



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Standards and Testing Agency business plan

1 April 2015 - 31 March 2016

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The Standards and Testing Agency

Purpose

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is an executive agency of the Department for Education. Our primary purpose is to provide an effective and robust testing, assessment and moderation system to measure and monitor pupils' progress from reception up to the end of key stage 2.

We are responsible for the development and delivery of assessments and testing in England, under statutory instruments, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. In carrying out these functions, we:

- develop and implement assessment policy in schools in line with ministerial priorities;
- develop high quality and rigorous national curriculum tests and assessments in line with ministerial policy;
- undertake operational delivery of national curriculum tests and assessments (including printing, distribution, provision of systems, marking and data capture);
- support the process of teacher assessment moderation in order that data is robust and can be used for national statistics; and
- support schools and other stakeholders.

We are responsible for setting and maintaining test standards, including standards related to marking, and producing guidance and exemplification materials for key stage 1(KS1) and key stage 2(KS2) English writing teacher assessment.

Responsibility for the management of the professional skills tests for prospective teachers was transferred from the National College for Teaching and Leadership to the STA in November 2013. Responsibility for the General Qualifications logistics service provided to centres and examiners was transferred to us on 1 April 2014.

Vision

Supporting schools in raising standards in education, through the successful delivery of world class tests and assessments that enable every child to realise their unique potential.

'Supporting schools' means:

- providing clear, timely, accessible guidance and communications;
- providing a helpline that meets its service level agreement;
- ensuring customer complaints are investigated and resolved in a timely manner;

- ensuring stakeholders are consulted when process changes are being considered, and that intelligence from complaints, the helpline and other forums is used to drive continual service improvements;
- where the integrity of pupils' results is questioned, investigating in a sensitive professional manner.

'Successful delivery' is:

- developing the required tests to the agreed timeline;
- providing systems that enable schools to order tests, register pupils, apply for access arrangements, submit teacher assessments and access pupils' results;
- ensuring that schools receive their test papers on time;
- ensuring that opportunity for loss or breach of security of materials is minimised, including when transported to and from schools;
- ensuring marking is of a high quality and completed on time;
- ensuring that test results are returned to schools on time and accurately reflect the marks awarded;
- ensuring that teacher assessment is moderated to provide a robust and reliable national dataset;
- following rigorous procurement processes to ensure value for money and that high quality suppliers are in place to support delivery;
- ensuring all deliverables are achieved within a tightly managed and controlled budget; and
- ensuring all staff have access to training and development opportunities that enable them to fulfil their role.

'World class tests and assessments' are:

- designed to meet the purpose of the assessment, with questions that appropriately assess the curriculum and standards that reflect the range of the pupils being assessed;
- intended to support the breadth and depth of teaching across the relevant curriculum;
- developed using recognised procedures, such as pre-testing, expert review and statistical analysis;
- high quality such that they meet Ofqual's common assessment criteria of validity, reliability, comparability, minimising bias and manageability; and
- where appropriate, designed to take account of the changing way in which pupils learn and use technology.

Values

To deliver our vision we intend to be:

- evidence based – ensuring policy development and operational delivery aligns with international best practice;
- customer focused – meeting the varied requirements of all of our stakeholders including pupils, schools and ministers;
- a learning organisation – recognised for our willingness to learn and improve our services year on year;
- an employer of choice – valued by our staff for our focus on training and development;
- financially sound – living within our means and always looking to reduce the burden on the taxpayer; and
- innovative – ensuring that all aspects of test development and delivery maximise the potential offered by technology and new ways of working.

Objectives

At April 2015 we are responsible for:

- test production and operational delivery of existing KS1 tests;
- the timely development and delivery of a valid and reliable phonics screening check;
- test production and operational delivery of existing KS2 tests in English and mathematics;
- collecting statutory teacher assessment data for KS2;
- ensuring the consistency and accuracy of data generated by teacher assessment for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile, KS1 and KS2 English writing through the monitoring and scrutiny of local authorities (LAs);
- secure, timely preparation of valid and reliable statutory tests and assessments for the 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 test cycles;
- developing new KS1 and KS2 tests, to sit alongside the new national curriculum, due for launch in 2016;
- developing and preparing for operational delivery of the matrix sampling KS2 science tests in 2016;
- providing a logistics service for collection of test scripts and other materials from centres and delivery to examiners for general qualifications, functional skills and other accreditations;
- managing the ongoing supply contract for the delivery of the skills tests and developing new tests to replace the existing materials;
- managing the first administration of the new reception baseline assessments from September 2015 and conducting relevant research to support their implementation;
- developing and implementing assessment policy for schools, including the Commission on assessment without levels; and
- procuring a Test Operations Future Operating Model service for commencement in 2018.

The 'Assessment and reporting arrangements', contains the statutory information and guidance on all aspects of national curriculum assessment and reporting for the EYFS, and key stages 1 and 2. They cover topics such as administering the tests or check, access arrangements, teacher assessment and reporting pupils' achievements to parents.

The level-setting process includes the review of statistical and judgemental evidence to ensure standards are maintained year on year and is carried out in the presence of Ofqual and teacher association representatives.

The STA's Chief Executive has a specific role with respect to test standards and level-setting. The Chief Executive signs off the content of the national curriculum tests and the level-setting process, acting independently of the department and ministers to ensure confidence in the validity of test outcomes.

Programmes of work

Assessment policy

The STA is responsible for developing assessment policy in schools in line with ministerial priorities. The main focus for 2015/16 is to support schools in the transition to assessment without levels and the other changes to the national assessment framework.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Reception baseline

The reception baseline is an assessment of pupils within the first half term of starting school and will be administered for the first time from September 2015. The purpose of the reception baseline is to support the accountability framework and help assess school effectiveness. The STA is responsible for maintaining the list of suppliers who are approved to deliver the reception baseline and conducting appropriate studies to ensure that the outcomes can support the accountability framework.

EYFS Profile

The EYFS Profile summarises and describes pupils' attainment at the end of the EYFS. The STA is responsible for ensuring the consistency and accuracy of data generated by teacher assessment judgements by scrutinising moderation practice in LAs and undertaking external moderation visits to a sample of LAs to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities.

Key stage 1

English and mathematics tests

The statutory KS1 national curriculum tasks and tests are designed to help inform the final teacher assessment judgement reported for each pupil at the end of KS1. In the academic year 2014/15, the STA was responsible for providing a website where schools and LAs could order standard and modified materials and managing the printing, production and delivery of the materials.

From the academic year 2015/16, the STA is also responsible for developing annual KS1 tests to assess the new national curriculum.

English and mathematics teacher assessment moderation

Teacher assessment is used to assess pupils at the end of KS1. The STA is responsible for ensuring the consistency and accuracy of data generated by teacher assessment judgements by scrutinising practice in LAs and undertaking external moderation visits to a sample of LAs to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities.

For the academic year 2015/16, the STA is also responsible for the development of the new framework for teacher assessment.

Phonics screening check

The phonics screening check determines whether pupils have met an age appropriate standard in phonics by the end of year 1. Pupils in year 2 must also take the check if they did not meet the required standard in year 1 or have not taken it before. The STA is responsible for developing and delivering the check.

In the academic year 2015/16, the STA will conduct a pilot to determine the implications of extending the check to pupils beyond year 2 who have not met the required standard in previous years.

Key stage 2

English and mathematics tests

The statutory tests in English reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics are administered to pupils at the end of KS2 in May each year and the results are used in the accountability framework. In the academic year 2014/15, STA was responsible for developing and delivering the tests at levels 3-5 and level 6.

This involves: writing test questions; undertaking review by experts, including teachers; trialling test questions; constructing test papers; printing, collation and delivery; development and management of systems; management of test administration, including access arrangements; communications with schools; external marking, including managing a reviews service; investigation of maladministration; data management; and returning of results to schools.

In readiness for future test cycles we are:

- developing tests for future years, including tests of the new national curriculum from the academic year 2015/16
- mobilising our resources, and the services of our suppliers, in preparation for the 2016 test cycle; and
- planning and procuring to source suppliers to support operational delivery of services from 2018; and
- producing sample materials and guidance around scaled scores.

Science sampling tests

Science sampling tests were introduced to monitor national standards in science at the end of KS2. The tests are conducted biennially and the next tests will be administered in 2016. The STA is responsible for developing and delivering the science sampling tests.

Key stage 2 teacher assessment

Schools are required to report a teacher assessment in the core subjects at the end of KS2 for all pupils. The STA is responsible for collecting the data for teacher assessment.

For the academic year 2015/16, the STA is also responsible for the development of the new framework for teacher assessment.

Moderation of key stage 2 English writing

For English writing, the STA is responsible for supporting and ensuring implementation of the arrangements to moderate teacher assessments by scrutinising practice in LAs and undertaking external moderation visits to a sample of LAs to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities.

General Qualifications Logistics

The STA provides a traceable exam scripts dispatch service for exam centres via Parcelforce Worldwide, known as the Yellow Label Service. This is used to deliver unmarked exam scripts, coursework and controlled assessments for externally assessed general qualifications, functional skills and other eligible accredited qualifications to examiners.

Professional skills tests for prospective teachers

The skills tests were established to assess the skills and knowledge which all teachers should have to carry out their wider professional role effectively. The STA is responsible for managing the supplier that delivers the skills tests and for the development of new tests.

Deliverables

Guidance and support for schools and local authorities

- Publish and disseminate guidance on statutory national assessment arrangements from EYFS to KS2.

Project, programme and risk management

- Achievable plans and relevant project and programme management (PPM) documentation are in place to maintain tight control and visibility of all cycles.
- Risks and issues are continually identified and actively managed in accordance with the Risk and Issue Management strategy.

Financial and commercial management

- STA delivers its remit and operational business within the budget agreed for 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.
- Rigorous procurement processes are followed to ensure value for money and that high quality suppliers are in place to deliver the programmes of work for all cycles.
- Suppliers and contracts are managed consistently in a way that can demonstrate best value and contracts are monitored to ensure that supplier performance is as agreed.
- STA conducts its business operations using best commercial practices and in compliance with EU rules, UK procurement regulations and Cabinet Office and departmental policies.

Improving services and processes

- A full evaluation for every workstream is completed by October 2015, to ensure that lessons learned can be used to make improvements to future cycles.
- Stakeholder feedback is sought at regular intervals through a range of channels and stakeholders are consulted when process changes are being considered.

Assessment policy

- Commission on assessment without levels to support schools with the transition to the new assessment framework.

2015 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and moderation

- EYFS Profile teacher assessment data is reliable as a consequence of moderation.

- EYFS Profile moderation arrangements are monitored and scrutinised by STA.

Reception baseline

- Comparability study report published.

2015 key stage 1

- KS1 teacher assessment data is reliable as a consequence of moderation.
- KS1 test materials, free from printing errors, are provided to those schools that order them.

2015 phonics screening check

- Phonics screening check materials are developed and delivered to all schools with eligible pupils.

Development of all statutory tests and assessments

- Tests are developed using recognised procedures, such as pre-testing, expert review and statistical analysis, which generate evidence to demonstrate that the tests satisfy Ofqual's common assessment criteria of validity, reliability, comparability, minimising bias and manageability. This includes additional processes required to introduce tests of the new national curriculum.
- High quality test materials are developed and handed to print for KS2 English reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling, mathematics, science and phonics screening check.

2015 key stage 2 English and mathematics tests

- National curriculum tests in English and mathematics are delivered successfully and securely, and levels of lost scripts and missing results are comparable to previous years.
- Quality of marking is at least as good as previous years.
- All data feeds are sent to the Data Services Division as set out in the Assessment Technical Requirements Document.
- Secure timely mobilisation of the national curriculum tests for delivery in 2016.

2016 key stage 2 science sampling tests

- Secure timely mobilisation of the science sampling tests for delivery in 2016.

Key stage 2 teacher assessment data collection and moderation

- Appropriate systems and arrangements are in place to collect statutory teacher assessment data for KS2.
- KS2 writing teacher assessment data is reliable as a consequence of moderation.
- All data feeds are sent to the Data Services Division as set out in the Assessment Technical Requirements Document.

Performance indicators

Provision of key stage 2 results

99.9% of assessing pupils receive a complete set of test results data at their respective school, containing a correct test result (not withstanding any marking or process reviews) for every test sat by a pupil by 00:01 on Tuesday 7 July 2015.

Return of key stage 2 test scripts to schools

99.9% of assessing pupils receive a complete set of test scripts marked on screen, at their respective school; and their respective school has access to a complete set of test scripts marked onscreen through the script return website.

Helpline service

At least 90% of inbound calls to the helpline, for any single working day, are answered by an operator within five rings (15 seconds) during helpline operating hours.

Web-based systems to support schools

NCA tools is available 24 hours a day with an availability of at least 99.8%.

Professional skills tests for prospective teachers

The system for delivering and operating tests is available for at least 99.9% of the time that the test centres are open for testing.

General Qualifications logistics

99% of all consignments are collected from centres and delivered for marking.

Programme delivery milestones

Assessment policy	Date
Publication of final report from Commission on Assessment Without Levels	July 2015

Table 1: 2015 Assessment policy milestones

2015 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and moderation	Date
External moderation visits complete	June 2015
Completion of moderation process	September 2015

Table 2: 2015 EYFS Profile and moderation delivery milestones

2015 Reception baseline	Date
First administration of reception baseline assessments	September 2015
Publication of comparability study report	January 2016

Table 3: 2015 Reception baseline delivery milestones

2015 key stage 1 moderation	Date
External moderation visits complete	July 2015
Completion of moderation process	September 2015

Table 4: 2015 KS1 moderation delivery milestones

2015 phonics screening check	Date
All phonics screening check materials in schools	12 June 2015
Check week	15-19 June 2015

Table 5: 2015 phonics screening check delivery milestones

2015 key stage 2 English and mathematics tests	Date
All KS2 test materials in schools	1 May 2015
Test week	11-14 May 2015
Judgemental exercise / level setting for all 2015 KS2 statutory tests completed	2 July 2015
Statutory deadline for schools to submit teacher assessment data	26 June 2015
Return of pupils' results to schools and local authorities	7 July 2015

Review outcomes returned to schools	4 September 2015
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Table 6: 2015 KS2 English and mathematics tests delivery milestones

2015 moderation of end of key stage 2 English writing teacher assessment	Date
External moderation visits complete	July 2015
Evaluation of KS2 writing moderation process complete	September 2015

Table 7: 2015 moderation of end of KS2 English writing teacher assessment delivery milestones

2016 key stage 2 science sampling test	Date
Science sampling Invitation to Quote sent to suppliers	June 2015
Supplier confirmed at Sub-Programme Board	July/August 2015
Award contract	August 2015
Start-up meeting	September 2015

Table 8: 2016 KS2 science sampling test

Development of statutory tests and assessments	Date
Technical pre-test trial for future statutory tests completed	July 2015
Item validation trial for future statutory tests completed	July 2015
Item writing for future statutory tests of the new national curriculum completed	October 2015
All 2016 statutory tests constructed and content signed off	January 2016
Expert review of future statutory tests completed	February 2016

Table 9: development of statutory tests and assessments delivery milestones

Delivery of 2016 statutory tests and assessments (provisional at this stage)	Date
KS1 (including phonics screening check) 'Assessment and reporting arrangements' published	September 2015
KS2 'Assessment and reporting arrangements' published	September 2015
KS1 test orders deadline	November 2015
KS2 test orders deadline	November 2015
All 2016 KS1 statutory tests sent to print (including modified tests)	January 2016

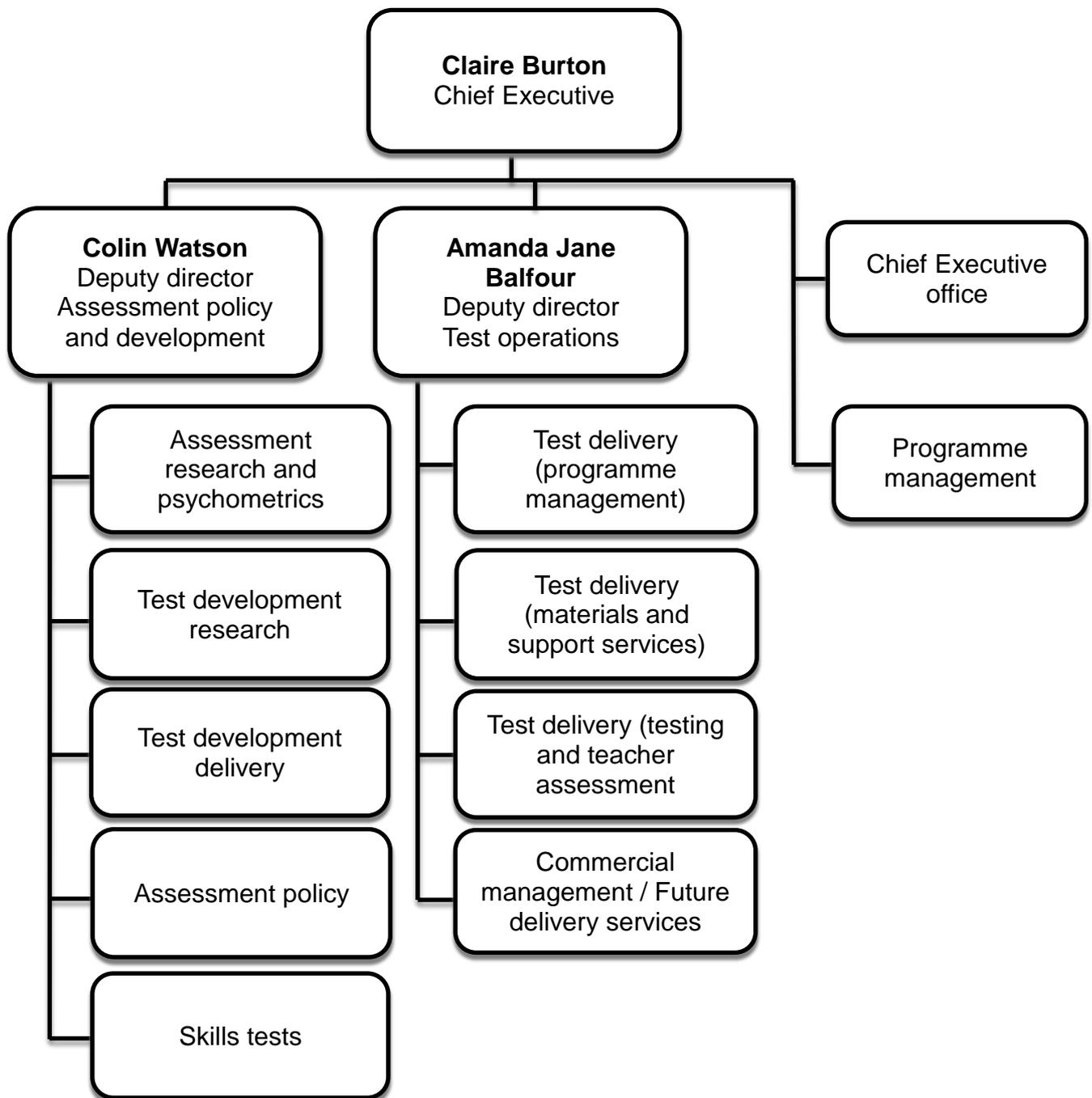
All 2016 KS2 statutory tests sent to print (including modified tests)	February 2016
KS1 statutory tests sent for collation	March 2016
KS2 statutory tests pupil registration deadline	March 2016

Table 10: delivery of 2016 statutory tests and assessments delivery milestones

General Qualifications logistics	Date
May functional skills series	May 2015
Date of first examination on common timetable for Summer series	May 2015
Date of final examination on common timetable for Summer series	June 2015
June functional skills series	June 2015
July functional skills series	July 2015
October functional skills series	October 2015
Date of first examination on common timetable for November series	November 2015
Date of final examination on common timetable for November series	November 2015
November functional skills series	November 2015
January functional skills series	January 2016
February functional skills series including controlled assessments	February 2016
March functional skills series including controlled assessments	March 2016

Table 11: General Qualifications logistics delivery milestones

Annex A: Organisational structure



Annex B: Expenditure

For 2015-16 STA plans to spend:

Area of spend	£'000
Administration budget*	4,200
Programme budget	49,900
Capital budget	0
Total	54,100

* Shared services are accounted for on a nominal basis and are not, therefore, included in these figures.



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