

Kaplan Financial

# Approach to Teaching, Learning and Assessment

2020





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## 1. Introduction

The Kaplan Teaching and Learning Strategy promotes a shared understanding amongst faculty, staff and other stakeholders of our key policies and priorities.

It guides us to the approach we think is best, and why. It also highlights professional teaching best practices that we aim to emulate throughout our company.

The Teaching and Learning Strategy answers the following questions:

- ✓ What helps shape and inform our approach to teaching, learning and assessment?
- ✓ How do we design courses, teach students and assess their performance?
- ✓ How do we maintain quality and consistency across all of our courses?



## 1.1. Independent assessment

There are a number of areas where we differ from more traditional educational organisations. The main one being that Kaplan is not responsible for curriculum design for the accounting and tax qualifications, nor the writing and assessing of the examinations used to determine a student's competence.

Although the professional bodies consult widely with a range of stakeholders, including Kaplan when developing the curriculum, the final document is published and owned by them.

For apprentices, we take a more holistic view of the curriculum to address not just the knowledge required by an apprentice for their professional body, but also the knowledge, skills and behaviours stipulated by the apprenticeship standard and the end point assessment requirements.

## 1.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our values define Kaplan UK's culture and reflect what we deliver to our students, customers and employees each day. We aim to create an environment which embraces diversity and promotes equality and inclusion – inspiring everyone to succeed.

Every student can develop as an independent learner. They can study their chosen subject in depth and enhance their analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Initial assessment and consideration of reasonable adjustments are carried out to ensure all students have equal access to learning. All of our student-facing staff are EDI trained and are equipped to provide equality of learning opportunity for all students.



## 2. Approach to Teaching, Learning and Assessment

### 2.1 Course Design

#### 2.1.1 Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes, produced by the professional bodies, feature in all Kaplan learning materials. They also help the Content Specialists shape content and inform the direction learning should take.

Students are made aware of the intended outcome of their chosen course through the enrolment process, 'onboarding' and our learning materials. Recruitment and admission policies are underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes.

#### 2.1.2 Evidence based approach

Kaplan follows an evidenced based approach, using data to help inform both pedagogy and course design. Gathering data and interpreting feedback is designed to help students achieve their desired outcomes efficiently and effectively.

This has helped shape the way the content is structured. To some degree, it separates pure knowledge from the application of knowledge in a range of different contexts.

Preparing for the exam is the last part of what we refer to as our three phased approach:

#### Knowledge

The knowledge phase sets the foundation for the learning experience. It's where students are first introduced to new knowledge through information and examples related to the lesson objective.

This is an essential first step that should be mastered before students move onto application.

#### Application

This phase allows students to apply what they've learned through additional activities including: question practice, case study or group work. Research shows that reinforcing knowledge by application contributes towards the development of mastery.

This work, during the application phase, is an essential component in embedding earlier knowledge. It aids both long-term retention and understanding.

#### Preparation

Once students have prepared and practised, they're ready to perform and put their newly acquired understanding to the test. With the final phase, the student is able to demonstrate their mastery by answering exam style questions, and solving exam standard problems.

These questions/problems may be similar in difficulty to those seen as examples or worked exercises in the previous two phases. However, more importantly, they will look and feel much like the real exam.

## 2.2 Delivery channels and learning environments

### 2.2.1 Delivery channels – blended

Kaplan offers students a range of ways to study. The four delivery channels have unique attributes but also much in common as one channel can be blended with another.

For example classroom is predominantly a live, face to face, medium but will include online content. In addition, a student may choose to study individual subjects using different channels, in effect blending their study.

The four delivery channels are **Classroom, Live Online, Distance learning** and **OnDemand**.

All students, regardless of study method, are supported by a team of academic support tutors. These tutors are available to answer queries via: email, call back, or live chat during our opening hours (including evenings and weekends).

#### Scheduled teaching:

Scheduled, or timetable, teaching is either Classroom or Live Online. Classroom and Live Online require different approaches to teaching, recognising that tutors are not getting real time feedback in the same way, guidance to students needs to be very specific and engagement continually encouraged.

#### Flexible teaching

Flexible teaching allows students to study whenever they want, and at their own pace and includes Distance learning and OnDemand learning.



**Classroom**



**Live Online**



**Distance Learning**



**On Demand**

## 2.2.2 Learning environments

Kaplan has a range of learning environments, each with different qualities: physical, online, social and work-based. As a result of these and mindful of our four delivery channels it's become necessary in some instances to change our pedagogical approach.

### The Physical Learning Environment

Kaplans physical learning environments are specifically designed for the type of instruction being delivered.

Our "Collaborative Classrooms" have circular tables to encourage students to talk among themselves and a multi board display to create a different group dynamic, by contrast the "Lecture Classrooms" are forward facing, directing everyone's attention towards the tutor.

### The Online Learning Environment

Enhancing learning with technology is an important way to get students to fully engage with their studies. All students have access to MyKaplan, Kaplan's online learning environment.

### The Social Learning Environment

Kaplan is currently trying to increase the levels of activity throughout its social learning environments. These are areas where students can engage in social activities to help them learn from each other in a less structured way. All subjects have some type of forum often supported by live chat.

### The Work-based Environment

We have a large number of students studying on Apprenticeship programmes. These offer students the opportunity to gain formal recognition and academic credit for learning that occurs in the workplace.

## 2.2.3 Self-directed learners

Across all our delivery channels, we recognise the need to promote independent learning.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility beyond their formal structured study so they can develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.







## 2.3 Teaching Principles and Pedagogy

### 2.3.1 Teaching Principles

#### Tutor expertise

Tutors and academic support staff are committed to delivering effective teaching and learning, giving all students the chance to reach their potential. Most of the tutors we recruit have professional and/or industry backgrounds and a postgraduate financial qualification.

We encourage them to continue their development either internally, with courses offered by the Kaplan Training Academy (KTA), or using external training programmes.

#### Personalisation

In the Learning Strategy, we define personalisation as: adjusting the pace (individualisation), adjusting the approach (differentiation) and connecting to the learners' interests. MyKaplan allows students to assess their own learning using a range of different methods. By capturing data we're then able to provide feedback to tutors on individual students.

#### Formal and Informal learning

Delivering formal structured learning programmes remains the main objective for Kaplan. However, we are committed to encouraging a greater range of options for informal learning, including the Kaplan Knowledge and Videobanks.

We define 'formal learning' as organised and structured, with agreed learning outcomes. Informal by definition means 'less formal', requiring students to develop their own independent learning pathway. As such, there are no predetermined learning outcomes.



## Continuous feedback and evaluation

Students are encouraged, by their tutors, to regularly provide feedback on the quality of their learning. This could be an informal conversation with their tutor, or something more structured such as a survey or a course evaluation. This process should assure and enhance the students' learning experience.

### 2.3.2 Pedagogy

In addition to the principles above, our tutors use a range of different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment including:

- ✓ Direct instruction
- ✓ Differentiation
- ✓ Using e-learning and technology
- ✓ Multi-Sensory learning
- ✓ Collaborative learning
- ✓ Experiential learning
- ✓ Relating theory and practice

## 2.4 Assessment

Assessment both influences and directs our approach to teaching and learning. Kaplan prepares its own internal assessments for most qualifications allowing students to test their understanding with exam standard questions.

Our approach to assessment can be summarised below:

### Formative assessment

Formative assessments provide immediate feedback to our students, to facilitate the learning process. They can be diagnostic assessments or assessments for learning. With the latter this includes, but is not limited to, questioning, peer assessment and self-assessment.

### Summative assessment

Summative assessments measure the extent to which our students have achieved the learning outcomes. It includes results from Kaplan internal tests and the final exam. The purpose behind it is to quantify and reward achievement, and the data is important for measuring performance.

### Marking feedback

Providing students with feedback is designed to close the gap between present and potential learning. Across all our delivery channels, feedback is provided verbally and/or in writing depending upon the type of assessment.

Feedback is constructive and forms part of an ongoing dialogue between the student and Kaplan. This is all in the spirit of offering guidance for further development and progression.



## 3. Maintaining quality – Teaching, Learning and Assessment

### 3.1 Recruitment and Selection

One of the main sources of new tutors is the pool of past Kaplan students. This is because they are recently qualified so are technically up to date, can still relate to being a student and have experienced the type of teaching we deliver.

### 3.2 Faculty and Academic Support – development

The Kaplan Training Academy (KTA) and The Apprenticeship Academy were created as centres of excellence. Their role is to provide staff with resources and courses to make this process as easy as possible.

#### 3.2.1 Internal Training – The Kaplan Training Academy

The Kaplan Training Academy (KTA) delivers a comprehensive programme of training and development for all our academic staff. Everything the KTA delivers is consistent with the broader objectives of Kaplan, to “make a difference to every learner and inspire them to succeed”.

#### 3.2.2 Continuing development of professional practice

Teaching, learning and assessment at Kaplan is informed by internal training, reflection, evaluation and engagement with relevant CPD activities. All Kaplan tutors have professional qualifications and are required by their institutes to annually confirm they’ve engaged in relevant CPD activity.

### Teaching qualifications

The continued professional development of our staff is essential if we are to remain at the forefront of what we do. With this in mind, we offer a Master's level Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCert) currently with The University of Essex.

### Vocational qualifications

For members of staff without the necessary entry requirements, but are looking for an introduction to teaching, we offer the Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training.

Talent coaches are also required to complete their assessor's qualification CAVA, if they do not already hold one.

### 3.2.3 Reflective practice

Reflecting on professional practice is clearly something each individual has to do for themselves. However, by creating opportunities for reflection, Kaplan ensures it's at the forefront of a tutor's mind.

### 3.2.4 Apprenticeship Academy

All Talent Coaches who join Kaplan, whether experienced or new to the role, spend three weeks on commencement of employment in the Apprenticeship Academy. When this is complete the Talent Coaches are provided with additional support from their mentors and CPD training.



## 3.3 Observations, feedback and external accreditation

### 3.3.1 Observation programme

Kaplan has a robust system for observing teaching, learning and assessment consisting of a two-stage approach of direct (formal) observations, and peer (informal) observations.

Targets are set and monitored as part of the overall quality control of faculty. For example, the number of tutors observed and their level of competency is recorded and benchmarked against predetermined standards.

### 3.3.2 Feedback mechanisms

There are a number of ways in which we gather feedback to enable us to monitor performance and identify any areas that require development:

- ✔ **Internal/external surveys** – We source data from student end of course feedback, the annual student satisfaction survey, and employer feedback. A key metric for us is our Net Promoter Score (NPS).
- ✔ **Pass rates** – We analyse this data and compare it with national averages to identify areas that require improvement.

### 3.3.3 Complaints and Appeals

Our Complaints and Appeals policy is in the policies section on the website.

### 3.3.4 External accreditation

Kaplan employs a team of instructional designers to ensure its online content is of the highest quality with regard to teaching and learning.

The instructional team follows a systematic approach supported by learning and instructional theory to design and develop content and other learning solutions to support the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This systematic approach is entirely consistent with Kaplans evidence-based agenda.



## 3.4 Course design and learning materials

### 3.4.1 Course design

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### 3.4.2 Learning Materials

All of our teaching, learning and assessment materials are subject to an internal quality assurance process. The Content Specialists are an integral part of this quality process given their high levels of involvement in the creation of the original learning materials.

The Content Specialist is required to have an excellent level of technical expertise together with an ability to convey information in a way that is easily understood and consumed by the student.

## 3.5 Quality of Assessment – marking

### Maintain marking quality

Our Academic Support and Logistics teams are responsible for the quality of internal marking. All markers new to Kaplan go through a rigorous recruitment process that starts with a sample script being sent out for marking in accordance with predetermined guidelines.

When returned, the script is judged based on its score against the marking quality matrix. Any comments on how the marking can be improved will be fed back to the marker. If the marker is of the required standard they will join the Kaplan marking team.



