

Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework Ascentis Short Online Qualifications (SOQs)

(Also including Principles of Health and Safety unit (K/504/1368) (*Ascentis Level 2 Diploma in Maintenance Operations*) and Ascentis Level 3 Award and Certificate in Managing Property and Residential Lettings. A full list of qualifications covered by this guidance is listed in [Appendix \(I\)](#))

Now that the ERF is finished, the regulators are implementing an extended version for the 2020-21 academic year. This is because they acknowledge that further disruption to teaching and learning is possible due to local lockdowns and social distancing measures. This regulatory framework will allow the usual 'rules' to be flexed temporarily.

This framework will run alongside the General Conditions for the whole of the 2020-21 academic year. Learners will achieve either under the General Conditions or under the EERF.

Context: SOQs and the ERF (ended 31st July 2020)

The mitigation against the disruption caused by the lockdown for Ascentis SOQs was confirmed by the regulators as 'adapt.' The preferred method for achievement during the summer was an adaptation of the assessment method to use our new e-invigilation software, as this is robust and comparable to the SOQ assessments. This involves learners sitting the assessments in their own home with e-invigilation used to ensure the assessment was conducted appropriately and in line with Ascentis requirements.

E-invigilation for all our SOQs is available to all Centre's under the General Conditions and will be monitored more closely under the EERF due to the acceleration of this offer being available to Centres. Centres must apply to use this adaptation to ensure that each Centre has the resources required to roll out this offer to their learners.

Learner and system guidance are available on the Ascentis website that outlines the minimum requirements for e-invigilation and can be found in the key documents section [here](#), by clicking on Remote e-invigilation sub heading.

E-invigilation

We are now offering e-Invigilation for all of our SOQs enabling learners to complete assessments remotely, from anywhere with an internet connection. This method of assessment does incur an additional cost per assessment as they are invigilated by Ascentis. For up to date prices and fees, please check our product catalogue which is available on the Ascentis website [here](#).

If you would like to assess these qualifications through e-invigilation, please contact hello@ascentis.co.uk for an application form.

Once you submit your application, Ascentis will let you know when you have been approved and send you the relevant documentation to get you up and running. As e-invigilation follows a different process to regular qualifications, your Centre will be required to choose the assessment method prior to registration as the learner will be registered on either the normal SOQ, which is sat under invigilated conditions in your Centre, or the e-invigilation qualification.

For further information on our e-invigilation offer, you can find our frequently asked questions document on the Ascentis website [here](#).

SOQs and the Extended ERF

The regulators have consulted on an extended version of the ERF for the current academic year because of the possibility of further disruption to teaching and learning due to local lockdowns and social distancing measures. This regulatory framework will allow the usual 'rules' to be flexed until 31st July 2021.

Awarding Organisations have been required to consider what adaptations they will make available to Centres in 20-21 under the Extended ERF **if Centres need to be more flexible than the General Conditions allow.**

If Centres can carry on as normal, albeit maintaining a Covid-19 secure environment, then they may not need to consider the Extended ERF.

Current situation with Ascentis SOQs qualifications

All Ascentis short online qualifications (SOQs) use externally set assessments, which consist of a 40-minute multiple-choice assessment made up of 20 questions, which are randomly selected to cover each assessment criteria. Online resources are available on demand to Centres and these can be distributed to learners to complete remotely. Learners have three opportunities to achieve in an academic year.

All assessments are taken under invigilated conditions. Paper based assessments **must** be conducted in the Centre and are not available through e-invigilation.

Ascentis SOQs were developed to be flexible. Assessments are available on-demand and the small GLH and automatic banking of results make them ideal for learners to bank achievement as they build confidence and cover skills as and when ready throughout an academic year.

Potential issues in 2020-21

- Disruption due to local lockdowns – Centres having to suspend contact with learners and scheduled assessment sessions being cancelled.
- Social distancing requirements affecting the way controlled assessments are taken.

Social distancing measures will mean smaller class sizes and smaller assessment groups for most of our Centres. This may result in a larger number of separate assessment **sessions** over a period of time. The risk of learners being able to share the content of an assessment with other learners who are still due to sit the assessment is therefore increased.

Ascentis permitted adaptations under the EERF

Centres will be given the option to request and receive paper based assessments where required. These will be sent out electronically. This will be a temporary mitigation until normal processes can resume and Ascentis can distribute assessment papers.

This is a change to the normal process where paper based assessments were requested and sent through secure and tracked post.

Risks

- There will be duplicate copies (possible multiple duplications), both hard copy and electronic which increases risk that there may be a breach of assessment confidentiality.
- Electronic copies may be easier to tamper with. Content can be deleted/changed and so the authenticity and validity of the assessment responses may be less secure.
- If a Centre is holding assessments for the same qualification on multiple days, there is a risk that they may re-use the same assessment set instead of requesting a new one for each assessment session.

Conditions to mitigate risk

- Centres MUST delete ALL electronic copies of live assessment materials after they have been printed.
- Centres must request a separate set of assessment papers for each assessment session. This will be monitored through the external marking of assessments.

This adaptation will be permitted temporarily while Ascentis staff are not in the office. Paper based assessments will be issued as a last resort where an e-assessment cannot take place or as a reasonable adjustment request.

In the event that local restrictions are put in place, which would make the posting of paper-based assessments for external marking overly burdensome, we will permit Centres to instead scan and send them electronically where this would help to avoid disadvantaging learners who would otherwise not receive timely results and certification.

Risks

- There is a risk that Centres will not send these through secure/encrypted platforms, which imposes a higher risk of the integrity of the qualification becoming compromised.
- There will be duplicate copies (possible multiple duplications), both hard copy and electronic, which increases risk that there may be a breach of assessment confidentiality.
- There is a risk that the scanning equipment held in Centres would not scan in colour or to a high enough quality for all the learner responses to be clearly seen.
- Electronic copies may be easier to tamper with. Content can be deleted/changed and so the authenticity and validity of the assessment responses may be less secure.

Conditions to mitigate risk

- Centres MUST securely destroy ALL hard copies of the question papers once the assessments have been completed.
- Centres must securely store the original copies of documents scanned in if claiming achievement this way until external marking has taken place and results issued, in case any queries arise. Once results have been issued, Centres MUST securely destroy ALL original copies.
- Centres must train staff in scanning documents into appropriately labelled and organised folders / files so that documents can be easily identified / located / signposted to the external marker.
- Centres must devise a documented process for securely sending electronic copies of live assessments while mitigating the risk outlined above. This should cover the management, monitoring and deletion of any electronic copies made.

This adaptation will be permitted as a last resort and a rationale will be required from the Centre as to why the original copies cannot be sent and how they plan to mitigate the risk identified.

The Centre will need to provide Ascentis with information on how they will be encrypting the assessments and what secure platform they intend to use to share the confidential material. A rationale will be required from the Centre as to why the original copies cannot be sent and how they plan to mitigate the risk identified.

If a Centre is required to use this adaptation, they must email qualityassurance@ascentis.co.uk beforehand to provide information relating to the specific circumstances that have prevented original copies from being sent for marking.

There are no more adaptations available under the EERF for these qualifications.

Centres have the option to use blended delivery models to keep face-to-face contact with learners to a minimum where necessary. When learners are ready, time in the Centre could be focused on completing live assessments in small groups under controlled and socially-distanced conditions.

Ascentis support for Centres

Ascentis intend to support Centres by offering remote assessments using our e-invigilation software.

Ascentis intend to offer paper based assessments where there is a need.

Summary

We will support Centres by explaining the rationale behind our decisions regarding live assessments under the Extended ERF and work with them on their planning for the year ahead and with their 'logistics' in the event of local lockdown restrictions.

We support Centres to deliver course content online offering online on-demand resources so that they can minimise attendance in Centres if this is what is required.

We will support Centres by providing the opportunity to scan and send assessments electronically where there is no possibility of sending the originals due to imposed lockdown restrictions. This adaptation will be used as a last resort.

Appendix (I) - Qualifications covered by this guidance

Short Online Qualifications

Ascentis Entry 3 Award in Equality and Diversity (603/4941/4)
Ascentis Entry 3 Award in Healthy Living for Well-Being and Mental Health (603/5750/2)
Ascentis Entry 3 Award in Internet Safety for IT Users (603/4934/7)
Ascentis Entry 3 Award in Introduction to British Values (603/3398/4)
Ascentis Entry 3 Award in Introduction to an Inclusive Environment (603/5977/8)
Ascentis Entry 3 Award in Introduction to Safeguarding (603/5850/6)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Awareness of Social Media and Online Safety (603/3422/8)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Citizenship (603/2664/5)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Environmental Sustainability (501/0419/6)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in Environmental Sustainability (501/0420/2)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Equality and Diversity (601/2671/1)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering (600/0343/1)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Health and Safety (500/7232/8)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Healthy Living (501/0286/2)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in Healthy Living (501/0285/0)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Understanding an Inclusive Environment (603/5949/3)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Infection Control and Prevention (603/5838/5)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Internet Safety for IT Users (600/3240/6)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Managing Personal Finance (500/7233/X)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Mental Health & Well-Being (603/2832/0)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Personal Health and Well-Being (603/4280/8)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Personal Safety (603/4938/4)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Preventing Plastic Pollution (603/4405/2)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Understanding Employment, Business and Enterprise (600/6249/6)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in Understanding Safeguarding for Work, Education and Life (603/5851/8)

Other Qualifications

Ascentis Level 3 Award in Managing Property and Residential Lettings (603/5156/1)
Ascentis Level 2 Diploma in Maintenance Operations (600/7485/1) - (Principles of Health and Safety unit (K/504/1368))