

## NPQEL – FAQs relating to Covid-19

Updated 16 March 2021

**We know that you are working in unprecedented times and appreciate that the recent upheaval in schools due to the national lockdown has brought with it further challenges. We understand that these challenges may also impact your ability to complete your NPQ as planned, and that you may have questions relating to this.**

This FAQ document has been produced to help with the most common queries we are receiving about the NPQEL and specifically in relation to the impact of Covid-19. If this document does not answer your question, please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the programme team for support.

### Project duration, timelines and deadlines

#### **Will there be any flexibility on timeframes for completing my assignment?**

We recognise it may be challenging to continue with your NPQEL in the current climate and would like to work with you to ensure you feel confident to continue and if needed to adapt your plans. In terms of timelines, the recommended timeline for the latest point to launch Task 2 was (at the time of programmes starting) for spring half-term 2 i.e the February half-term onwards. This allows two terms to implement the project in preparation for submitting in November 2021 for assessment.

Whilst adaptations to your original plans which allow you to continue to your original timelines may be possible, we know this may not always be the case. In these cases, we understand that completing a two-term project within the timeframe available may no longer be possible and – depending on your circumstance – there are two options we can explore: you may be able to submit evidence relating to a project implemented over fewer than two terms (e.g. 1.5 terms), or we may be able to grant an extension to your submission deadline to allow you to complete a two-term project.

If you are concerned about your ability to complete a two-term project in the time available and would like to discuss your options, please contact the Programme Support team using [executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk](mailto:executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk). We are happy to discuss your concerns and will work with you to identify the best possible solution given your unique situation. Please note that we are required to track any approved exemptions to the framework requirements or to submission deadlines, and so any such exemptions/adaptations must be agreed with us in advance.

#### **What happens if I am half-way or part-way through a project, but the focus is no longer relevant due to the impact of school closures?**

In the first instance we would explore whether or not you could adjust your current project to respond to the current context. If this is not possible at all, we would need to consider – on a case by case basis – how much of your project you have implemented, and the extent to which you can provide all required evidence at this point in time. Depending on the outcome of this it may be possible for you to submit a project of shorter duration, evaluating impact up to this point and projecting (using this data) likely future impact if you had continued as planned.

### **Even with all the adaptations and flexibilities available I don't think it's going to be possible to complete my NPQ by April 2022. What do I do?**

If you feel that it will not be possible to launch your NPQ project at all, please contact us ([executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk](mailto:executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk)) as soon as possible so that we can talk through the options and support available.

### **Can I defer and do my NPQ project next year?**

Unfortunately, due to the expiry date of our NPQ licence, we are unable to offer a deferral option for those currently registered to complete an NPQ with us. We want to work with you to ensure you feel confident to continue, or if needed, to adapt the focus of your projects in order to complete your NPQEL. Depending on your circumstances, we may also be able to discuss the possibility of completing a shorter project or, if this is not possible, providing a short extension to allow you to complete your NPQEL. If completion of your NPQEL is a concern for you please do get in touch with us at [executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk](mailto:executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk) so we can discuss your options.

### **Project design, implementation and evaluation**

#### **How can I complete my assignment without access to the data I was intending to use (such as exam results)?**

Assessment criteria 2.4.4 requires you to 'design, implement and evaluate an improvement strategy that improves pupil progress and attainment across several (3+) schools'. We know that for many of you, school closures and/or changes to external examination processes, will have impacted your ability to collect the data you were planning to use to evaluate the impact of your project on pupil progress and attainment.

The DfE's stance is that if you cannot access the original data you intended to use to evaluate the impact of your project, then you may use alternative data so long as it allows you to demonstrate the impact of your project. For example, in the absence of external exam results this summer you may now choose to use Teacher Assessed Grades.

Please note that the mark scheme does not specify one type of data as a requirement. This means that you can use **any source of data – or information** - to support your evaluation of your project. You can also change the type of data you use part-way through your assignment. If you do this, we recommend that in your write-up you explain the reasons behind your choices i.e. why is the new data set the best possible alternative?

#### **How can I complete my project with the majority of pupils and staff out of their schools?**

For the NPQEL your project must be designed to improve progress and attainment across several (3+) schools. This means that your project must be designed to have impact across 3+ schools, and that it must be implemented across 3+ schools. Therefore, as long as your project in its scope is designed to improve progress and attainment across 3+ schools, it is not a problem if – for a period of time and due to the impact of schools being closed to the majority of pupils – you do not work with all the pupils you had originally intended to.

You should therefore explore adaptations to your project which would allow you to start working towards your goal in the current context (e.g. prioritising particular work-strands, or work with particular pupil groups, or

changing your plans to respond to the new need presented by school closures etc.). At the point of schools reopening to all, you would then be able to review and adapt your project plans accordingly – potentially reverting back to the original plan.

If you do adapt your project to focus on fewer pupils, your project would still need to be led across 3+ schools and you would need to include an analysis of the projected impact on all pupils – based on evidence from working with the smaller group – had you been able to deliver the project at the full scale intended.

As with any project adaptations, if you think the best option for you is to continue your project but working with a reduced number of pupils/teachers, please get in touch with us at [executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk](mailto:executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk) so we can ensure this is the best option for you and so we have a record of this.

### **I'm struggling to understand how I can adapt my project, is there anyone I can speak to about this?**

If you have any concerns or questions about how you can adapt your project, please contact the programme team ([executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk](mailto:executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk)) as we are happy to help. We will be able to talk through the options available and if needed can offer support from an NPQEL advisor - an experienced executive leader and NPQEL assessor – who can provide further support.

### **What happens if I have started my project but will find it difficult to evidence leadership across the required number (3+) of schools (e.g. as the schools I planned to work with are deprioritising this and I am not able to continue to work with them)?**

If you are in this position, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can talk you through the options available to you. This may include:

- Submitting a shorter project
- Starting and submitting your project later than planned

If neither of these options is possible, please don't worry. We do have other flexibilities which we can explore with you – however, these would need to be discussed and agreed on a case by case basis and in conversation with our NPQEL Advisor. If you have concerns or questions about this please get in touch as soon as possible via [executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk](mailto:executive.leaders@ambition.org.uk)

### **Can I focus on coronavirus recovery for my School Improvement project?**

You can find alternative criteria (2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4) in the NPQEL Task 2 Mark Scheme. These are designed to enable you to focus your project on 'Covid recovery'. If you choose to use these criteria, please contact us to let us know as we will need to have a record of this for assessment.

**Please note that we are continuing to work with the DfE for updated guidance, and we'll keep you posted of any developments in relation to the NPQEL if and when we have any.**