

# Adult Learning - A Learner's Guide to Initial and Diagnostic Assessment

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

### **I have decided on the programme I want to enrol. Why do I need to do an initial assessment?**

An initial assessment is essential to help guide you to the right level of course. It can be unsettling and inconvenient for you and other members of a class if changes have to be made after the start of a course. We want to provide you with the best information, advice and guidance throughout your time with us, and the initial assessment is an important part of that.

### **I already have a qualification and I am fairly sure I know which level I should be studying. Do I still need to do an initial assessment?**

Yes: the content of courses is changed by the awarding bodies and in many cases when this happens, the demands of the course become greater. An initial assessment is to check where you are at the start of **this** course. Even if you have just completed and passed a course with us at a particular level and want to progress to the next level, we still recommend that you take the initial assessment, just to be sure that you are ready to move on at this pace. This is because a pass grade can cover a broad range, from passing by a few marks to passing with full marks. An initial assessment will help us see if a step-up course will help you be more prepared before you make the jump up to the next level.

### **What will I need to do for an initial assessment?**

An initial assessment is a series of questions and activities about the subject you are interesting in studying. For most levels, this will be an online assessment and a short piece of writing by hand. For some lower level courses, an alternative initial assessment can be done on paper. In all cases, your local area Centre Manager will chat to you about your previous experience and what you are hoping to gain from your course. For GCSE English and maths, we will have a more in-depth chat to ensure you are fully aware of the demands of the one-year programme, so that you can plan ahead.

### **What support is available to help me with this?**

The initial assessment is arranged through your local centre where the experienced and friendly staff will help you. We offer a number of options:

- In some cases we will set up initial assessment sessions at local venues where you book on and have access to a computer to do an online

initial assessment. A member of staff will be there to welcome you and talk you through what to do and what to expect. This will also be a chance to meet other people who are signing up to courses, so you can start making contacts.

- Where these sessions are not available, or where it is not appropriate, the staff at your local centre will help you access a computer to complete the online initial assessment. You will be able to make an appointment to do this.

### **I am an absolute beginner and I don't feel at all confident using a computer. What can I do?**

Please don't worry. For beginner levels we have initial assessments that can be done with pen and paper. Where there are additional needs, we can support you with a member of staff to read out questions and help you complete the process. We can also support you with using a computer so that you can have a go at the online version - in this way you will pick up new skills that will help you in other areas of the course.

### **I don't like tests and I wasn't expecting to have to take one at the start of my course.**

Try not to think of an initial assessment as a test. Sometimes learning is compared to a journey - the initial assessment tells you where to start the journey from and provides you with the best route for where you want to get to. It also prepares you for the diagnostic assessment.

### **What is a diagnostic assessment?**

Sometimes it is really clear from the initial assessment which level of course is best for you. Sometimes it is not as clear. The diagnostic assessments will help you in three ways:

1. It can provide additional information to help decide on the best level of course for you - for instance where your initial assessment result is hovering between two levels.
2. The results will give you detailed information about the strengths you already have in the subject you are studying and where you can make progress.
3. You can use the results of the diagnostic assessment to help you set targets so you can get the most from your time on the course. Your tutor will support you with this.

### **I have heard there are online, independent learning resources that I can use at home. How do I get access to these?**

Where you have taken an online initial assessment, you will also take an online diagnostic assessment. This applies to Entry Level Three, Level

One, Level Two and GCSE qualifications. By doing this, you will gain access to a range of excellent, FREE home-learning resources, that are matched to your own needs. The more of this work you do, the more the system designs for you, so you can either challenge yourself or gain extra support from the system. This really helps you to build on the progress that you are making in class.

For beginners, you will be supported to do a diagnostic assessment, ideally, before the start of the course. Sometimes, though, these are best done in class – you might not even realise you are doing an assessment, as it might be a game or type of quiz. The tutor will guide you with home-learning resources.

### **How long will it take me to do the initial and diagnostic assessments?**

This will vary, depending on the programme you are aiming to study and also the speed at which you complete the assessments. The online assessments adjust in difficulty to lower or higher levels of question depending on how you are answering the questions, so the time taken should adjust accordingly. (An initial assessment will always be done before you start on a course and for Entry Three levels upwards, so will at least part of the diagnostic assessment.)

Ideally, we will aim to get the initial and diagnostic assessments done at the same time – with a break or two of course! Generally speaking, book out a couple of hours in your diary – in most cases, it will take much less time than this.

### **I have still got questions...**

Please get in touch with your local centre.

<b>Adult Learning centre:</b>	<b>Telephone:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Allerdale	01900 706023	<a href="mailto:allerdaleadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk">allerdaleadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk</a>
Barrow	07867 182841	<a href="mailto:barrowadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk">barrowadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk</a>
Carlisle	01228 227304 / 01228 227305	<a href="mailto:carliseadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk">carliseadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk</a>
Copeland	01946 506416	<a href="mailto:copelandadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk">copelandadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk</a>
Eden	07468 709606	<a href="mailto:edenadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk">edenadultlearning@cumbria.gov.uk</a>
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