



HLTA National Assessment Partnership

Code of Practice and Guidance for Regional Providers of Assessment

Higher Level Teaching Assistant Programme



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Introduction

This Code of Practice is for Regional Providers of Assessment (RPAs) of the Higher-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) programme. It has been developed by the HLTA National Assessment Partnership. It is also relevant to Providers of Preparation (PoPs) whose HLTA candidates are assessed by the Partnership.

The partnership aims to encourage all organisations to pool their strengths for the benefit of all, and for the benefit of HLTA candidates and other stakeholders involved in the programme. All members of the Partnership are responsible for decision making and operate in accordance with a collective spirit of partnership working. It is within this premise that this Code of Practice and Guidance has been produced.

The Partnership will be governed by a Board, consisting of an independent chair and with the aim to include membership from headteachers and HLTAs.

RPAs will work closely with schools, academies and alternative educational settings and their staff to uphold the principles set out in this guidance to prepare and assess candidates for HLTA status. This Code of Practice addresses the following main activities within the HLTA programme relating to candidates’:

- **Preparation:** briefing candidates and helping them prepare for the assessment process.
- **Assessment:** assessing candidates’ professional skills, knowledge and understanding against the requirements of the HLTA standards.
- **Appeals:** dealing equitably with candidates wishing to dispute the outcome of their assessment.

It also addresses partnership issues such as moderation, how to manage relationships with all stakeholders involved in the preparation and assessment process, and how each RPA needs to contribute to the Partnership.

RPAs are committed to meeting the needs of the diverse communities that schools and educational settings serve and to promoting good practice within the sector, recognising all protected characteristics identified in legislation. RPAs are subject to upholding the latest equality and data protection legislation (Equalities Act 2010 and Data Protection Act 2018). The partnership will reflect these duties in its working practices and will regularly review its procedures and guidance in line with emerging legislation.

RPAs are committed to the on-going development of the HLTA programme and will maintain close links with the DFE, wherever possible.

RPAs operate across these existing regions as listed below, and agree not to promote their assessment services in other regions:

Strictly Education 4S: London and South East, South West, West Midlands (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Birmingham), East of England (Essex, Suffolk, Hertfordshire).

HLTA North: North West, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, N and NE Lincolnshire, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

University of Northampton: East Midlands (except N and NE Lincolnshire); East of England (Cambridgeshire and Norfolk).

Preparation

The RPAs' responsibilities for assessment preparation are to promote consistency of quality in practice and opportunity by ensuring that:

- candidates have access to preparation
- preparation complies with this Code of Practice and relevant principles:
 - has appropriate content
 - uses appropriate processes
 - is of appropriate duration and includes:
 - the checking and verification of HLTA standard 11
 - registration for assessment with a RPA (refer to p. 3)
- feedback is provided to the Preparation Provider from assessors in relation to how well candidates have been prepared for their assessment.

Eligible candidates are those defined as having:

- funding from their school or another organisation, or who are self-funded
- been judged ready for assessment by the RPA through an application process
- employment in a school or suitable setting, working with children and young people aged between 3 and 19 years or in exceptional circumstances employed in a school run nursery catering for 2-year-old provision
- evidence of appropriate Level 2 qualifications in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy
- opportunities to meet all standards as part of their employment
- the support of the employing organisation

The purpose of preparation is to ensure that candidates understand the HLTA standards, to make them aware of the requirements of the assessment process, and to ensure that they understand how to formulate personal responses to demonstrate they meet all the assessment criteria.

RPAs work closely with Providers of Preparation (PoPs) to encourage preparation based on these key principles:

- preparation is about advice and guidance on the assessment process, in relation to the HLTA standards
- guidance offered during preparation is generic and process-related, and cannot be allowed to compromise the assessment
- the assessment process is where candidates demonstrate their routine work (normally from the last 12 months) by:
 - preparing records of routine activities as snapshots of their work
 - assigning their actions to the HLTA standards
 - providing task-related supporting evidence for scrutiny by assessors
 - identifying colleagues who can confirm that the activities described are part of their roles in school
 - describing how their work in school demonstrates they are meeting the HLTA standards.

RPAs will encourage PoPs to deliver the following:

- information about the assessment process
- signpost candidates to register with their RPA for assessment by the end of the second session of preparation using the agreed application process
- activities to build familiarity with the HLTA standards and their application
- guidance on the assessment tasks, including the completion of documentation

- opportunities for candidates to receive generic feedback as they complete the documentation
- opportunities for candidates to provide feedback on the quality of preparation.

RPAs will encourage PoPs to include these processes during preparation:

- activities that build confidence, trust and networking
- personal reflection time with opportunities to ask questions and to raise issues
- drafting of documentation
- an exchange of critical feedback with candidates
- the analysis and synthesis of information
- collaborative tasks; paired and group dialogue.

RPAs will encourage a programme, that allows for candidates to receive the equivalent of three days of preparation either online or face-to-face. Any activity longer than three days equivalent should be clearly differentiated from preparation.

The pattern of delivery may be adjusted to meet the specific needs of schools or candidates. This requirement continues to apply whether the preparation is delivered as standalone preparation or is incorporated into a wider training programme.

The RPAs must encourage PoPs to complete these activities during the first session of preparation or during the equivalent session within an integrated training and preparation course:

- check the candidates' original evidence of appropriate level 2 qualifications in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy
- make and retain a copy of the evidence, having confirmed on the record form (F17b) that the copy is an exact replica of the original evidence. The copies and signed F17a and F17b forms must be sent to the RPA (encrypted if possible) well before the final session of preparation to allow the RPA to complete the registration process and assign an assessor. Candidates will not be allocated an assessment until F17a and F17b have been submitted to their RPA.
- inform candidates who do not meet the literacy/numeracy requirements that they must meet this standard before they can proceed with preparation and assessment registration.

RPAs will provide PoPs with an application form and guidance so candidates can demonstrate they meet the requirements of Standard 11.

RPAs will encourage PoPs to report any mistakes or subsequent changes in registration information directly to the RPA and to notify the RPA of anomalous circumstances that may impact assessment arrangements.

RPAs will inform PoPs and candidates that they will not conduct assessments or release the assessment result until payment for the service has been received.

Whilst RPAs have no direct responsibility for monitoring the quality assurance of PoPs, they will encourage high-quality preparation across their region to maintain consistency in standards by providing feedback received from assessors and candidates.

Should the preparation of a candidate impact negatively on their assessment at the assessment stage, RPAs have a responsibility to conduct the assessment but to inform the candidate of the issues and report this to the PoP. This is to prevent subsequent issues of a similar kind re-occurring. If a candidate submits their HLTA assessment documents and issues exist that will impact negatively on their assessment, the RPA has a responsibility to inform the candidate that these need to be addressed before the assessment takes place.

Assessment

RPAs are responsible for the delivery of high-quality HLTA assessment in their regions and must follow the assessment process strictly in line with the methodology set out in the Preparation for Assessment Handbook and agreed framework for assessment.

To ensure that they can deliver the assessments according to this process, RPAs need to:

- manage the assessment process
- recruit sufficient competent assessors
- deploy assessors to carry out assessments as required
- manage the performance of the assessors and provide appropriate feedback, guidance and training opportunities.

RPAs will encourage PoPs to support candidates to apply by the relevant deadlines and guidance.

RPAs are responsible for confirming to candidates the arrangements for assessment.

RPAs will electronically store and maintain accurate candidate records in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

The candidate registration process invites, but does not require, candidates to inform RPAs of any disabilities that could affect their assessment. When RPAs have been informed about a candidate's disability or disabilities, they will make reasonable adjustments for the candidate to access the assessment process.

RPAs may choose to use customer satisfaction surveys and feedback to inform the continuous improvement of their assessment processes.

Whilst each RPA is individually responsible for the recruitment, selection, training, and ongoing development of assessors, initial training of assessors by RPAs must include:

- understanding of the HLTA standards and guidance documentation
- nature and scope of candidate preparation
- pre-assessment scrutiny of candidate documentation, including the completion of pre-assessment documentation
- formulation of focused questions related to the HLTA standards
- purposes and timings of assessment interviews, ensuring accurate and legible recording of responses
- completion of assessment documentation
- requirements of moderation and quality-assurance processes, including determining evaluative judgements based on the evidence provided.

RPAs must ensure all new assessors have their first solo assessment quality assured by a senior assessor and scrutinised at moderation. RPAs must ensure that all registered assessors take part in on-going professional development as deemed appropriate by the RPA, taking account of developments within the HLTA programme.

RPAs will identify a named person or persons with senior assessor responsibilities who will lead the quality assurance of assessor practice and moderation activity to ensure the continuity, consistency, and sustainability of all elements of the HLTA programme. RPA assessors can assess on behalf of other RPAs within the HLTA National Assessment Partnership. However, not for any other individual, group or organisation, other than HNAP.

RPAs must ensure that assessors do not normally undertake more than five assessments in any week, to maintain equity and quality in the assessment process.

RPAs must review the performance of each assessor as required, and following moderation where appropriate, assessors will receive summary written feedback.

The assessor competency criteria for performance management purposes covers the following assessor activities:

- preparation for assessments
- conduction of assessments
- assessment outcomes including overturns
- completion of paperwork to agreed deadlines
- communication with the assigned RPA representative
- participation in quality assurance and in assessor training.

If quality issues emerge in relation to a particular assessor, the RPA must apply any of the following procedures as appropriate:

- suspend further assessments until an investigation has been conducted by a senior assessor
- arrange for the assessor to discuss the area(s) of concern with a senior assessor
- provide individual training and development as appropriate
- require the assessor to shadow, or be shadowed by, an experienced assessor for all or part of the assessment process as appropriate
- remove from the RPAs register if no improvement is made and concerns remain.

Pre-Upload Scrutiny and Moderation

Pre-Upload Scrutiny

RPA must conduct pre-moderation scrutiny of assessors' records so that unsuitable files are not submitted for review at the monthly moderation events. If the records are insufficient (for example, they lack detail or are difficult to understand), then the files must be returned for revision. Such files cannot be moderated. If moderators judge the records to be lacking, they must return the records to the assessor, to be completed more fully using evidence from the candidate's task sheets and the notes taken at the time. The assessor cannot seek further evidence at this point from the candidate or school.

If the moderators judge that the assessment processes are lacking, they must require a full reassessment in line with the Partnership's standard procedures.

The choice of records to be scrutinised must be determined by the RPA and every assessor who submits assessments must have at least one of their files scrutinised in each moderation cycle for adherence to assessor practice. The selection of files should consider the experience of individual assessors and any difficulties they have experienced in the past.

The assessment processes carried out by the assessor must have produced sufficient evidence to enable evaluative judgements to be made against the HLTA standards. If the assessment processes have not produced sufficient evidence, then a full reassessment will be required by another assessor.

RPAs must moderate their own assessment processes for each monthly cohort of candidates. The moderation must be conducted by RPA nominated moderators at a monthly event, during which documentation relating to a sample of candidates will be reviewed. The moderation serves to confirm or to overturn the assessment outcomes recommended by the assessors, and to provide feedback to the individual assessors and the Partnership. Feedback may be given to PoPs where issues may impact on the assessment of future candidates.

RPAs supervise the moderation process and nominated moderators must be experienced HLTA assessors and trained in moderation processes. Before taking on full responsibility for moderation, their competence in the role must be confirmed by a senior moderator, for example, by review of their experience and a review of trial moderations.

RPAs must make available all relevant candidate files to be moderated. Each file must include the following:

- candidate personal details (F0)
- summary assessment record form (F15)
- assessment grid (F9/10)
- candidate's response sheets for all tasks (F1 to F8)
- records of meetings (F11 to F14).

Moderation

Although the process of moderation relates closely to the process of assessment, it is not simply repetition of the earlier process. Moderation is a check on the assessor rather than on the candidate; for this reason, it is not essential to moderate the judgements of all the HLTA standards in each of the files chosen for review. All judgements where there was insufficient evidence to meet

the standard must be moderated. Otherwise, the RPA is required to moderate judgements against sufficient standards to enable a decision to be made about an assessor's processes.

RPAs must comply with the following guidelines in relation to file sampling and the representative sample must include:

- all cases where there is insufficient evidence that all of the HLTA standards have been met
- all cases which the assessor has recommended that the candidate is eligible for partial reassessment
- all resubmitted files (for example, files resubmitted because of a partial reassessment outcome)
- all full reassessments
- all cases deemed difficult to resolve or where the pre-load scrutiny identifies issues of principle for consideration
- at least a 5 per cent sample of cases in which candidates are judged to have met the HLTA standards which will be determined by the Peer Reviewer who identifies a random sample of files drawn from those submitted monthly to the designated RPAs.

Over the year RPAs' samples must also be designed to ensure that files from every assessor will have been included. Generally, heavier sampling would be expected for the less-experienced assessors and for assessors who have experienced difficulties in the past.

Similarly, over the year, RPAs' samples must be designed to ensure that candidates from every PoP will have been included and will be based on the selection principles outlined above for assessors.

RPA moderators must check whether they agree with the assessor's judgements. This check is made by reference to the summaries of evidence available within the assessor's records.

Where they agree with the assessors' judgements, the moderators will endorse those judgements.

Where they do not agree with the assessors' judgements, moderators will overturn those judgements (following a further review by a second moderator) and reclassify the candidates' results. Where a candidate's result is reclassified as 'full reassessment' all other files assessed by the same assessor will be flagged as 'review pending'. Such files will be subject to a separate review by the RPA before the outcome for that candidate is confirmed.

RPA moderators must prepare feedback for assessors. This feedback will, in most cases, point to both strengths and weaknesses, and will always include the reasons for any changes made to the assessment outcome. The feedback can also include sanctions including justification for the suspension of an assessor's appointment.

RPA moderators must report back to the RPA any information that can be used to improve the effectiveness of its internal systems for training, quality assuring and supporting its assessors.

RPA moderators must provide information that assists the RPA in identifying trends in the way that candidates have been guided by different PoPs, e.g., to identify strengths or weaknesses in the way different HLTA standards are addressed and the way in which documentation is completed. This may be carried out before, during or after moderation. Where such trends are identified the RPA must feedback the information to individual PoPs.

Each individual RPA has the right to vary the standards sampled during moderation to address matters revealed by the earlier checks. Nationally agreed standards to be sampled each month, however, must be included.

On a monthly basis, RPAs must each provide a peer reviewer for another RPA. A deputy peer reviewer should be identified in case of absence.

The Partnership will specify which of the RPAs must provide peer review support to other RPAs. The arrangements will last for three-month periods, after which the pairings will be changed to ensure a constant interchange of ideas and practices across the partnership.

The purpose of the monthly peer review is for the peer reviewer to provide constructive support to the relevant RPA, in the case of problematic files. It also serves to promote the exchange of ideas between RPAs at a detailed level if required.

The peer reviewer and the moderator may also identify any issues to be taken forward to the partnership. The peer reviewer and moderator must exchange a joint report electronically within three working days of the monthly event, addressing the issues they have discussed or confirming no issues were raised.

The Partnership will arrange a forum for peer reviewers to meet when required; to exchange insights and experience, as well as share developmental activities and input organised by the partnership, such as participation in cross moderation. A peer reviewer from each of the RPAs should attend each meeting to ensure that all RPAs share in the benefits of the forum.

Appeals

The term 'appeals' refers to appeals by candidates against their assessment outcomes. Such appeals must be made by the candidates themselves. Appeals will not be considered if they are made by third parties on behalf of the candidates.

RPAs' responsibilities concerning appeals are to:

- ensure that candidates are informed about their right to appeal
- have in place an appeals procedure to meet the requirements set out in this code
- monitor the operation of their appeals procedures to inform the development of the HLTA programme
- collaborate with other RPAs in the event of an appeal.

RPAs must publish their appeals procedures on their websites. They must also send information about the procedures to candidates, at the same time as they first send information about the individual candidates' assessments.

In their appeals procedures, RPAs must make clear that the only grounds for an appeal are when the RPA has used procedures that were inconsistent with this Code of Practice, and whether it used those procedures improperly and unfairly in arriving at the assessment judgement.

In their appeals procedures, RPAs must keep candidates informed by:

- acknowledging the appeal
- indicating the time within which the appeal will be considered
- sending written accounts of the outcome of the appeal
- explaining how unresolved appeals can be taken forward for review by the Partnership
- monitoring appeals.

RPAs must have procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating the operation of their appeals procedures, including the numbers and nature of enquiries and appeals and outcomes. RPAs must share this data with the Partnership on request.

Should a candidate remain dissatisfied with their RPA appeal outcome, then he or she can refer their case to the Partnership for review. It is not acceptable for a candidate to appeal against the overall RPA's judgement without having due cause based on evidence of maladministration or malpractice in assessment procedures.

In such cases, the Partnership will convene a review panel comprising two senior assessors or other named person from two different RPAs, none of which will be from the RPA responsible for the candidate's original assessment outcome.

The review panel will operate in accordance with the procedures agreed with the Partnership.

The referral process will be reviewed periodically.

Partnership Responsibilities

It is expected that each RPA will contribute to Partnership meetings and other related activity designated to influence the direction and development of the HLTA Programme at a national and regional level.

The Partnership will seek to establish and maintain equal status across all RPAs.

Partnership meetings will be facilitated on a rotation basis, the organising RPA being responsible for circulating an agenda and supporting papers in advance and the minutes afterwards.

RPAs will work together to develop and maintain management systems and procedures enabling them to establish appropriate and effective relationships with national and regional stakeholders.

Promotion of HLTA programme will be conducted by the Partnership at a national level with the cost shared between partners' organisations on an agreed pro rata basis.

All national promotional materials and supporting documentation used by all RPAs (Handbooks, Certificates, Website, etc.) will carry the logos of each RPA partner and be entitled "HLTA National Assessment Partnership".

Promotional activity conducted on a regional basis is not required to carry other RPA partners' logos although membership of the HLTA National Assessment Partnership should be acknowledged.

RPAs should respond to requests for support from schools and educational settings in their designated region whether in the maintained or independent sector (including academies, free schools and other independent organisations).

RPAs must practise good customer relations and undertake to acknowledge all enquiries from stakeholders within three working days and to give a substantive response within 10 working days. A named point of contact with their contact details must be provided by each RPA on their own website.

The agreed national assessment fee will be reviewed by the Partnership annually and RPAs will not deviate from this fixed charge. This fee and any other related charges decided at a regional level must be made transparent to all prospective candidates and their organisations via the RPA's website and other promotional methods.

Risk Management

If an RPA is no longer able to carry out its functions the Partnership will convene to discuss the appropriate course of action. The needs of schools and candidates will be central to any decisions made by the Partnership in this situation.

In the event of capacity related issues (e.g., assessor capacity) the Partnership will apply a collaborative approach to address any immediate shortfall.

In the event of the programme becoming unsustainable due to lack of stakeholder engagement, the Partnership will convene to decide its strategy and future direction which might include its termination.