

# LEARNING STANDARD & ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCIES STANDARD FOR THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

## CONSULTATION VERSION

APRIL – JULY 2017





### *What is this document?*

This is a draft version of the Learning Standard and Assessment of Competencies Standard to use during the consultation phase. It was created based on a pre-consultation conducted between January and March 2017.

Bioforce, Pearson and RedR UK are entering a full consultation phase commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> May until 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017.

This version of the Standards is valid throughout this consultation period. The Standards will be updated after the consultation period, based on inputs and feedback received from the global humanitarian community.

Please visit the [RedR UK](#) or [Bioforce](#) websites for more information about the consultation process and how you can get involved.

You can also share your feedback, comments and suggestions directly with the consultation team:

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the project

Humanitarian learning and assessment providers have an essential role to play contributing to the delivery of more effective humanitarian response. They build the capacity of individuals, and the organisations that employ them, by providing learning and development support to build their competence to work in the sector. They also have an essential role to play in supporting individuals to demonstrate their competence, so that they can progress in their careers, and supporting employers to effectively recruit and develop staff.

Bioforce, Pearson, RedR UK and the Humanitarian Learning Academy (HLA), are facilitating the co-creation of sector-specific Learning and Assessment Standards (L&A Standards or the Standards) and associated quality assurance mechanisms (QAM). This initiative – funded by the HLA - builds on the work done over many years by many stakeholders and will contribute to improving the quality and consistency of professional development in the global humanitarian sector<sup>1</sup>

### Purpose

We aim to produce L&A Standards with a common quality framework that are widely endorsed and adopted. Standards will include clear, measurable commitments and will provide clarity and harmonisation of best practice for learning and assessment providers. Use of the Standards will contribute to recognising, developing and recording the competencies of humanitarian workers to support the delivery of higher quality humanitarian action.

Standards are tools to support the development of quality learning and assessment for the humanitarian sector. L&A Standards will exist independently from other standards and will not include quality criteria related to organisational management.

We acknowledge that assessment is not always the consequence of a learning experience. Assessment can occur independently from learning.

### Users

Are you a public or private organisation, profit or non-profit that is offering learning or assessment opportunities that could be useful for people working in the humanitarian sector? Or do you assess learning? Are you a certifying body or institution? Do you recruit humanitarian workers and assess their competencies?

If you have answered 'Yes' to any of these questions then these learning and assessment standards are for you!

Future intended users may include:

- Universities providing a degree related to humanitarian action
- Private/ for profit training providers that offers courses relevant/needed by people working in the humanitarian sector
- NGOs offering or selling training services
- NGO L&D/HR departments training their own staff and volunteers, and staff and volunteers from other organisations
- Government departments and agencies.

### Structure

The L&A Standards are a set of Commitments, Quality Criteria and Key Actions.

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<sup>1</sup> The L&A Standards have been developed through the lens of the humanitarian sector, nevertheless during consultations the scope can be broadened to cover other sectors, such as development, recovery, etc.

**Commitments** reflect what learners and assessed people can expect from the organisations providing learning and assessment services.

**Quality Criteria** describe how organisations and staff should be working to meet the Commitments.

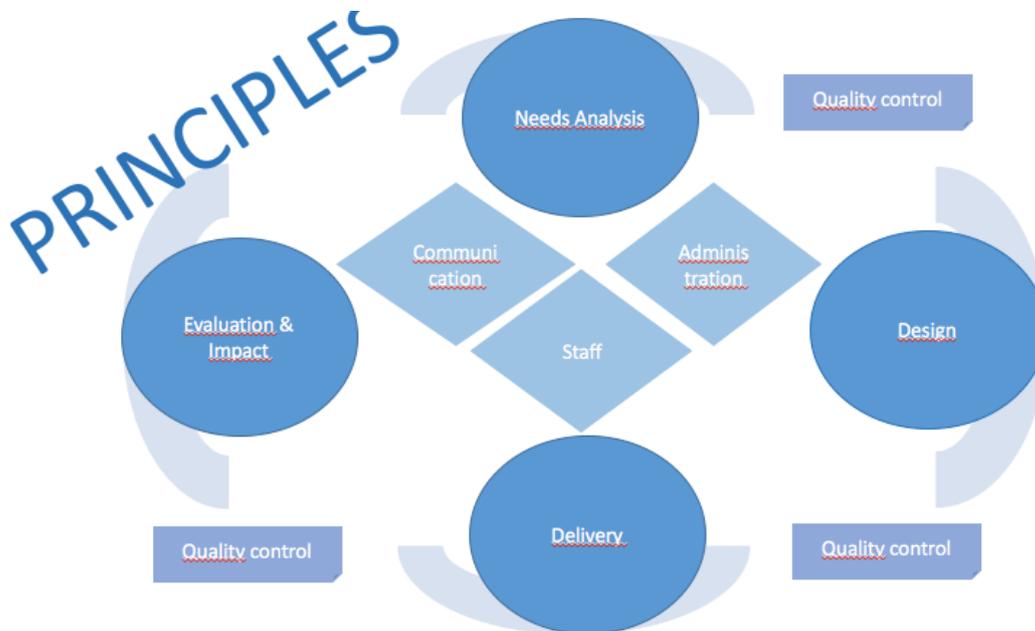
**Key Actions** are actions to be taken by learning and assessment providers to fulfil the Commitments.

**Guidance material** will be developed to support users to meet the Standards.

There are four common Commitments. These reflect common processes and requirements related to both quality learning and the assessment of competencies. The common Commitment to Quality Control is integrated throughout the cycle.

There are four separate Learning and Assessment Commitments. These are described in two different sections. Commitments in these sections follow the training and assessment cycle logic.

Principles underpin all the Commitments.



## PRINCIPLED APPROACH

The provision of quality learning and assessment services within the humanitarian sector should be guided by the principles of **impartiality** and **accessibility**.

**Accessibility:** service providers should aim to reach humanitarian actors that have limited or no access to learning opportunities and competency assessments.

**Impartiality:** service providers should aim to conduct their processes in a fair, just and equitable manner. They should not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests.

## COMMON COMMITMENTS

### C.1. Commitment on STAFF

Learners and assessed people participate in services and have support from a sufficient number of competent staff.

### C.2. Commitment on COMMUNICATION

Learners and assessed people have access to clear, accurate and timely information and feedback.

### C.3. Commitment on ADMINISTRATION

Learners and assessed people receive adequate administrative support during the learning or assessment process.

### C.4. Commitment on QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEMS

Learners and assessed people are provided with services that are quality controlled.

## LEARNING STANDARD

### 5. L. Commitment on LEARNING NEEDS ANALYSIS

Learners access services that are based on an evaluation of the sector's needs.

### 6. L. Commitment on DESIGN

Learners engage with services that are designed to meet their needs and the needs of the sector.

### 7.L. Commitment on DELIVERY

Learners develop their competence through access to well delivered services.

### 8.L. Commitment on EVALUATION AND IMPACT

Learners and staff can evaluate services.

## ASSESSMENT STANDARD

### 5. A Commitment on ASSESSMENT NEEDS ANALYSIS

Assessed people access assessment that is appropriate and relevant to their needs.

### 6. A. Commitment on DESIGN

Assessed people engage with services that are designed to meet their needs and the assessment roadmap is clearly defined and impartial.

### 7. A. Commitment on DELIVERY

Assessed people have access to well delivered services that are an impartial and fair assessment of competencies that establish clear future learning pathways and progression.

### 8.A. Commitment on EVALUATION AND IMPACT

Assessed people and staff can evaluate services.

All the Commitments, Quality Criteria and Key actions have been designed following this rationale.

## COMMON COMMITMENTS

These 4 common Commitments should be applied by organisations providing learning and/or assessment services.

### C.1. Commitment on STAFF

**Learners and assessed people participate in services and have support from a sufficient number of competent staff.**

#### QUALITY CRITERIA

Learning and assessment providers recruit, support and develop a sufficient number of competent staff with relevant professional experience.

#### KEY ACTIONS

Staff Level Responsibilities:

1. Services are delivered by staff with appropriate competencies and capacity
2. Staff have relevant qualifications when required (for specific content)
3. Assessors and trainers have sufficient understanding of the humanitarian sector.
4. Assessors/markers make standardised decisions.
5. Staff have the appropriate skills and experience.
6. Trainers and assessors are accountable.

Organisational Level Responsibilities:

7. Systems to recruit, support and develop competent staff are in place.
8. Clear recruitment, induction and orientation processes for staff are in place.
9. Regular development opportunities are available for staff.
10. An appropriate number of staff are recruited
11. Assessment providers are registered by appropriate Government institutions (when necessary).
12. Assessment providers keep records of processes.
13. Assessment providers ensure appropriate invigilation.

## C.2. Commitment on COMMUNICATION

**Learners and assessed people have access to clear, accurate and timely information and feedback.**

### QUALITY CRITERIA

Learning and assessment providers communicate clearly and openly, providing accurate information about their services and processes.

### KEY ACTIONS

#### Organisation Level Responsibilities

1. Information is available about how to make an application and its related time scale.
2. Learning and assessment providers offer accurate information about its services and processes (application process, selection criteria etc.)
3. Communications are clear/ transparent and through appropriate means. / Learning and assessment providers use language that is simple and easy to understand
4. During enrolment learning and assessment providers request information from learners and assessed people on their specific support needs.
5. Communications are timely, including acknowledging applications, acceptances/rejections and registration/joining instructions.
6. Orientation information/induction is offered.
7. Relevant, additional, resources are signposted to learners and assessed people.
8. Learning and assessment outcomes are clearly communicated.
9. Communications about failure/sensitive matters are managed with care.
10. Information on future development opportunities are made available and openly shared.

### C.3. Commitment on ADMINISTRATION

**Learners and assessed people receive adequate administrative support during the learning or assessment process.**

#### **QUALITY CRITERIA**

Administrative systems are accurate, secure, up to date and well managed.

#### **KEY ACTIONS**

##### Organisation Level Responsibilities

1. Systems are in place to safeguard any personal information collected from learners and assessed people.
2. Systems are in place to register and identify learners and assessed persons.
3. Confidentiality is ensured throughout the learning or assessment process.
4. During enrolment information is requested from learners on their specific needs and this information is used during the design and delivery of services.
5. Assessment documents and data are accurate and protected
6. Learning outcomes and results of the assessment are only shared with employers or other external agencies with prior consent from the learner or the assessed person.
7. Recognition is available e.g. receiving a certificate

#### C.4. Commitment on QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEMS

**Learners and assessed people are provided with services that are quality controlled.**

#### QUALITY CRITERIA

Learning and assessment providers have quality control systems in place.

#### KEY ACTIONS

##### Organisation Level Responsibilities

1. Systematic, objective and ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes are in place. (Including assessors and trainers receiving regular performance reviews)
2. Evidence from monitoring and evaluations is used to adapt and improve services.
3. Mechanisms are in place to record knowledge and experience and make it accessible throughout the organisation.
4. Robust complaints-handling processes are implemented and monitored.
5. Complaints are welcome and accepted, and communication of the mechanisms is clear, documented and accessible.
6. Management of complaints is timely, fair and appropriate.
7. Assessment providers offer an appeals process that includes a second opinion mechanism and these are clearly explained.
8. Learning and assessment provision is reviewed and changes made based on feedback received.

## LEARNING STANDARD

### 5. L. Commitment on LEARNING NEEDS ANALYSIS

**Learners access services that are based on an evaluation of the sector's needs.**

#### QUALITY CRITERIA

Learning provision is based on the needs of the humanitarian sector and targeted learners.

#### KEY ACTIONS

1. Analyse capacity building needs of the humanitarian sector and organisation
2. Involve the professional sector in defining sector needs
3. Identify target learners
4. Identify learning programmes based on the needs of the humanitarian sector and target learners.

## 6. L. Commitment on DESIGN

**Learners engage with services that are designed to meet their needs and the needs of the sector.**

### QUALITY CRITERIA

Services are designed to effectively meet identified learning needs.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. Services are designed by staff who are competent and have sufficient capacity/time
2. Sufficient resources are available/dedicated to the design process
3. Learning objectives are defined to reflect the appropriate level of outcome and are measurable
4. Adult learning principles are respected and these are reflected in the methodologies developed
5. The most appropriate delivery modality is selected
6. Lessons learnt and prior experience are drawn upon when designing learning programmes and assessments.
7. Learning content is contextualised
8. Identified target learners are consulted where possible and/or appropriate
9. Learning materials are checked regularly for accuracy, relevancy and to ensure they are kept up to date

## 7.L. Commitment on DELIVERY

**Learners develop their competence through access to well delivered services.**

### QUALITY CRITERIA

Services effectively develop competencies linked to learning objectives.

### KEY ACTIONS

Preparation:

1. Learner support- review enrolled learner profiles are reviewed and preparation adjusted accordingly
2. Ensure environment and resources are sufficient, accessible and adapted to learner's specific needs
3. Pre-course information is sent to learners as appropriate

Delivery:

1. Delivery of the course is effectively managed and delivered according to adult learning principles and inclusivity, respecting diversity
2. Facilitated by competent delivery staff

Supported to learn:

3. Learners' progress is assessed periodically to measure improvements in their capabilities
4. Learners are given opportunities to discuss their progress.
5. Feedback is offered on specific areas to improve in, along with suggestions about how to do this.
6. Learners are offered timely opportunities to feedback and suggest adjustments to the delivery of the service.
7. Adjustments are made during the delivery according to the feedback received.
8. Learners have opportunities to assess their learning
9. Feedback to learners includes ways to improve for career progression / for next time.
10. Feedback on specific areas for improvement, along with suggestions about how to do this.

## 8.L. Commitment on EVALUATION AND IMPACT

### Learners and staff can evaluate services.

#### QUALITY CRITERIA

Processes are in place for evaluating services and measuring impact where possible.

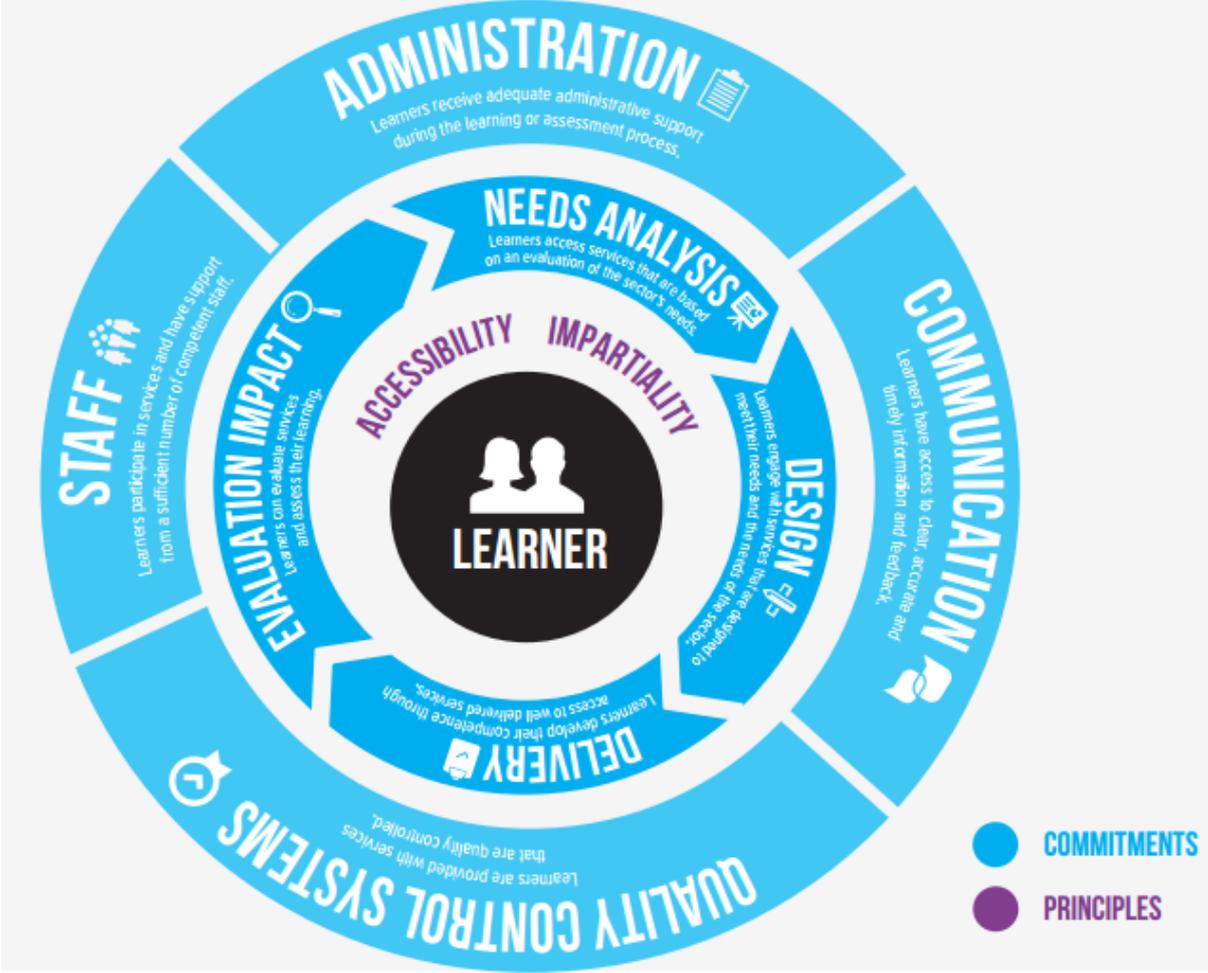
#### KEY ACTIONS

##### Evaluation of services

1. Learning providers offer opportunities for learners and staff to evaluate processes and outcomes.
2. After action reviews and “capitalisation” (review of learning +++) is conducted and the results are used to improve future services.
3. Reviews and evaluation inform improvement of services.
4. Learners and facilitators contribute to lessons learnt and these are actively taken forward (not just identified).

##### Measure impact

5. Methods to measure improved performance are used where possible



## ASSESSMENT STANDARD

### 5. A Commitment on ASSESSMENT NEEDS ANALYSIS

**Assessed people access assessment that is appropriate and relevant to their needs.**

#### QUALITY CRITERIA

Assessment provision is based on the needs of the humanitarian sector and the individual.

#### KEY ACTIONS

1. The assessment provider analyses the humanitarian sector's competency assessment needs/recognition needs.
2. The assessment provider identifies gaps.
3. The assessment provider identifies the competency assessment needs for individuals.
4. The assessment provider identifies and analyses the existing competency framework within the humanitarian sector or relevant to it.

## 6. A. Commitment on DESIGN

**Assessed people engage with services that are designed to meet their needs and the assessment roadmap is clearly defined and impartial.**

### QUALITY CRITERIA

Services are designed to effectively meet identified assessment needs according to a recognised humanitarian competency framework.

### KEY ACTIONS

(access & impartiality)

1. Assessment provider designs an inclusive assessment.
2. Assessment provider identifies existing assessment mechanism (in the humanitarian sector or relevant to it)
3. Assessment provider offers the possibility to access the assessment remotely and/or in person.

(characteristics of the assessment to be designed)

4. Assessment provider establishes the assessment as a process-oriented exercise.
5. Assessment provider ensures the assessment is thorough – sufficient to prove standard has been met.
6. Assessment providers design and use accurate mark schemes.

(competency framework + competencies definition)

7. The evaluation of competencies relies on a competency framework validated by the sector.
8. The assessment is made against a competency framework linked to a function or profession
9. Competencies are clearly defined with clear limits. / Assessment provider define clear criteria to assess. / There is a ranking of criteria.
10. Competencies are prioritized.
11. The different levels of competency are defined.
12. The means of verification are adapted for each level.
13. Assessment is based on performance indicators describing how the competence should be assessed.

(methods)

14. Assessment methods are appropriate. / Variety of methods according to competency to be assessed.
15. The assessment mechanism is based on practice observation in real-life professional situations / or simulated.

(on going quality assurance)

16. Assessment provider guarantees that reasonable adjustments to meet the evolving needs are made.

## 7. A. Commitment on DELIVERY

**Assessed people have access to well delivered services that are an impartial and fair assessment of competencies that establish clear future learning pathways and progression.**

### QUALITY CRITERIA

Services provide a clear roadmap towards the development of the specific competencies being assessed and they are impartial and fair.

### KEY ACTIONS

(first contact)

1. Assessment providers provide information about how the competency will be assessed
2. The final objective of the assessment is defined in advance: reorientation or progression within the same organization.
3. Assessment providers clearly indicate learning pathways and progression routes

(how to go about the assessment)

4. Assessment of competencies uses the same criteria for everyone.
5. Assessment is based on controlled assessment sessions / same or equivalent assessment session/ process for each person being assessed
6. Assessment is conducted in a context of mutual trust.
7. Assessment is standardised and moderated.

(on going quality assurance)

8. Assessment providers offer & and are open to receive relevant, clear and timely feedback.
9. Assessment is kept up to date.
10. Assessment provider guarantees that reasonable adjustments to meet the evolving needs are made.
11. The assessment provider has a governing body equivalent to monitor its effectiveness.

(system for recognition)

12. A system is available to deliver a report // badge that the assessed people can present to current/potential employers.
13. The assessment outcome has the aim of helping individuals staff to develop themselves.
14. The assessment provider offers recommendations on what an individual should do next to move forward in the progression process.
15. Assessment informs the individuals about their competencies; allows the organisation to identify staff weaknesses, and how to help them progress.
16. Involves a support in the job to allow on-going improvement.
17. The assessment leads to recognition / and potential career mobility.
18. Assessed people receive a recognised and credible certification.

(post delivery services)

19. Assessed people receive recommendations on how to improve competencies as a result of the assessment process.
20. Assessment is ongoing and constant all along the professional career

## 8.A. Commitment on EVALUATION AND IMPACT

### Assessed people and staff can evaluate services.

#### QUALITY CRITERIA

Processes are in place for evaluating services and measuring impact where possible.

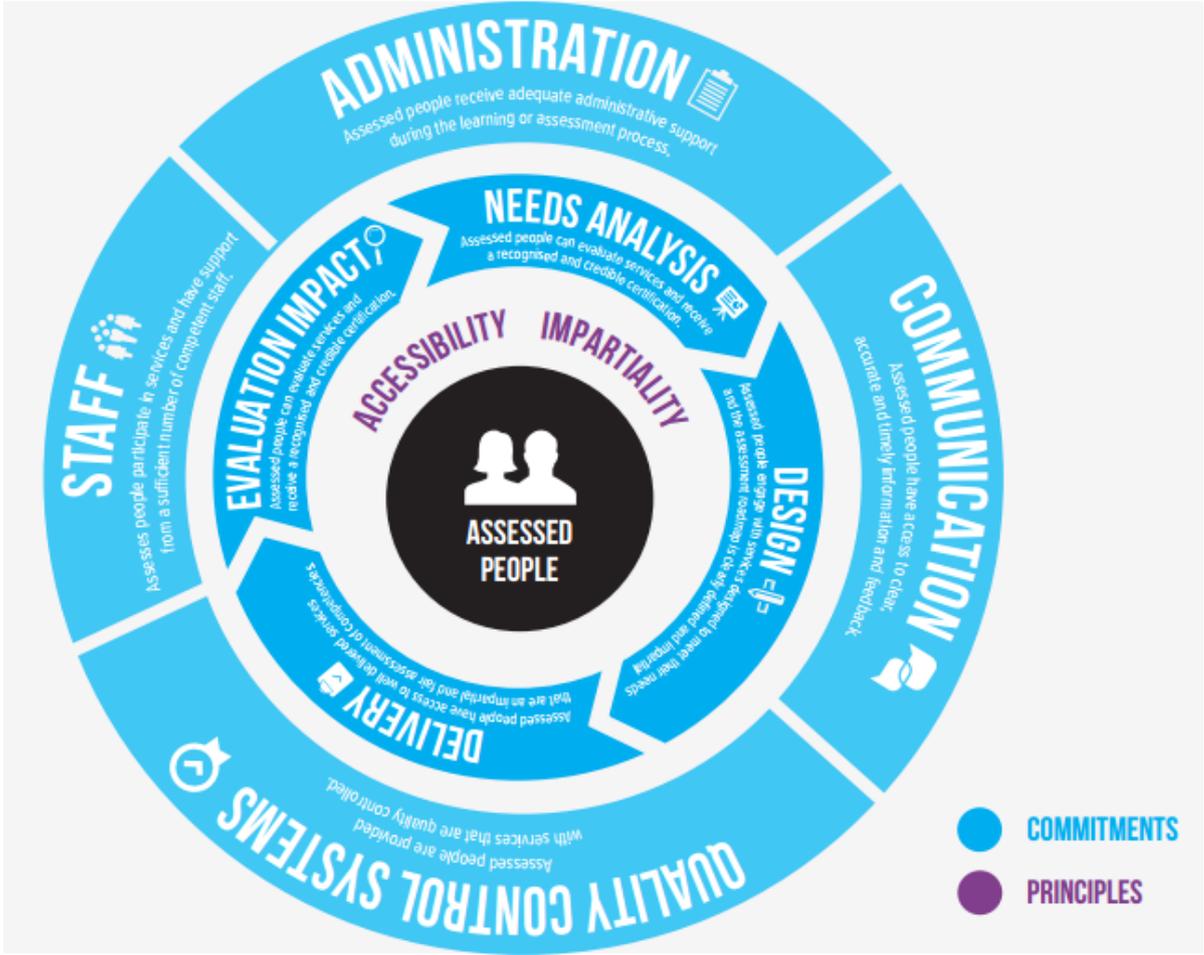
#### KEY ACTIONS

Evaluation of services

1. Assessment providers offer opportunities for assessed people and staff to evaluate processes and outcomes.
2. Reviews and evaluation inform improvement of services.
3. Assessed people and assessors contribute to lessons learnt and these are actively taken forward (not just identified).

Measure impact

4. Methods to measure improved performance are used where possible



## GLOSSARY- WORKING DRAFT

*Possible terms and definitions for use within the standards- to be discussed during consultation:*

### **assessment**

the act of judging or deciding the value and/or quality of something

OR

involves the process of "taking stock" of, or understanding, an individual's characteristics, status, or performance, and typically involves considering and interpreting information from several sources of data. It might involve, for example, observations, interviews, or other kinds of information

OR

the assessment of student learning involves describing, collecting, recording, scoring, and interpreting information about performance.

### **assessment provider**

an organisation that provides assessments of competencies for humanitarian workers

### **assurance**

The maintenance of a desired level of quality in the **delivery of learning and assessment** or the **production of training programmes**, especially by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production.

OR

A way of preventing mistakes and avoiding problems when delivering solutions or services to customers;

OR

ISO 9000 definition: Part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. It is the prevention of mistakes by managing critical points during a project cycle. [www.Meriam-Webster.com /dictionary](http://www.Meriam-Webster.com/dictionary); ISO9000

### **capabilities**

to have the abilities needed to do a job

### **capacity-building**

to improve the ability of an individual or organisation

OR

process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world.

*Alternative terminology: 'capacity sharing' 'capacity strengthening'*

### **commitment**

reflect what humanitarian workers can expect from the organisations providing learning and assessment services.

### **competence**

competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development

OR

competency is a recognised ability to perform within a professional context and includes the application of skills, knowledge and attitudes.

**criteria**

a principle or standard by which something may be judged or decided.

**humanitarian workers**

people who work in a humanitarian or development role

**key action**

an action to be taken by learning and assessment providers to fulfil the Commitments.

**KSA**

development of knowledge, skills and attitudes which contribute to improved competence

**learning services**

services include any learning modality that a provider uses e.g. face-to-face, e-learning, coaching, mentoring

**learning / training provider**

an organisation that provides learning/training services

**mechanism**

a process by which something takes place or is brought about

**quality**

the degree of excellence of something

OR

the ability of a product or service to meet or exceed customer requirements

**quality criteria**

describe how organisations and staff should be working to meet the Commitments.

OR

a principle or standard by which the ability of the organisation to meet Commitments may be judged or decided.

**quality assurance mechanism**

the process that measures and judges if the standard has been met

**resources**

relates to both human resources and physical resources

OR

a supply of physical materials, labour and capital

**staff**

any designated representative of an organisation, including national, international, and permanent or short-term employees, as well as volunteers and consultants.

**standard**

an agreed way to do something

**target learners**

the group of people a learning programme will be useful for or relevant to.

– to include an understanding of their existing competencies and experience in order to target gaps in their KSA.