

National curriculum assessments

Code of practice



February 2009
Ofqual/09/4122

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Foreword

Ofqual, the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator, is the regulator of qualifications, tests and examinations in England. We ensure that children, young people and adult learners get the results they deserve, that standards are maintained and that qualifications count now and in the future.

As a regulator, we step in and exercise our regulatory authority where there is a risk to the integrity of the system or to a learner. We aim to be consistent in our decision making and to make our decisions clear and understandable.

Ofqual's strategy is to adopt a proportionate approach to regulation, aiming to intervene only when necessary, after assessing whether there is a risk to the fairness of the system or to an individual learner. Ofqual's regulatory approach follows the five principles of regulation established by the government's Better Regulation Task Force:

- proportionate – regulators should only intervene when necessary; remedies should be appropriate to the risk posed, and costs identified and minimised
- accountable – regulators must be able to justify decisions and be subject to public scrutiny
- consistent – government rules and standards must be joined up and implemented fairly
- transparent – regulators should be open, and keep regulations simple and user-friendly
- targeted – regulation should be focused on the problem and minimise side effects.

Ofqual began its interim work on 8 April 2008. The government will be bringing in legislation to establish Ofqual as the regulator of qualifications. Until this legislation is passed, we will operate as part of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Ofqual, as part of QCA, is accountable to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families for securing public confidence in the validity, reliability and rigour of the national curriculum assessments.

This code of practice, with the *National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework* document, provides the criteria and identifies the processes that we will apply to the regulation of national curriculum assessments.

We are committed to applying the government's five principles of good regulation (proportionality, accountability, consistency, transparency and targeted intervention)

to our regulatory work. The publication of the code of practice places the criteria for the development and delivery of the national curriculum assessments in the public arena.

This revised code of practice replaces the version published in early 2007. Revisions to this publication have been informed by feedback from stakeholders and evidence from monitoring activities. The changes in this document are intended to achieve a better understanding of the processes that generate high-quality national curriculum assessments, based on a system of continuous improvement.

I am pleased to present this revised code of practice for 2009 test delivery. If you have any comments about the code, please send them to ncamonitoring@ofqual.gov.uk.

Isabel Nisbet

Acting Chief Executive, Ofqual

Introduction

Regulation of the national curriculum assessments

1. The national curriculum assessments are developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and are used to assess pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at key stages 1 and 2, and science at key stage 2. The test results are intended to complement evidence of attainment collected by teachers through their own assessments and, at key stage 1, to help teachers make their assessment of pupils' attainment. The results are used to indicate the level of attainment of individual pupils and (when aggregated) the level of performance of schools and local authorities in England.
2. The national curriculum assessments are regulated by Ofqual using the *National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework* and this code of practice. Intervention by the regulator will be targeted, consistent and proportional to the task in hand. Ofqual will ensure a fair deal for learners and be accountable to the public, whose interests it seeks to safeguard, and to government.¹

Purpose of this document

3. This code of practice is designed to ensure that the public can have confidence in the standards set in national curriculum assessments. It ensures that assessments reflect the requirements of the national curriculum, and that the results are a true reflection of pupils' levels of attainment. It does this by:
 - specifying the processes and procedures necessary to ensure that high-quality, consistent and rigorous standards are applied in national curriculum assessments and level setting
 - providing the regulator with an instrument against which it can monitor the administration, development, delivery and reporting of national curriculum assessments.
4. The role of the regulator, the programme for monitoring national curriculum assessments and the common and subject-specific criteria for each

¹Ofqual began its interim work on 8 April 2008. The government will be bringing in legislation to establish Ofqual as the regulator of qualifications. Until this legislation is passed, we will operate as part of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Afterwards, the regulator will be accountable to parliament rather than to government ministers.

assessment, are set out in the *National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework*.

5. Adherence to the *National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework* and this code of practice will ensure that schools and teachers can:
 - have trust in the agencies and the procedures the agencies use to develop the assessments
 - be confident that the assessments will be appropriate for their pupils
 - have confidence in the levels awarded to their pupils.
6. These expectations are set out under the heading 'Characteristics and evidence of success' at the end of each section of this code of practice. They will provide the basis for quality measures against which the delivery of the process will be assessed.

Audience and engagement

7. This section is designed to help readers quickly identify some of the main responsibilities of various stakeholders. It also suggests sections of this code of practice that may be of particular interest to organisations other than QCA and its contracted agencies.
8. The successful delivery and reporting of results of national curriculum assessments depends on the involvement of a range of organisations and individuals. These can be divided into two categories:
 - local and national authorities and agencies, which include QCA, local authorities, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the agencies responsible for developing, printing and distributing the assessments to schools and marking and reporting results
 - schools, headteachers, teachers and others who are responsible for the administration of the assessments in schools.
9. For the purpose of transparency and accountability, reference is made to the responsibilities of those carrying out individual pupil assessments at the end of the foundation stage.
10. The following paragraphs describe the roles of the organisations and individuals involved in the national curriculum assessment process, and how they engage with the process.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

11. QCA is accountable to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families for ensuring that the public has confidence in the validity, reliability and rigour of statutory assessments,² and for maintaining test standards over time.
12. QCA is responsible for defining the standards of the national curriculum assessments and the standards expected to achieve a national curriculum level in these assessments.
13. QCA sets the standards and is responsible for delivering these assessments and ensuring that the assessments meet these standards. Ofqual has developed this code of practice to monitor the delivery of national curriculum assessments.

²The term 'assessments' in this document refers to all national curriculum tests, tasks and their associated mark schemes.

14. The single point of accountability for the integrity and quality of national curriculum assessments, and for maintaining assessment standards, is ultimately QCA's chief executive.
15. QCA is responsible for producing national curriculum assessments and for setting in place procedures to ensure that the standards defined by QCA are maintained in each core subject assessment, across key stages and from year to year. It must act on feedback from evaluations of previous assessments, including appropriate recommendations from relevant monitoring reports and evaluations, and act on the outcome of a review of performance in the live test compared to the pre-tests.
16. The responsibilities of QCA are discharged through its staff and appointed agencies. QCA should provide appropriate training and support to ensure that its personnel can carry out the functions set out in this code of practice.
17. QCA's demands on schools, headteachers and teachers must be the minimum necessary to support their professional competence in assessment and administration of the tests and to maintain the integrity of the national assessments.
18. QCA must produce and distribute clear and timely statements of administrative processes and procedures.
19. QCA must have procedures in place for ensuring the confidentiality of all assessment materials before the test date.
20. QCA must ensure that Ofqual is provided with all the information it requires and is given access to such meetings and staff as the regulation team deems necessary for it to carry out its duty.
21. QCA must ensure that the national curriculum assessment programme is delivered to agreed quality standards and on schedule.
22. QCA must also ensure that its agencies provide value for money.
23. QCA must ensure that full account is taken of current equal opportunities legislation.

QCA's accountable officer³

24. QCA will appoint a named person or persons for ensuring that the quality and standard of its assessments meet those agreed – the accountable officer(s). In doing so QCA guarantees to Ofqual:
- a) that all necessary action will be taken to maintain standards in each subject from year to year
 - b) its compliance with the requirements of this code of practice and the *National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework*
 - c) its participation in comparability, monitoring and evaluation activities, and that such changes as this work shows to be necessary are made.

QCA officers

25. QCA officers manage all stages of the assessment process to ensure that:
- a) the stages are carried out in accordance with this code of practice and with QCA's policies and procedures
 - b) QCA's senior management, including the accountable officer(s), are alerted to issues or concerns that arise during the process.

Chair of level setting⁴

26. QCA will appoint a chair of level setting who will:
- a) chair all draft level setting and final level setting meetings
 - b) recommend final level thresholds to QCA's chief executive.

Test development agencies

27. QCA will appoint agencies with the appropriate knowledge and expertise to:
- a) develop tests and associated assessment materials in each core subject, and at each key stage, that are of comparable standard from year to year

³This title relates to the functions carried out by QCA and may not be the title used. This function may be part of one or more person's job descriptions.

⁴This title relates to the functions carried out by QCA and may not be the title used. This function may be part of one or more person's job descriptions.

- b) pre-test the materials with a nationally representative sample of pupils as defined in the test specification and provide pre-test reports – see Section 2b
 - c) analyse statistically the performance of pupils in the pre-tests and recommend any amendments that should be made to the test questions or test construct during their development
 - d) analyse performance in the live test against performance in the pre-test, and provide a report
 - e) carry out appropriate equating exercises to ensure that tests are of a comparable standard year on year
 - f) advise where the level thresholds should be set.
28. QCA will also appoint agencies with the appropriate knowledge and expertise to produce appropriate modified assessment materials. The agencies must liaise with other QCA-appointed agencies as appropriate.

Test operations agencies

29. QCA will appoint an agency, or agencies, with the appropriate experience, knowledge and expertise to:
- a) produce the assessment materials
 - b) distribute the assessment materials to participating schools
 - c) mark the test papers
 - d) collect national data for test delivery and reporting purposes.

External marking

30. The test operations agency appointed to mark the test papers must:
- a) prepare and distribute clear and comprehensive guidance for schools on the procedures to be followed for external marking
 - b) develop a training programme that delivers consistent marking through agreed quality assurance procedures, including the level of supervision of markers
 - c) appoint an appropriately experienced marking programme leader and sufficient markers for each subject at key stage 2 with relevant subject and, where required, management expertise

- d) contract an appropriate marker contingency to be held in reserve
- e) plan for the succession of appropriately trained leaders, in particular at marking programme leader and script scrutineer level
- f) train all those involved in delivering and supporting the marking process
- g) ensure that markers receive all the necessary information, training and administration materials as agreed with QCA
- h) ensure that all new markers are fully supported through additional training and the provision of a mentor
- i) set in place appropriate procedures for monitoring the quality of marking
- j) ensure that all markers are aware of the confidential nature of all assessment materials prior to the tests being taken
- k) effectively plan and facilitate marker training events and script scrutinies
- l) provide all the necessary materials to support the level setting process
- m) provide QCA with regular management information reports that include appropriate management data
- n) provide a report on pupil responses to questions in the tests for each subject at key stage 2
- o) provide help and advice to schools about marking and review arrangements.

31. The marking programme leader must:

- a) develop the subject-specific training materials to be used at all training meetings
- b) oversee and monitor the delivery of the training programme to markers
- c) chair the script scrutiny meeting
- d) attend the final level setting meeting and present the recommended level thresholds arrived at during the script scrutiny meeting
- e) report regularly to the test operations agency, raising any issues that may have arisen
- f) chair the review panel

- g) produce a final report for the test operations agency and QCA, including lessons learnt and recommendations for improvements to the marking process. This report will be published.

32. Markers must:

- a) complete training before starting to mark
- b) mark pupils' work in accordance with the agreed mark scheme and marking procedures
- c) carry out the administrative procedures efficiently within the marking period, ensuring that results and marked scripts are returned by the published date
- d) sign a confidentiality clause before having access to training materials.

Data collection

33. The test operations agency appointed to collect national data must:

- a) provide a process to allow relevant data to be entered by schools to enable the correct quantities of assessment materials to be sent to each participating school
- b) check all data received from markers before results are released to schools and follow up any inconsistencies
- c) provide accurate data to support the level setting process
- d) provide QCA and DCSF with timely and accurate data to meet their requirements.

Local authorities

34. Local authorities have a statutory duty to:

- a) monitor the administration of the key stage 2 national curriculum assessments in their schools before, during and after the end of key stage test weeks in line with the statutory requirements
- b) moderate teacher assessments at key stage 1 and at the foundation stage.

35. The code of practice ensures that QCA provides local authorities with the necessary statutory information, guidance and training to carry out these duties.

Department for Children, Schools and Families

36. The DCSF receives data from QCA on how the national cohort of pupils has performed in the national curriculum assessments at the end of each key stage.

Schools, headteachers and teachers⁵

37. QCA must ensure that schools receive timely information and materials to administer the national curriculum assessments and meet the requirements set out in this code of practice. Schools should expect to receive clear guidance from QCA on how the tests should be administered, reasonable adjustments for pupils who have special assessment needs, and the timetable for delivering the assessments. Schools should also receive advice on how to deal with extraordinary situations that may arise around the test period.

Schools

38. Maintained schools⁶ must participate in the statutory national curriculum assessments and report the outcomes to parents and carers.
39. If non-maintained schools choose to participate in the national curriculum assessment system, they must follow the published assessment arrangements.

Headteachers

40. It is the responsibility of headteachers and governors of maintained schools to ensure that the statutory national curriculum assessments are administered to all eligible pupils.
41. Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that the tests are administered according to the published statutory assessment arrangements.
42. Headteachers have a statutory obligation to complete a headteacher's declaration form confirming that the published assessment arrangements have been followed, that the key stage 2 assessment materials were stored securely before the tests and that pupils' answer papers were stored securely prior to being dispatched for marking.
43. The sections in this code of practice that may be of particular interest to headteachers are:
- Section 1: Communication and dissemination
 - Section 2c: Independent reviews
 - Section 3: Test security (key stages 2)

⁵The term 'teachers' in this document includes those working with children at the foundation stage.

⁶The term 'maintained schools' refers to all schools required to follow, and be assessed in, the national curriculum, including academies.

- Section 4: Print and distribution of assessment materials
- Section 5: Test administration
- Section 6: Reasonable adjustments
- Section 11 Data requirements, collection and reporting
- Section 12: Review of marking
- Section 13: Evaluation.

Teachers

44. Teachers may be involved in the testing process in a number of ways:

- pre-testing the assessments while they are under development
- reviewing and commenting on the assessments during the development process
- overseeing the administration of the assessments
- as markers
- reporting results to pupils and parents or carers.

45. Teachers, with advice from identified educational experts (eg their special educational needs coordinators), are responsible for identifying which pupils should not be entered for the national curriculum assessments.

46. The sections of this code of practice that may be of particular interest to teachers are:

- Section 2b: Pre-testing
- Section 2c: Independent reviews
- Section 3: Test security (key stages 2)
- Section 4: Print and distribution of assessment materials
- Section 5: Test administration
- Section 6: Reasonable adjustments
- Section 12: Review of marking.

Section 1: Communication and dissemination

Description

47. Clear communication and timely dissemination ensure that local authorities, foundation stage settings and schools receive information about national curriculum assessments enabling them to:
- a) understand their statutory responsibilities
 - b) understand the administrative arrangements that affect the periods before, during and after the tests, including any changes from previous years' practice
 - c) make necessary preparations for administering assessments consistently and equitably with regard to QCA directives and guidance
 - d) use relevant outcomes from the national assessments to inform future classroom practice.
48. The views of appropriate stakeholders are taken into account when changes to the national curriculum assessments, reporting arrangements or processes are proposed.

Responsibilities

49. QCA must:
- a) ensure that local authorities and schools have sufficient information to understand their roles and statutory responsibilities
 - b) provide information, guidance and support in a timely manner
 - c) keep the arrangements for providing information, guidance and support under review and identify areas where improvements could be made.
50. Local authorities must:
- a) be aware of their statutory roles and responsibilities
 - b) share information within their authority and schools to ensure common understanding and consistency
 - c) provide support to schools and teachers within their authority
 - d) carry out their roles and responsibilities in line with QCA information, guidance and support.

51. Local authorities should be encouraged to provide feedback about the appropriateness and effectiveness of QCA's communication.
52. Headteachers must:
 - a) make sure that they are aware of their statutory responsibilities and discharge them according to published arrangements
 - b) disseminate information in a timely manner, as appropriate, regarding these responsibilities to delegated staff
 - c) ensure that statutory responsibilities are carried out in line with QCA information, guidance and support.

Nature of the process

53. QCA must identify the most effective and efficient form for communicating and disseminating information, guidance or support materials. In doing so, it will take account of:
 - a) the purpose of the information, guidance or support materials
 - b) the intended audience and what action is expected as a result of the information, guidance or support
 - c) the risks associated with failure to communicate information, guidance and support clearly, effectively and in a timely manner
 - d) the timescales necessary to implement action.
54. QCA must:
 - a) ensure that those staff involved in national curriculum assessments are aware of the statutory requirements placed on local authorities, schools and teachers relating to national curriculum assessments
 - b) ensure information, guidance and support are delivered to the appropriate audience in a timely manner, particularly when there are any changes to administrative procedures, test design or test content
 - c) ensure that information, guidance, requirements, instructions and deadlines are clearly set out
 - d) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of its communication and dissemination strategies and identify improvements that could be made to future assessment cycles

- e) take account of the evaluations of previous years' communication strategies in planning the arrangements for delivering each cycle of assessment
- f) ensure that local authorities, schools and foundation stage settings are involved in the design and delivery of information, guidance and support through partnership so that they can contribute to improving systems for the future
- g) keep the burden of administering national curriculum assessments to a minimum without risking the validity of the testing process
- h) ensure that the deadlines by which local authorities, schools and foundation stage settings are expected to have completed an activity are clear and published in a timely manner
- i) respond promptly and effectively to any communication in accordance with its published customer service code.

Characteristics and evidence of success

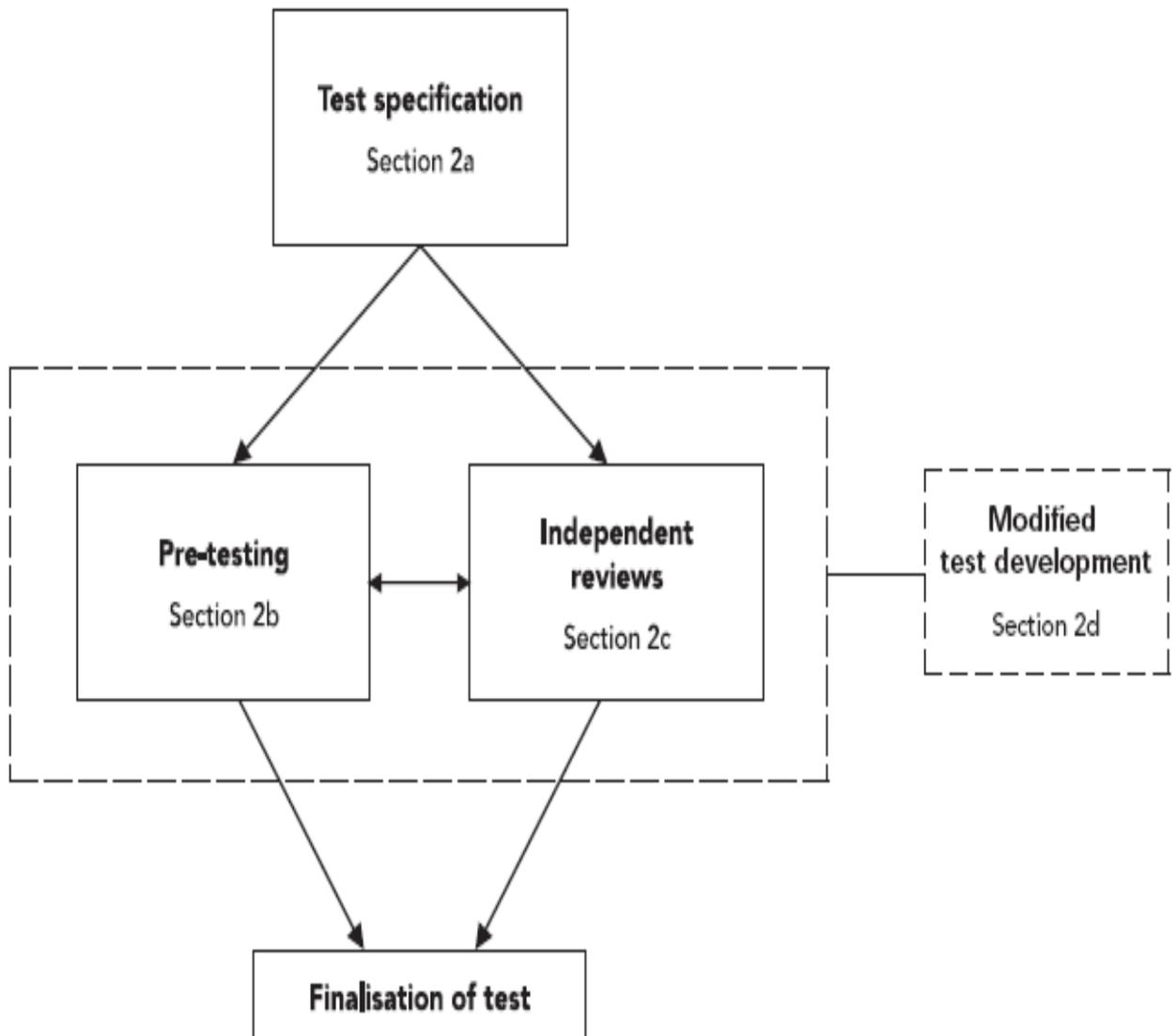
- 55. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 56. A successful communication and dissemination system will be in place if:
 - a) continuous improvement is at the heart of design and delivery
 - b) a range of accessible communication approaches is used according to need, risk and outcome
 - c) the purpose of and audience for all communications are clear
 - d) information, guidance and support are provided in a timely manner
 - e) local authorities and schools are aware of, and able to undertake, their responsibilities to meet required deadlines.

Section 2: Test development

Description

57. Test materials (tests, tasks, mark schemes and modified test materials) are produced for core subjects at the end of each key stage to meet the statutory requirements. The tests are designed to be accessible to all eligible pupils who have been able to follow the programme of study. However, some pupils will require the tests to be presented in a modified format; this could be in a larger font size, modified wording or in Braille.
58. A specification is produced for each test cycle based on the common criteria and subject-specific criteria in the appropriate regulatory framework. These are the four regulated steps of the test development process:
 - a) test specification
 - b) pre-testing
 - c) independent reviews
 - d) modified test development.
59. The development process will be completed to allow tests to be administered according to the published timetable.

Figure 1: Regulated steps in the test development process



Section 2a: Test specification

Description

60. The test specifications define:
- a) the tests, tasks and mark schemes to be produced
 - b) the quality assurance arrangements to be carried out to ensure all tests are appropriate for users
 - c) the timescales for producing the materials
 - d) the test development processes to be followed
 - e) any additional requirements that may affect the printing and marking of the tests
 - f) that modified materials are to be produced (see Section 2d).
61. A separate specification may be produced to define the development of modified assessment materials.

Responsibilities

62. QCA is responsible for producing the end of key stage assessments. Where the production of materials has been delegated to an appointed agency or consultant, QCA is responsible for producing a clear specification and for ensuring the process is managed effectively.
63. QCA's accountable officer has ultimate responsibility for the quality of the materials.

Nature of the process

64. QCA must provide each agency responsible for developing assessment materials with a clear specification that will:
- a) generate results that provide a valid measure of the required skills, knowledge and understanding as defined by the national curriculum and subject criteria
 - b) generate results that provide a reliable measure of pupils' performance
 - c) generate results that provide comparability of standards
 - d) minimise bias, differentiating only on the basis of all pupils' ability to meet national curriculum requirements

e) deliver a manageable system of assessment.

65. The specification must define the curriculum coverage and structure for each component of the assessment, as defined by the criteria in the *National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework*. This includes the available marks, the timing and format of each component as well as the technical and reporting requirements expected of the agency.
66. This specification must be provided at the outset of each test development process and may only be changed during the course of the development cycle in exceptional circumstances.

Characteristics and evidence of success

67. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
68. The assessment and mark scheme meet the criteria published in the *National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework*.
69. The assessment materials meet the requirements of the test specifications.

Section 2b: Pre-testing

Description

70. Pre-testing is the method used to establish the appropriateness of contexts, language, illustrations and the level of difficulty of individual questions and whole tests. Schools are invited to participate in pre-tests of questions and papers. QCA decides on the appropriateness of questions and whole tests, based on pupils' responses in these pre-tests and feedback from participating schools.
71. To ensure that it is possible to draw valid conclusions from these responses, there needs to be sufficient numbers of pupils in the pre-test sample, chosen from a sufficiently large sample of schools that represents the wide range of schools involved in national curriculum assessments.
72. The process allows participating schools to have the opportunity to understand and contribute to:
 - a) the test development process
 - b) the work of QCA.

Responsibilities

73. QCA is responsible for ensuring that the test development agency or agencies appointed to prepare and pre-test assessment materials in each core subject and key stage has proven expertise and experience in developing materials and statistical resources to analyse the outcome of the tests.
74. The test development agency for each assessment is responsible for the origination of suitable materials from which questions will be selected for the first pre-test. Where necessary, the test development agency will obtain copyright permission to use published materials.
75. QCA is responsible for ensuring that pre-testing is delivered to meet the specification, to agreed quality standards, on schedule and within the agreed budget.
76. QCA may choose to inform local authorities which schools have participated in pre-testing assessment materials.

Nature of the process

77. To ensure the validity and reliability of all assessments, all assessment items must go through at least two formal pre-tests and, where new styles or formats are being used, an early informal pre-test. For the formal pre-tests, at least one

must provide information on individual questions or items and a second must obtain information on the questions within the context of a near final paper.

78. The questions must be pre-tested with an appropriate number and range of pupils drawn from:

- a) all relevant types of schools
- b) schools from each geographical region of England
- c) schools from metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas
- d) a range of socio-economic, cultural and ethnic groups.

This sample should include:

- e) an equal number of boys and girls
- f) pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL)
- g) pupils who have special educational needs (SEN)
- h) pupils working at the full range of levels covered by the assessment.

79. The test development agency will prepare a statistical report that includes information on the:

- a) number and gender of pupils involved
- b) number of schools involved
- c) types of schools
- d) geographical location of schools
- e) pupils' EAL and SEN status.

80. The report must analyse how pupils have responded to individual items, how items have performed, the level of difficulty and appropriateness for inclusion in the final assessment. The analysis should include:

- a) a comparison between teacher assessment and the level derived from the pre-test
- b) the number of questions tested
- c) the range of questions as identified in the specification and programme of study.

81. Where appropriate, the report must include recommendations for the next stage of development.
82. The final pre-test report must also include information on the performance of the assessment as a whole. There should be no changes to wording, rubrics or item positioning after this pre-test, except in exceptional circumstances.
83. Where changes are recommended after this final pre-test, QCA must have a sound justification supported, where possible, by a statistically sound argument and additional pre-testing if necessary.

Characteristics and evidence of success

84. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
85. The tests are of an appropriate level of demand for eligible pupils.
86. Pupils' performance in the live test is consistent with predictive evidence from pre-testing.
87. Stakeholders are aware of, and have confidence in, the pre-testing process as a means of ensuring the validity of the tests and the appropriateness of the mark schemes.
88. Schools participating in the pre-test process have an insight into the test development process and appreciate that their contribution will have influenced how the test develops.

Section 2c: Independent reviews

Description

89. Independent review is the process by which appropriate experts, assessment advisers and teachers are consulted and advise on the appropriateness, manageability and accessibility of the developing tests. The process ensures that the materials reflect good classroom practice and are suitable for the identified cohort. It also ensures that the test development process is transparent.
90. Test materials are adjusted in line with the recommendations, where appropriate, from the independent reviews.
91. Schools may be asked to release teachers to contribute to the independent review panels looking at the test materials under development. Schools will be provided with sufficient funds for adequate supply cover, in accordance with QCA guidelines.

Responsibilities

92. QCA is responsible for assembling an expert panel of suitably qualified persons to evaluate the tests and associated materials for suitability, manageability, accessibility and appropriateness for pupils. QCA's accountable officer is responsible for confirming the action taken forward from these meetings.
93. The test development agency must attend all independent review meetings to present draft test materials for consideration and to respond to the points raised at these meetings, as appropriate.
94. The expert panel must ensure that all discussions and associated assessment materials at these meetings remain confidential.

Nature of the process

95. The expert panel must include:
 - a) suitably qualified teachers and advisers from across England who are currently involved in the teaching and learning of the identified key stage subject, including those with experience of working with pupils who have special assessment needs, and for whom English is an additional language
 - b) representatives from the test operations agency, such as the marking programme leader where appropriate.
96. In accordance with their expertise and at the appropriate stage of the process, the expert panel will review the extent to which draft test materials:

- a) cover the identified key stage programme of study
- b) meet the requirements of the programme of study and level descriptions
- c) are accessible and engaging to all pupils for whom the test is intended
- d) are appropriate in language, content, context and level of difficulty for all pupils for whom the test is intended
- e) are manageable from an administrative point of view
- f) are accompanied by appropriate guidance for teachers
- g) include clear mark schemes
- h) ensure comparability of standards over time
- i) ensure comparability of standards across tiers and key stages.

97. Records of the expert panels' considerations, highlighting any issues or risks, must be made by both QCA and the test development agency. The records must clearly identify the reviewers' recommendations and include how these have been taken forward by QCA.

Characteristics and evidence of success

98. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

99. Members of the independent review panel are fully engaged in the discussion and know that their professional judgements have been taken into account. Sufficient time has been set aside for expert panels to engage critically with the test development materials and inform the next stage of the process.

100. Schools are confident that the materials have been reviewed by experts with relevant teaching experience during the test development phase.

101. Those invited to attend the expert review panels develop their assessment expertise through the in-depth discussion of the assessment materials.

Section 2d: Modified test development

Description

102. Modified tests provide pupils who have visual impairment, hearing impairment and other agreed special educational needs with appropriately modified materials for their statutory assessments. The modified test development process ensures that any modifications to the papers are made in such a way as to make questions accessible without changing the fundamental nature and purpose of the assessment or the level of difficulty of the question.

Responsibilities

103. Modified test agencies are appointed by QCA to carry out the appropriate alteration to the tests under development. These agencies must have proven experience, and appropriately qualified staff, in working with pupils with special assessment needs.

104. QCA is responsible for ensuring that any modifications are consistent with practices at other key stages, including those at key stage 4 where appropriate.

105. QCA and the modified test agency must ensure that any agreed modifications do not undermine the integrity and purpose of the assessment.

Nature of the process

106. Modified test materials must be produced for pupils with visual or hearing impairments and distributed for each test. In the process of modifying assessment materials, QCA must ensure that:

- a) the fundamental nature and purpose of the assessment is unaltered through the modifications
- b) pupils using the modified tests are presented with questions of comparable level of difficulty and are not advantaged or disadvantaged by the modifications
- c) any changes to the illustration and layout are appropriate
- d) it is provided with advice on the impact of modifications to the mark schemes
- e) test security is maintained.

107. Full account must be taken of current equal opportunities legislation.

108. QCA must ensure that appropriate administration instructions for the modified test materials are produced to ensure they are equitably administered.

109. Modified test materials and guidance must be signed off by QCA's accountable officer.

Characteristics and evidence of success

110. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

111. Modifications make the tests more accessible without advantaging or disadvantaging individuals or groups of pupils.

112. Teachers view the modifications as appropriate and support appropriate access for their pupils.

Section 3: Test security (key stage 2)

Description

113. It is essential that the end of key stage assessments are valid measures of pupils' own performance in the tests. To achieve this, all assessment materials must be kept confidential to those directly involved in the development, printing and distribution stages of production and in the training of markers. These materials must be kept confidential before the tests are administered in schools and pupils' completed scripts must then be stored securely until they have been dispatched for marking.

Responsibilities

114. It is the responsibility of QCA to have procedures in place that ensure the security and confidentiality of all test materials, pupils' scripts and results information.

115. All agencies and individuals contracted by QCA must ensure that the principles of confidentiality and security are respected throughout, including compliance with current data protection legislation. This includes markers and independent reviewers, who have prior access to assessment materials.

116. Ofqual officers monitoring the assessment process must adhere to QCA's procedures for ensuring the confidentiality and security of materials under development.

117. Local authorities are responsible for monitoring security provision in their schools.

118. QCA is responsible for appointing an agency to monitor non-maintained schools' compliance with national curriculum assessment security procedures.

119. Headteachers are required to confirm that all assessment materials have been stored securely.

Nature of the process

120. QCA must ensure that procedures are established, documented and supplied to all relevant staff, agencies, consultants, independent reviewers and markers to maintain the integrity of the tests throughout the development phase prior to test date.

121. QCA will ensure that all schools and local authorities receive procedures on maintaining test security, including procedures regarding the arrival of assessment materials in schools and the secure storage of the assessments before the test and until the pupils' completed scripts are sent for marking.

122. QCA must give schools and local authorities clear and consistent guidance on the possible sanctions for those not adhering to the published security procedures.
123. QCA must inform Ofqual of any breach of security that has the potential to compromise the integrity of an assessment.
124. QCA must have contingency plans in place to respond to any breach of security that has compromised the integrity of an assessment.

Characteristics and evidence of success

125. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
126. The test operations agency confirms that all headteachers have returned the headteacher's declaration form (see paragraph 42).
127. All independent review meetings and marker training meetings start with a key message about maintaining the confidentiality of assessment materials and pupils' responses in the test.
128. All assessment materials are accounted for.
129. There is no breach of security.
130. There is no negative publicity about test security.

Section 4: Print and distribution of assessment materials

Description

131. Assessment and administration materials are printed and then distributed in time for schools to check that there are sufficient quantities for each eligible pupil entered for the test. The process must allow time for additional materials to be sent before the test date. Schools then store pupils' completed scripts until they have been dispatched for marking.

Responsibilities

132. QCA is responsible for the timely and secure printing and distribution of appropriate quantities of assessment and administration materials to schools. This is to enable schools to administer the assessments effectively and efficiently. QCA must have procedures in place to ensure there are no printing errors.

133. QCA is responsible for defining the quality and printing standards expected and for ensuring consistency across key stages and subjects where appropriate.

134. The printing agency, or agencies, is responsible for ensuring that the paper quality meets the standards set by QCA.

135. QCA must have procedures in place to ensure the delivery of materials to all maintained schools in England, non-maintained schools participating in the tests and Service Children's Education schools overseas.

136. QCA must ensure that agencies involved in delivering and collecting materials inform schools and local authorities when materials will be delivered and, for tests that are being externally marked, the process for arranging parcel carriage of completed scripts for marking.

Nature of the process

137. QCA will monitor closely the work of the printing and distribution agencies and have systems in place to receive regular information on the successful printing and delivery of materials to schools.

138. Where printing or distribution problems or errors occur, QCA must have procedures in place to ensure that additional or replacement assessment materials are supplied in good time so that schools can meet their statutory obligations without undue additional administrative burden.

139. QCA must investigate all reports of materials lost or stolen during transit.

140. All parties involved in the distribution process must have systems in place to ensure the security of materials.

Characteristics and evidence of success

141. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

142. There are no errors in the printing of the tests.

143. All participating schools receive all assessment and associated administration materials to allow secure administration.

144. Markers receive pupils' scripts within three working days of test week.

145. Schools are satisfied with the service provided and receive marked scripts and a copy of results according to the stated schedule.

146. There is no breach of security or loss of assessment materials.

Section 5: Test administration

Description

147. The administration procedures are published and copies provided to all participating schools and local authorities. The aim is to ensure that schools conduct testing in a fair and equitable manner, in accordance with published administrative procedures.

Responsibilities

148. QCA is responsible for specifying and publishing arrangements for test administration and for advising on and monitoring the quality of the moderation of teacher assessment at the foundation stage and at key stage 1.

149. QCA must ensure that any changes to these arrangements have been fully evaluated before implementation and communicated clearly to stakeholders.

150. Schools and local authorities are responsible for carrying out the test administration arrangements.

Nature of the process

151. QCA must publish annually details of the administration procedures and relevant guidance.

152. The arrangements for test administration must not impose unnecessary demands on schools or local authorities.

153. The arrangements must take into account all eligible pupils, including those with special educational needs, and provide guidance to ensure reasonable adjustments are applied equitably.

154. Schools and local authorities must be provided with timely, clear and concise information about the following:

- a) subject-specific information relating to each test
- b) the structure and format of the tests
- c) test dates
- d) arrangements for ensuring test security
- e) reasonable adjustments – see Section 6 – and how to apply for these arrangements
- f) reporting arrangements

g) the evaluation process

h) future plans for any changes to the model of assessment.

155. QCA must provide guidance for local authorities on carrying out their statutory responsibilities to monitor the quality, delivery and consistency of national curriculum assessments and judgements.

Characteristics and evidence of success

156. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

157. Evaluation indicates that the administration was manageable.

158. Monitoring by local authorities and QCA indicates that administration has been carried out fairly, in line with the published guidance and that schools perceive this to be universally applied.

Section 6: Reasonable adjustments

Description

159. Some pupils need additional support to access the assessments. Others may be affected by situations outside their control on the day of the assessment. The purpose of this section is to ensure that arrangements are in place to remove barriers to access to assessment by allowing reasonable adjustments to be made for individuals and for specific groups of pupils.

Responsibilities

160. QCA will publish clear instructions and guidance about reasonable adjustments (access arrangements and special consideration) that meet the requirements of the statutory regulations and relevant legislation.

161. Local authorities must be aware of the appropriate arrangements available for pupils in their schools and monitor these arrangements according to their statutory responsibilities.

162. QCA must appoint an agency to monitor the appropriate arrangements in participating non-maintained schools.

163. Schools must familiarise themselves with the guidance on reasonable adjustments so that all pupils who meet the criteria for receiving additional approved support are able to demonstrate their level of attainment.

164. QCA will report any issues arising from the administration of reasonable adjustments for each test cycle and identify actions to improve future performance. This should be linked to its communication and dissemination programme.

Nature of the process

165. Where possible, barriers to assessment must be removed during the development of the assessment materials.

166. There must be no unnecessary barriers to assessment that prevent pupils from effectively demonstrating their achievement in the tests. Where a pupil's performance in the assessment is affected by specific circumstances, reasonable adjustments should be made.

167. Arrangements for pupils with particular assessment requirements (access arrangements) must ensure that pupils are not given, or do not appear to be given, an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

168. Arrangements and adjustments must be made according to the needs of the individual pupil, reflecting, where practicable, the pupil's usual method of working, the assessment requirements and the requirements of current legislation.
169. Adjustments must not undermine the validity and reliability of the assessment objectives or the meaningfulness of the assessment.
170. An appropriate range of experts must be consulted regularly to review the arrangements and make recommendations for improving access for eligible pupils.
171. Where possible, reasonable adjustments (access arrangements and special consideration) should be consistent with those used at key stage 4.

Characteristics and evidence of success

172. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
173. Parents, carers and teachers of children with special assessment needs are satisfied that their children have not been advantaged or disadvantaged.
174. Pupils receive appropriate support and guidance when taking the assessments.
175. Schools acknowledge that their pupils have been allowed appropriate support as described in the statutory assessment arrangements.
176. Schools are confident that no group has been advantaged or disadvantaged by reasonable adjustments.

Section 7: Foundation stage profile and key stage 1 assessment

Description

177. At key stage 2 the level a pupil achieves in the national curriculum assessment in each core subject is reported alongside the teacher's assessment. Foundation stage profile and key stage 1 assessment and reporting requirements are different to those at key stage 2. Each child completing the foundation stage is assessed against the 13 foundation stage profile scales and each key stage 1 pupil is required to take a national curriculum assessment in reading, writing and mathematics. However, at key stage 1 the outcomes of the assessments are not reported but used to inform the teacher's assessment of the pupil. It is the scale point score for the foundation stage profile and the level assigned by the teacher at key stage 1 that are reported.
178. Local authorities moderate the assessments in order to ensure that standards are maintained through the consistency of judgements in relation to national standards.

Responsibilities

179. QCA is responsible for developing and distributing key stage 1 national curriculum assessment materials to schools and for determining the level thresholds for these assessments.
180. The test development agency must appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced panel of experts to scrutinise pupils' work in the pre-tests and recommend level threshold marks.
181. QCA is responsible for providing schools with clear guidance on the statutory requirements for key stage 1 assessments, which states the acceptable combinations of test and task materials that can be used for the assessment.
182. QCA is responsible for providing schools with clear guidance on the statutory requirements for foundation stage profile assessments, which require practitioners to make judgements on children's learning and development through observing behaviour that is demonstrated consistently and independently.
183. QCA is responsible for setting in place monitoring arrangements to ensure that local authorities are effectively moderating teacher assessment judgements for the foundation stage profile and for key stage 1. It must publish a monitoring report that includes the identification and sharing of good practice.

184. Local authorities are responsible for investigating all reported allegations of maladministration received from identified sources.
185. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to moderate foundation stage profile and key stage 1 teacher assessments for consistency and validity within and between their schools and other foundation stage settings.

Nature of the process for key stage 1 assessments

186. The procedures for developing the key stage 1 national curriculum assessments are the same as those for key stage 2 (see Section 2).
187. A script scrutiny or other judgemental exercise must be carried out based on the results of the test development agency's equating exercise. The script scrutiny procedures should mirror those described for key stage assessments (see Section 10b) but should be adapted to suit the purpose, where appropriate.
188. At key stage 1, the levels are set before the tests are taken. A level setting meeting must be convened to look at:
- a) the statistical evidence from the pre-tests
 - b) the judgemental evidence from the experts who attended the script scrutiny or other judgemental exercise
 - c) a dataset of sufficient pupils' results equated against a previous test.
189. The level setting meeting must not be held until all the information required for the meeting is available.
190. QCA's chair of level setting must chair the meeting.
191. Where a level setting meeting occurs more than a year before the test goes live, a level confirmation meeting must be held at which additional data from previous years' tests must be considered before the thresholds can be finalised.

Characteristics and evidence of success

192. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
193. Standards are maintained over time.
194. Schools receive clear and timely guidance on statutory requirements and the tests and tasks they have elected to administer as part of their teacher assessment.

Section 8: Marking (key stage 2)

Description

195. This section covers the following aspects of the marking process:

- a) recruitment and training of markers – understanding their roles and responsibilities and the marking administration arrangements
- b) marking, standardisation and quality assurance – ensuring that markers mark to the set standard and consistently apply the mark scheme
- c) evaluation – listening to those involved in marking and learning lessons for future years.

Section 8a: Recruitment and training of markers

Description

196. The marking process starts with the development of training materials, and an agreed national training programme, which is delivered to sufficient markers to mark all externally marked national curriculum assessments. As well as being trained to mark to a national standard, markers also receive guidance on maintaining security and carrying out administrative tasks accurately and in a timely manner.

Responsibilities

197. QCA is responsible for ensuring that there is an appropriate marker structure and a subject-specific training programme in place. This programme must describe the training techniques to be used, based on best practice.

198. The test operations agency is responsible for appointing sufficient markers and for the organisation and administration of the training programme. It must provide regular reports on progress in recruiting markers and ensure that all staff are trained and fully briefed before delivering a training programme.

199. The test operations agency is responsible for allocating markers to appropriate teams and for ensuring that when allocating markers to schools there is no conflict of interest.

200. The test operations agency is responsible for ensuring markers have access to a quality helpdesk service and that queries from markers are dealt with according to the agreed service level agreement.

201. The marking programme leaders are responsible for ensuring that the expected quality of marking and consistent application of standards are clearly demonstrated through the training programme.

202. QCA must ensure that key messages about maintaining the security of the tests and pupils' marks are reinforced in all marker training programmes.

Nature of the process

203. A marker structure, including reserve markers, must be in place before recruitment starts.

204. The criteria for appointing a new marker or reappointing an experienced marker, detailing the status, experience and marker eligibility required, must be agreed with QCA and be in place before recruitment starts.

205. Markers must advise the test operations agency of any personal interest in a pupil or school taking part in national curriculum assessments.
206. Marking teams must be organised so that markers can be effectively supervised.
207. A training programme, including a series of early training meetings for the most senior markers, must be in place in good time to enable the effective and efficient development of subject-specific suite of marker training materials.
208. No changes can be made to the published mark scheme during marker training.
209. The training programme must be agreed with the marking programme leader. The training programme for each and subject must:
- a) be robust
 - b) consider any issues raised by, or recommendations from, the evaluations of the previous year's training programme.
210. The training programme must be designed so that all markers:
- a) receive consistent advice and guidance
 - b) are aware of the procedures for achieving consistent marking
 - c) understand their involvement in the marking process, including those aspects that affect the script scrutiny and level setting procedures
 - d) are informed about the importance of meeting deadlines and carrying out administrative tasks accurately
 - e) understand the arrangements for dealing with scripts where maladministration is suspected
 - f) are trained in the use of any technology used in the marking process.
211. New markers must be identified and receive appropriate training before they start live marking and receive mentor support throughout the marking period.
212. Markers must sign a confidentiality clause before training and must not discuss the content of the test in advance of the test date or modify their own classroom materials based on their prior knowledge of the assessment. They must not disclose pupils' responses in the tests except with their mentor or supervisor.

Characteristics and evidence of success

213. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
214. Sufficient, suitably qualified markers are appointed to complete the marking process to schedule. The majority of markers have been retained from the previous year.
215. The suite of subject-specific training materials supports and exemplifies the mark scheme. Exemplar materials cover the full range of levels.
216. Each subject has an effective training programme and markers are confident that they can apply the mark scheme after training.
217. The training and standardisation materials fully prepare markers for live marking.
218. The training materials give markers clear and consistent messages about their role, quality standards expected, quality procedures, how to record marks and how to dispatch materials.
219. There is no breach of security.

Section 8b: Marking, standardisation and quality assurance

Description

220. Standardisation is a process that starts immediately after marker training. It ensures that markers have understood the training and can apply the mark scheme consistently and accurately.
221. All markers must participate in the standardisation exercise. Their marking is checked against the national standard and any divergence from the agreed definitive marks for the scripts is noted. The absolute mark difference (AMD) for a marker's standardisation set is then compared to the QCA-agreed tolerances. A marker must not start marking their allocation of live scripts until they have passed standardisation.
222. Once standardisation has been achieved markers continue to be quality assured to ensure that their marking of live scripts is accurate and consistent. Markers who are not able to apply the mark scheme consistently are immediately stopped from marking and their scripts are reallocated.

Responsibilities

223. QCA is responsible for approving the test operations agency's procedures for standardisation and ongoing quality assurance.
224. The test operations agency must have arrangements in place to deliver a robust standardisation process. The marker training materials and marker support documentation must set out the requirements for standardisation and ongoing quality assurance.
225. The test operations agency must ensure that those in supervisory roles or involved in delivering training programmes have proven experience of marking consistently, in training markers and are trained in how best to give constructive feedback and provide mentoring.
226. The test operations agency must recommend, and then agree with QCA, the acceptable tolerance for marking quality.
227. The test operations agency must ensure that markers failing to meet the specified standards are quickly identified and stopped from marking regardless of the point in the marking process. All stopped markers' scripts must be retrieved and reallocated for marking or re-marking.
228. The test operations agency must record, for audit purposes:

- a) all standardisation and quality assurance data
- b) feedback on the performance of all markers
- c) information about stopped markers.

Nature of the process

- 229. The number of standardisation scripts that markers are required to mark and the acceptable marking tolerances for each test must be confirmed with QCA.
- 230. All markers, including supervisory markers, must mark an agreed number of standardisation scripts accurately and consistently before being cleared to mark.
- 231. Only those markers whose marking is within the acceptable tolerance at standardisation stage may start marking.
- 232. Markers will be required to undertake further marking quality assurance checks at pre-determined intervals during the marking period.
- 233. Markers must be informed of how their performance will be judged and the arrangements for informing them if their marking fails to meet the required standard.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 234. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 235. Markers and their supervisors clearly understand and follow the standardisation and quality assurance procedures.
- 236. Markers demonstrate their ability to mark consistently to the national standard and to follow procedures.
- 237. Scripts from stopped markers are reallocated and marked on time.
- 238. Schools are confident that marking has been carried out accurately to the national standard.
- 239. The number of upheld reviews of marking reduces year on year.

Section 8c: Evaluation of marking and markers' performance

Description

240. At the end of the marking process, each marker receives feedback on their performance and is graded accordingly. The performance review is based on: the marker's ability to mark consistently and in line with the mark scheme, the marker's administrative ability and the number of reviews upheld against the marker.
241. The quality of the marker training is also evaluated – see Section 13.

Responsibilities

242. QCA is responsible for ratifying the criteria used by the test operations agency to grade markers and the arrangements for feeding back performance information to markers.
243. QCA must ensure that the quality of marking is evaluated each year to ensure that standards are maintained.
244. The marking programme leaders must produce a report that includes recommendations on how the process can be improved, the effectiveness of standardisation and the quality assurance process, any issues with the mark scheme and lessons learnt.

Nature of the process

245. Procedures must be in place to deal with any markers whose performance falls below the minimum standard, outlining the appropriate action to be taken.
246. A process must be in place for appraising markers based on their contractual duties, their performance and the number of reviews of their marking upheld.
247. Markers must be notified of their grade.
248. Markers who fail to achieve the required standard of marking should not be reappointed at that level the following year.

Characteristics and evidence of success

249. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
250. Only markers who can mark accurately and consistently are reappointed.

251. QCA's evaluation of the process informs future test and mark scheme development, and improves marking quality.
252. Marking programme leaders support decisions on stopped markers and on reappointments.
253. There is consistency in the grade assigned to markers across subjects.

Section 9: Maladministration (externally marked assessments)

Description

254. It is essential that pupils' reported levels of attainment are based on their own independent work and that the integrity of the assessment nationally is secure. For the purposes of this document maladministration refers to any act that threatens the integrity of the tests or the validity of the results of individual pupils. It may or may not have arisen from a deliberate intent to intervene in the statutory assessment process.
255. Maladministration at the foundation stage and at key stage 1 is addressed in Section 7 (paragraph 184).

Responsibilities

256. QCA has a statutory duty to investigate any matter of maladministration brought to its attention that could jeopardise the integrity, security or confidentiality of the tests and lead to results that do not reflect the unaided work of pupils. Depending on the nature of the incident, this duty might be shared with partner bodies, for example local authorities or the test operations agency.
257. If QCA finds that there is sufficient doubt over the accuracy or correctness of results for any pupil, QCA has the authority to amend or annul results. QCA must inform Ofqual of all cases leading to the annulment of results. The relevant local authorities should be informed of annulments at the same time as the school concerned, where appropriate.
258. QCA must inform schools of the appeals procedures at the same time as providing them with the details of the decision.
259. The test operations agency is responsible for ensuring that all reported instances of maladministration raised with them are passed to QCA and the agreed procedures for dealing with reported instances are followed by markers and agency staff.

Nature of the process

260. QCA must have procedures in place to:
- a) receive and record all reported incidents of suspected or alleged maladministration⁷

⁷Incidents may be reported by members of the public, pupils, parents, teachers, local authorities, agencies or QCA.

- b) respond to all reported suspicions or allegations of maladministration
- c) establish the strength of evidence in support of any suspected or alleged maladministration, where appropriate working in partnership with other bodies to verify the full facts of each case
- d) adjudicate whether suspicions or allegations of maladministration are correct
- e) take appropriate action, where necessary, that affects the reported results
- f) inform the school and/or local authority of the outcome of the investigation and any action taken in line with published guidance
- g) record all stages and outcomes of each enquiry or investigation and retain this information for at least five years.

261. When an initial maladministration enquiry, or in-depth maladministration investigation, is delegated to an individual or agency, QCA must ensure that:

- a) the nature and scope of the task has been clearly specified
- b) investigators have appropriate expertise to undertake the task (or, if they have no prior experience, that they receive appropriate training and guidance)
- c) procedures have been agreed for the conduct of the enquiry or investigation, for securing and retaining evidence, and for reporting findings, recommendations and any action taken.

262. Decisions on the outcome of each case must be based on all the available evidence. The decision process must involve independent experts, appointed by QCA, who have an in-depth and wide-ranging experience of national curriculum assessments.

263. Where the incident is reported to the test operations agency, the agency must ensure that:

- a) the incident is recorded in full
- b) QCA is notified without delay
- c) full details of the case are passed to QCA and retained for at least five years.

264. The test operations agency must ensure that all markers are aware of their responsibility to record and report suspicions of maladministration in accordance with the published guidelines:

- a) whenever it is suspected that a test script does not represent a pupil's independent work
- b) where there may be evidence of script tampering or an administrative irregularity.

265. QCA must have procedures in place to ensure that appeals from schools, following an investigation into alleged maladministration, are dealt with in a fair and timely manner.

Characteristics and evidence of success

266. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

267. All reported instances of maladministration are fully investigated and any corrective action is taken.

268. Stakeholders are confident that the tests have been administered fairly.

269. There is trust in the integrity of the test results.

Section 10: Level setting (externally marked assessments)

Description

270. Level setting is the process by which the mark needed to achieve a level is determined. Threshold marks are set for each subject in line with the national curriculum level description so that standards are maintained and each pupil's achievement is rewarded with the appropriate level.

Responsibilities

271. QCA's accountable officer has overall responsibility for ensuring that robust and reliable level thresholds are set.

Nature of the process

272. For all externally marked national curriculum tests the following processes must be included:

- a) Draft level setting provides a recommendation of the anticipated level thresholds to the final level setting process and proposes a script scrutiny range. These are based on statistical analyses from pre-test data.
- b) Script scrutiny provides a recommendation of the anticipated level thresholds based on a review of pupils' performance in the live test.
- c) Final level setting reviews all the statistical and judgemental evidence, and recommends final level thresholds.

Section 10a: Draft level setting

Description

273. Draft level setting provides QCA with an insight into the likely level thresholds of the national curriculum assessments. Performance in the pre-tests and performance in previous years' tests are reviewed and compared to arrive at draft level thresholds.

Responsibilities

274. QCA's accountable officer is responsible for ensuring that the procedures for setting levels are secure, robust and have been implemented correctly.

275. QCA's accountable officer is also responsible for ensuring that the evidence presented at the draft level threshold meeting is valid and reliable, and that standards are maintained.

276. The test development agency must provide a report on the pre-testing process identifying the issues and recommending draft level thresholds.

Nature of the process

277. For each externally marked national curriculum assessment there must be a draft level setting meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- a) set the draft threshold marks
- b) propose the mark ranges for the script scrutiny process.

278. A draft level setting report must be provided by the test development agency. The report provides a full explanation and justification based on secure statistical and judgemental evidence for each recommended level threshold.

279. All participants at the draft level setting meeting must be provided with the draft level setting report in sufficient time to prepare adequately for the meeting.

280. The meeting must consider the thresholds and associated ranges in turn, starting with the target level for each key stage (and tier, where relevant), then progressing onto the higher levels before finishing with the lower levels.

281. The meeting must aim to reach a consensus on a draft level threshold mark or zone and script scrutiny range. If the attendees are unable to reach a consensus then the chair may reconvene the meeting when additional evidence is available.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 282. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 283. The draft level threshold procedures are fit for purpose and followed.
- 284. Draft level thresholds are set.
- 285. A script scrutiny range is agreed and communicated to the test operations agency.

Section 10b: Script scrutiny

Description

286. Script scrutiny is the process by which the most senior of markers participate in the level setting process. They review scripts from pupils whose marks fall within the agreed mark range proposed at the draft level setting meeting. This performance is compared against that required to achieve a given level in previous years, to come to a judgement on where this year's level thresholds should be set.

Responsibilities

287. The test operations agency, appointed by QCA to mark the tests, is also responsible for:

- a) setting up a script scrutiny meeting for each key stage subject assessment
- b) ensuring that sufficient quantities of scripts covering the full range of marks are available for the meeting
- c) ensuring that the script scrutiny procedures are followed and that there is sufficient justification for the threshold recommendations.

288. The marking programme leader is responsible for chairing the script scrutiny meeting and ensuring that the script scrutiny procedures are followed and that the outcomes of the meeting can be defended when presented at the final level setting meeting.

289. QCA must monitor the process and ensure that an appropriate range and number of marked scripts are scrutinised.

Nature of the process

290. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- a) record a zone of marks within which, in the scrutineers' expert opinion, each threshold mark will be found – the threshold zone
- b) recommend a level threshold mark or marks from within that zone of marks.

291. QCA must review the national data before the script scrutiny meeting to ensure that the range of scripts to be scrutinised is appropriate.

292. The script scrutiny meeting must be chaired by the marking programme leader.

293. All scrutineers must be senior markers whose marking is of proven high quality and who have marked the current assessment. The majority should have

previous experience of script scrutiny. Scrutineers new to the process must receive additional guidance in consultation with the marking programme leader.

294. The test operations agency must provide all participants with the following:
- a) script scrutiny procedures
 - b) the national curriculum level descriptions
 - c) the generic 'characteristics of performance' for each level threshold, approved by Ofqual
 - d) archive scripts at the level thresholds from at least three years.
295. The meeting must follow the agreed procedures, in line with Appendix 3, for determining the thresholds. The procedures should ensure a consistent approach as appropriate, across key stages and subjects.
296. Scrutineers must use their collective professional judgement to reach a consensus on a threshold zone and mark.
297. If a consensus is not possible, and all possible steps to achieve this have been taken, the chair must set the threshold zone and mark.
298. The marking programme leader must communicate the outcomes of the meeting to QCA's accountable officer in a report detailing the recommendations from the meeting and a justification for these, along with any issues that might affect the validity of the outcomes.

Characteristics and evidence of success

299. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
300. The script scrutiny procedures are fit for purpose and are followed.
301. Script scrutiny threshold zones and marks are set and presented at the final level setting meeting.

Section 10c: Final level setting

Description

302. Final level setting is the final stage of the process where decisions are made on the mark a pupil needs in order to be awarded a given level. The process draws on the outcomes of the draft level setting and script scrutiny processes, as well as a national data sample to ensure that standards are maintained year on year.

Responsibilities

303. QCA's chair of level setting is responsible for chairing the final level setting meeting. They are responsible to QCA's chief executive, for ensuring that all evidence is discussed and considered, and that the level thresholds recommended to QCA's chief executive are secure and valid.

304. Ofqual is responsible for monitoring level setting meetings and advising QCA's chief executive on the outcomes of the meeting.

305. The ultimate decision on the level thresholds, based on input from QCA's chair of level setting and from Ofqual, is the responsibility of QCA's chief executive (see paragraph 14).

306. QCA must communicate the final thresholds to schools and other interested groups in a timely, appropriate and effective way.

Nature of the process

307. There must be a final level setting meeting for every statutory national curriculum assessment to set level thresholds (including thresholds for the award of level N and any compensatory levels)

308. An independent adviser must be appointed by QCA to advise the chair at the meeting.

309. Attendees must be provided with the outcomes of the draft level setting and script scrutiny meetings, the mark distributions from a national data sample summary and historical data from the last five years, including performance data and final level thresholds.

310. Each level must be reviewed in turn, starting with the target level for each key stage (and tier, where relevant) and then progressing onto the higher levels, before finishing with the lower levels.

311. The meeting must attempt to reach consensus on the final level thresholds. If a consensus is not possible, and all reasonable steps to achieve this have been taken, then the chair must set the recommended level thresholds.
312. The recommended level thresholds must be presented to QCA's chief executive, who may require further investigation before finally setting the level threshold marks.

Characteristics and evidence of success

313. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
314. The level thresholds represent standards comparable to previous years.
315. Threshold marks are communicated to the test operations agency with sufficient time to finish the marking process.
316. The level thresholds are published in hard copy and on the QCA website by the agreed date.
317. Schools understand and trust the level setting process and have confidence in the outcomes.

Section 11: Data requirements, collection and reporting

Description

318. Data are collected at various stages of the assessment process. This ensures that:
- a) there is an accurate record of the number of pupils entered for each test and, where appropriate, the number entered for each tier of test
 - b) the number of participating schools is accurately recorded
 - c) schools receive appropriate quantities of assessment materials, including modified test materials
 - d) there is a national data sample to inform the level setting process
 - e) schools are provided with accurate results data for the purposes of:
 - o reporting to parents or carers in line with statutory requirements
 - o school evaluation and review.

Responsibilities

319. It is QCA's responsibility to ensure that accurate data are collected and circulated to the relevant stakeholders/agencies.
320. Where data are provided through school census, QCA is responsible for passing them to the relevant agencies.
321. The test operations agency must ensure that the arrangements for registering and confirming test orders do not place an unnecessary burden on schools.
322. The test operations agency must assure the accuracy of all test results sent to schools.
323. QCA is responsible for ensuring that the information requirements of DCSF are met.

Nature of the process

324. Robust systems for the collection and checking of all pupil performance data, as defined by DCSF in the technical requirements document, must be in place.

325. Data must be accurate, up to date and complete. This is to enable the distribution of tasks, tests and external marking materials to schools and the reporting of test results by the published dates.

326. Results must be accurate and sent to schools by the agreed deadline.

Characteristics and evidence of success

327. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

328. Test orders, including the correct number of modified tests, are accurately captured and assessment materials arrive in schools within the published timeframe.

329. Schools and local authorities receive accurate results data by the published date.

Section 12: Review of marking

Description

330. This process provides teachers with the opportunity to request a review of the original marking of a pupil's marked scripts. This ensures that all teachers can be confident that a pupil's assessment has been awarded the correct overall level in accordance with the published mark scheme.

Responsibilities

331. QCA is responsible for establishing a review process to address teachers' concerns about the quality of marking and accuracy of results, and to have procedures in place to inform schools and local authorities of the outcome.

332. The test operations agency is responsible for setting up the review process and providing schools and local authorities with the necessary information on how to seek a review.

333. Schools are responsible for familiarising themselves with the review process. They must ensure that review requests are received on time and that they have followed the published procedures for seeking a review of the level awarded.

Nature of the process

334. Arrangements for seeking a review of marking must be clearly documented, published, and sent to schools and local authorities. These arrangements must allow sufficient time for a review of the results of an individual pupil, a school group or whole school cohort.

335. Only the most accurate markers should be involved in the review process. They must undergo further training, which is tailored to the review process and includes standardisation of their marking.

336. Where a review is upheld, schools must be informed of the change in level.

337. Where a review is not upheld, the reasons must be conveyed to the school and the school must be able to obtain further guidance if required.

338. The cost to schools for requesting a review of marking must not be prohibitive.

339. Where schools have requested a review in consecutive years, the test operations agency must ensure their scripts are reviewed by a high-quality, experienced marker.

340. Reviews should be completed by the published date. Where this is not possible the schools must be informed.

341. QCA must have procedures in place for monitoring, evaluating and reporting annually on the review arrangements and for sharing relevant data with Ofqual on request.

342. Schools must be provided with the procedures to be followed if they are not satisfied with the review process.

Characteristics and evidence of success

343. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

344. Review requests are processed on time.

345. Inconsistently or poorly marked scripts are identified and re-marked by an accurate marker trained to review marking.

346. Following the review of marking, the scripts, together with results, are returned to schools by the agreed deadline.

347. Stakeholders regard the review process as fair, manageable and have confidence in the quality of marking and the levels awarded to their pupils.

Section 13: Evaluation

Description

348. Evaluation is an essential part of any process to ensure that continuous improvements are made to systems and products, and that their effectiveness is kept under review.

Responsibilities

349. QCA must carry out a full review of all aspects of the assessment process and publish the findings annually. These evaluations, along with its own self-assessment, must inform the delivery of the national curriculum assessment programme for subsequent years.

350. The test development agency is responsible for analysing performance in the live test against performance in the pre-test and reporting the outcomes to QCA.

351. The test operations agency is responsible for ensuring that QCA receives a report as provided by each marking programme leader that includes recommendations for improving the marking process in future years.

352. The test operations agency must provide QCA with a detailed report on the review process, including a breakdown, by individual questions, of the issues that led to the most reviews as well as the number of upheld reviews.

353. QCA must ensure that the quality of marking is evaluated each year to ensure that standards are maintained year on year. This includes evaluating the quality of the marker training programme.

354. QCA must review all the evaluation reports and take any necessary action.

Nature of the process

355. Evaluation of the national curriculum assessment process must include:

- a) seeking the views of a representative sample of local authorities, schools, pupils and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of the distribution of assessment materials and the administrative procedures, the appropriateness and relevance of the assessment materials and individual test questions, and the manageability of the assessments overall
- b) input from independent reviewers
- c) analysing performance in the live test against the performance of sample schools in the pre-test

- d) identifying aspects of the marking programme leaders' reports that relate to evaluation
- e) analysing the outcomes of marking reviews and process reviews
- f) markers' perceptions of the training programme
- g) evaluating the effectiveness of the marker training programme by looking at the number of stopped markers and reviews upheld.

356. The evaluation process must feed into QCA's self-assessment activity to support continuous improvement.

Characteristics and evidence of success

357. QCA will ensure that the criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

358. Stakeholders have the opportunity to raise concerns about the assessments.

359. Stakeholders see improvements being implemented year on year.

360. Ofqual is satisfied that the outcome of any evaluation informs future practice.

Section 14: Procurement

Description

361. Procurement is the process by which agencies are appointed to deliver aspects of the national curriculum assessment system, such as printers, distributors, test developers and test operations agencies responsible for marking and data collection.

Responsibilities

362. QCA is responsible for appointing agencies with the necessary skills and relevant, proven experience to deliver particular aspects of the national curriculum assessment process.

363. QCA must ensure that there is no conflict of interest between any parties involved in a procurement exercise.

Nature of the process

364. QCA must follow established procurement procedures for appointing agencies.

365. The procurement process must be transparent and efficiently carried out within the published time frame. All relevant selection criteria must be made available to the agencies bidding for the contract.

366. Ofqual must be informed of any major procurement activities, such as the appointment of test development or test operations agencies. Ofqual must make it known to QCA if it wishes to contribute to the procurement exercise.

Characteristics and evidence of success

367. The agencies selected to support the development, delivery and reporting of assessments are effective and the criteria used to decide procurement are appropriate.

Section 15: Archiving

Description

368. Archiving ensures that essential documents are stored and can be accessed at a later date.

Responsibilities

369. QCA is responsible for ensuring that an archive of documents is stored and maintained in order that a range of evidence is available to:

- a) compare performance year on year, thus ensuring that standards are maintained
- b) provide researchers with an appropriate range of documents and evidence.

370. QCA is responsible for ensuring that its agencies archive all relevant materials.

Nature of the process

371. Each year, QCA must agree with Ofqual which documents are to be archived. This must include:

- a) the scripts at each level threshold
- b) all the previous year's test papers and mark schemes
- c) all documentation detailing changes to the assessment structure and content
- d) all end-of-cycle evaluation reports.

372. All necessary steps must be taken to maintain this archive and to keep it accurately indexed.

373. QCA must follow its established protocols and retention policy for archiving.

Characteristics and evidence of success

374. Those involved in judgement-based processes have access to enough evidence from previous years to ensure that the results are secure and that standards are maintained.

375. Appropriate documents are archived to allow relevant research and evaluation work to be carried out.

Glossary

Archive scripts	Pupils' work from previous years that has been stored to exemplify a particular level. Archive scripts are used to carry forward standards from one year to the next.
Assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a pupil's work meets the assessment criteria for a particular level.
Assessment cycle	The cycle of an assessment from development to level setting.
Code of practice	Principles and practices, specified by the regulatory authority (QCA), against which the processes and procedures for developing and delivering national curriculum assessments are monitored and evaluated.
Content	The coverage of a test or assessment, expressed as the knowledge, understanding, skills or area of competence that is being assessed.
External markers	A person appointed by the test operations agency to mark assessments from schools other than their own.
Level	The national curriculum level of attainment.
Level setting	The process by which pupils are given levels to reflect their attainment.
Level threshold	The boundary between two levels.
Live scripts	Pupils' work from that year's assessment.
Maladministration	Maladministration, in this document, refers to any act that threatens the integrity of the tests or the validity of the results of individuals or groups of pupils. It may or may not have arisen from a deliberate intent to intervene in the statutory assessment process.
Mark scheme	A scheme detailing how marks are to be awarded in relation to a particular assessment or component. A mark scheme normally characterises acceptable answers to questions/tasks or parts of questions/tasks and identifies the number of marks to be awarded.

Moderation	The process through which internal assessment is monitored to ensure that it is reliable, fair and consistent with required standards.
Modified test materials	Test papers and other materials that have been amended for pupils with special assessment needs.
Monitoring	Ensuring that processes and procedures are being carried out according to the specification provided or code of practice.
Pre-testing	Trialling assessment materials with a sample of pupils as part of the test development process.
Reasonable adjustments	Arrangements that are approved in advance of a test or assessment to allow attainment to be demonstrated by pupils with special assessment needs (access arrangements) and arrangements that may result in an adjustment to the marks of pupils whose performance in the tests is affected by extremely distressing circumstances (special consideration).
Regulator	The body, accountable to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, responsible for securing public confidence in the validity, reliability and rigour of statutory assessments and in the maintenance of standards over time.
Reliability	The ability of an assessment to produce results that can be replicated.
Script	A pupil's written response to the external or internal assessment.
Script scrutiny range	The mark range used to identify scripts as part of the level-setting process.
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator. A teacher or other professional who has responsibility for managing any special requirements of pupils with special educational needs.
Stakeholder	Any person with an interest in national curriculum assessments.

Standardisation	A process that ensures that the mark scheme is applied consistently by markers or moderators.
Test materials / assessment materials	Any materials relating to the delivery of a test or assessment, such as test papers, source materials, answer sheets and mark schemes.
Validity	The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme.

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First published by The Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator in 2009.

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