


Policy and Procedure for Initial Assessment and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Name of Policy	Date Effective	Review Date	Signature
Initial Assessment and RPL	05/09/2022	05/09/2023	

Introduction

FW Solutions Ltd is committed to ensuring that all learners are working towards clearly defined learning goals that have been identified through a process of initial assessment. This ensures that we are able to offer a tailored and Individual Learning and Progression Plan (ILP) for all learners to ensure their identified learning needs are met. This also informs how much of the apprenticeship training content the individual requires and confirms they are on the appropriate training programme.

Purpose

FW Solutions Limited believes that by carrying out an initial assessment with every learner, we build a clear, accurate and realistic picture of a learner's 'starting point'. OFSTED inspectors consider the 'distance travelled' by the apprentice from their starting point when determining a judgement on the impact of the training programme on an individual.

Initial assessments are a tool to be used to inform the social, physical and learning development needs of the learner. They will help to build a relationship between the learner and the learning provider (FW Solutions) and must be used as a starting point for the ILP.

What is Initial Assessment?

We define Initial Assessment as:

building up a clear, accurate and relevant picture of an individual's prior attainment and potential, to use as a basis for negotiating an individual and suitable programme of learning and assessment opportunities.

Initial Assessment is concerned with both:

- What learners have already achieved – their attainment
- What they should realistically be able to achieve in the future – their potential

Why carry out Initial Assessment?

Information about current interests and achievement can provide a strong basis for building an effective learning programme. Initial assessment checks that the apprenticeship (both the job role and the training) or programme of study, is an appropriate programme for the individual. The outcomes of recruitment screening, diagnostic testing and pre-induction tasks can all be used to put together a detailed picture of the learner as they move through the different stages of the process.

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Initial Assessment involves the collection of a wide range of information to form a coherent picture of the individual skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviours and learning needs. This information is used to place the learner on an appropriate pathway which matches their skills, knowledge, behaviours and abilities and addresses their individual needs thus improving their opportunities for success. Without this, there are only assumptions. A learner who is on a programme at the right level and has interest and aptitude for the work they do will be more likely to succeed.

Policy on ensuring a robust Initial Assessment process:

A robust Initial Assessment process should be learner centred. This means that it needs to:

- engage learners and be of benefit to them and their learning journey
- help learners feel positive about themselves and their potential to learn

It is important that learners need to:

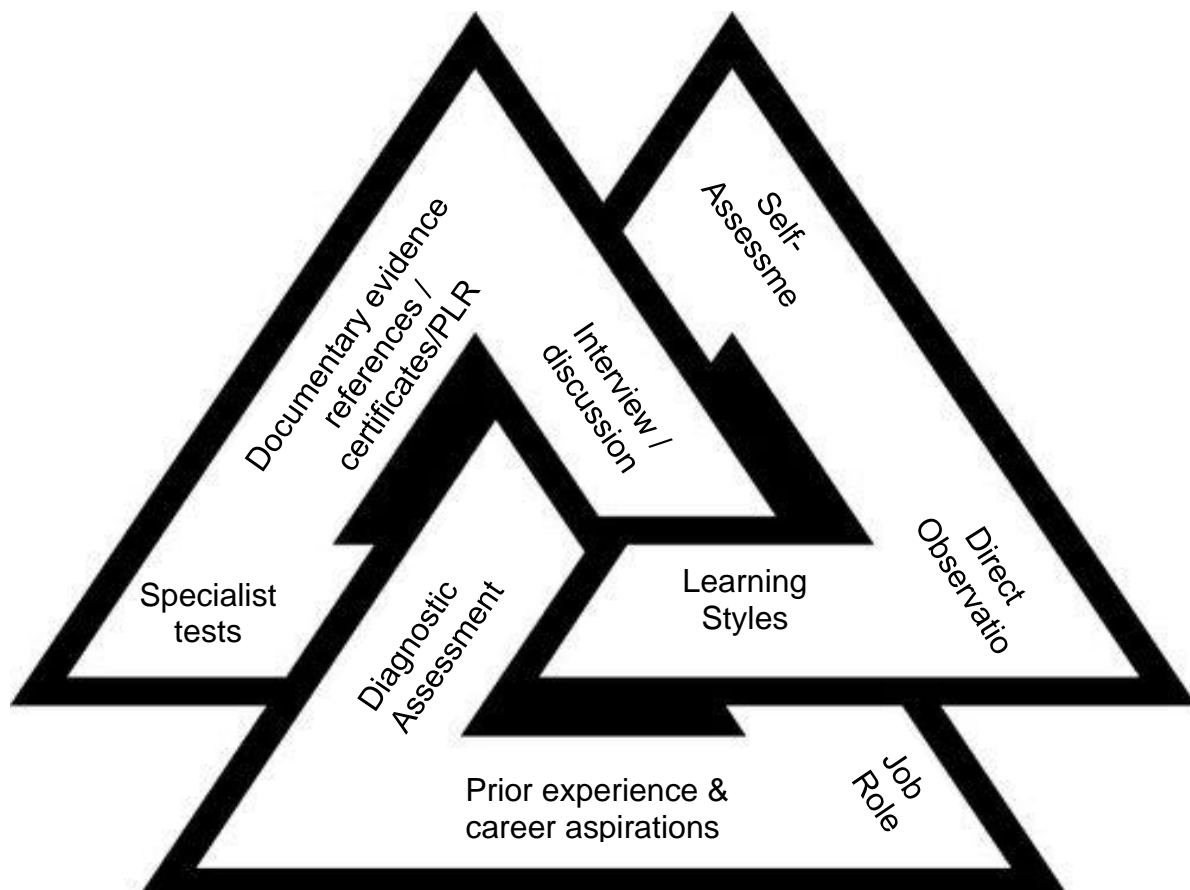
- understand why we want to put together an early and accurate picture of their skills and needs
- have access to their Individual Learning Plan
- feel confident about how the learning plans will be used to help them

Many learners have different levels of literacy, numeracy and language skills as well as other strengths and areas for development which may impact upon a learning programme. FW Solutions ensure a robust initial assessment process that: -

- is completed prior to the start date of the programme of study;
- is initiated at the recruitment stage when an apprentice is applying for an apprenticeship job;
- is a process, not a single event;
- uses a range of methods;
- helps Teaching and Learning Coordinators and employers to find out about learners;
- helps learners to find out about themselves and their programme (what they will learn and how);
- confirms the learner is enrolling on an appropriate subject and level of study programme/apprenticeship;

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Information that will be considered during initial assessment



The initial assessment will include:

- Initial telephone interview where the apprentice has applied for an apprenticeship job
- Employer interview and practical observation
- Application forms and work history
- Current and prior attainments including Personal Learning Record (PLR) from the Learner Record Service (LRS) reports and qualification certificates
- Literacy, numeracy and digital skills assessment
- Learning needs
- Learning styles
- Skills gap analysis
- Academic assessments
- Goals and aspirations
- Discussion with Learner Engagement team

Enabling the identification of:

- Appropriate advice and guidance

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- An appropriate qualification at an appropriate level
- An appropriate Tutor Assessor
- The right learner being enrolled on the right programme

This then leads to the completion, implementation and evaluation of an effective Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and identification of learning and assessment opportunities and resources.

If additional support is identified during initial assessment, those needs will be discussed with the Head of Sector to ensure appropriate resources are made available at the start of the programme. Not all needs may be met by FW Solutions or the learner's employer and, where appropriate, learners may be referred to specialist, partner organisations.

FW Solutions will involve the employer to identify where they can support the learner with their needs, between visits with their TLC. Initial assessment will be revisited during the programme as a review tool and to aid in the measure of 'distance travelled'.

Roles and Responsibilities

FW Solutions Ltd is responsible for ensuring that all employees involved in the assessment of learners receive appropriate training, supervision and support regarding the policy and their responsibilities.

Manager's Responsibility: the Head of Sector is responsible for ensuring that a copy of this document is available to all employees and that the policy and procedure are reviewed annually. Lesley Rimmington, Quality Director, Realise is responsible for ensuring the adherence of this policy by all employees and that the policy is available to learners and employers on the web site.

Individual's Responsibility Individual employees are required to act in accordance with the policy, to enable appropriate support to the learner(s), failure to do so may be considered as an act of misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

Policy Implementation – Procedure

It is essential that all employees put the learner at the centre of the initial assessment process; the process is an important part of the TLC gaining and understanding a rounded picture of the learner as a person.

FW Solutions guide the learner through the completion of a number of mandatory initial assessments:

- Review of Personal Learning Record (PLR) from the Learner Record Service
- Checking prior attainment certificates

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- Completion of the FW Solutions Application form, including self-assessment of digital skills, goals and aspirations and the reasons for enrolling on the course
- NCFE/Skills Builder Screening, Initial Assessment and Diagnostic tests, to discover current levels of ability in maths and English and inform a starting place for further appropriate assessments
- NCFE/Skills Review or One File Scorecard for apprentices to assess current Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) against the apprenticeship standard
- CognAssist – online cognitive assessment which identifies individuals with learning needs and delivers tailored support strategies and reasonable adjustments based on individual cognitive profiles and specific areas of need.
- Pre-course assignment tasks
- For Higher Apprenticeships and Level 4/5 Diplomas, a pre-course essay to assess academic writing skills

The TLC or learner engagement officer will then conduct the structured Learner Profile Discussion to include:

- Occupational background and current job role
- Prior attainment and courses attended
- Courses that the learner has started and not completed and the reasons
- How the apprenticeship will develop the gaps in KSBs identified in the Skills Review
- Assessment needs
- Learning needs
- Additional Support needs
- Progression opportunities
- How the apprenticeship/study programme can help the learner achieve their goals and aspirations.

TLCs will further probe the learner where the structured discussion has led to them needing an understanding of:

- Social needs
- Pastoral Care
- Records of Dyslexia Assessments
- Any other IAG

Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence is a good source of information that is considered at the start of the initial assessment process. Application forms submitted via Find an Apprenticeship or by completing the FW Solutions application form provide useful information about prior experience, achievements and aspirations. It can also be a useful early indicator in assessing English by the way it is written and whether there

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are spelling errors. Records of achievement, certificates, and references can all be sources of information about the skills and abilities that an individual can bring to their learning.

Assessing English and Maths

FW Solutions will initially look at the Personal Learning Record in the Learner Record Service, identified through the individual learner number (ULN) as soon as the application form is received.

All learners commencing apprenticeships who have not attained a Grade A*-C/9-4 in English and maths (or equivalent) will work towards them as part of their apprenticeship learning.

Qualification certificates can also provide the learner's current attainment level if there are no records in the PLR. However, we will also underpin this by using the NCFE/Skills Builder English and maths Initial Assessment System, which tracks the Functional Skills curriculum and satisfies the core curriculum for English and maths from pre-entry level to level 2. The Initial Screening tool is dynamic and adjusts the level according to the answers given, allowing the learner to see what level they are currently working at. The screen assessment will also produce an Additional Learning Needs Report (ALN) if the learner scores over 60% of the dyslexia or dyscalculia questions.

The Initial Assessment enables learners to find out their current level in English and maths and informs the system which level of Diagnostic Assessment to take. The diagnostic will then identify their strengths and weaknesses and form the basis of the Individual Skills Plan (ISP) which creates a portfolio of learning resources to support their learning programme and achieve their programme outcomes. In certain circumstances, the Functional Skills specialist or TLC may override the diagnostic level to a higher or lower level to ensure an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses is gained.

If the learner has already achieved GCSE Grade A*-C/9-4 in English and maths (or equivalent), FW Solutions is committed to continuing the development of literacy and numeracy at this level and beyond. Diagnostic results are used at initial assessment to plan a programme to 'embed' teaching and learning of weaker areas identified by the Skills Forward platform (Topics Student Needs to Practice) in the Individual Skills Plan (please refer to the Learner Functional Skills Guide).

Interview/Discussions

A well-managed and structured interview generates a lot of useful information and will organically lead to further informative conversations. An essential part of the initial assessment process is to talk to learners, asking them questions and actively

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listening to what they have to say. The information gathered through discussion provides a strong indication of interest, aptitude, ability and aspirations. The discussion will be carried out by the learner's TLC, or the Learner Engagement Officer, at the first 'welcome meeting'.

Initial assessment discussions are structured and consistent although they do not need to be formal and where the opportunity arises, further probing questions can be asked if required. The key reasons for this are:

- a structured approach is far more likely to elicit more information and ensure that no questions are forgotten;
- all learners are asked a standard set of questions rather than leaving the questions open to the individuals carrying out the interview. These questions are focussed on:
 - Previous Qualifications and academic background
 - Previous work experience
 - Maths, English and Digital Skills
 - Goals and Aspirations
 - Starting Point
- Discussions are an ideal opportunity for the training provider and learner to get to know each other.

The outcome of the discussion is recorded in the ILP and in the discussion record in Skills Review and informs the learner's starting point.

Self-Assessment and Skills Review/Scorecard

Skills Review and Scorecard are self-assessed skills gap analysis tools that enable an apprentice and their employer to review and input recognised prior learning and measure the key areas of knowledge, skills, competence and behaviours that are part of an apprenticeship standard.

The generated result is then used to have a detailed discussion in relation to how the apprenticeship is structured, delivered and funded. The functionality allows FW Solutions to document and evidence any changes to duration, funding and clear milestones that are to be achieved on programme.

We repeat the review process over time to demonstrate progress against the KSBs within the standard enabling us to monitor the apprentice's readiness for End Point Assessment.

Recognition of Prior Learning/ Experience

Information about a learner's qualifications and achievements can provide an indication of their general level of ability. In recognising prior learning, the following should be considered against the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the Apprenticeship standard or adult learning programme:

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- Work experience (this is particularly important if the apprentice is an existing employee);
- Prior education, training or associated qualification(s) in a related sector subject area (this goes beyond just English and maths); and
- Any previous apprenticeship started or completed

Information on existing qualifications may also indicate weakness areas. For example, the absence of (or low grades in) GCSE maths & English, may suggest basic skills needs which require further investigation during initial assessment. The purpose of establishing a learner's prior experience and learning is to avoid any duplication of learning in an area for which they are already deemed competent and the impact on the minimum length of time required to complete the apprenticeship or programme of learning.

If the learner is already employed, discussion will identify the duties involved in the job role (whether it is a new or existing job role) to ensure relevance to the qualification/apprenticeship being undertaken. Consideration will be given as to the knowledge, skills and behaviours that already may have been gained in the job role against the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship or programme of study and ensure that significant new learning is required.

When FW Solutions identifies prior learning or experience and this impacts on the apprenticeship or learning programme, this is recognised and recorded in the Training Plan and the content, duration and price of the programme of learning adjusted accordingly. Using the Professional Discussion record in Skills Review/Scorecard, FW Solutions will quantify the proportion of prior learning already attained, quantify the proportion of off-the-job training content that will not be covered (where the programme is an apprenticeship) and quantify the amount that funding will be reduced by.

Feedback from initial assessment

Feedback is given after the initial assessment and short-term targets are set once the learner is accepted onto a programme of study. This takes place at the first 'welcome meeting'. Feedback is used to increase the learner's self-awareness, build confidence and motivate them to succeed. We encourage learners to discuss the outcomes of assessment and develop a language of learning. This will help them take an active role in making decisions about goals and targets for their individual learning plan.

Initial Assessment Implementation Checklist for TLC/Learner Engagement Officer:

- Is the assessment introduced to learners in a positive way?
- Does the learner understand what will happen during and after the initial assessment?
- Are the initial assessments providing the information you need in order to advise the learner effectively?

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- Is the learner given the opportunity to discuss and feedback on the assessment process?
- Does the learner understand who will see the information from the initial assessment and how it will be used?
- Has the outcome of initial assessment been recorded in full on the ILP and in Skills Review/Scorecard?

Process where additional support is identified during initial assessment

1. Results of Initial Assessment are used to inform the Individual Learning Plan (ILP)
2. If the need for additional support is identified, this is recorded in the 'Additional Support Form' and the SEN-Co informed?
3. Additional Learning Support form is completed with the learner and action plan/review dates agreed.
4. All employees that will be involved with the learner are made aware of any support needs
5. On-going support is provided throughout the learner's time on programme and reviews undertaken regularly.

Staff CPD

It is important to FW Solutions that staff involved in the initial assessment process hold a wide range of skills and knowledge. They will have at least a minimum understanding of: -

- The purpose of Initial Assessment
- Government Policy on Initial Assessment and RPL
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-recognition-of-prior-learning/apprenticeships-initial-assessment-to-recognise-prior-learning>
- Methods of identifying learning and support needs and collecting information
- The programmes of study available to the learner by FW Solutions
- Understanding of the signposting procedure where a learner cannot be supported by FW Solutions
- Other providers or agencies who may be best able to support a learner's needs
- Employer Engagement and Training Needs Analysis
- Interviewing and questioning techniques
- Minimum Level 2 IAG qualification
- Equality and Diversity and non-discriminatory practices
- Learning Styles
- Data protection and confidentiality policies

Monitoring

Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy will be through: -

- Achievement and retention results (QAR)
- Feedback during the review process

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- Learner and employer evaluation questionnaires
- Learner and employer satisfaction surveys
- Complaints and compliments procedure
- OTLA for Continuous Improvement Process
- The self-assessment process and QIP
- Annual policy review
- OFSTED Inspection results

Policy Review

Overall responsibility for this Policy and Procedure for Initial Assessment and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within FW Solutions Ltd and the implementation thereof lies with Lesley Rimmington, Quality Director.

This policy will be reviewed annually by Lesley Rimmington, Quality Director, Rebecca Warden, Business Development Director and Janet Williams, Office Manager.

This Policy and Procedure for Initial Assessment and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is Version 3 and was amended and adopted on 05/09/2022.

This Policy and Procedure for Initial Assessment and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is due to be reviewed on 05/09/2023.