

QAA NPQ National Moderation- Note of Visit

Provider	Forest Learning Alliance (FLA)
Lead Contact	Kelli Puttock – Quality Assurance Manager
Attendees	Kelli Puttock – Quality Assurance Manager Ravinder Ghei – Director, Forest Learning Alliance Phil Sherwood – Strategic Lead Peter Callow – National NPQ Moderator, QAA
Date	10 September 2019

Summary/Key Points

National Professional Qualifications (NPQ)- Final Assessment Strategy

- Leaders ensure that there is strong focus on final assessment throughout the NPQML, NPQSL and NPQH programmes. They balance this carefully with their commitment to ensure that the programmes enable participants to have access to ongoing high-quality professional development which supports leadership and school improvement. The final assessment strategy is a core thread which is carefully built across each programme, starting with providing information to prospective applicants on the Forest Learning Alliance website.
- Successful applicants are introduced to more detail about final assessment at the first face-to-face session, including in a Delegate Pack. They go away with a clearer understanding of the nature of the tasks, how to complete them and how they will be assessed. This enables participants to start to consider their choice of task from the outset, which is reinforced through aspects of the first online module within the following week. Thereafter, the blended approach of face-to-face sessions and online modules provide participants with well-structured guidance that supports them all the way to task submission.
- The Alliance prides itself on the one-to-one support they make available to NPQ participants, particularly through its Director and a Leadership Consultant. This enables participants to discuss and review their tasks at any stage, either in person or remotely. The role of the sponsor in providing support for final assessment is well-considered and sponsors receive training to do this effectively. The participant evaluations at the end of each face-to-face to session means that any general requests for more guidance or support on final assessment can be swiftly acted upon. Effective use is made of peer-to-peer discussions at face-to-face sessions so that participants can be challenged and supported to help bring about improvements in tasks and their writing up.
- FLA has regular two-way communication and discussion, including through a shared workspace, with NPQ online, which is the external assessment provider. It is a pro-active and effective relationship that enables leaders, facilitators and participants to all benefit from the learning and analysis of assessment outcome data of a national assessment provider. However, FLA leaders also undertake their own analysis so that they have a good first-hand knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of participants’ assessments which is used to develop or modify programme content or practice. For example, they have

identified a weakness in NPQSL assessments of participants failing to mention both 'benefits and risks' in relevant assessment criteria. FLA are well placed to undertake their own assessments in the event that NPQ online are unable to do so. This is because the Director is an assessor and there are plans in place to ensure that more leaders and partners are trained to undertake the role.

NPQ Final Assessment – National moderation outcomes and the impact of QAA national moderation (including Metrics 4 and 5)

- At the time of the moderation meeting, the QAA had only completed one national moderation report for NPQ online, based on a sample of two marked submissions from FLA in June 2019. This considered two assessments, one from NPQML and one from NPQSL. FLA leaders challenged NPQ online about the weakness of the original assessment judgements in both submissions. These had required amendment at internal moderation to enable 100% of the scripts to be found to have been assessed accurately (Metric 5). This demonstrates FLA's understanding of the importance of holding the external assessment provider to account.
- This one national moderation found that the assessment contractor had robust moderation processes in place to ensure that assessment marking is carried out in line with the DfE NPQ Content and Assessment Framework and mark scheme. The internal moderation provided clear justification and explanation of the changes made to the original scores. The moderation comments added detail to the original assessment notes in order to help participants who did not reach the threshold for a pass mark to improve a future re-submission.
- The quality of individual participant support and careful tracking has ensured that, to date, 100% of participants have completed their final assessment within 18 months of formally commencing their programme and are on target to do so in the future (Metric 4).

NPQ Final Assessment- Promoting continuous improvement

- FLA leaders demonstrate through their actions that they are determined to ensure the very best experience and outcomes for participants. For example, they have recently started using alumni on the NPQH programme to talk about their tasks and their assessment. This has enabled current participants to learn from previous cohorts' experiences and to receive additional advice and support. There are already plans to continue with this and expand the initiative to other programmes.
- The use of 'Assessment Clinics' is another good example of how FLA have responded to participants' needs in order to bring about continuous improvement. They have recently introduced this more formal arrangement for participants to have additional access to support for their writing up of final assessments.
- FLA has joined with other small NPQ providers to establish a forum for sharing good practice. This enables members to learn from, and support, each other through their different experiences and resources.

Key Strength(s)

- A high level of individual support for participants throughout programmes which enables them to be thoroughly prepared for undertaking and completing their final assessments.

- The positive relationship with NPQ online allows FLA to develop and improve its programme content and support for participants' assessment.
- Enthusiastic and committed leaders constantly review their assessment process and practice and receive appropriate challenge and support from governors, leading to continuous improvement.

Next step(s)

- Build capacity to maintain the same level of quality of experience and outcomes for participants through the greater use of peer-to-peer support and alumni.
- Review the website to make the user experience is as straightforward and easy as possible in relation to the access of information on tasks and their assessment.
- Make expectations of the assessment tasks and their associated workload clearer in publicity material, including on the website, and throughout the programmes.

QAA Moderator: Peter D Callow

Date: 13 September 2019