**NPQSL ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK**

Contents

[Overview 3](#_Toc33452006)

[Assessment 5](#_Toc33452007)

[Project 1 FAQs 7](#_Toc33452008)

[Assessment submission 13](#_Toc33452009)

[Marking & outcomes 15](#_Toc33452010)

[Key Support Documents 16](#_Toc33452011)

[Key Submission Documents 16](#_Toc33452012)

# Overview

Purpose

The National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) supports the professional development of aspiring and serving Senior Leaders.

By completing an NPQSL, you will:

* Develop knowledge and skills across 6 content areas, which set out what an effective senior leader should know and be able to do
* Have the opportunity to develop up to 7 key leadership behaviours, which set out how an effective leader should operate
* Complete a final assessment that evaluates your capability against the knowledge and skills set out in the 6 content areas

Participant Profile

The NPQSL is for individuals who aspire to be, or are Senior Leaders. This includes:

* experienced middle leaders aspiring to senior leadership;
* deputy headteachers;
* assistant headteachers;
* other senior staff.

Core components

The core components of the NPQSL are:

* **Training** focused on building knowledge and skills core content areas and leadership behaviours
* **Completion of one project** and associated **written assignment**

Content Areas

The 6 content areas across which you will develop your leadership knowledge and skills are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Strategy and Improvement | * Working in partnership |
| * Teaching and Curriculum Excellence | * Managing Resources and Risk |
| * Increasing Capability |
| * Leading with Impact |  |

Leadership behaviours

The 7 leadership behaviours that you will have the opportunity to develop are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Commitment | * Awareness |
| * Collaboration | * Integrity |
| * Personal Drive | * Respect |
| * Resilience |  |

You can find the full curriculum breakdown of these content areas in the **Key Documents** section of this handbook.

As well as building your knowledge and skills in these areas through the training sessions which form the core of the NPQSL, and through the application of this learning in your NPQSL project, you will have the opportunity to complete **Ambition Institute’s 360° review** which is designed to provide you with a deeper understanding of your strengths and development areas in relation to these behaviours.

Final assessment

For your final assessment you will need to complete a project and submit the associated write-up for assessment within 18 months from the start of your programme. This project is designed to allow you to demonstrate competence in each of the content areas and leadership behaviours outlined above, and you will be asked to focus – in your write-up of each project – on providing evidence to support you in demonstrating these requirements.

In order to be awarded your NPQSL you must:

* Meet the attendance requirements for completion of your formal training;
* Complete the project and submit the associated write-ups within 18months of your programme start date;
* Not exceed the stated word count for each project;
* Provide all required supporting documents;
* Attain the required number of marks in the required competencies, and overall.

# Assessment

Task 1 Overview

**Participants must:**

* **Lead** an improvement projects across your school, lasting at least 2 terms, to reduce variation in pupil progress and attainment (Part A) and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching   
  (part B).
* **Submit** a project write up for assessment, which focuses on addressing the specific elements of the mark scheme criteria. This should cover the design, implementation and evaluation of the programme.
* **Submit all** supporting documents listed below as evidence to support your write up. Supporting evidence must be concise and directly related to your project and corresponding assessment criterion. More information on each of the supporting documents below can be found on page 13:
* Project Plan
* Risk Register/Plan
* Pupil Performance Data
* Raw Data Analysis
* Business Case
* Communications Plan/Strategy
* Sponsor Comments
* **Not exceed** a total word count of **5000**, excluding supporting documents or annexes.

The purpose of this task is to allow you to demonstrate your ability to lead improvement across a school. It therefore looks for evidence of this within the following NPQSL content areas:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Part A** | **Part B** |
| * Strategy and Improvement | * Managing Resources and Risk |
| * Teaching and Curriculum Excellence | * Increasing Capability |
|  |
| * Leading with Impact |  |
| * Working in partnership |  |

More detail about the specific content areas assessed, and how, can be found on **Page 6** below,and the mark scheme for this task can be found in **the Key Documents** section of this handbook**.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Content Area** | **NPQSL Assessment Criteria** | **Supporting Documents**  **Required** |
| **Strategy and Improvement** | 1.2.1 Deploys statistical and/or data analysis concepts to identify variation in pupil performance and contributing factors, applying the findings to design of own plans. | Raw Data Analysis |
| 1.2.2 Evaluates research into, and examples of, implementing change successfully and applies findings to the design and implementation of own plans. |  |
| **Teaching & Curriculum Excellence** | 2.2.1 Evaluates teaching quality across a school accurately, exploiting appropriate techniques to gather evidence. |  |
| 2.2.2 Analyses different leadership/management strategies aimed at improving pupil progress, attainment and behaviour and applies findings to own plans. |  |
| 2.2.3 Designs, implements and evaluates an improvement project that reduces variation in pupil progress and/or attainment across the school. | Pupil performance data |
| 2.2.4 Exploits opportunities to develop and grow the school curriculum. |  |
| **Leading with Impact** | 3.2.1 Evaluates research into, and examples of, leadership and motivation and/or influence and applies findings to motivate or influence others across the school. | Sponsor Comments |
| 3.2.2 Designs and implements a communications plan to promote and/or defend plans, drawing on campaigns and techniques used by other schools. | Communications Plan |
| **Working in Partnership** | 4.2.1 Establishes and sustains partnerships that build capability and/or improve performance in priority areas for the school. | Sponsor Comments |
| 4.2.2 Evaluates the effectiveness of partnerships in terms of pupil progress and/or attainment. |  |
| **Managing Resources and Risks** | 5.2.1 Analyses the value for money/cost effectiveness of different options and designs a business case for recommended approach. | Business Case |
| 5.2.2 Implements a risk management plan that systematically assesses, monitors, mitigates and contingency plans for risks. | Risk Management Plan |
| **Increasing Capability** | 6.2.1 Analyses key research into and examples of effective professional development and talent management in schools and applies findings to own plans. |  |
| 6.2.2 Analyses how professional development provision may need to change over time and applies findings to own plans. |  |

Assessment Criteria

# Project 1 FAQs

Project Scope & Impact

**I have some ideas about my project. How can I check whether or not it is suitable in scope and scale? Do you have example project titles and summaries to help me identify whether my own is suitable?**

* When determining your project, and before starting, you should review the assessment criteria and check that through your project you are confident that you can provide the required evidence. If there are areas where you are unsure what your evidence would look like, then you should check in with your Sponsor or programme provider in the first instance

**How direct does the focus on ‘reducing variation in pupil progress and attainment’ need to be?**

* The core outcome or goal you are working towards should be linked to the removal of a specific variation in pupil progress and attainment, identified in your initial analysis of data, and which is evident across your school. When analysing data to identify the focus of your project you should consider where variances exist across your school - this could be in comparison to external benchmarks, or in comparison to the progress and attainment of particular sub-groups of pupils within a school (e.g. progress/attainment of particular sub-groups across departments, or in comparison to other sub-groups). Please see **1.2.1** and **2.2.3** for further detail on requirements.

**How much focus do I need to put on the improvement of teaching efficiency and effectiveness?**

* In order to reduce variation in pupil progress and attainment across your school you should consider ways to improve teaching efficiency and effectiveness (as this has a direct impact on pupil progress and attainment). This must be an area of consideration in order to meet criteria **2.2.1** in particular.

**What does it mean by ‘across a school’?**

* To achieve your NPQSL you are required to lead an improvement project across your school to (A) reduce an identified variation in pupil progress and attainment and (B) improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching. In your initial analysis of pupil performance data, you should identify where variance in pupil progress/attainment exists and why. To ensure this is ‘across a school’ you should analyse data sets which provide a ‘whole school’ context and allow you to identify variance at the required scale (i.e. not just within a department, but across departments and across groups of pupils with particular ‘characteristics’. Your project should be designed to address this variance and close the gap. It should also include a focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching i.e. how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching in relation to the identified variance.

Project Timelines and Duration

**When can I start my project?**

* You can start your project as soon as you have started your course. You should use learning and information from the course to inform and support you in the design, delivery and evaluation of your projects.

**Does it have to last for a certain length of time?**

* The project should last at least two academic terms. This is to ensure that you are able to evidence all required competencies.

**Can I use a project which I started prior to this programme?**

* To ensure you are able to meet all programme requirements you should not use a project which you have previously completed. This is because it may not meet all requirements for the NPQSL, or you may not have gathered, at the appropriate points, the required evidence.

**What happens if I move school part way through the programme or the project?**

* Should you move school, or be planning to do so, please get in contact with our Participant Support team immediately as each situation is unique and so they will be able to advise best about next steps.
* However, do note that your project must be for at least two terms and so you should consider whether or not you can meet the related criteria (4.2.1 and 3.2.1). You should also consider whether or not you can gather the required supporting evidence (particular relating to your sponsor comments and pupil performance data (2.4.3).

Sponsors

**What are the roles and responsibilities of the sponsor?**

* Your Sponsor must provide a written report which focuses specifically on the requirements as outlined in **3.2.1 and 4.2.1**; this is a required supporting document. Because of this, they should be in a position to observe your practice at key points of your project and you should work with them to ensure that they are able - through regular conversations, updates and attendance at ‘key events’ – to comment on the extent to which you have evidenced this competency.

**Who would be an appropriate sponsor?**

* As above, the sponsor should be someone who is in a position to know the work that you have done, has a good knowledge of how you lead the team and who is able to assess the impact of your leadership. Whoever they are, they should be in a position to provide evidence relating in particular to ‘Leading with Impact’ (with a focus on 3.2.1 and 4.2.1).

**Are there guidance or support documents for sponsors in their role, or any templates for them to use when providing comments?**

* Yes. Please see the supporting documents section below.

**What happens if my sponsor leaves during my project or within the 18months I have to submit my assignments?**

* We advise you to gather your Sponsor’s comments as soon as is appropriate. They may also choose to record notes after each relevant encounter/observation/point, sharing these with you for reference. This would ensure that should they leave you have a record of their reflections which you can use in your submission. However, should your sponsor leave without providing the required comments we would advise you to identify someone else who could provide the relevant evidence, as your project write up **must** be supported by sponsor comments as a required document.

Supporting Documents

**Are the supporting documents compulsory?**

* The supporting documents (project plan, risk register/plan, pupil performance data and raw data, business case, sponsor comments and communication strategy) are compulsory; you will not be able to pass your NPQSL without these.

**Are they included in the word count?**

* The supporting documents (Appendices) are **not** included in the word count however they should be concise and directly link to the related competencies. You should use them to supplement your word count.

**Is there a required format for each supporting document/do you provide templates for the supporting documents?**

* We provide a template for the project write-up and sponsor comments. These can be found on p**age 13.**
* For the risk management plan, communication plan and business case you will be provided with a range of resources and tools during the relevant programme sessions which you may choose to use. You may also use a template or format which your school currently uses.
* There is no template for the pupil performance data or raw data analysis.
* Where we do not provide a ‘set’ template this is because a) schools will often have their own way of doing things which we want you to utilise, and b) there is not always one set way of doing things e.g. data analysis approach/presentation will be dependent on the data you are using and the focus of your analysis.

Risk Management Plan

**Should I still include the risk management plan if I find there are no risks?**

* The risk management plan is a required supporting document related to **5.2.2** and all supporting documents are compulsory. In order to meet the requirements of this competency you should evidence that you have a plan in place to systematically assess, monitor, mitigates and contingency plan for the most important and relevant risks related to your project. Over the project duration you should therefore regularly review your risk management plan (as things may have changed) and you must evidence your assessment of all potential risks at the most relevant points. Even if you assess a specific potential risk as low likelihood you should still record this to evidence that you are able to manage risks effectively.

Pupil Performance Data

**What kind of data do you require? Does it have to be national?**

* The pupil performance data you provide should be relevant to the intended outcomes of your change programme. It should allow you to evidence 2.2.3 - that you have designed, implemented and evaluated an improvement project that reduces variation in pupil progress and/or attainment across the school. Because of this there are no set requirements for ‘what’ data you provide as this will be specific to your project. It should however show that you have reduced variation (in line with your intended outcomes), and allow you to fully evaluate the impact of your project overall.

**What format does this have to be submitted in?**

* As above, there is no set format for this data however this should be concise and clearly relevant to your project. We would recommend submitting both raw and analysed data sets.

Raw Data Analysis

**What kind of analysis should I be doing?**

* You should demonstrate that you have met the criteria for **1.2.1**. Because of this your analysis should show that you are able to use a range of relevant statistical and data analysis techniques (appropriate to the data you have and the purpose of your analysis). Above all the analysis you conduct, and the tools/techniques used, should allow you to identify accurate trends in pupil progress variation.

Sponsor Comments

**What kind of comments should they give, or what should they be commenting on?**

* Your Sponsor must provide a written report which focuses on the requirements as outlined specifically in 3.2.1 and 4.2.1. The should not give ‘general’ comments but should tailor them – with supporting evidence and detail – to the requirements of these two competencies. They should therefore be in a position to observe your practice at key points of your project and you should work with them to ensure that they are able - through regular conversations, updates and attendance at ‘key events’ – to comment on the extent to which you have evidenced this competency.

**What’s the word limit or typical length?**

* There is no word limit but we expect them to be **approximately 500 words and up to one side of A4.** Bullet points are fine and may be beneficial to ensure all areas of the relevant competencies are covered.

Communication plan

**What format does this have to be submitted in?**

* As before, there is no set format for your communications plan. You may use a template or tool which your school provides, or one provided by us in your sessions.
* You should however ensure that your plan allows you to show that you identified the needs/priorities/motivations of others, and responded to these in the way you engaged with them over the duration of your project. It should also show that you identified the most important/relevant stakeholders – those whose buy-in etc. is required for the success of your project or of key aspects of your project.

**Does this have to include internal and external stakeholders?**

* This is dependent on the scope and nature of your project and you should identify all relevant stakeholder groups and individuals when designing this strategy in order to meet the requirements of 3.2.2. You should also explore other similar plans for engaging the stakeholders you identified/achieving the aims of your project, applying findings to your own strategy.

Business Case

**What format does this have to be submitted in?**

* As before, there is no set format for your business case. You may use a template or tool which your school provides, or one provided by us in your sessions.
* You should however ensure that your business case allows you to show that you are able to put forward a comprehensive case in support of your proposal which includes analysis of their value for money/cost effectiveness.

Common issues

**Why do people fail – are there any trends or things which I should be aware of?**

* Project focus:
  + Remember that your NPQSL is designed for aspiring and serving senior leaders to enable them to evidence the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for impact as a senior leader. As such you must select a project focus – using your research and data analysis – of a scope and scale which is suitable for a senior leader.
  + Your project must also allow you to meet the requirements for Part A (reducing an identified variation in pupil progress and attainment) and Part B (improving the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching).
* General:
  + Explain why you have made the decisions and choices you have made, not just what you did. What options did you explore and why did you end up choosing the one you did?
* Strategy and improvement:
  + You must identify variation in pupil performance and the contributing factors (i.e. why it exists) and design a project to reduce this gap. This could be within the school e.g. girls/boys etc., or compared to a national benchmark.
  + Once you have designed your solution (i.e. how you will close the gap in variation and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching), you must research how to implement change successful, looking at various models and identifying the most appropriate model/approach for your context.
* Teaching and curriculum excellence:
  + You must evaluate teaching quality across your school (and not just in one department or area) as well as identifying the impact of different teaching interventions or strategies.
  + You must analyse leadership/management strategies aimed at improving pupil progress, attainment and behaviour and apply these to your plans.
  + You must also explore the curriculum and identify ways to improve this (to support you to close the identified gap in variation).
* Leading with impact:
  + You must evidence the research you undertook into leadership, motivation and influence of others (drawing from others schools), as well as submitting a communications plan which shows what you did to promote/defend your plans with relevant stakeholders.
* Working in partnership:
  + You must establish partnerships which are designed to build capability/improve performance in key areas.
  + You must evaluate the effectiveness of any partnerships which you have established, evidencing the impact which they have had on pupil progress/attainment and to closing the gaps in variation which you identified.
* Managing resources and risks:
  + You must analyse the cost effectiveness and value for money of your proposed solutions, and create (and present) a business case to support your recommended approach.
  + You must submit a risk management plan which shows that you are able to identify, mitigate and manage risks.

# Assessment submission

Writing your assessment

**Templates**

* We advise that you use the templates provided for the write up of your project. These can be found on page 13 below and are designed to support you to evidence the competencies assessed clearly and concisely.

**Style**

* There is no set ‘style’ for the write-up, however we encourage you to use ‘I’ (first-person) and to be as specific and direct as possible. You should avoid just providing a narrative of your project and ensure your write up focuses on the specific elements of the mark scheme criteria. You should ensure you reference learning taken from your programme and any wider reading and research you have done around the NPQSL curriculum areas.

**Formatting**

* For ease of reading and assessment we recommend using a size 11 font and 1.15-line spacing, however this is not compulsory.

**Supporting documents and appendices**

* You can submit your supporting documents along with your write-up in one document, or you can upload as separate documents. As a reminder, you must submit **all** supporting documents to pass the qualification.
* Please ensure all supporting documents are clearly named: ‘**Name\_NPQ\_Appendix #\_Document**’
* e.g. *Joe Bloggs\_NPQSL\_Appendix A\_Raw Data Analysis*

**Referencing and bibliography**

* When referencing reading/sources please use the Harvard referencing format where possible:
* In-text citation: (AUTHOR SURNAME, YEAR) or AUTHOR SURNAME (YEAR, P#)
* e.g. (Neville, 2010) or Neville (2010, p25).
* Bibliography/ reference list: SURNAME, YEAR, TITLE, PUBLISHER
* e.g. Neville, 2010, *The complete guide to referencing and plagiarism*, Open University Press, New York

**Page and word limits**

* **Project write-ups**: the word limit for the written project is strictly observed (5000 words). The assessor will stop reading once the word limit has been reached and will not read – or assess – anything beyond this.
* **Appendices***:* You should submit **only the required supporting documents** (along with your project write-up) within the appendices. These appendices should be kept to a minimum, they are not designed to ‘supplement’ the word count available.
* There are no page limits, but as above please be concise and only submit directly relevant documentation.

Submitting your assessment

Submitting your assignment

**Timelines**

* You have 18months from the date your NPQ programme starts to submit your assignments for assessment. Contact your provider if you are not sure on this specific date.
* You can submit your assignments prior to your 18month deadline, however, you must submit all required documentation in one go AND must have a) completed the training elements and b) completed your project over at least 2 terms.
* Whilst you should meet the 18month deadline we also recognise that things happen unexpectedly and there may be exceptional circumstances where you require an extension. Should you need to formally request an extension, please get in contact with your provider in the first instance.

**The platform**

* For detailed information on how to submit your assessments via our portal, please see our detailed Assessment **Submission Guidance document** in the Key Submission Documents section of this handbook. This document includes the link to the portal, guidance on how to register and on how to submit all documentation.

# Marking & outcomes

**Mark scheme**

* You can find the detailed mark scheme in the supporting documents section below.
* Please note that in order to pass your NPQSL you must:
* Achieve a score of 1 or 2 in every competency area (i.e. a score of 0 in any competency area will result in an outcome of ‘Fail’ for that project and overall), and
* Meet the overall bar for the assignment: Pass mark = 20. Marks available = 28

**Process**

* All assignments are marked by our internally trained assessors before going through an internal moderation process as well as an external, national moderation.

**Timelines**

* For the purposes of moderation, we mark assignments at 4 points over the year only.
* From the date we start our assessment processes (at each of these 4 points) you can expect to receive your outcome within 12 weeks/3 months.
* This means that the longest you may have to wait for your outcome is 6 months.

**Outcomes**

* We will email the outcome to you along with a copy of your assignment and a copy of the Assessors feedback.
* Pass: Your recommendation for the award of NPQs will be passed to the Teaching Regulation Agency, an executive agency of the Department for Education. Successful participant's NPQ certificates will be available 2 weeks from the date you are informed by us of your outcome. After this date, you can access a copy of your certificate at your convenience by logging into the Teacher Self-Service web portal ([https://teacherservices.education.gov.uk/SelfService/Login](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fteacherservices.education.gov.uk%2FSelfService%2FLogin&data=02%7C01%7Canna.schofield%40ambition.org.uk%7C8e89ba5c695d41f508ee08d6f0c9c02f%7C19faf53aeb364728a5e39f15a98d6fbd%7C0%7C0%7C636961146634534208&sdata=TNiang3St38KcRwvJSnHT3Os8aQiIj6Xe8gxilATzMk%3D&reserved=0)). You will need to know their teacher reference number (TRN) to access Teacher Self-Service.
* Fail: You will have 2 further opportunities to re-sit your NPQSL, and we hope that the feedback provided will support you to do so successfully. Should you be unsuccessful a third time you will have to wait 1 year and begin an NPQSL programme again. More detail about fees can be found in your contract, or you can contact your Participant Support contact.

Key Support Documents

Please click on the links below to access the support documents:

* [NPQ Curriculum and Assessment Framework](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835720/National_Professional_Qualification__NPQ__Content_and_Assessment_Framework.pdf)

* [NPQ Mark Scheme](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/rc7ba6q1veodujl6eeyuia7r3glnseyy)
* [Project and project write-up guidance and exemplification](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/wcgy4fdoa824nafprwiovrght7r452lc)
* [Submission guidance](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/shuao17fmib0a45847mlr4b30cb8l6op) and [tutorial](https://ambition.instructuremedia.com/embed/7c2c7648-7979-4993-8e6f-d833dd7e0536)
* [International and Domestic Research](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/xzzxnytyshdld3odtificky6jn4i0ujh)

Key Submission Documents

Please click on the links below to access the submission documents:

Project 1

* [Project 1 write-up template](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/av5a1g9nps1v76m77zzqrtunlufmhzq2)
* [Project 1 sponsor guidance and template](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/qhxu26a7d48k0ncp4f20b7y74j8hrw3e)
* [Project 1 action plan template](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/x3rqv3be1o5x4klp143m6vujzx7ccvw6)
* [Project 1 communications plan](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/7481ws99ic56fbxt74j8xv8q05z2xsg2)
* [Project 1 business case template](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/czfvfv8koo37othu2i4oq8pdoytgq2px)
* [Project 1 risk management template](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/demledwwpl1h7tn4ssjmpufolzdxb3m0)