



National Professional Qualifications

Summative assessment policy

October 2025

NPQ summative assessment policy

Preamble

It is the LLSE expectation that every participant passes their summative assessment. This is because they will have engaged with at least 90% of the programme and the curriculum design, content and sequencing enables them to practice the implementation process by reflecting reflexively on the application of their own NPQ learning in a structured and challenging way. The summative assessment is therefore an opportunity for the participants to demonstrate and apply their learning from the programme by taking on the role leadership role associated with their programme, rather than a task set to catch them out! Participants have described the summative assessment experience as feeling like a consultant for a week.

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1) Assessment eligibility

- The participant must have at least 90% engagement with the programme to be able access the summative assessment. There will be no exceptions made to this requirement.
- Participants may access an assessment in the window before their allotted window in exceptional circumstances, and if they are absolutely certain that they have completed the programme in sequence and to an acceptable standard. Any early attempt will still count as one of the permitted two assessment attempts. Participants must contact enquiries@llse.org.uk providing the reason, least two weeks before the assessment starts to request early access.
- Participants will be reminded by LLSE, via the platform, of the requirement for their progress percentage to show at least 90% during the two months before each assessment window opens. Participants are personally responsible for reaching this percentage in good time before the assessment window opens.
- The participant's facilitators and delivery partners will be able to provide individual support to meet this threshold, as required.
- To be awarded the NPQ, the participant must have engaged with at least 90% of the programme and have passed the summative assessment.
- Participants have two attempts to pass the assessment. Accessing the assessment by downloading it, counts as one attempt even if a submission is not made.

2) Assessment submission dates

- There are eight calendar days (deadline is at 12.00 midday on the eighth day) in which to submit the assessment response. LLSE has decided to alter the DfE-recommended times of the day, for assessment access and submission, from 12 midnight to support participants' workload.
- Once the case study has been downloaded, the participants will be deemed to have started the assessment, constituting their first attempt of two.
- No additional time is allowed if a participant accesses the case study late.
- The dates are made available to participants before they apply for the programme. Participants declare that they will be able to access, complete and submit the assessment in the allotted times when they apply. Therefore, any issues with the dates are anticipated to only be 'extenuating or exceptional circumstances' (see deferral and withdrawal policy).
- NB - an Ofsted or other inspection/monitoring visit does not constitute an 'extenuating or exceptional' circumstance, nor does a booked holiday (as the dates were available at point of programme application). The circumstance must be unique to the participant and not a common situation experienced by many.
- The assessment start and submission times are set in accordance with DfE assessment window dates. The assessment case study and questions are released to all eligible participants at the same time. There is therefore no flexibility regarding the dates.
- The DfE assessment window is a three-month window in which the assessments are completed by participants, marked, internally moderated, externally moderated, reported to and verified by the DfE. It is not the period available for the participants to complete the assessment.
- The assessment submission period is naturally set as close to the start of the DfE-assigned assessment window, so that the marking and moderation phases can be completed rigorously and in a timely manner. There is therefore very little flexibility about this timing from LLSE's perspective.

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3) Issues completing the assessment

- If a participant is unable to complete the assessment during the allotted submission period, the terms and conditions of the deferral policy apply. An assessment delay form must be completed to record the 'extenuating or exceptional circumstances' (see deferral and withdrawal policy).
- In the event of deferral participants (From November 2025) must complete the assessment in the next available cohort.
- The final cohort of this current framework is expected to start in November 2027. No deferrals will be permitted in this cohort.
- Participants have two attempts to pass the assessment.
- If a participant accesses the case study and questions, and then wishes to defer, it will be deemed that the first assessment attempt has been used. This is the case even if the participant does not submit an assessment response leaves only one more attempt to complete the summative assessment.
- Please note that in any circumstances, the accessing of the summative assessment case study will deem that an assessment attempt will have been made, without exception. There will therefore only be one more assessment attempt remaining.

4) Assessment format

4.1) The case study

- The assessment is based on a case study that puts the participant in a new role within the school/trust. The role is at the same leadership level as the programme learning. Specialist NPQ participants must respond to the case study as a leader of colleagues, rather than as an individual teacher or from the perspective of their current professional role. Leadership NPQ participants must respond, for example as an executive leader across several schools (NPQEL) and a headteacher of a whole school (NPQH).
- Although the case study school/trust phase/specialism may vary from the participants', the case study and questions are intentionally and skillfully written to enable any participant who has completed the programme to access the key information required to compose successful answers to the questions. This has been corroborated by the DfE, the external moderator and the consistently high and above national average pass rate.
- The case study reflects a life-like scenario and provides quantitative and qualitative information in prose, numeric and graphic form to strengthen the narrative for the participants. It includes the school vision/mission, background information (number of pupils on roll against the school's capacity, staff structure and turnover) and school-level data (including percentage of free school meals (FSM), pupil premium (PP)/English as an additional language (EAL)/special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) figures, attainment and/or, progress data), illustrative Ofsted report extracts (current education inspection framework), policy extracts, staff/pupil/parent/governor voice. For the leadership NPQs this could additionally include a school improvement plan, illustrative school budget, governance structure, the school's relationship with the local authority/academy trust.

4.2) Participant response requirements

- The participant must assume the leadership role that has been assigned in the case study to respond to the questions. They must include explanations of how they would assign staff to

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make the improvements, rather than focusing only on their own direct actions. They must answer from the case study subject's perspective, using their own NPQ learning to create their responses.

- The participant response can be up to the absolute maximum word count (NB: there is not a +10% margin as with academic writing, assessors will check the word count and cannot read beyond the limit and no appendices will be read):
 - 1,500 words for the specialist NPQs
 - 2,500 words for the leadership NPQs
- Participants will be able to achieve a pass without reaching the maximum word count
- Academic referencing is not necessary. However, information from other sources must be acknowledged to mitigate from any plagiarism or academic misconduct problems (see section 9 below). For example, 'Willingham says that teachers need to be certain of the material that students need to be able to recall quickly and be proficient in it so that it can be practised', or 'It is important to know exactly which piece of information we want students to recall easily (Willingham)'. To safeguard the participant's word count, there is no need to cite the paper/book, year or author's first name. The surname is sufficient. Participants are urged not to just quote or cite research, this practice will unnecessarily add to the wordcount, with not added benefits during marking. The research must be interwoven to support their own thinking.
- The words written must be the participant's own, unless referenced as above. The best assessments are entirely the participant's own words with no quotations, only references to research evidence that are directly used to support their own arguments/responses. Participants are most likely to succeed if they avoid using artificial intelligence. A reliance on artificial intelligence always results in a lower mark and often a fail. LLSE's considered and intentionally approach to assessment follows Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and DfE guidance. The assessment has a narrow, specific focus that demands a deep response, justification and rationale using the quantitative, as well as the qualitative evidence. It is topical, current and specific, and require the creation of content" (p6, AI Use in Assessments, JCQ, 2023). There is no way to 'accidentally' achieve a pass because of this, and the type of language used, and the level of intellectual capability", strong foundational knowledge" and understanding is required to succeed in answering the question. (DFE statement for March - Generative artificial intelligence in education Departmental statement March 2023).
- The response must be submitted on the specific form in Word format. Due to the lack of flexibility with submission dates, there will be no opportunity to resubmit within the same assessment window. Any errors will therefore constitute one of the two attempts that a participant has to complete their assessment. There is no flexibility.

4.3) The questions

There are three questions. All three need to be completed. The questions are linked and allow the participant to demonstrate their progressive thinking about the process of implementation in the case study school/trust. The preamble reminds the participants of the expectations and provides useful hints about how to be successful.

The questions require the participant to use the case study school/trust information to:

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1. identify/diagnose the most important problem – suggested word counts are up to 300 words for the specialist NPQs and up to 600 words for the leadership NPQs
 2. select and justify a solution – suggested word counts are up to 300 words for the specialist NPQs and up to 600 words for the leadership NPQs
 3. identify, describe step-by-step and justify some implementation strategies from 1/2 of the EEF implementation stages. To describe, explain and demonstrate understanding, an implementation plan alone will not be enough to pass this question. – suggested word count – at least 850 words for the specialist NPQs and at least 1,000 words for the leadership NPQs
- are weighted, so that they focus on the processes of effective implementation. The total number of marks available is 50, with a split of 10: 10: 30 for problem: solution/focus: implementation strategies.
 - Word count guidance is provided for each question to support the participant to pass. NB – this is guidance only. The word count guidance is provided to ensure that each participant has enough words available to answer question 3 (worth 60% of the total marks) in sufficient detail to be able to pass.

Word count guidance

	Marks available	Pass mark	Specialist NPQs	Leadership NPQs
Question 1	10	5	Up to 300 words	Up to 600 words
Question 2	10	5	Up to 300 words	Up to 600 words
Question 3	30	15	At least 850 words	At least 1,000 words
Entire submission (Totals)	50	25	1,500 words – absolute maximum limit for all words added. NB – Additional words cannot be marked. There is no +10% available.	2,500 words – absolute maximum limit for all words added. NB – Additional words cannot be marked. There is no +10% available.

- The pass mark is 25/50. This will be converted to a final percentage for moderation purposes and only a pass or fail grade will be given to participants. Participants must demonstrate that they are able to identify an issue, and a solution/focus, justifying their choices for both and detail (step-by-step) how the implementation of a particular aspect of the proposed solution/focus should be approached and why. Explanation and the use of the case study information is paramount to success.
- In response to question 1, participants must interweave the case study evidence into their writing, rather than just listing, stating or quoting information.
- For question 2, participants must interweave the research evidence that they wish to use in with their response, rather than just quoting or citing it. They must also explain how the solution will rectify the problem identified in question 1.
- There are three pass criteria: pass, good pass and exceptional pass. The differentiation between the grades is articulated in the specimen mark scheme, and is summarised in the table on the next page:

Summative assessment generic grade criteria

Grade	Exceptional pass Meets the good pass criteria and...	Good pass Meets the pass criteria and...	Pass	Fail If any of these apply...
Question 1 identify/diagnose the most important problem	9-10 marks The choice of the most important problem is well-justified, referring to its relative importance to other potential problems.	7-8 marks Case study evidence used is both quantitative and qualitative and is interwoven throughout the response.	5-6 marks - Identifies the one most important problem. - Uses the Ofsted and/or α (question dependent) information in the case study when justifying the identification of the problem. - The problem can be any relevant problem that is evident in the case study (there are no 'red herrings'/misleading problems)	0-4 marks - No feasible problem diagnosed. - The problem diagnosed does not relate to the case study - i.e., it is not relevant. - No explanation provided.
Question 2 select and justify a focus/solution(s)	9-10 marks - The choice of solution is exceptionally well-justified. <i>and/or</i> - Other possible solutions are rejected and reasons for their rejection are linked to the case study evidence.	7-8 marks - Case study evidence used is both quantitative and qualitative, and is interwoven throughout the response. - Any research evidence is interwoven throughout the response.	5-6 marks - Identifies one relevant solution. - Explicitly/implicitly uses the Ofsted and/or α (question dependent) information in the case study when justifying the choice of a solution.	0-4 marks - No feasible focus/solution identified. - The focus/solution identified does not relate to the problem diagnosed - i.e., it is not relevant. - No explanation/justification provided.
Question 3 identify, describe step-by-step and justify several implementation strategies from 1/2 of the EEF implementation stages	26-30 marks - Very good understanding of the strategies that would help in the xyz implementation stage(s) identified in question) to improve the issue evident in case study, some of which are insightful. - Case study evidence used comes from at least 2 sources and is interwoven to create a sustained argument.	21-25 marks - Good understanding of some strategies that would help in the xyz implementation stage(s) identified in question to improve the issue evident in case study. - Case study evidence used comes from at least 2 sources.	15-20 marks - An understanding that implementation is executed in stages - expect to be implicit rather than explicit. - An understanding of the issue (evident in case study) - expect to be implicit rather than explicit. - Identifies several strategies for the practical, stepped process - xyz EEF implementation stage(s). - Explains the rationale behind the approach.	0-14 marks - No indication of a feasible practical process. - The process identified does not relate to EEF xyz implementation stage(s) in the context of the case study - i.e., it is not relevant. - No explanation/justification provided.

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5) Access arrangements and 'exceptional/extenuating circumstances'

- Participants who have declared specific learning differences on their application form will be able to continue to use a plugin to read the text and may be given an additional day to complete their assessment if appropriate. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- There will be online question and answer sessions before and throughout the eight-day submission period.
- Mitigations to support all participants include carefully worded questions that provide a narrow focus (domains to be assessed table) for the participant's 'most important' problem, succinct, well-organised information, introductory information that supports the participants, clear questions and a mark scheme that overtly supports participants to pass.
- If participants experience any exceptional and extenuating circumstances (refer to deferral and withdrawal policy) during the eight-day submission period, they should contact enquiries@llse.org.uk during office hours immediately.
- NB – an Ofsted or other inspection/monitoring visit does not constitute an exceptional or extenuating circumstance. The circumstance must be unique to the participant, and not a common situation experienced by many.

6) Accessing the assessment and uploading the completed submission

- The case study will be available only to participants who have gained the 'eligible for assessment' tick in their profile (engaged with 90% of the programme) and are in the designated cohort.
- If participants have completed less than 90% of the programme, they will be permitted to delay assessment only in 'exceptional and extenuating circumstances' (as referenced to deferral and withdrawal policy).
- Participants access the case study using LLSE Online, as they have accessed materials for the entire programme. The case study will be released at 12.00 midday at the start of the eight-day submission period.
- Participants are sent an email message when the case study and questions are available.
- Once the case study has been accessed, the participants will be deemed to have started the assessment, constituting their first attempt of two. No additional time is allowed if a participant accesses the case study late.
- The response must be written into the submissions form which is a Word document (offline). There is a box for recording the response to each question and recording the accurate word count that includes every word in the response box.
- The word count will be checked by the assessor administrative team. If the maximum word limit unit is exceeded, additional words will be redacted, so that the assessor cannot read them.
- The completed LLSE submission from in Word format is uploaded in activity 4 of the summative assessment section of the LLSE platform by 12.00 midday on the last day of the eight-day submission period.
- Participants can request upload support through the enquiries@llse.org.uk during office hours up to 11.45am on the date of the submission deadline.

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7) Support for participants

- The most effective way for participants to access support is to proactively engage with the summative assessment briefings or discuss questions with their facilitator (if they have accessed the facilitator briefings), rather than sending individual emails to the administration team.
- The participant twilight assessment briefings will take place during the six weeks before the assessment becomes available. Booking links will be communicated to participants.
- A recording of one of the briefing sessions will be made available on LLSE Online together with a past case study, questions and mark scheme. These are all available in the course introduction in the assessment section (1.4), rather than at the end of the programme.
- There will be online question and answer support twilight sessions during the eight-day submission period. Joining links will be sent to participants.
- Participants can request support for uploading their submission form Word document through enquiries@llse.org.uk during office hours until 11.45am on the date of the submission deadline.

8) Marking and moderation

- The scripts will be marked 'positively for relevance and justification' (DfE guidance), i.e., overtly using the case study information and providing feasible responses. The mark scheme articulates this, e.g., use of the case study evidence, the questions asking for explanations and justification, participants are encouraged to use their knowledge of the evidence ('learn that...') (numbers) and practice ('learn how to...') (letters) statements for implementation and one other domain.
- The assessors are carefully selected in accordance with rigorous expectations, extensively trained and are required to complete a standardisation exercise.
- The stratified random 10% 'internal' moderation sample is selected by assessor, delivery partner, cluster (if applicable), mark band initially allocated. It also includes full and median marks, borderline passes and fails, scripts where academic misconduct concerns (see section 9 below) are raised and at an assessor's request, as well as any other potential risks to accuracy of marking, for example any identified patterns associated with one assessor, new assessors et al., as necessary.
- Further internal moderation takes place in preparation for the Summative Assessment Board, where the marks are ratified before national external moderation begins.
- A sample is then selected randomly for national external moderation by the DfE-appointed national external moderator.
- The final marks are verified by the DfE at the end of the three/four-month assessment window prior to being made available to the participants.
- An appeals process is outlined in section 11 below.

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9) Academic Misconduct

- a) Collusion – secret agreement or cooperation in order to deceive others.
 - Participants are expected to write their submission by themselves and refrain from discussing their responses with other colleagues.
 - Signs of collusion include extensive similarities between different participant's scripts, and might include identifying identical problems, solutions, language and approaches.
 - This may be particularly challenging for participants who work closely together. The scripts of these participants will usually be marked by the same assessor to help mitigate this risk.
- b) Plagiarism – using someone else's ideas/work as your own (8% of the script is the indicative proportion).
 - A plagiarism check is completed before marking commences. Participants are expected to acknowledge other sources, rather than merely quoting or referring to them, although academic referencing is not expected. For example, 'Willingham says that teachers need to be certain of the material that students need to be able to recall quickly and be proficient in it so that it can be practiced', or 'It is important to know exactly which piece of information we want students to recall easily (Willingham)'.
 - Copying of other participant's (past or present) work will be detected during the plagiarism check.
- c) Falsification – whole/part script is written by someone else, including computer software and artificial intelligence.
 - Information may be received from schools for other participants or noticed by an assessor because of inconsistencies between sections of the scripts and other suspicious elements.
 - In such cases, a participant's assessment submission is compared to their online work during the programme, their delivery partner and facilitators may also become involved in the decision-making process.
- By uploading the script, the participant declares that it is entirely their own work, and therefore that no academic misconduct has occurred.
- An incident of academic misconduct will be treated very seriously, as it is likely to contravene part 2 of the Teachers' Standards.
- Following investigation, on the discovery of academic misconduct (including collusion, plagiarism, including copying and falsification), the participant's delivery partner, external moderator and the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA) will be informed. The assessment submission will be null and void and constitute one of the two summative assessment attempts.

10) Results

- Participants receive a pass or unsuccessful outcome only, no grade/score.
- Participants will be notified of the release of the results through the platform.
- Certificates will be available to download on the [Teacher Regulation Agency \(TRA\)](#) website.
- Unsuccessful participants are entitled to support to pass their second and final attempt. They are invited to contact LLSE for an individual feedback tutorial (30 minutes), that will provide specific information about the reasons for the failure. Participants will also be able to attend

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the assessment briefing sessions for the window in which they choose to take their second attempt.

11) Appeals

Given the rigour associated with the marking and moderation processes (see section 8 above), careful consideration should be given before starting an appeal.

8.1) Stage 1

- Should a participant wish to appeal again the outcome of their assessment, they should contact enquiries@llse.org.uk and pay the £130.00 assessment fee within 10 working days of the result being released.
- The script will be marked by a new assessor, and moderated, without reference to the original assessment within 20 working days.
- If the mark is altered by more than 5 marks/10% or moves from a fail to a pass, the assessment fee will be refunded.

8.2) Stage 2

- If the script continues to yield a fail mark, the participant may wish to lodge a stage 2 appeal. They have a further 5 working days to lodge this second appeal by contacting enquiries@llse.org.uk and paying the £130.00 assessment fee.
- The script will be marked by a lead assessor, and moderated by the lead moderator without reference to the original assessment within 15 working days.
- If the mark is altered by more than 5 marks/10% or moves from a fail to a pass, the assessment fee will be refunded.

8.3) Concluding the process

- The end of stage 2 must be completed within three months (DfE requirement).
- If unresolved within three months from the date submitted by the appellant and all internal processes are exhausted, a complete appeal bundle is to be sent to the Department and/or its designated External Body who will act as the final arbiter.