



**Digital Development Programme for Adult
Community Education Providers (Digital ACE)**

Digital Quality Assurance Materials

**Guidance around Quality Assurance for online adult education,
including existing externally produced materials and in-house
provision.**

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1. Introduction

This document is one of six guidance documents produced for the Digital ACE (Adult and Community Education) programme. The six guidance areas for digital development include Policy, Safeguarding & Prevent, Developing Materials & Resources, Quality Assurance, Supporting Low Skilled Learners and Underpinning Technology. See the References and links section of this document for [additional strand information](#).

These guidance materials have been developed by senior managers from the sector to support all providers as they develop and revise their own quality assurance arrangements. They include tried and tested tools, examples, resources, online links and tips that have been developed and adapted from March 2020 as providers needed to factor in the quality improvement into their new arrangements for online learning.

ACL providers who took part in the Ufi/HOLEX online survey (See [Link 1](#)) have acknowledged that the circumstances in which they had to transfer their face-to-face provision to online and remote learning due to the Covid-19 lockdown have been far from ideal. However, they also identified that it had been a good way to ‘push’ staff and students to grapple with technology that they previously resisted (and may otherwise never have considered using). But what about quality assurance? What are the criteria for successful and good quality online or digital learning provision?

As one survey respondent said:

“The Service's priority has been to make sure there is an immediate response to all learners, but we are now adjusting processes to monitor the quality. We are mindful of the quality and are taking our time as we evolve to factor this in. As we move to an online/blended approach, the processes will be developed within the quality framework.”

A senior HMI from Ofsted, who led the review of FE and skills providers’ response to the Covid-19 pandemic through online learning (see [Link 2](#)), also contributed to these guidance materials.

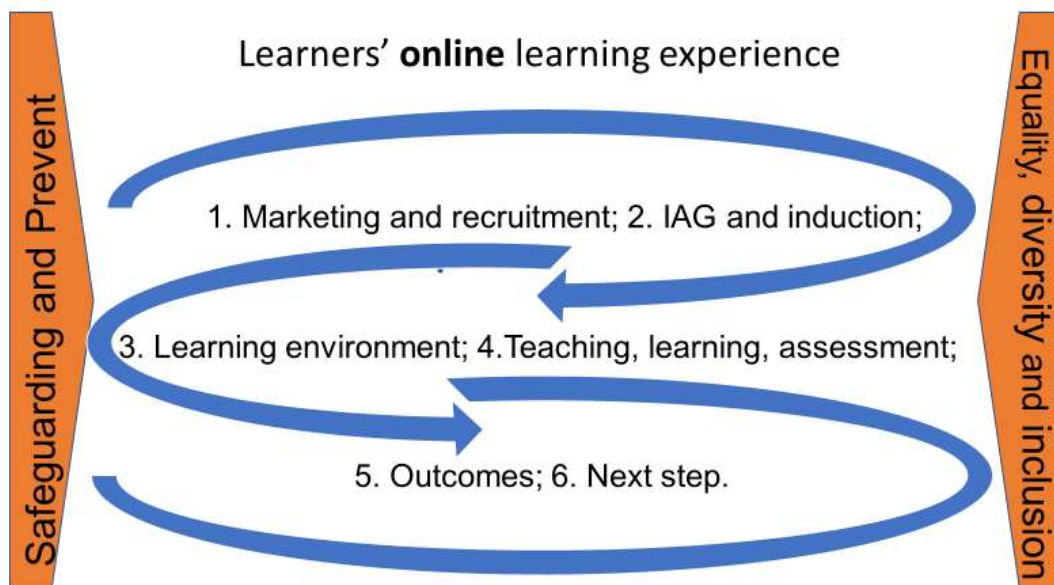
Link 1: Analysis of the results of the Digital ACE opening baseline survey. [Ufi/HOLEX Digital ACE survey report May 2020](#)

Link 2: Ofsted’s review into online education during coronavirus (Covid-19) in the further education and skills sector. <https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2020/07/15/online-education-in-further-education-and-skills-learning-about-what-works/>

2. The scope and aims of the strand

The aims for this strand are to consider the quality criteria for online/remote learning that runs alongside or is separate to face-to-face learning. The contexts considered are across the spectrum for ACL providers, including adult learning, community learning, family learning, employability provision, apprenticeships, traineeships, 16-19 study programmes and provision for learners with high needs.

The structure agreed for these materials was that they would follow the learner's online journey:



Each of the above sections are structured as follows: What to quality assure (QA) /measure and why; how to quality assure it; and what difference quality assuring it should make. They also include links and examples to tools and ideas, good practice and tips.

3. How to use these guidance materials

These materials have been produced for providers to use within their service and, as appropriate, with their staff. The examples and materials have been developed to support services and are available for them to adopt or edit as they see fit.

Each guidance document is supplemented with a webinar, originally broadcast live and now available to watch online (see **Link 3** below).

Link 3: Recording of [Digital ACE Quality Assurance webinar](#)

4. Quality assurance for marketing and recruitment for your digital provision

4.1. What to quality assure in marketing and recruitment and why

As specified in the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, every ACL course should be defined by its 'intent': Who is it for? Why is it needed? What difference will it make to individuals and local communities. The purpose of marketing in ACL is to let people know the courses you offer and whether it is online or blended learning provision. You need to consider who the courses you are marketing are for and who you want to reach.

Monitoring the quality of your online and paper-based marketing and recruitment materials and procedures enables you to analyse how well you are attracting the intended target audience for each of your courses. It should enable you to identify which methods are effective and where you may be putting barriers to participation.

4.2. How to quality assure marketing and recruitment for your digital provision

Consider the following:

- Reviewing the intent of every online or blended course: How clearly defined is the intended purpose of the course? Who is the intended target group? What is the intended purpose or additionality of the digital aspect?
- Analysing recruitment/enrolment data and information: Has the course reached the intended target group (e.g. educational/employment background, learning aims, prior digital experience, post codes, age etc.)? Are learners on appropriate courses to enable them to meet their goals?
- Consulting with learners through telephone/online surveys: What attracted them to the course? What barriers, if any, did the digital element present? (See **Annex 1**: Survey questions to learners).
- Consulting with staff and community stakeholders to explore why courses failed to recruit.

Quality assuring equality, diversity and inclusion for marketing and recruitment for your digital provision

- Ensure that the data you use to monitor recruitment to your online/blended learning provision includes information that will enable you to check how well you are reaching out to your communities.
- Include minority groups when selecting individual learners for interviews or surveys so that you are gathering learners' views on their online experience from a diverse group.

4.3. What difference quality assuring marketing and recruitment for your digital provision should make/quality criteria

- Every online/blended learning course will have a clear purpose for you to market.
- The quality assurance processes above should tell you which marketing processes and materials are the most effective for the different online and blended courses and can model the most effective practice.
- You will know how well you are reaching the intended target groups and whether any amendments are needed to ensure 'the right people are on the courses that are right for them'. You can then take any remedial action required, such as reviewing your marketing strategy for your online provision.
- You will have a better idea of learners or potential learners who may be marginalised or disadvantaged because of the transfer to online or blended courses and so that you can respond accordingly.

4.4. Advice and tips

- **Bromley Adult Education College** has created an in-house 'Marketing Working Group' with managers, curriculum leaders and a digital champion to ensure that the marketing information on the website is updated so that it is current.
- Don't forget to work with your community partners to find out where people are not attracted to online or blended learning.

- Definitions of online learning, blended learning, distance learning etc. may differ across courses and providers. It's important to agree these definitions when quality assuring the provision, especially when you are working with subcontractors and partner providers.

4.5. Successful practice and exemplars

In response to concerns that some learners and potential learners may be excluded from its online provision, **Buckinghamshire Adult Learning Service** has created a range of very short clips on its website for learners to see how to set up a Gmail, attend a Google Meet, use Google Classroom etc. and also downloadable printed guides. The clips are very encouraging and start from basics [e.g. what device can be used and the internet] so as to be as inclusive as possible. It's so important to offer guidance/training to learners on digital skills as well as tutors. (See **Link 4**).

Annex 1: [Learn Harrow survey questions to learners](#) - considering learners' overall experience of online learning

Link 4: Buckinghamshire Adult Learning Service video clips on how to use digital platforms and facilities.
<https://sites.google.com/adultlearningbcc.ac.uk/bal-intranet/learners?authuser=0>

5. Quality assurance for online careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) and induction

5.1. What to quality assure for online IAG and induction, and why

Many providers have adapted their induction and IAG to online services. Part of your quality assurance for online learning should ensure that **all** learners have completed an induction, retained the key points and are fully aware where to find the information they need if they have any safeguarding and Prevent concerns.

The extent of IAG learners may need depends on the type of course, but it is important that tutors know why each learner has joined their course and how it will help them meet their personal, employment or career goals.

Remote enrolments using telephone or online platforms have increasingly replaced face-to-face interviews, so it is important to check how well the enrolment process captures information on all learners' individual goals, relevant to their course and their progression aims.

5.2. How to quality assure online IAG and induction

Consider the following:

- Checking that all Covid-19 secure measures are covered in course descriptions
- Checking the data on who has completed the online induction against registers for each class
- Using online observations and tutors' records to check that tutors are reinforcing the key points throughout the course

- Sampling online individual learning plans (or equivalent) to evaluate how well tutors are gathering and using information on learners' personal goals
- Using online observations to monitor the quality of IAG interviews and the agreed actions
- Adding a question on IAG and induction to the learner online interviews/surveys (as demonstrated in **Annex 1** by Learn Harrow who added the question 16 – 'IAG – what do you plan to do next?').

Quality assuring equality, diversity and inclusion for online IAG and induction

- It is important to ensure that learners are supported to have realistically high expectations and ambitions for their careers and their next steps.
- How well are you challenging unconscious bias and any assumptions among staff, employers and other stakeholders when considering learners' next steps?

5.3. What difference quality assuring online IAG and induction should make/quality criteria

- You will not know what action you will need to take until you have the reassurance that all online learners are familiar with: the key information about your organisation; the expectations of their course; the code of conduct (or similar) for your organisation; and how to protect themselves online and how to follow your procedures if they have any issues.
- All your online learners will have a record in their individual learning plan of their personal/career/progression goals that tutors will use to plan their learning.
- Your IAG service, where relevant, enables learners to plan current and future courses to enable them to meet their individual goals.

5.4. Successful practice and exemplars

Link 5: Bromley Adult Education College has a video posted on the website informing students how they can enrol on Sept 2020 courses and what Covid-19 secure measures to expect. [Open enrolments for September 2020; Enrolment - Bromley Live \(baec.ac.uk\)](https://www.baec.ac.uk/enrolment)

Link 6: Bromley Adult Education College publishes its results of its online learner survey <https://baec.ac.uk/index.php/student-feedback/>. Their learners are kept informed and a full circle of communication includes a summary of findings of the online learner survey conducted in May 2020.

Link 7: Barnsley Adult Skills and Community Learning online induction video <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/adult-skills-and-community-learning/your-course-induction/>.

5.5. Further examples

Annex 2: [Learn Harrow survey questions to teaching staff](#) – considering their overall experience of delivering online learning. (Q 16 – 19 for questions on IAG)

6. Quality assurance for your digital learning environment (equipment, platforms etc.)

6.1. What to quality assure in your digital learning environment and why

Quality assurance of your online/blended learning environment should consider the following questions:

- Are all the online platforms and tools you are using doing the job you want them to do? (Accessibility, ease of use, connectivity etc.)
- Is your organisation supporting a designated platform or allowing staff to use whichever platform they are most proficient in using? If it is the latter, how are you ensuring that there is consistency in the quality of the digital learning environment?
- Which tutors/staff are confident in using the digital technology and who needs more support? Has the training already provided met all tutors' needs?
- Do you know which learners are struggling to access and use the technology, and are the guidance and support you provide effective? Are you reaching all the learners who need this support?
- Do you know where the switch to online and blended learning has marginalised or disadvantaged learners (or potential learners)? How effective have your inclusion measures been?
- How effective are your procedures for GDPR regarding arrangements for using the video, recording sessions, sharing information etc.?
- How well are your learners and tutors following the guidelines for online behaviour?

6.2. How to quality assure your digital learning environment

Consider the following:

- Using a self-assessment for staff on their digital skills (See **Annex 5**)
- Using online 'visits or drop-in's' to monitor the learning environment
- Adding an automatic feedback form on your online 'how to' guidance materials to evaluate their usefulness
- Using a quick survey after each tutor's first session to assess any additional support needs or mentoring; do the same for learners
- Carrying out a test run of your resources, perhaps with a few staff and learners as a pilot, to check the quality of the technology and connectivity and usefulness of any guidance

Quality assuring equality, diversity and inclusion for your digital learning environment

- Who is attending or not attending compared with enrolled learners? Which learners should you follow up to ensure that they have the skills and equipment etc. they need to participate in their courses?

- Are all your courses fully accessible for all learners? Are your learners able to access the additional adjustments they need, such as voice recognition and screen reading, subtitles etc.?

6.3. What difference quality assuring your digital learning environment should make/quality criteria

- You should know what action you will need to take so that you have the reassurance that your online learning environment is accessible for all your tutors, staff and learners and that no-one is disadvantaged.
- You should also have the reassurance that all your online/blended learning provision is compliant with GDPR.

6.4. Advice and tips

- You don't have to re-write your surveys as a few additional questions may be all that is needed to give you feedback on your online provision. (See **Annex 1** and **Annex 2**).
- However, it is sometimes useful to send out a very short survey specifically on the use of online equipment so that you can take prompt action, if needed. (See **Annex 4**).
- It is important to follow up learners and staff who have not responded to your survey, especially where you think there may be barriers to using technical equipment.

6.5. Successful practice and exemplars

For successful practice and exemplars, see:

Annex 1: [Learn Harrow survey questions to learners](#) - considering learners' overall experience of online learning. (Q: 2 – 6)

Annex 2: [Learn Harrow survey questions to teaching staff](#) – considering their overall experience of delivering online learning. (Q: 1 – 5)

Annex 4: [Buckinghamshire County Council online self-assessment for staff](#) - considering staff's digital skills.

7. Quality assurance for online teaching, learning and assessment

7.1. What to quality assure for online teaching, learning and assessment, and why

It's important to remember that there is a different dimension to online pedagogical skills and it is not simply a question of transferring normal classroom practice to an online platform. Teaching has to be adjusted and revised to achieve the best online learning experience for learners.

In the same way, monitoring the quality of online sessions needs to be adjusted and revised from your 'normal' quality assurance procedures.

Quality assurance of your online/blended learning environment should consider the following points, (in addition to those relevant to face-to-face and online learning):

- technical difficulties: whether everyone is logged on at the start with audio and video
- the relevance of schemes of work and learning objectives for learning through digital technology
- the engagement/participation of all learners – that they all access the relevant resources and understand what they need to do to achieve during each learning activity
- tutors' awareness of signs that learners are disengaging and their ability to respond accordingly
- the levels of passive as opposed to active learning and the pedagogical strategies being used to minimise the former
- the use and management of any group or pair work to increase participation through 'break-out rooms', where available
- that learning is developed through constructive thinking without an over-reliance on exercises, worksheets etc. which tend to promote 'short-term learning'
- that (self-) assessment for learning is developed by learners and not simply through tutor questioning (How useful are quizzes etc. in developing and assessing long-term learning?)
- that some learners may have a sense of loss of community as one of the more adverse effects of the move to online learning
- the use of a variety of approaches to facilitate participation, including 'flipped learning' where learners receive the resources online in advance and use the session to discuss the content, issues etc.
- that blended learning or mixed learning are balanced and no-one is disadvantaged.

7.2. How to quality assure online teaching, learning and assessment

Consider the following:

- Adapting your current observation, teaching and learning (OTL) procedures to cover the above topics (See Annex 5 for Northern College's update to tutors on OTL)
- Using online observations or learning 'walks' and tutors' records to check tutors are reinforcing the key points throughout the session or course
- Adapting your current OTL procedures to cover the above topics
- Analysing online session plans to ensure that all tutors are using an appropriately wide range of learning approaches to ensure that all learners are learning actively
- Using online questionnaires to learners about their courses (See **Annex 6**)
- Staying online after an observation to talk to the learners about that session – or using telephone interviews/online surveys (See **Annex 6** for some questions)
- Capturing the learner voice from a diverse group of learners. It is not always possible to speak to learners in class and they may not be able to stay online but, after the class, direct telephone enquiries can elicit valuable quality information
- Using your online learning 'walks' and learner voice activities to monitor learners' sense of community

- Monitoring the use of activities such as projects, collaborative tasks and artefacts that encourage participation and promote a greater sense of community (an online magazine or cultural cookery book are good examples.)
- Arranging to talk to the tutors about the session (See **Annex 3** for some questions)
- Monitoring attendance and following up absenteeism
- Ensuring that all materials used are within copyright laws

Quality assuring equality, diversity and inclusion for online teaching, learning and assessment

- Be aware of learners who may not be participating and explore why this may be the case.
- Consider reasonable adjustments for learners with restricted mobility, hearing or sight impairment etc.
- Consider how a blended approach can support learners for whom online learner is not totally suitable. This may include posting out paper-based resources.

7.3. What difference quality assuring online teaching, learning and assessment should make/quality criteria

The above quality assurance activities should help you to:

- establish whether your learners' online experience is positive
- identify areas or trends in the learning experience which could be improved or would benefit from training or resources
- obtain feedback from tutors about the move to online to share their experiences and identify good practice and needs (peer-to-peer support)
- inform future curriculum planning to enable you to respond to identified learners' needs.

7.4. Advice and tips

- When you are observing online sessions, it is useful to know the recent training the tutors have attended on online learning as this may help you evaluate the training.
- Observations of teaching and learning are also about identifying good practice to share. This can work well with online learning, especially if permissions are needed for recording the session.
- Beware of overuse of PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos and electronic worksheets. Are they making a difference to all learners' development and their progress towards their learning objectives?
- Some online platforms have some specific advantages which allow for 'captions' which transcribes speech for those who are hard of hearing.
- Conduct the session visit with your microphone on mute. You may also wish to switch off your phone.

7.5. Successful practice and exemplars

Case study: Developing tutors confidence on online teaching techniques

Buckinghamshire Adult Learning Service carried out a survey of their staff and learners and identified that in developing tutor confidence and competence, their focus will be particularly on the following areas:

- strategies to maximize flipped learning
- ensuring that all learners are stretched and challenged
- encouraging independent learning skills and nurture self-directed learning
- instilling an ethos of problem solving in learners
- supporting tutors to use online assignments and projects
- constructing artefacts which allow learners to experiment through study
- fostering peer collaboration through joint tasks.

Case study: Building tutors' trust

Bromley Adult Education College invited tutors to put their names forward for online learning walks. This approach builds on trust. Additionally, it strengthens tutors' confidence to put themselves forward for sharing best practice.

Case study: Quality Assuring Teaching & Learning online: Why it is important to monitor and follow up attendance

At **Barnsley ASCL**, when we moved our provision online in response to Covid-19, we felt it unfair to observe classes in the early stages, but quality assurance still remained an important factor for us to consider.

We took the approach of monitoring attendance in sessions and where this had dropped, we investigated the reasons behind the non-attendance to establish if this was related to the quality of provision.

We spoke in depth to some learners and found in one particular class, the learning experience was a negative one.

- Resources were not open ready to share onscreen and the tutor then spent time trying to find activities on her PC.
- Learners were all speaking over each other and the tutor was not using the function she had available to mute learners.
- Children were playing in some learners' background and one learner who was having difficulty used inappropriate language.

We used our data on which training on online training each tutor had completed and who had signed confirmation that they had read the WebEx tutorial to quickly establish that this particular tutor had not completed either of the above. This tutor therefore did not

have the information and skills to meet our standards for online learning. This was easily rectified through further training and support.

Case study: Tackling unconscious bias online

At **Learn Harrow**, during an observation of a Freedom Programme class on Zoom on domestic violence: living with the dominator.

In class a learner shared personal experiences and referenced her husband of mixed Middle Eastern heritage who treated her and all females like servants. The tutor thanked the learner for sharing but adroitly reminded learners of the dangers of pre-judging or judging on gender, race or ethnicity.

Feedback by the quality assurance officer to the tutor praised the intervention and suggested introducing class material on unconscious bias. The tutor's feedback confirmed that she will research the topic and introduce new unconscious bias material to add greater depth of learning and understanding.

Annex 5: [ACL Essex survey to learners](#) – considering learners' online learning experience.

Annex 6: [Northern College guidance for tutors OTL for online learning](#) – considering amendments to current session observation processes.

7.6. Further examples

The DfE has developed a **Skills Toolkit** (See **Link 8**). It contains courses that cover digital, numeracy and work readiness or employability, and has a wider range of materials available to participants. When it invited applications for further courses, it included these **evaluation criteria** (See **Link 9** and **Annex 7**).

Link 8: The DfE's Skills Toolkit. <https://theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk/>

Link 9: The DfE's evaluation criteria for new courses for the Skills Toolkit. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-skills-toolkit-submit-a-new-course> (See Stage 2).

Annex 7: [The DfE evaluation criteria for its Skills Toolkit courses](#)

For additional examples, see:

Link 10: Education & Training Foundation (ETF) has developed a **Digital Teaching Professional Framework**. This can be useful for evaluating your tutors' digital reaching skills as well as a framework for training. <https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/edtech-support/digital-skills-competency-framework/>

8. Quality assurance of the impact of your digital provision

8.1. What to quality assure for the impact of your digital provision and why

The materials and suggestions in section 7 above include surveys and questions for learners. This section focuses on additional quality assurance arrangements to enable you to gain an overview of the overall difference your online/blended learning courses are

making for your learners and local communities. Are they achieving their intended purpose and outcomes? How do you know?

While the surveys and interviews will answer the above questions to a certain degree, you may also want to consider the following:

- learners' progress in overcoming any barriers to online learning
- the extent to which online learning has increased learners' employability, health and well-being or involvement in their local community – over and above face-to-face learning
- the impact of your online learning on reaching or not reaching your specific target groups.

8.2. How to quality assure the impact of your digital provision

Consider the following:

- Adapting learners' surveys to include questions on how they improved digital skills to overcome online barriers
- Using feedback from tutors to ascertain whether specific target groups are still being reached
- Keeping the feedback from learners coming in by having an online form on your website

Quality assuring equality, diversity and inclusion for the impact of your digital provision

- Ensure that all data analysis considers the impact of your digital provision for different target groups of learners, and learners according to their: ethnicity, disability, age, gender, postcodes etc.

8.3. What difference quality assuring the impact of your digital provision should make/quality criteria

- This is a central part of your self-assessment. It helps you identify where the move to online provision has been successful and where further actions are needed.
- You should be able to pinpoint where further digital support is needed for learners and for staff.
- An analysis of your learners' achievement should enable you to inform future planning and delivery of your online curriculum.

8.4. Advice and tips

- It's important to remember that when centres are shut and the provision is moved online, the demographic of your learners may change.
- Always go back to the purpose (intent) of each online course you are evaluating. How successful was the online element in achieving your initial intent?

- Don't forget to then ask: 'How do we know?'

8.5. Successful practice and exemplars

Case study: How an analysis of learners' achievement led to a change from online learning to blended learning.

At **Newcastle City Learning**, although learners on the 16 to 19 study programme attended online sessions well, their achievement in exams and other assessments seemed to have deteriorated.

The concerns were that deep learning or learning which really does assist learners to remember was not taking place online. Managers also identified that in online provision it was more difficult to ensure that these young learners were engaged rather than simply being compliant.

As a result, they are introducing more face to face interventions to ensure that teachers can truly check learners' understanding and progress.

They are also planning training for their teachers on how to assess learning and provide formative feedback to learners to ensure that they improve and develop their understanding of new topics.

9. Quality assurance of Safeguarding and Prevent arrangements for digital provision

9.1. What to quality assure for safeguarding and Prevent in your digital provision and why

Recent inspection findings show that ACL providers have generally responded well to the requirement to ensure that all their learners are safe and that they know how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism. But what about the additional risks of online learning?

The Digital ACE Safeguarding and Prevent materials provide relevant guidance and materials. This section is about quality assuring the measures taken.

- How do you know if the online courses, quizzes and surveys for staff and learners on safeguarding and Prevent are more than a tick box exercise?
- What difference have they really made to their understanding of the issues, how they relate to them and what they need to do if they have any concerns?
- To what extent are they all aware of the additional risks of online learning?

9.2. How to quality assure your safeguarding and Prevent arrangements for your digital provision

Consider the following:

- Separating online/telephone questions to staff and learners from other questions to raise their awareness of the importance of safeguarding and Prevent in online learning. (See **Annex 1** and **Annex 5** for examples of questions)

- Ensuring that all monitoring activities include all your staff, learners and governors, and subcontractors or partner providers- all stakeholders
- Using criteria for checking that online course/session planning and learning materials comply with any additional policy requirements/amendments specifically for online/blended learning
- Monitoring of compliance with revised safeguarding policy such as:
 - that learners' personal details are not stored by staff on a personal home computer
 - that details are kept in a secure location on one drive
 - that all learners know if a session is being recorded and where it will be stored for what purpose
 - use of secure/encrypted email.

Quality assuring equality, diversity and inclusion for safeguarding and Prevent for digital provision

- It is important that all your QA activities look out for learners who may be particularly vulnerable in an online learning environment and may not necessarily know it.
- Be aware of the use of 'backchannels' during online lessons where learners may be communicating via a backchannel unbeknownst to the tutor.

9.3. What difference quality assuring safeguarding and Prevent arrangements should make to your digital provision /quality criteria

All quality assurance procedures for safeguarding and Prevent should give managers, staff and governors the reassurance that you have taken the agreed steps to protect staff and learners, and that they are being implemented as required.

Monitoring and quality improvement arrangements in these areas should lead to the achievement of minimum standards by all.

9.4. Advice and tips

- It is important to review your risk assessment and action plan for Prevent in light of more people using online platforms for your courses and to use your quality assurance activities to monitor the impact of any actions taken.
- Waiting rooms on online learning platforms can be effective for taking safeguarding measures. (See the case study from **Learn Harrow** below).

9.5. Successful practice and exemplars

Case study: How an online observation identified good practice

Notes from the observation at Learn Harrow

Zoom's waiting room was an effective safeguarding measure. Learners were reminded to keep their cameras focused on themselves to reduce inadvertent disclosure.

- One learner logged on using her father's internet account and the tutor verified with the parent before admitting her to the class.
- A second learner was poorly seated so that most of his face was obscured. Other learners were calling out and they began laughing at him. At that point it was not obvious or apparent but later, the tutor confirmed that sensitive learner had suffered significant distress. The tutor managed the situation well and asserted her authority over all learners. She helped the distressed learner to adjust his camera.

Link 11: The DfE has developed **an essential digital skills framework** that defines the digital skills adults need to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework>. Page 9 is on 'Being safe and legal online'. This can provide a useful framework for your QA processes for safeguarding.

10. Self-assessment of your digital provision

10.1. What to self-assess in your digital provision and why

The Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) lends itself to online and blended learning in the same way as to face-to-face provision. However, it is important to ensure that you consider the specific aspects of online provision.

10.2. How to self-assess your digital provision

Overarching questions to consider:

- What is the intent of your online/blended learning provision? What have been the drivers of your decisions on what to put on and what to leave out? Do these fit in with your mission and strategic objectives to the same extent as your face-to-face provision?
- To what extent are your online/blended courses being implemented to achieve the intended outcomes? Is the way that teaching staff teach and assess appropriate for online/blended learning and fully effective?
- What is the impact of each lesson and your courses (see Section 8 above) What difference are they making?
- To what extent are any 'behaviour rules' you have set for your learners (and staff) achieving the learning environment you intended? What impact has moving to online/blended learning had on attendance?
- To what extent has online learning enhanced (or not) your learners' personal development? Have you adapted your curriculum to support learners whose employment/personal circumstances or career options have changed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How well are you leading and managing your online/blended learning provision? Consider how well you are supporting the development of all your staff; managing their workloads and consulting with learners, employers, community members and other stakeholders.

- What is the impact of your governance arrangements on developing, monitoring and improving the quality of your online/blended learning provision?
- How safe are your learners and why?
- Finally, how well are you quality assuring your online/blended learning provision? To what extent is it leading to improvements throughout your provision?

10.3. What difference self-assessing your digital provision should make/quality criteria

Self-assessment is all about quality improvement. In identifying what you do well, asking the question 'why?' will identify the good practice that is embedded in your organisation. Similarly, asking 'why not?' for the weaker aspects will enable you to prioritise your actions for improvement.

All learners should have an entitlement to the same (good quality) provision. This is why inspectors look for consistency in good practice. If an aspect of online learning is only good for some learners, is the provision good enough?

10.4. Successful practice and exemplars

Annex 8: [ACL Essex guidance for self-assessment of online provision](#)

Annex 9: [Template for online evaluation for self-assessment](#) – recording an online 'visit' to a learning centre for self-assessment.

Annex 10: [Learn Harrow quality measures for Covid-19](#) – covering the intent, implementation and impact of the digital provision, in light of the pandemic.

11. Summary of key points

- The purpose of quality assurance is to **ensure that learners benefit from good quality provision** – consistently across the provision. This is just the same for your digital provision.
- Quality assurance should cover **every aspect of your learners' online experience**.
- You need to check that your **online marketing strategy and recruitment** procedures are **as effective as those for your face-to-face provision**.
- The **induction process** for online provision has an added dimension that needs to be **monitored for effectiveness**. You also need to **monitor your IAG processes** to ensure that it is relevant to online learning with you and other providers.
- For good quality online provision, you need to check that **staff and learners have access to the right equipment**, that there is **appropriate connectivity**, and that teachers and learners **have the skills they need** to operate the systems.
- Your quality assurance systems for teaching, learning and assessment need to take into account that **teaching online is not simply a question of transferring normal classroom practice to an online platform**. The challenge is to evaluate (and improve) the quality of online learning and assessment as well the quality of online teaching.

- Online learning can open doors to further learning, but it can also create barriers for some learners. Your quality assurance procedures need to **check that your online learning is benefitting all learners** and enabling them to achieve their goals.
- Your quality assurance procedures need to consider the **additional risks for safeguarding and Prevent** brought about by the increase of online learning.
- **Online learning** adds an additional dimension to **self-assessment against the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework**. You need to check that you are collecting the evidence you need to back up your judgements about your provision.
- These guidance materials have highlighted the need to quality assure how each aspect of your online provision supports your strategy for **ensuring equality and promoting diversity and inclusion**.

12. 10 Tips from the sector for the sector

1. Ask the question, '**How is our online learning different from face-to-face provision?**' and then ask **is it meeting our (high) expectations?** Then go one step further, how do we know?
2. **Keep it simple.** Think first about what you need to quality assure and what capabilities and tools you need to ensure that you have an effective online experience.
3. There is **no need to start from scratch**. Build on your current quality assurance procedures so that you quality assure your online provision.
4. Make sure that all your quality assurance activities **include your subcontracted/partnership provision**. Check that your online quality assurance arrangements are compatible with the technology used by your subcontractors, partner providers and work-based provision.
5. **Quality assurance is about bringing about improvements.** The best way is to identify and share good practice in teaching and learning. Recording online learning sessions can provide a ready-made training tool.
6. Encourage **online peer assessment**.
7. **Create templated documents** that cover online induction, safeguarding etc. **to ensure consistency and support tutors**. This also provides a benchmark for course expectations around course/learner induction and documentation.
8. **Having more quality assurance tools is not always best.** Question and test which ones are appropriate and effective.
9. **Test new sessions and platforms beforehand** – have a quality assurance check list, try a mock audience, use the rehearse setting in PowerPoint.
10. **Set a standard for staff's digital skills** to a level required by your organisation and monitor this.

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Rhiannon Rogers	Quality and Performance Officer	Bracknell Forest Council
Teresa Ablewhite	Vice Principal Quality and Compliance	ACL Essex
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14. References and Links

14.1. Summary of links within this document

- Link 1:** Analysis of the results of the Digital ACE opening baseline survey - [Ufi/HOLEX Digital ACE survey report May 2020](#)
- Link 2:** Paul Joyce, Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills talks about Ofsted's review into online education during coronavirus (Covid-19) in the further education and skills (FES) sector. <https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2020/07/15/online-education-in-further-education-and-skills-learning-about-what-works/>
- Link 3:** Recording of [Digital ACE Quality Assurance webinar](#)
- Link 4:** Buckinghamshire Adult Learning Service video clips on how to use digital platforms and facilities <https://sites.google.com/adultlearningbcc.ac.uk/bal-intranet/learners?authuser=0>

- Link 5:** Bromley Adult Education College's video on online enrolment. [Open enrolments for September 2020; Enrolment - Bromley Live \(baec.ac.uk\)](https://baec.ac.uk/enrolments-for-september-2020)
- Link 6:** Bromley Adult Education College publishes its results of its online learner survey <https://baec.ac.uk/index.php/student-feedback/>
- Link 7:** Barnsley Adult Skills and Community Learning online induction video <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/adult-skills-and-community-learning/your-course-induction/>
- Link 8:** The DfE's Skills Toolkit. <https://theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk/>
- Link 9:** The DfE's evaluation criteria for new courses for the Skills Toolkit. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-skills-toolkit-submit-a-new-course> (See Stage 2)
- Link 10:** The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) has developed a Digital Teaching Professional Framework. <https://www.etf-foundation.co.uk/supporting/edtech-support/digital-skills-competency-framework/>
- Link 11:** The DfE has developed **an essential digital skills framework** that defines the digital skills adults need to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework>. Page 9 is on 'Being safe and legal online'. This can provide a useful framework for your QA processes for safeguarding.

14.2. Digital ACE information and strands

Funded after the establishment of a partnership between HOLEX and Ufi VocTech Trust, the Digital ACE project enabled HOLEX to review and collate best practice and recommendations across key areas of online provision.

Digital ACE has been designed to support ACE providers on the next stage of their technological journey and help them develop their digital capability so that they can enhance their offer to students while still maintaining their learner centred and high quality approach to adult learning.

The various Digital ACE resources and materials are available via the [Digital ACE page](#) on the HOLEX website.

Digital ACE Strand	Content of materials
Policy	Guidance on how to develop a digital policy and the areas which should be considered.
Safeguarding & Prevent	Guidance on what to consider for moving effective Safeguarding and Prevent practice online.

Developing Materials & Resources	Guidance to support the training and development of staff in producing and adapting materials, live streaming lessons, use of video and YouTube recordings, online presentations and webinars, use of externally prepared materials, assessment and learner engagement.
Quality Assurance	Guidance around quality assurance for online adult education, including existing externally produced materials and in-house provision.
Supporting Low Skilled Learners	Guidance on how best to determine an online offer which enables providers to engage and induct learners with low level skills.
Underpinning Technology	Guidance around the most effective and cost efficient underpinning technological solutions for adult learning, managing a service in this context, connecting and integrating with learners and communicating with staff.

15. Annexes - Good practice examples for you to ‘adopt and adapt’

- Annex 1:** [Learn Harrow survey questions to learners](#) - considering learners’ overall experience of online learning
- Annex 2:** [Learn Harrow survey questions to teaching staff](#) – considering their overall experience of delivering online learning. (Q 16 – 19 for questions on IAG)
- Annex 3:** [Bromley Adult Education College - QA of induction and IAG](#)
- Annex 4:** [Buckinghamshire County Council online self-assessment for staff](#) - considering staff’s digital skills.
- Annex 5:** [ACL Essex survey to learners](#) – considering learners’ online learning experience.
- Annex 6:** [Northern College guidance for tutors OTL for online learning](#) – considering amendments to current session observation processes.
- Annex 7:** [The DfE evaluation criteria for its Skills Toolkit courses](#)
- Annex 8:** [ACL Essex guidance for self-assessment of online provision](#)
- Annex 9:** [Template for online evaluation for self-assessment](#) – recording an online ‘visit’ to a learning centre for self-assessment.
- Annex 10:** [Learn Harrow quality measures for Covid-19](#) – covering the intent, implementation and impact of the digital provision, in light of the pandemic.