



Assessor Connect

March 2026

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2026.

As of 1 January 2026, Primary ITO is now a business division of the new the Food and Fibre Industry Skills Board (ISB). Industry wide consultation is currently underway to determine the next steps for provision of work-based learning for the primary industry sectors. We will keep you posted but, in the meantime, there are no changes for our Assessors or learners.

Check out our online professional development sessions being offered in 2026, we encourage you to attend these when you can. To view the workshop schedule, [click here](#)

This year's moderation programme has started. This is an important process as it helps us support assessors to develop their skills and provide confidence to the Industry Skills Boards and NZQA that we have consistency in our assessment standards - check out our 2026 Moderation calendar on page 2 for more details.

Ngā mihi

From the Quality Assurance Team

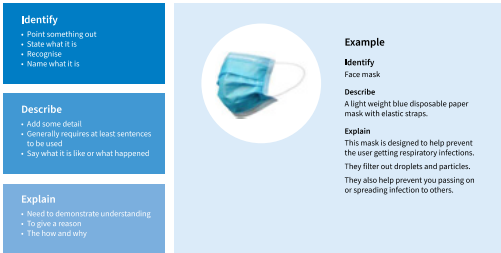
Botanical Plant Naming

Amenity, Landscape and Arboriculture Assessments that have a plant identification focus, require correct botanical naming conventions to be used by learners. We have found through moderating learner assessments that this is not always being done. We appreciate scientific naming is not a familiar area for many Assessors, so we have put together a handy guide to Plant Botanical Naming to assist you in supporting your learners. Click [here to view](#)



Identify vs Describe vs Explain

Identify, Describe and Explain
In assessments learners are often required to either identify, describe or explain. This is sometimes misinterpreted. The following provides clarity.



Identify

- Point something out
- State what it is
- Recognise
- Name what it is

Describe

- Add some detail
- Generally requires at least sentences to be used
- Say what it is like or what happened

Explain

- Need to demonstrate understanding
- To give a reason
- The how and why

Example

Identify
Face mask

Describe
A light weight blue disposable paper mask with elastic straps.

Explain
This mask is designed to help prevent the user getting respiratory infections. They filter out droplets and particles. They also help prevent you passing on or spreading infection to others.

Primary ITO

While we are all familiar with these terms that commonly appear in assessment questions and tasks, it is **important to note which term is being used** because it will **dictate the depth of answer and level of detail required**.

- **Identify** – this usually involves stating or naming what something is. In this case an answer with just a few words is often adequate.
- **Describe** – This involves adding some detail to say ‘what it is like’ or ‘what happened’ and generally requires at least sentences to be used.
- **Explain** – again further detail needs to be part of the learner’s answer that demonstrates understanding, the ‘how’ and the ‘why’.

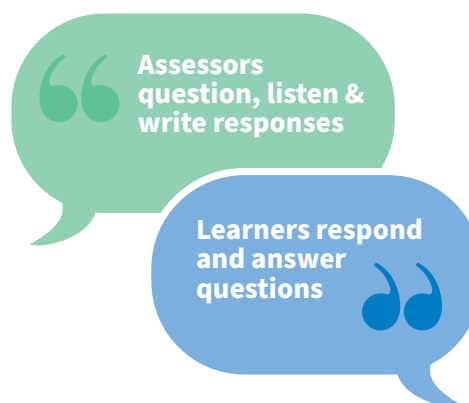
To view an example, see our [‘Identify, Describe, Explain’ PDF](#)

Verbal Assessment

It may be appropriate to consider carrying out verbal assessment, for part or all of the assessment if your learner has significant literacy or numeracy issues.

If you choose to use this option, please remember that throughout the assessment it needs to be clear what is the assessor’s/verifier’s comments and what is (or represents) the learner’s work. Consider using a different coloured pen when you are writing down the learner’s answers on their behalf as opposed to when you are writing general comments/feedback in their booklet.

Assessors can also use oral clarification when they believe that the learner’s answer(s) needs more detail. This involves having a conversation with the learner using leading questions, to extract additional information and then writing that down on behalf of the learner - preferably next to or below their original answer. It is also good practice when doing so, to initial/sign next to these questions and write a brief



explanation note in the margin e.g. *The answer was written down on behalf of the learner following verbal discussion.*

Whether you are verbally assessing the whole assessment for a learner or using oral clarification for one or two questions, please make sure you and the learner both sign the verbal sign off page at the end of the assessment.

Moderation Update

It was pleasing to see a consistently good standard of assessment across many sectors in 2025. Overall assessor compliance remained strong with **91% of Assessors and 85% of total assessment samples** moderated, being found **compliant**. Sectors with the Highest compliance rates included Dairy Processing, Meat & Food Processing, Agriculture, Sports Turf, Landscape, Arboriculture and Production Horticulture.

Primary ITO also **performed well in external moderation** requests from the Workforce Development Councils and NZQA with **90% of assessments found to be at the national standard**.

Every year the Quality Assurance Team develops risk-based, strategic moderation plans outlining focus areas for moderation activities. This forms the basis of our moderation calendar.

The calendar gives an indication of when Assessors & Providers may get asked to supply moderation samples. View our [2026 moderation calendar](#)

We often get asked from Assessors ‘What are moderators looking for when they moderate?’. In answer to this, the team has put together this comprehensive [Guide to Moderation](#) as a reference document to assist you.



You can also view our [Sending Assessments for Moderation video](#).

As part of your assessor obligations, Primary ITO Registered Assessors are required to submit moderation when requested. If you require support when you have a moderation request from us, please don't hesitate to call us and we will guide you through the process, if you are unsure of what is required. Photo evidence remains a challenge for some assessors - check out the [Photo Evidence Guide for moderation](#)

Resources for Assessors

- [Skill of Verification video](#) - verification skills for paper-based assessments.
- [Skill of verification Mahi Tahī](#) - focuses on verifying in our online learning platform.
- [Writing Assessor/Verifier Comments](#) - an excellent one-page document on 'how' and 'what' to write for assessors and verifiers to show learner competency.
- [Photo Evidence Guide](#) - a handy visual guide for you and/ or your learners with collating photo evidence and labelling photo files.



Help Us Update Our Records

Please email our Quality Assurance Team at quality@primaryito.ac.nz if:

- Your contact details or employer have changed
- You have recently achieved US 4098
- You are no longer assessing or do not wish to remain as an assessor.

Connect with us!

For general inquiries or feedback on our newsletter please contact the Quality Assurance Team.

Assessor Support

Alastair Gordon – Quality Development Lead
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Provider Assurance & Advisory Support

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Internal/External Moderation

Kathleen Moffat - Moderation Lead
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Assessor Registration /Moderation Support

Kelly Cenek - Quality Coordinator
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Ngā mihi nui

Hayley, Warren, Alastair, Kelly and Kathleen