**NPQML ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK**

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# Overview

Purpose

The National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders (NPQML) supports the professional development of aspiring and serving Middle Leaders.

By completing an NPQML, you will:

* Develop knowledge and skills across 6 content areas, which set out what an effective Middle Leader or head of department should know and be able to do;
* Have the opportunity to develop up to 7 important 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.

Core components

The core components of the NPQML are:

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

Content Areas

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

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

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

Leadership behaviours

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

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

As well as building your knowledge and skills in these areas through the training sessions which form the core of the NPQML, and through the application of this learning in your NPQML projects, 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 school improvement project (lasting for at least two terms) aimed at improving pupil progress and team capability. You should submit your written assignment 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 the write-up of your project – on providing evidence to support you in demonstrating these requirements.

In order to be awarded your NPQML you must:

* Attend the required formal training;
* Complete your school improvement project and submit the associated write-up within 18months of your programme start date;
* Not exceed the stated word count for the write-up;
* Provide all required supporting documents;
* Attain the required number of marks for each competency and overall.

# Assessment

Project Overview

**Participants must:**

* **Lead** an improvement project in their team, lasting at least 2 terms, aimed at improving pupil progress and attainment (part A) and the capability of their team (part B)
* **Submit** a written account of the project to the provider for assessment, demonstrating how they have met the criteria set out below. This should cover the design, implementation and evaluation of the project.
* **Submit** supporting documents/material as evidence where indicated below. Supporting evidence must be concise and directly related to the candidate’s project and corresponding assessment criterion. The required supporting documentation is below, and more detail can be found in the relevant section of this handbook:
	+ Raw Data Analysis
	+ Pupil Performance Data
	+ Sponsor Comments
	+ Budget
	+ Risk Register
	+ Project Plan
* **Not exceed** a total word count of **4,500** excluding supporting documents or annexes.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Part A** | **Part B** |
| Strategy and Improvement | Managing Resources and Risks |
| 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**.**

Assessment Criteria

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Content Area** | **NPQML Assessment criteria** | **Supporting documents** |
| Strategy and improvement | 1.1.1 Deploys tools and techniques to manage and analyse data on pupil progress and attainment | Raw data analysis |
| 1.1.2 Designs, evaluates and improves plans in light of data on pupil progress and attainment |  |
| 1.1.3 Deploys change management tools and/or techniques during the design and implementation of plans |  |
| Teaching and curriculum excellence | 2.1.1 Analyses research into, and examples of, domestic and international teaching strategies/pedagogical approaches and applies findings to own plans |  |
| 2.1.2 Evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum taught by team, implementing improvements where necessary | Pupil performance data |
| 2.1.3 Implements and evaluates an evidence-based project that improves pupil progress and/or attainment |  |
| Leading with impact | 3.1.1 Exploits different leadership styles and justifies why these have been adopted |  |
| 3.1.2 Exploits different communication styles and justifies why these have been adopted |  |
| Working in partnership | 4.1.1 Establishes relationships with others within and outside of own team, deploying appropriate structures and/or processes to mitigate against any barriers | Sponsor Comments |
| 4.1.2 Designs and/or delivers plans in collaboration with others within and outside of own team |  |
| Part B |
| Managing resource and risks | 5.1.1 Analyses the financial and staffing implications of own plans, during whole lifetime of plans, using a budget | Budget |
| 5.1.2 Defines the steps required to successfully implement plans, using a project plan | Project plan |
| 5.1.3 Identifies and mitigates risks in plans, using a risk register | Risk register |
| Increasing capability | 6.1.1 Assesses individuals’ performance and capability methodically and identifies appropriate, targeted professional development opportunities within and beyond the school to support them |  |
| 6.1.2 Assesses their own performance and capability methodically, identifying appropriate, targeted professional development opportunities for self |  |
| 6.1.3 Designs and implements plans to evaluate the impact and cost-effectiveness of professional development in terms of pupil outcomes |  |

# Project 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 improving pupil progress need to be?**

* The core outcome or goal you are working towards must be directly linked to the improvement of pupil progress and/or attainment (**2.1.3**). As this project will be within your team, the exact nature or focus may vary as the need and solutions look different depending on your role and the team you work with. You should analyse relevant data on pupil progress and attainment at group and individual level (**1.1.1**) in order to design your improvement project, and your stated priorities/project focus should be consistent with your analysis of data **(1.1.2).** Part A of your change programme should therefore be designed to directly impact pupil progress and attainment, and you must provide pupil data to support your analysis of your programme’s effectiveness (**2.1.3**).

**How much focus do I need to put on the improvement of team capability?**

* In order to improvement pupil progress and attainment across your team you should consider ways to improve the capability of your team (as this has a direct impact on pupil progress and attainment). This must be an area of consideration in order to meet criteria **6.1.1, 6.1.2 and 6.1.3**.

**What does it mean by ‘within a team’?**

* To achieve your NPQML you are required to lead an improvement project within your team. This may be your department, year group (if you have a pastoral role) or other (depending on your role). In your initial analysis of pupil performance data, you should identify where variance in pupil progress/attainment exists and why. To ensure this is ‘within a team’ you should analyse data which is representative of the work of the team as a whole. You should look at this at both a group and individual level to ensure you are able to identify specific areas for improvement. Your project should be designed to address this variance and close the gap. It should also include a focus on improving the capability of your team i.e. how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching of the team and/or individuals within it (as appropriate).

**Is there a minimum number of people who I have to work with for this to be classed as a team?**

* The purpose of the NPQML is for you to evidence the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for impact as a middle leader. Middle leaders are responsible for more than just their classes and pupils within these classes, and are responsible for the impact and performance of others within a specified area or focus i.e. a key stage, year group, specialism (e.g. SEN) or subject area. Because of this team size may vary, but you must have responsibility and accountability for performance of others in a specific area.

Project Timelines

**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 project.

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

* Your 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 NPQML, 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 will be able to meet this criterion. You should also consider whether or not you can gather the required supporting evidence (particularly relating to your sponsor comments and pupil performance data.

Sponsors

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

* Your Sponsor must provide a written report which focuses on the requirements as outlined in 4.1.1 (specifically) and their comments are 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 **4.1.1**).

**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 of this handbook.

**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 (raw data analysis, pupil performance data, budget, sponsor comments, project plan and risk register) are compulsory; you will be unable to pass your NPQML without these.

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

* The supporting documents are **not** included in the word count however they should be concise and directly link to the related competencies; you should not 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, found on page **13.**
* For the risk register, project plan and budget, 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.

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 2.1.3 – that you have implemented and evaluated an evidence-based project within a team that improves pupil progress/attainment in line with specified purpose and priorities. Because of this there are no set requirements for ‘what’ data you provide as this will be specific to your project. Whatever you do provide should however show that you have improved pupil progress (in line with your intended outcomes), and allow you to fully evaluate the impact of your project overall. You should also ensure you have a comparator i.e. a data set from the beginning and end of your project against which you can evaluate progress and impact.

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

* 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 **1.1.1**. Because of this your analysis should show that you are able to use a range of relevant data analysis tools and techniques to manage data at group and individual level. 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 4.1.1. The should not give ‘general’ comments but should tailor them – with supporting evidence and detail – to the requirements of this competency. 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.

Risk register

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

* The risk register is a required supporting document related to **5.1.3** and all supporting documents are compulsory. In order to meet the requirements of this competency you should evidence that you have identified all important/relevant risks and have relevant/appropriate mitigations in place. These should be specific to your project. Over the project duration you should therefore regularly review your risk register (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 identify and manage risks effectively.

Budget

**What should the budget contain and is there a set format?**

* The budget will support you to meet the requirements of 5.1.1, where you must show that you have analysed the financial and staffing implications of your plans (for the duration/life-cycle of your project), using a budget. When creating your budget during the design phase of your project you should ensure that it includes data on all relevant financial and staffing implications, during the lifetime of your project. In your write-up you should explain how you have analysed this data and – where appropriate – considered how efficiencies can be achieved in relation to important/appropriate costs.

**What if there are no costs or no additional costs (beyond existing departmental budget) associated with my project?**

* You must still submit a budget for your project – and for the duration of its lifecycle – to allow you to meet the criteria for **5.1.1**. This is because you must evidence that you can create a budget and, in the design of any plans, are considerate of financial and staffing implications and of where efficiencies can be achieved. You may consider direct and indirect costs in your analysis.

Project Plan

**What should this look like?**

* Whilst there is no set format your project plan should clear define all steps required to successfully implement your plans from end-to-end/for the duration of your project. We would recommend that you include a focus on actions and timelines (start/completion dates) at a minimum.

Common issues

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

* Project focus:
	+ Remember that this is an NPQML and is designed to enable you to show the skills, knowledge and behaviours required of a middle leader. Your change programme should therefore be of a focus and scope which is appropriate to middle leadership i.e. you are undertaking something which a middle leader would/does do and which has the required scope and impact. As a middle leader we expect therefore that you have responsibility for performance and impact beyond your own classroom and pupils. Specifically, the focus must be on improvement of pupil progress and team capability, and you must ensure your project is designed to have impact within your team.
* General:
	+ People explain what they did but not why they did it. You must explain your choices, evidencing the underpinning research which informed these choices, in order to show your thinking (i.e. why did you chose to do X? What other options were there and why did you not choose them?).
* Strategy and improvement:
	+ You must analyse data on pupil progress and attainment as both group and individual level, designing plans to improve which fully align with this analysis.
	+ You must evidence research into change management tools/techniques and explain how these informed your plans.
* Teaching and curriculum excellence:
	+ You must analyse domestic and international research into teaching strategies i.e. how to lead and grow excellent teaching within your team, and show how you have applied this to your own plans.
	+ You must analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum used, implementing appropriate improvements.
	+ Your project and related data should show the impact of your change programme on pupil progress and attainment.
* Leading with impact
	+ You must explain and justify your choices when it comes to communication and leadership style; you should show that you can deploy different styles/approaches and explain your rationale behind these choices.
* Working in partnership:
	+ When designing and implementing your project, you must show collaboration with others from both within and outside of your team.
* Managing resources and risk:
	+ Even if there are no direct costs associated with your project you MUST provide a worked budget to evidence that you know how to create a budget. Your budget should show that you have analysed both the financial and staffing implications of your plans, including both direct and indirect costs, and show that when designing your project (and monitoring it) you have considered all appropriate costs and put in place efficiencies to ensure that it provides value for money.
	+ You must create and use a risk register throughout your project to show that you are able to identify, mitigate and manage risk effectively. These should be specific to your project.
* Increasing capability:
	+ As this project is about the leadership of others you must show that you have assessed the performance and capability of others, using this information to design your improvement project. You must show that you can identify the strengths/development areas of others and put in place appropriate development opportunities to support individuals to develop further.
	+ You must evaluate the cost effectiveness of your professional development choices, showing return on investment i.e. for each pound or hour spent on CPD, what was the return in terms of pupil progress?

# 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 in the key supporting documents section 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 NPQML 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\_NPQML\_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 (4500 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

**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** on **Page 13**.
* Please note that in order to pass your NPQML 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 = 22. Marks available = 32

**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 NPQML, 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 NPQML 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/e1v0guls9fdqvb5196e4984uqiduaqtp)
* [Project 1 sponsor guidance and template](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/d6s4vijra45zck2lk0npd0iac2leyquk)
* Project 1 action plan template excel and [word version](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/y9s7m4cjv7hhklg3cg5mxvf6e8k3e3tc)
* [Project 1 risk register template](https://ambitionschoolleadership.box.com/s/q1sf2mw8cpk5y1qt7a37phq31ur9f5cs)