

National curriculum assessments

Code of practice

Key stages 1–3

2007

National curriculum assessments
**Code of
practice**



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

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Foreword


The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is accountable to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills 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*, 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 this 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 2006. 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 2007. If you have any comments about the code, please send them to ncamonitoring@qca.org.uk.



Isabel Nisbet
Director, Regulation and Standards

Introduction

Regulation of the national curriculum assessments

- 1 The national curriculum assessments are used to assess pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at key stages 1, 2 and 3, and science at key stages 2 and 3. 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 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) 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. QCA will ensure a fair deal for learners and be accountable to the public, whose interests it seeks to safeguard, and to government.

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:
 - a) specifying the processes and procedures necessary to ensure that high-quality, consistent and rigorous standards are applied in national curriculum assessments and level setting
 - b) 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 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:
 - a) have trust in the agencies and the procedures the agencies use to develop the assessments
 - b) be confident that the assessments will be appropriate for their pupils
 - c) 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.
- 7 The appendices provide models of procedures designed to ensure that standards are maintained year on year.

Audience and engagement

- 8 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 people other than the National Assessment Agency (NAA), which is a subsidiary body of QCA, and contracted agencies.
- 9 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, NAA, local authorities, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) 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.
- 10 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.
- 11 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

- 12 QCA is accountable to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for ensuring that the public has confidence in the validity, reliability and rigour of statutory assessments¹, and for maintaining test standards over time.
- 13 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.
- 14 Responsibility for delivering these assessments and ensuring that the assessments meet the standards set by QCA rests with NAA. QCA has developed this code of practice to monitor the delivery of national curriculum assessments.
- 15 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.

¹ The term 'assessments' in this document refers to all national curriculum tests, tasks and their associated mark schemes.

National Assessment Agency

- 16 NAA 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.
- 17 The responsibilities of NAA are discharged through its staff and appointed agencies. NAA should provide appropriate training and support to ensure that its personnel can carry out the functions set out in this code of practice.
- 18 NAA'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.
- 19 NAA must produce and distribute clear and timely statements of administrative processes and procedures.
- 20 NAA must have procedures in place for ensuring the confidentiality of all assessment materials before the test date.
- 21 NAA must ensure that the QCA regulation team 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.
- 22 NAA must ensure that the national curriculum assessment programme is delivered to agreed quality standards and on schedule.
- 23 NAA must also ensure that its agencies provide value for money.
- 24 NAA must ensure that full account is taken of current equal opportunities legislation.

NAA's accountable officer²

- 25 NAA will appoint a named person or persons for ensuring that the quality and standard of its assessments meet those set down by QCA – the accountable officer(s). In doing so NAA guarantees to the QCA regulation team:
 - a) that all necessary action will be taken to maintain standards in each subject from year to year

² This title relates to the functions carried out by NAA and may not be the title used. This function may be part of one or more person's job descriptions.

- 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.

NAA officers

- 26 NAA 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 NAA's policies and procedures
 - b) NAA's senior management, including the accountable officer(s), are alerted to issues or concerns that arise during the process.

Chair of level setting³

- 27 NAA 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

- 28 NAA 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
 - 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.
- 29 NAA will also appoint agencies with the appropriate knowledge and expertise to produce appropriate modified assessment materials. The agencies must liaise with other NAA-appointed agencies as appropriate.

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

Test operations agencies

- 30 NAA will appoint an agency, or agencies, with the appropriate experience, knowledge and expertise to:
- produce the assessment materials
 - distribute the assessment materials to participating schools
 - mark the test papers
 - collect national data for test delivery and reporting purposes.

External marking

- 31 The test operations agency appointed to mark the test papers must:
- prepare and distribute clear and comprehensive guidance for schools on the procedures to be followed for external marking
 - develop a training programme that delivers consistent marking through agreed quality assurance procedures including the level of supervision of markers
 - appoint an appropriately experienced marking programme leader and sufficient markers for each subject at key stages 2 and 3 with relevant subject and, where required, management expertise
 - plan for the succession of appropriately trained leaders, in particular at marking programme leader and script scrutineer level
 - train all those involved in delivering and supporting the marking process
 - ensure that markers receive all the necessary information, training and administration materials in advance of training meetings
 - ensure that all new markers are fully supported through additional training and the provision of a mentor
 - set in place appropriate procedures for monitoring the quality of marking
 - ensure that all markers are aware of the confidential nature of all assessment materials prior to the tests being taken
 - effectively manage and support marker training events and script scrutinies
 - provide all the necessary materials to support the level setting process
 - provide NAA with regular management information reports that include appropriate management data
 - provide a report on pupil responses to questions in the tests for each subject at key stages 2 and 3
 - provide help and advice to schools about marking and review arrangements.
- 32 The marking programme leader must:
- develop the subject-specific training materials to be used at all training meetings
 - oversee and monitor the delivery of the training programme to markers
 - 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 NAA, including lessons learnt and recommendations for improvements to the marking process. This report will be published.

33 Markers must:

- a) attend a training event
- 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 the training event. They must not discuss the content of the test before the test date or modify their own classroom materials based on their knowledge of the assessment.

Data collection

34 The test operations agency appointed to collect national data must:

- a) collect relevant data from participating 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 NAA and DfES with timely and accurate data to meet their requirements.

Local authorities

35 Local authorities have a statutory duty to:

- a) monitor the administration of the key stages 2 and 3 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.

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

Department for Education and Skills

- 37 DfES receives data from NAA on how the national cohort of pupils has performed in the national curriculum assessments at the end of each key stage.

Schools, headteachers and teachers⁴

- 38 NAA 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 NAA 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

- 39 Maintained schools⁵ must participate in the statutory national curriculum assessments and report the outcomes to parents and carers.
- 40 If non-maintained schools choose to participate in the national curriculum assessment system, they must follow the published assessment arrangements.

Headteachers

- 41 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.
- 42 Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that the tests are administered according to the published statutory assessment arrangements.
- 43 Headteachers have a statutory obligation to complete and sign a headteacher's declaration form confirming that the published assessment arrangements have been followed, that the key stages 2 and 3 assessment materials were stored securely before the tests, and that pupils' answer papers were stored securely prior to being dispatched for marking.
- 44 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 and 3)
 - Section 4: Print and distribution of assessment materials

⁴ The term 'teachers' in this document includes those working with children at the foundation stage.

⁵ The term 'maintained schools' refers to all schools required to follow, and be assessed in, the national curriculum, including academies.

- Section 5: Test administration
- Section 6: Reasonable adjustments
- Section 12: Review of marking
- Section 13: Evaluation.

Teachers

- 45 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.
- 46 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.
- 47 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 and 3)
 - 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

- 48 Clear communication and timely dissemination ensures that local authorities, foundation stage settings and schools receive information about national curriculum assessments enabling them to:
- understand their statutory responsibilities
 - understand the administrative arrangements that affect the periods before, during and after the tests, including any changes from previous years' practice
 - make necessary preparations for administering assessments consistently and equitably with regard to NAA directives and guidance
 - use relevant outcomes from the national assessments to inform future classroom practice.
- 49 Clear communication also provides the opportunity for an effective dialogue between NAA and its stakeholders in order to serve the interests of the pupil.
- 50 The views of appropriate stakeholders are taken into account when changes to the national curriculum assessments, reporting arrangements or processes are proposed.

Responsibilities

- 51 NAA must:
- ensure that local authorities and schools have sufficient information to understand their roles and statutory responsibilities
 - provide information, guidance and support in a timely manner
 - keep the arrangements for providing information, guidance and support under review and identify areas where improvements could be made.
- 52 Local authorities must:
- be aware of their statutory roles and responsibilities
 - share information within their authority and schools to ensure common understanding and consistency
 - provide support to schools and teachers within their authority
 - carry out their roles and responsibilities in line with NAA information, guidance and support.
- 53 Local authorities should be encouraged to provide feedback about the appropriateness and effectiveness of NAA's communication.

- 54 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 NAA information, guidance and support.

Nature of the process

- 55 NAA 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.
- 56 NAA 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 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 QCA's published customer service code.

Characteristics and evidence of success

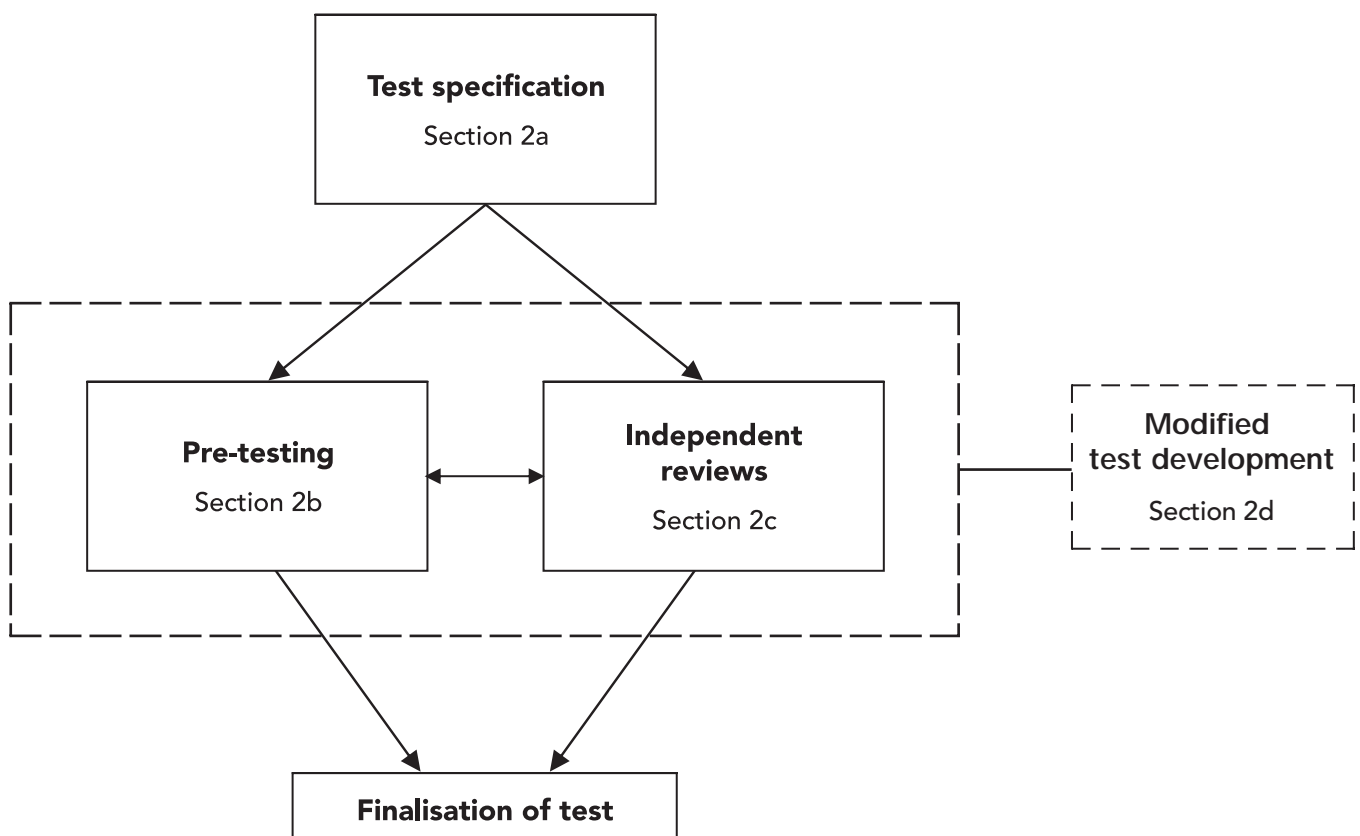
- 57 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 58 A successful communication and dissemination system will be in place if:
- a) continuous improvement is at the heart of design and delivery
 - b) a range of accessible 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

- 59 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.
- 60 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:
- test specification
 - pre-testing
 - independent reviews
 - modified test development.
- 61 The development process will normally have been completed by the end of November in the year before the test is first available for use in schools.

Figure 1: Regulated steps in the test development process



Section 2a: Test specification

Description

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

Responsibilities

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

Nature of the process

- 66 NAA must provide each agency responsible for developing assessment materials with a clear specification that will:
- generate results that provide a valid measure of the required skills, knowledge and understanding as defined by the national curriculum and subject criteria
 - generate results that provide a reliable measure of pupils' performance
 - generate results that provide comparability of standards
 - minimise bias, differentiating only on the basis of all pupils' ability to meet national curriculum requirements
 - deliver a manageable system of assessment.
- 67 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.

- 68 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

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

Section 2b: Pre-testing

Description

- 72 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. NAA decides on the appropriateness of questions and whole tests, based on pupils' responses in these pre-tests and feedback from participating schools.
- 73 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.
- 74 The process allows participating schools to have the opportunity to understand and contribute to:
- a) the test development process
 - b) the work of NAA.

Responsibilities

- 75 NAA 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.
- 76 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.
- 77 NAA is responsible for ensuring that pre-testing is delivered to meet the specification, to agreed quality standards, on schedule and within the agreed budget.
- 78 NAA may choose to inform local authorities which schools have participated in pre-testing assessment materials.

Nature of the process

- 79 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.

- 80 The questions must be pre-tested with an appropriate number and range of pupils, drawn from:
- all relevant types of schools
 - schools from each geographical region of England
 - schools from metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas
 - a range of socio-economic, cultural and ethnic groups.
- This sample should include:
- an equal number of boys and girls
 - pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL)
 - pupils who have special educational needs (SEN)
 - pupils working at the full range of levels covered by the assessment.
- 81 The test development agency will prepare a statistical report that includes information on the:
- number and gender of pupils involved
 - number of schools involved
 - types of schools
 - geographical location of schools
 - pupils' EAL and SEN status.
- 82 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 comparison between teacher assessment and the level derived from the pre-test
 - the number of questions tested
 - the range of questions as identified in the specification and programme of study.
- 83 Where appropriate, the report must include recommendations for the next stage of development.
- 84 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.
- 85 Where changes are recommended after this final pre-test, NAA must have a sound justification supported, where possible, by a statistically sound argument and additional pre-testing if necessary.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 86 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 87 The tests are of an appropriate level of demand for eligible pupils.

- 88 Pupils' performance in the live test is consistent with predictive evidence from pre-testing.
- 89 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.
- 90 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

- 91 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.
- 92 Test materials are adjusted in line with the recommendations, where appropriate, from the independent reviews.
- 93 Schools may be asked to release teachers to contribute to the independent review panels, looking at test materials under development. Schools will be provided with sufficient funds from NAA for adequate supply cover, in accordance with QCA guidelines.

Responsibilities

- 94 NAA 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. NAA's accountable officer is responsible for confirming the action taken forward from these meetings.
- 95 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.
- 96 The expert panel must ensure that all discussions and associated assessment materials at these meetings remain confidential.

Nature of the process

- 97 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.

- 98 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.
- 99 Records of the expert panels' considerations, highlighting any issues or risks, must be made by both NAA and the test development agency. The records must clearly identify the reviewers' recommendations and include how these have been taken forward by NAA.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 100 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 101 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 informs the next stage of the process.
- 102 Schools are confident that the materials have been reviewed by experts with relevant teaching experience during the test development phase.
- 103 Schools are satisfied with the quality of the test materials.
- 104 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

105 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

- 106** Modified test agencies are appointed by NAA 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.
- 107** NAA is responsible for ensuring that any modifications are consistent with practices at other key stages, including those at key stage 4 where appropriate.
- 108** NAA 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

- 109** 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, NAA 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.
- 110** Full account must be taken of current equal opportunities legislation.

- 111 NAA must ensure that appropriate administration instructions for the modified test materials are produced to ensure they are equitably administered.
- 112 Modified test materials and guidance must be signed off by NAA's accountable officer.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 113 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 114 All pupils, for whom the tests are appropriate, have access to the tests.
- 115 Teachers view the modifications as appropriate and support appropriate access for their pupils.

Section 3: Test security (key stages 2 and 3)

Description

116 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

- 117** It is the responsibility of NAA to have procedures in place that ensure the security and confidentiality of all test materials, pupils' scripts and results information.
- 118** All agencies and individuals contracted by NAA 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.
- 119** The QCA regulation team involved in monitoring the assessment process must adhere to NAA's procedures for ensuring confidentiality and security of materials under development.
- 120** Local authorities are responsible for monitoring security provision in their schools.
- 121** NAA is responsible for appointing an agency to monitor non-maintained schools' compliance with national curriculum assessment security procedures.
- 122** Headteachers are required to confirm that all assessment materials have been stored securely.

Nature of the process

123 NAA 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.

- 124 NAA 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.
- 125 NAA must give schools and local authorities clear and consistent guidance on the possible sanctions for those not adhering to the published security procedures.
- 126 NAA must inform the QCA regulation team of any breach of security that has the potential to compromise the integrity of an assessment.
- 127 NAA 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

- 128 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 129 The test operations agency confirms that all headteachers have returned the headteacher's declaration form (see paragraph 43).
- 130 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.
- 131 All assessment materials are accounted for.
- 132 There is no breach of security.
- 133 There is no negative publicity about test security.

Section 4: Print and distribution of assessment materials

Description

134 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

- 135** NAA 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. NAA must have procedures in place to ensure there are no printing errors.
- 136** NAA is responsible for defining the quality and printing standards expected and for ensuring consistency across key stages and subjects where appropriate.
- 137** The printing agency, or agencies, is responsible for ensuring that the paper quality meets the standards set by NAA.
- 138** NAA 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.
- 139** NAA 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

- 140** NAA 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.
- 141** Where printing or distribution problems or errors occur, NAA 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.

- 142 NAA must investigate all reports of materials lost or stolen during transit.
- 143 All parties involved in the distribution process must have systems in place to ensure the security of materials.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 144 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 145 There are no errors in the printing of the tests.
- 146 Schools receive all assessment and associated administration materials.
- 147 Schools arrange parcel carriage collections for completed assessments on time and markers receive allocated scripts within two working days of the test having been taken.
- 148 Schools are satisfied with the service provided.
- 149 There is no breach of security or loss of assessment materials.

Section 5: Test administration

Description

150 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

151 NAA 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.

152 NAA must ensure that any changes to these arrangements have been fully evaluated before implementation, and communicated clearly to stakeholders.

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

Nature of the process

154 NAA must publish annually details of the administration procedures and relevant guidance.

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

156 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.

157 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.

- 158** NAA 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

- 159** NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 160** Evaluation indicates that the administration was manageable.
- 161** Schools and local authorities are confident that the tests are being administered in a fair and consistent manner.
- 162** Monitoring by local authorities and NAA indicates that administration has been carried out fairly and in line with the published guidance.

Section 6: Reasonable adjustments

Description

163 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

164 NAA 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.

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

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

167 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.

168 NAA 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

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

170 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.

171 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.

- 172 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.
- 173 Adjustments must not undermine the validity and reliability of the assessment objectives or the meaningfulness of the assessment.
- 174 An appropriate range of experts must be consulted regularly to review the arrangements and make recommendations for improving access for eligible pupils.
- 175 Where possible, reasonable adjustments (access arrangements and special consideration) should be consistent with those used at key stage 4.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 176 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 177 Parents, carers and teachers of children with special assessment needs are satisfied that their children have not been advantaged or disadvantaged.
- 178 Pupils receive appropriate support and guidance when taking the assessments.
- 179 Schools acknowledge that their pupils have been allowed appropriate support as described in the statutory assessment arrangements.
- 180 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

- 181** At key stages 2 and 3 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 stages 2 and 3. 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.
- 182** Local authorities moderate the assessments in order to ensure that standards are maintained through the consistency of judgements in relation to national standards.

Responsibilities

- 183** NAA is responsible for developing and distributing key stage 1 national curriculum assessment materials to schools, and for determining the level thresholds for these assessments.
- 184** 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.
- 185** NAA 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.
- 186** NAA 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.
- 187** NAA 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.

- 188** Local authorities are responsible for investigating all reported allegations of malpractice received from identified sources.
- 189** 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

- 190** The procedures for developing the key stage 1 national curriculum assessments are the same as those for key stages 2 and 3 (see Section 2).
- 191** 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 stages 2 and 3 assessments (see Section 10b and Appendix 3) but should be adapted to suit the purpose, where appropriate.
- 192** 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.
- 193** The level setting meeting must not be held until all the information required for the meeting is available.
- 194** NAA's chair of level setting must chair the meeting.
- 195** 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

- 196** NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 197** Standards are maintained over time.
- 198** 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.

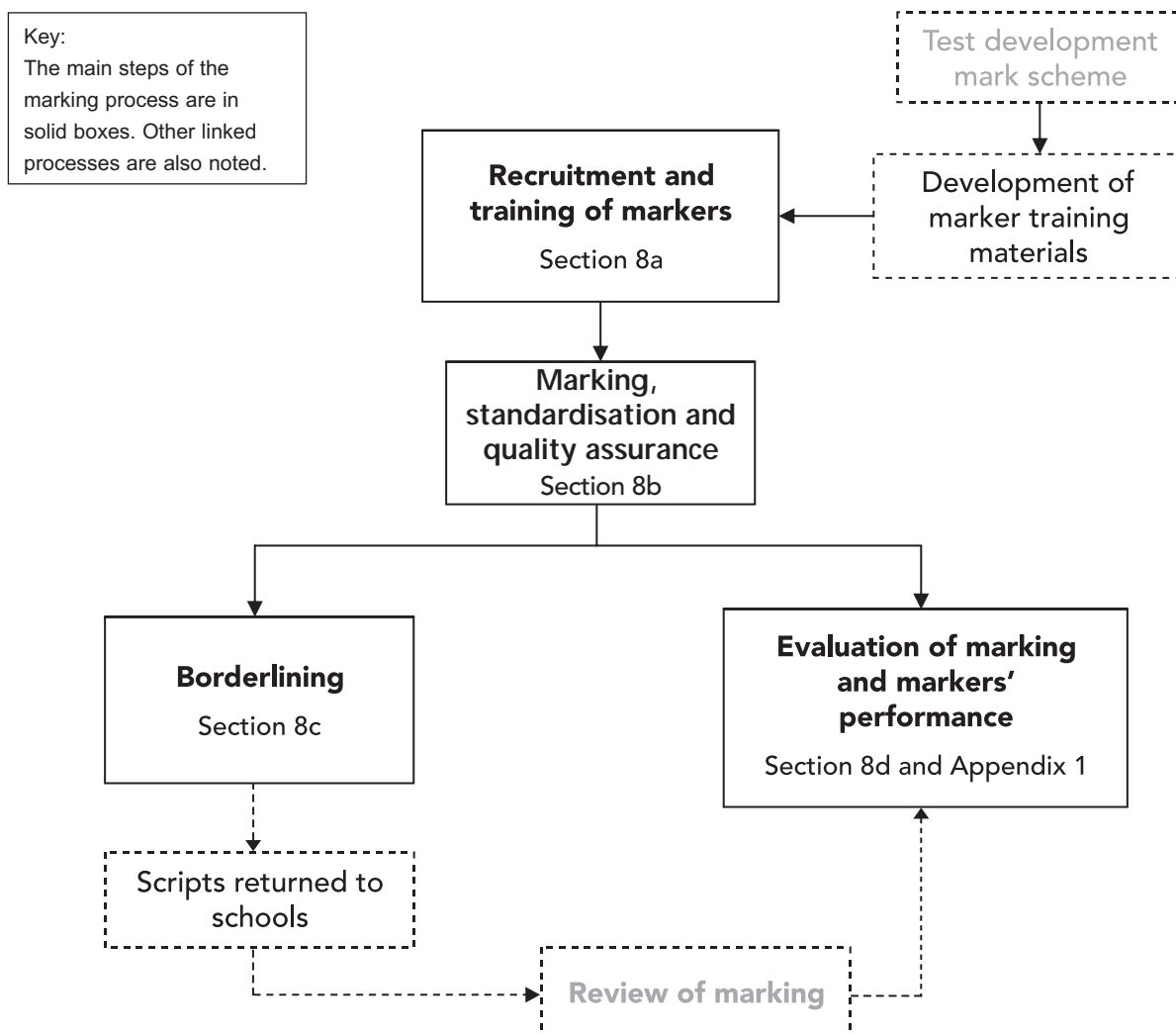
Section 8: Marking (key stages 2 and 3)

Description

199 This section covers the following aspects of the marking process:

- recruitment and training of markers – understanding their roles and responsibilities and the marking administration arrangements
- marking, standardisation and quality assurance – ensuring that markers mark to the set standard and consistently apply the mark scheme
- borderlining – checking the marking of pupils' scripts with marks just below the level threshold
- evaluation – listening to those involved in marking and learning lessons for future years.

Figure 2: Regulated steps of the marking process



Section 8a: Recruitment and training of markers

Description

200 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

- 201** NAA is responsible for ensuring that there is an appropriate marker structure and a key stage / subject-specific training programme in place. This programme must describe the training techniques to be used, based on best practice.
- 202** 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.
- 203** 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.
- 204** 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.
- 205** NAA 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

- 206** A marker structure, including reserve markers, must be in place before recruitment starts.
- 207** The criteria for appointing a new marker or re-appointing an experienced marker, detailing the status, experience and marker grade required, must be agreed with NAA and be in place before recruitment starts.
- 208** Markers must advise the test operations agency of any personal interest in a pupil or school taking part in national curriculum assessments.

- 209** Marking teams must be organised so that markers can be effectively supervised.
- 210** 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 use of personnel.
- 211** No changes can be made to the published mark scheme during marker training.
- 212** The training programme must be agreed with the marking programme leader. The training programme for each key stage and subject must:
- be robust
 - consider any issues raised by, or recommendations from, the evaluations of the previous year's training programme.
- 213** The training programme must be designed so that all markers:
- receive consistent advice and guidance
 - are aware of the procedures for achieving consistent marking
 - understand their involvement in the marking process, including those aspects that affect the script scrutiny and level setting procedures
 - are informed about the importance of meeting deadlines and carrying out administrative tasks accurately
 - understand the arrangements for dealing with scripts where malpractice is suspected
 - are trained in the use of any technology used in the marking process.
- 214** New markers must be identified and receive appropriate training before they start live marking and mentor support throughout the marking period.
- 215** 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

- 216** NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 217** Sufficient, suitably qualified markers are appointed to complete the marking process to schedule. The majority of markers have been retained from the previous year.
- 218** The suite of subject-specific training materials supports and exemplifies the mark scheme. Exemplar materials cover the full range of levels.
- 219** Each subject / key stage has an effective training programme and markers leave their training session confident that they can apply the mark scheme.

- 220 The training and standardisation materials fully prepare markers for live marking.
- 221 The training materials give markers clear and consistent messages about their role, quality standards expected, quality procedures, how to record marks, borderlining procedures (or its equivalent) and how to dispatch marks, levels and scripts to schools when required.
- 222 There is no breach of security.

Section 8b: Marking, standardisation and quality assurance

Description

- 223 Standardisation of marking is an ongoing process that starts immediately after the marker training event and involves the continuous supervision of a marker by a more senior marker. It ensures that markers have understood and can continue to apply the mark scheme accurately throughout the marking period.
- 224 All markers in a particular subject and key stage work with the same standardisation materials. Their marking is checked against the national standard. Any divergence from the mark scheme is noted and the absolute mark difference calculated. A marker cannot start marking the rest of their allocation of live scripts until they receive feedback from their supervisor on the standardisation materials and their first sample of live scripts – see Appendix 1.
- 225 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 re-allocated.

Responsibilities

- 226 NAA is responsible for approving the test operations agency's procedures for standardisation and ongoing quality assurance.
- 227 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.
- 228 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.
- 229 The test operations agency must recommend, and then agree with NAA, the acceptable tolerance for marking quality.
- 230 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.

- 231** The test operations agency must record, for audit purposes:
- a) all marking scores sent to the supervisors
 - b) feedback on the performance of all markers
 - c) information about stopped markers.

Nature of the process

- 232** The number of standardisation scripts that markers are required to mark and the acceptable marking tolerances for each subject / key stage test must be confirmed with NAA.
- 233** All markers, including supervisory markers, must mark an agreed number of standardisation scripts accurately and consistently before being cleared to mark.
- 234** Only those markers whose marking is within the acceptable tolerance at standardisation stage may start marking.
- 235** Markers will be quality assured throughout the marking period. This will involve a quality check of at least two samples of marking by the marker's supervisor.
- 236** 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

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

Section 8c: Borderlining

Description

243 Borderlining is a quality assurance process by which the scripts of pupils whose marks fall just below the identified level threshold are checked to ensure that the pupils are awarded the appropriate level. Markers are trained to revisit these scripts, check that the mark scheme has been correctly applied and check that all clerical administration for that pupil's papers is correct.

Responsibilities

244 NAA is responsible for ensuring that borderlining, or its equivalent, takes place.

Nature of the process

245 Markers must be trained to carry out the borderlining process.

246 Appropriate borderlining is completed before scripts are returned to schools.

247 Where scripts are borderlined by a marker who was not the original marker, clear procedures must be provided and followed.

Characteristics and evidence of success

248 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

249 Schools are confident that pupils whose marks fall just below a level threshold have received the accurate level.

250 Schools are confident that marking has been carried out accurately to a national standard.

251 Evidence is provided that scripts have been borderlined.

Section 8d: Evaluation of marking and markers' performance

Description

- 252 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 subject- / key-stage-specific mark scheme, the marker's administrative ability and the number of reviews upheld against the marker.
- 253 The quality of the marker training is also evaluated – see Section 13.

Responsibilities

- 254 NAA 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.
- 255 NAA must ensure that the quality of marking is evaluated each year to ensure that standards are maintained.
- 256 The marking programme leaders must produce a report that includes recommendations on how the process can be improved, the effectiveness of standardisation and the sampling process, any issues with the mark scheme and lessons learnt.

Nature of the process

- 257 Procedures must be in place to deal with any markers whose performance falls below the minimum standard, outlining the appropriate action to be taken.
- 258 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.
- 259 Markers must be notified of their grade.
- 260 Markers who fail to achieve the required standard of marking should not be re-appointed at that level the following year.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 261 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 262 Only markers who can mark accurately and consistently are re-appointed.
- 263 NAA's evaluation of the process informs future test and mark scheme development, and improves marking quality.
- 264 Marking programme leaders support decisions on stopped markers, and on reappointments.
- 265 There is consistency in the grade assigned to markers across subjects and key stages.

Section 9: Malpractice (externally marked assessments)

Description

- 266** 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 malpractice 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.
- 267** Malpractice at the foundation stage and at key stage 1 is addressed in Section 7 (paragraph 188).

Responsibilities

- 268** NAA has a statutory responsibility to investigate all reported allegations of malpractice received from identified sources. Depending on the nature of the incident, this duty might be shared with partner bodies, for example local authorities or the test operations agency.
- 269** If malpractice is proven, NAA has the authority to amend or annul results. NAA must inform the QCA regulation team 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.
- 270** NAA must inform schools of the appeals procedures following a malpractice investigation that has resulted in an annulment, at the same time as informing the school of the annulment.
- 271** The test operations agency is responsible for ensuring that all reported instances of malpractice raised with them are passed to NAA and the agreed procedures for dealing with reported instances are followed by markers and agency staff.
- 272** The QCA regulation team will, over time, review NAA's procedures for monitoring, investigating and dealing with allegations or reported incidents of malpractice.

Nature of the process

- 273** NAA must have procedures in place to:
- a) receive and record all reported incidents of suspected or alleged malpractice ⁶

⁶ Incidents may be reported by members of the public, pupils, parents, teachers, local authorities, agencies, QCA or DfES.

- b) respond to all reported suspicions or allegations of malpractice
- c) establish the strength of evidence in support of any suspected or alleged malpractice, where appropriate working in partnership with other bodies to verify the full facts of each case
- d) adjudicate whether suspicions or allegations of malpractice 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.

- 274** When an initial malpractice enquiry, or in-depth malpractice investigation, is delegated to an individual or agency, NAA 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.
- 275** Decisions on the outcome of each case must be based on all the available evidence. The decision process must involve independent experts, appointed by NAA, who have an in-depth and wide-ranging experience of national curriculum assessments.
- 276** Where the incident is reported to the test operations agency, the agency must ensure that:
- a) the incident is recorded in full
 - b) NAA is notified without delay
 - c) full details of the case are passed to NAA and retained for at least five years.
- 277** The test operations agency must ensure that all markers are aware of their responsibility to record and report suspicions of malpractice 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.
- 278** NAA must have procedures in place to ensure that appeals from schools, following an investigation into alleged malpractice, are dealt with in a fair and timely manner.

Characteristics and evidence of success

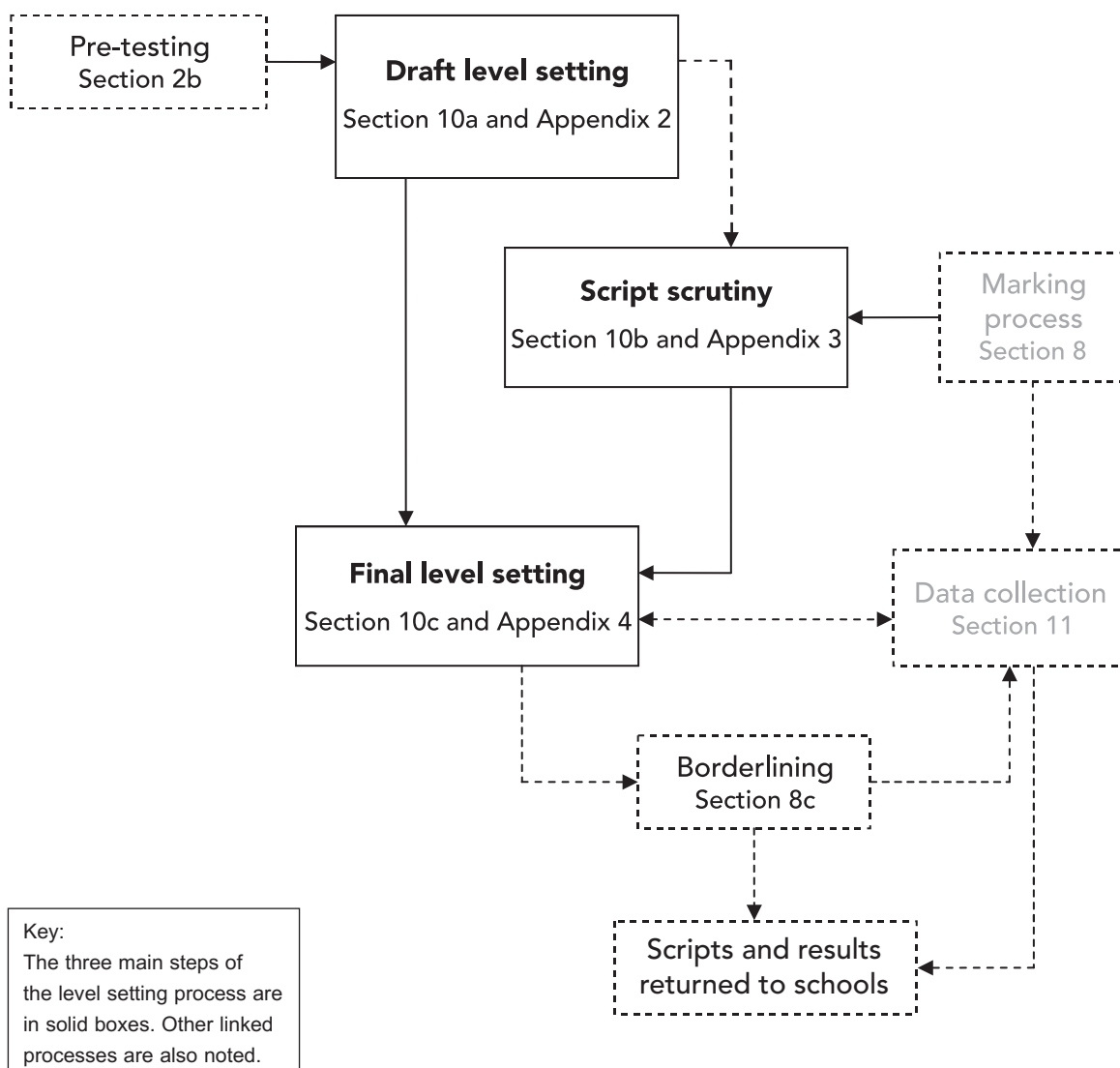
- 279 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 280 All reported instances of malpractice are fully investigated and any corrective action is taken.
- 281 Stakeholders are confident that the tests have been administered fairly.
- 282 There is trust in the integrity of the test results.

Section 10: Level setting (externally marked assessments)

Description

283 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.

Figure 3: Regulated steps in the level setting process



Responsibilities

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

Nature of the process

285 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 and judgemental evidence 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

286 Draft level setting provides NAA 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

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

288 NAA'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.

289 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

290 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.

291 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.

292 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.

293 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.

294 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

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

Section 10b: Script scrutiny

Description

299 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

- 300** The test operations agency, appointed by NAA 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.
- 301** 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.
- 302** NAA must monitor the process and ensure that an appropriate range and number of marked scripts is scrutinised.

Nature of the process

- 303** 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 from within that zone of marks.
- 304** NAA must review the national data before the script scrutiny meeting to ensure that the range of scripts to be scrutinised is appropriate.
- 305** The script scrutiny meeting must be chaired by the marking programme leader.
- 306** 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.

- 307** The test operations agency must provide all participants with the following:
- script scrutiny procedures
 - the national curriculum level descriptions
 - the generic 'characteristics of performance' for each level threshold, approved by the QCA regulation team
 - archive scripts at the level thresholds from at least three years.
- 308** 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.
- 309** Scrutineers must use their collective professional judgement to reach a consensus on a threshold zone and mark.
- 310** 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.
- 311** The marking programme leader must communicate the outcomes of the meeting to NAA'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

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

Section 10c: Final level setting

Description

315 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

- 316** NAA'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.
- 317** The QCA regulation team is responsible for monitoring level setting meetings and advising QCA's chief executive on the outcomes of the meeting.
- 318** The ultimate decision on the level thresholds, based on input from NAA's chair of level setting and the QCA regulation team, is the responsibility of QCA's chief executive (see paragraph 15).
- 319** NAA must communicate the final thresholds to markers, schools and other interested groups in a timely, appropriate and effective way.

Nature of the process

- 320** There must be a final level setting meeting for every statutory national curriculum assessment that:
- a) sets the level thresholds (including thresholds for the award of level N and any compensatory levels)
 - b) sets the borderline range of marks.
- 321** An independent adviser must be appointed by NAA to advise the chair at the meeting.
- 322** 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.

- 323 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.
- 324 The meeting must attempt to reach consensus on the final level thresholds and the mark ranges for borderlining associated with each. 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.
- 325 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

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

Section 11: Data requirements, collection and reporting

Description

- 331** Data is 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:
 - reporting to parents or carers in line with statutory requirements
 - school evaluation and review.

Responsibilities

- 332** It is NAA's responsibility to ensure that accurate data is collected and passed to the printers, distributors and schools.
- 333** Where data is provided through pupil level annual school census (PLASC), NAA is responsible for passing it to the relevant agencies.
- 334** The test operations agency must ensure that the arrangements for registering and confirming test orders do not place an unnecessary burden on schools.
- 335** The test operations agency must assure the accuracy of all test results sent to schools.
- 336** NAA is responsible for ensuring that the information requirements of DfES are met.

Nature of the process

- 337** Robust systems for the collection and checking of all pupil performance data, as defined by DfES in the technical requirements document, must be in place.
- 338** 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.
- 339** Results must be accurate and sent to schools by the agreed deadline.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 340 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 341 Test orders, including the correct number of modified tests, are accurately captured and assessment materials arrive in schools within the published timeframe.
- 342 In advance of the test date, schools are sent an external marking stationery pack containing guidance on completing marksheets, the name and address of the external markers allocated to them for each key stage / subject, information on how to book parcel carriage to markers and the necessary stationery to do this.
- 343 Schools and local authorities receive accurate results data by the published date.

Section 12: Review of marking

Description

344 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

345 NAA 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.

346 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.

347 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

348 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.

349 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.

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

351 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.

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

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

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

- 355 NAA must have procedures in place for monitoring, evaluating and reporting annually on the review arrangements and for sharing relevant data with the QCA regulation team on request.
- 356 Schools must be provided with the procedures to be followed if they are not satisfied with the review process.

Characteristics and evidence of success

- 357 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.
- 358 Review requests are processed on time.
- 359 Inconsistently or poorly marked scripts are identified and re-marked by an accurate marker trained to review marking.
- 360 Following the review of marking, the scripts, together with results, are returned to schools by the agreed deadline.
- 361 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

362 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

363 NAA 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.

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

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

366 The test operations agency must provide NAA 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.

367 NAA 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.

368 NAA must review all the evaluation reports and take any necessary action.

Nature of the process

369 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.

370 The evaluation process must feed into NAA's self-assessment activity, to support continuous improvement.

Characteristics and evidence of success

371 NAA will ensure that criteria for measuring success are established and linked through to self-assessment for regulatory purposes.

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

373 Stakeholders see improvements being implemented year on year.

374 The QCA regulation team is satisfied that the outcome of any evaluation informs future practice.

Section 14: Procurement

Description

375 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

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

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

Nature of the process

378 NAA must follow QCA's procurement procedures for appointing agencies.

379 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.

380 The QCA regulation team must be informed of any major procurement activities such as the appointment of test development or test operations agencies. The QCA regulation team must make it known to NAA if it wishes to contribute to the procurement exercise.

Characteristics and evidence of success

381 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

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

Responsibilities

383 NAA 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.

384 NAA is responsible for ensuring that its agencies archive all relevant materials.

Nature of the process

385 Each year, NAA must agree with the QCA regulation team which documents are to be archived. This must include:

- a) the scripts at each level threshold
- b) all 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.

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

387 NAA must follow QCA's protocols and retention policy for archiving.

Characteristics and evidence of success

388 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.

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

Appendices: Suggested models for maintaining standards

In line with the five principles of good regulation, the QCA regulation team will target resources to those areas of development and delivery that establish and maintain the standard. For the purposes of proportionality, accountability, consistency and transparency there is an expectation that examples of 'methods of compliance' are provided.

The methods of compliance exemplified in the appendices, in the form of models for ensuring the maintenance of standards, are provided as a guide for NAA to include or modify for its own procedures.

Appendix 1: Supervising and checking marking

Responsibilities

- 1.1 NAA must approve the test operations agency's procedures for quality assuring markers.
- 1.2 The test operations agency must ensure that there is effective training for all supervisory markers, including how to sample the work of others and how best to give constructive feedback.
- 1.3 NAA must ensure that where markers do not meet the quality criteria, appropriate corrective action is taken by the test operations agency.

Recommended procedures

- 1.4 Markers send at least two samples of marked scripts to a supervisor. The first must be at the beginning of the marking period and the second later in the process.
- 1.5 The supervisor must ensure that the marker is marking within the agreed tolerance and provide feedback to the marker.
- 1.6 An additional sample must be requested from those markers who are unable to demonstrate their ability to apply the mark scheme consistently and to a national standard. If this further sample does not meet the criteria the marker must be stopped immediately.
- 1.7 Marking programme leaders should be kept informed of marker quality and any changes to the marking cohort.
- 1.8 Supervisors must keep in touch with their teams and carry out regular progress checks on the volume of marking completed. Data should be passed to their senior marker.
- 1.9 There must be clear channels of communication between the marking programme leader and supervisors to identify and clarify any issues arising during the marking process.
- 1.10 Supervisors must authorise the return of each marker's scripts/results to schools.
- 1.11 Data from the sampling process must be recorded and be available for audit purposes at the end of the process.

- 1.12 The test operations agency must provide regular management information to NAA during the marking process on the accuracy of marking.
- 1.13 Wherever possible, re-allocated scripts should be returned to schools by the published deadline.
- 1.14 Where appropriate, additional quality assurance should be undertaken for schools that had reviews upheld in the past, to bolster confidence in the marking process.

Appendix 2: Draft level setting

Responsibilities

- 2.1 NAA's accountable officer is responsible for ensuring that the procedures for setting levels are secure, robust and have been implemented correctly.
- 2.2 NAA's accountable officer is also responsible for ensuring that the evidence presented at the draft level setting meeting is justified and reliable and that standards are maintained.

Recommended procedures

- 2.3 The meeting must be attended by NAA's accountable officer, at least one representative from the test development agency, NAA's research and statistics expert, an NAA support officer (who will be responsible for making an official note of the meeting) and other NAA officers involved in the test development and level setting process.
- 2.4 Before the meeting, the test development agency must submit a draft level setting report to NAA. This report must include the test development agency's recommendations for each level threshold and a full explanation and justification for each of these thresholds based on secure statistical and judgemental evidence. The report must also address all issues that could affect the validity of the conclusions drawn by the report. For a recommended format for a draft level setting report – see Figure 4.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 The meeting should begin with the test development agency's presentation of its report; the agency should then answer any questions from attendees.
- 2.7 The chair must lead the meeting in discussion of:
 - a) methodology and results from the statistical equating analysis (analyses)
 - b) methodology and results from the judgemental exercise(s)
 - c) issues that might affect the validity of conclusions drawn from results presented.

The discussion should then move on to the draft level thresholds and script scrutiny ranges.
- 2.8 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.

- 2.9** The meeting must aim to reach 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 terminate and reconvene the meeting if she/he considers that additional evidence is needed.
- 2.10** If the meeting is unable to reach consensus based on the range of evidence presented, a script scrutiny meeting must be conducted against the second pre-test scripts in order to establish a script scrutiny range.
- 2.11** NAA's chair of level setting must set the draft level threshold marks/zones and script scrutiny ranges.

Figure 4: Recommended format for a draft level setting report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Summary introduction
- 1.2 Details of any changes in the test structure, content or design that could affect comparisons
- 1.3 Background to the second pre-test – details of sample, design

2 Statistical equates

- 2.1 Details of method(s) used to estimate the cut scores including discussion of any changes
- 2.2 Estimated cut scores and comparison with previous years
- 2.3 Discussion of variation between equates, if more than one method used
- 2.4 Discussion of any changes after the second pre-test and the anticipated effect on equates

3 Teacher judgemental exercise

- 3.1 Details of the panel/sample and outline of processes, methodology
- 3.2 Results/evidence for cut scores and comparison with previous years
- 3.3 Discussion of findings

4 Recommendations for cut scores

- 4.1 Recommendations for cut scores or, at a minimum, a script scrutiny range
- 4.2 Explanation of recommendations

Appendix 3: Script scrutiny

Responsibilities

- 3.1 The test operations agency, appointed by NAA to mark the tests, is responsible for:
 - a) setting up a script scrutiny meeting for each externally marked assessment
 - b) ensuring that a supply of scripts is available at the prescribed marks for the meeting
 - c) ensuring that the script scrutiny procedures are followed and that there is sufficient justification for the threshold recommendations.
- 3.2 The test operations agency must have appropriately qualified administrative staff available to manage and support the meeting effectively. The test operations agency must ensure that the agreed procedures are followed.
- 3.3 The marking programme leader is responsible for chairing the script scrutiny meeting in accordance with agreed procedures.
- 3.4 Monitors must not directly intervene with the process but must raise any concerns with the test operations agency staff present at the script scrutiny meeting.

Recommended procedures

- 3.5 NAA must review the available national data before the script scrutiny meeting and provide NAA's accountable officer with a summary report.
- 3.6 This report must be based on a nationally representative sample of pupils who took the test. It should include the overall mark distributions for this sample and a graphical comparison of performance in the test against last year's test.
- 3.7 If, as a result of these data, NAA's accountable officer believes that the suggested script scrutiny range needs to be extended, the officer should convene a meeting and present the case for amending the script scrutiny ranges for the attendees to approve. The test operations agency should be informed of any changes and ensure that additional scripts are available for the meeting.
- 3.8 Script scrutiny ranges should avoid overlap between levels. In the event of an overlap of marks at particular levels, the marking programme leader and deputy marking programme leaders must review the overlap scripts before the script scrutiny meeting. They must decide whether to place the overlap scripts at the top of the lower level range of scripts or at the bottom of the higher level. Where possible, there must be no overlap ranges presented to the script scrutiny meeting.

- 3.9** Where the script scrutiny range exceeds 10 marks, the marking programme leader and two of the most senior scrutineers must review the mark range. They must decide whether those scripts at the extremities of the range need to be considered at the script scrutiny meeting. If the range is reduced, the scripts at the discarded marks must be available at the meeting should they be needed.
- 3.10** The script scrutiny meeting must be chaired by the marking programme leader or an appointed deputy in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.11** As well as the chair, the meeting must comprise at least nine expert scrutineers selected by the marking programme leader in consultation with the test operations agency. All scrutineers must have marked the current assessment.
- 3.12** For statutory tests, all the scrutineers must be senior markers and at least five of the scrutineers should have previous experience of script scrutiny.
- 3.13** The meeting must clearly record the decisions behind each threshold including:
- a) recording a zone of marks within which, in their expert opinion, the threshold mark will be found – the threshold zone
 - b) recommending a level threshold mark from within that zone of marks.
- 3.14** NAA officers should attend as observers. They may not contribute to the meeting unless invited to do so by the marking programme leader.
- 3.15** Before the meeting, the test operations agency must provide all participants with the following:
- a) guidance on script scrutiny procedures
 - b) the national curriculum level descriptions
 - c) the generic ‘characteristics of performance’ for each level threshold
 - d) archive scripts at the level thresholds from at least three years. These scripts should be balanced, representative of performance at the level thresholds and be drawn from tests taken in the past five years.
- 3.16** The generic characteristics of performance must be approved by the QCA regulation team and must be the basis for maintaining standards year on year.
- 3.17** These documents must be made available to all participants in sufficient time to prepare for the meeting. Scrutineers should use this material to ensure that they are fully conversant with the overall standard of work expected to achieve a level in previous years.
- 3.18** Before looking at pupils’ scripts from the live test, the scrutineers must identify examples from the archive scripts that illustrate the generic characteristics of performance at each level threshold.

- 3.19** At the script scrutiny meeting the test operations agency will provide a minimum of 10 scripts at each mark in the script scrutiny range from the live tests. These scripts should show a balanced performance across each of the components in the assessment and have been validated for use at the meeting.
- 3.20** The meeting must consider the thresholds 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.
- 3.21** The meeting should take the following format for each threshold:
- a) drawing on evidence from the archive scripts, and the generic characteristics of performance document, it should reach a consensus on the characteristics of performance at each level
 - b) working separately, each scrutineer must consider at least three scripts for each mark and decide whether they are above the threshold zone, within the threshold zone or below the threshold zone. Scrutineers should start from the top of the mark range and move downwards, stopping when they consider they have reached the threshold zone. They should then switch to the bottom of the mark range and work upwards, again stopping when they feel they have reached the threshold zone. Scrutineers should then focus on the scripts within the threshold zone. Scrutineers must keep a record of their decisions
 - c) the chair will collect and display scrutineers' judgements concerning all scripts reviewed
 - d) scrutineers will then use their collective professional judgement to reach a consensus on a threshold zone and mark
 - e) 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.
- 3.22** If the majority of scrutineers cast doubt on the validity of a mark range – by judging scripts at the top of the range to be consistently within or below the threshold, or scripts at the bottom to be consistently within or above the threshold – then an additional sample of live scripts must be considered. If these cannot be made available during the meeting, the meeting should be terminated and reconvened at a later date.
- 3.23** The marking programme leader must communicate the outcomes of the meeting to NAA'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.

Appendix 4: Final level setting

Responsibilities

- 4.1 NAA's chair of level setting is responsible for chairing the final level setting meeting, and is responsible to QCA's chief executive for ensuring that all evidence contributes equally to the discussion and that the level thresholds recommended to QCA's chief executive are secure and valid.
- 4.2 The QCA regulation team is responsible for monitoring level setting meetings and advising QCA's chief executive on the outcomes of the meeting.

Recommended procedures

- 4.3 For every national curriculum assessment there must be a final level setting meeting that:
 - a) sets the level thresholds (including thresholds for the award of level N and any compensatory levels)
 - b) sets the borderline range of marks.
- 4.4 NAA's chair of level setting must chair the meeting. This meeting should also be attended by NAA's accountable officer, at least one representative from the test development agency, an NAA research and statistics officer, the marking programme leader, a deputy marking programme leader, an NAA support officer (who will be responsible for making an official note of the meeting) and relevant NAA officers responsible for supporting the test development and level setting process.
- 4.5 An independent adviser must be appointed by NAA to advise the chair at the meeting. The independent adviser should be an expert in educational assessment and research with no current connection to NAA or the test development process. The independent adviser is present to advise the chair on the validity of the procedures and final outcomes.
- 4.6 NAA must ensure that the QCA regulation team is informed of all meetings so that it can monitor the process.
- 4.7 NAA may also wish to invite representatives from the teachers' associations and other bodies to observe the meeting.
- 4.8 At the start of the meeting attendees must be provided with the outcomes of the draft level setting and script scrutiny meetings, the mark distributions from the level setting data summary and historical data from the last five years, including performance data and final level thresholds.

- 4.9 This material should then be presented to the meeting in three oral presentations:
- a) the test development agency should present the recommendations from their procedures and the agreed outcome from the draft level setting meeting
 - b) the marking programme leader should present the outcomes of the script scrutiny
 - c) NAA's research and statistics officer should present the results of the data summary.
- 4.10 Presenters will be expected to answer questions on their presentation and the evidence provided.
- 4.11 The chair will lead the discussion of the outcomes reported in the three presentations and the degree of confidence that can be attached to the conclusions of each.
- 4.12 Where significant changes in performance are indicated by the data, the chair must ensure this is thoroughly discussed. The test development agency and marking programme leader must be asked to consider the data in the light of their evidence and experience.
- 4.13 The chair should then lead a review of each level 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.
- 4.14 The meeting must attempt to reach a consensus on the final level thresholds and the mark ranges for borderlining. If the attendees are unable to reach a consensus, the chair may terminate and reconvene the meeting if the chair considers that additional evidence is needed.
- 4.15 If a consensus is not possible, and all reasonable steps to achieve this have been taken, the chair must set the recommended level thresholds.
- 4.16 The chair of the level setting meeting and NAA's accountable officer must present the recommended level thresholds to QCA's chief executive.
- 4.17 QCA's chief executive may require further investigation before finally setting the level threshold marks.
- 4.18 Once QCA's chief executive has accepted the thresholds and the mark ranges for borderlines, NAA must ensure that they are communicated to markers within one day of the levels having been set in order to complete the borderlining process.
- 4.19 NAA must communicate the final thresholds to schools and other interested groups by:
- a) publishing the thresholds on the internet before marked scripts are returned to schools
 - b) distributing a booklet setting out the mark thresholds for each subject and key stage. These booklets must arrive at all schools and associated bodies before the marked scripts are returned to schools.

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.
Borderlining	The process of checking the marking of pupils whose marks are just below the level threshold to ensure the correct level is awarded.
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.
Malpractice	Malpractice, 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.
PLASC	The pupil level annual school census. Data collected by DfES.
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 Education and Skills, 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.
Tiers	The splitting of the full range of levels to allow for the provision of assessment materials appropriate for pupils working at different levels.
Validity	The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme.

About this publication

Who is it for?	Local and national authorities and agencies responsible for developing, distributing and marking national curriculum assessments and reporting the results.
What is it about?	This code of practice specifies the procedures and processes needed to ensure high quality, consistency and rigorous standards in national curriculum assessments at key stages 1 to 3.
What is it for?	This code of practice provides stakeholders with a clear description of QCA's regulation of national curriculum assessments.
What next?	QCA will keep this code of practice under review to ensure it reflects best practice.
Related materials	<i>National curriculum assessments: regulatory framework (QCA/06/2827)</i>

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