

Assessment Arrangements: Summary Report to Schools and Colleges on the 2005/2006 Quality Assurance Exercise

Introduction

SQA's quality assurance procedures in relation to assessment arrangements are designed to ensure that schools and colleges have effective internal systems and procedures in place for identifying candidates' assessment needs and that there is evidence available to support their requests for assessment arrangements.

This report provides a detailed overview of the 2005/2006 quality assurance exercise highlighting some of the key issues identified by SQA's Quality Assurance Managers as well as examples of the good practice they found.

Monitoring of SQA's quality processes for assessment arrangements

In September/October 2005, our Quality Assurance Managers visited a total of 48 schools/colleges including local authority schools, independent schools and FE colleges throughout Scotland.

Our approach to this monitoring exercise has focused on working in partnership with schools and colleges to achieve our shared goal of consistency in the interpretation and application of our policy on assessment arrangements across all centres. We have received positive feedback about this supportive approach, with all schools and colleges welcoming the opportunity to "see if they were getting it right". Further details of what centres thought about this year's monitoring exercise can be found in **Appendix 1** of this report.

The monitoring exercise covered all of the key aspects/stages of the centres internal quality assurance procedures for making requests for assessment arrangements, including the formal verification of each request. Our Quality Assurance Managers, using a standard pro forma, (see Appendix 3) examined the evidence available to support the submitted requests for a sample of candidates for the 2005 diet of examinations. This retrospective review of evidence meant that our Quality Assurance Managers

- had the opportunity to review a centre's evidence for their **finalised** submission of requests to SQA
- were in a better position to offer more timely and appropriate advice, guidance and support to centres – helping centres in gathering evidence for their requests for the following diet of examinations.
- had more time to address any specific concerns or issues the centre may have had – ensuring that candidates were not disadvantaged.

Key aspects/stages of SQA's quality process for assessment arrangements

Internal verification meeting

Our Quality Assurance Managers identified that 37 centres (77% of centres) had acceptable arrangements for holding the internal verification meeting.

11 centres (23% of centres) were required to further develop their systems to ensure

- ◆ that a formal verification meeting is actually held *or*
- ◆ that there is a formal signed and dated minute of the meeting *or*
- ◆ that appropriate personnel are present *or*
- ◆ that a senior member of staff independent of the learning support structure in the centre is present

While it is recognised that there will be differences in the way that schools/colleges carry out their internal verification, the formal internal verification meeting is, nevertheless, fundamentally important for a robust internal quality assurance process. Further guidance with exemplification on the internal verification meeting will be developed and will build on our existing guidance *Additional guidance on evidence needed to support a request for an assessment arrangement* which is available from our website www.sqa.org.uk

Confirmation from the candidates that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements and are intending to use them

The majority of schools/colleges (43 centres or 89% of centres) had evidence of either candidates' signatures or signatures from both parents/guardians and candidates. In the schools/colleges where this evidence was not available, all agreed that they would seek candidate signatures for future examinations.

The Quality Assurance Managers reported that there was general endorsement of the need to involve candidates formally in the process, through a signed statement. All schools/colleges felt that this was very important. Some schools and colleges reported that they also formally record when candidates do not agree to a request being made for an assessment arrangement.

Evidence of the disability/additional support need and how this affects the teaching and learning situation

42 centres (87.5% of centres) had suitable evidence for this aspect of the process. The Quality Assurance Managers reported that these schools/colleges had evidence which was up to date and relevant. The evidence available included psychological and other assessments, individual learning plans (IEPs), support plans (PLSPs) etc.

The remaining schools and colleges were either required to ensure that they carry out and record appropriate assessments of need or simply to ensure that the necessary

documentation is available for all of the candidates for whom requests are being made.

Evidence of the current need for support, how it is met and how it relates to the assessment arrangements requested

41 centres (85% of centres) had the necessary evidence available of the candidates' need for on-going support in the class and how this support linked to their need for assessment arrangements. The remaining schools/colleges either had insufficient evidence for some of their candidates' current need for support in the classroom or no evidence at all of support being provided in the classroom.

These centres were required to ensure that they gathered appropriate evidence to show that while there might have been valid reasons for support not being provided in the classroom on an on-going basis, for example, lack of resources, there was, nevertheless, evidence available of a candidate's need for support being met in other ways eg time being made for the candidate to finish work or get assistance from learning support staff in the learning support base/department.

Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account

33 schools/colleges (69% of centres) had evidence available showing that formal consultation with individual subject teachers had taken place and that subject requirements were considered in determining the most appropriate arrangements for particular candidates. The remaining schools and colleges had not developed this aspect of the process fully. For example, there were no formal mechanisms to record subject staff involvement in decisions regarding assessment arrangements

Feedback from the Quality Assurance Managers indicated that the majority of schools/colleges were very positive about the involvement of subject teachers in the process. In some cases there was evidence of a real shift from learning support staff informing subject staff of assessment arrangements to a real consultation and negotiation process between the two. Proformas had been developed in some schools/colleges with detailed guidance for subject staff.

Evidence for particular types of arrangements

44 schools/colleges (91% of centres) presented acceptable evidence of the candidates' need for a particular type of assessment arrangement and that this arrangement was the most appropriate to meet the candidates' needs. The remaining schools/colleges had either no evidence at all that a specific arrangement was needed or had insufficient evidence of the need for a particular type of arrangement, for example, no attempt to determine how much extra time was required to provide the candidate with a fair and equal opportunity or the what difference a reader/scribe made to the candidate's performance.

While it is recognised that it is often difficult to provide precise evidence about the need for some particular types of arrangement such as extra time, schools/colleges must gather evidence which clearly shows the rational or basis for making a request for a particular assessment arrangement.

Summary – Compliance to Good Practice

From this year's exercise, it is clear that all of the schools and colleges visited are working towards producing robust evidence. Many examples of good practice were found by our Quality Assurance Managers and **Appendix 2** provides a checklist of some of the features found. You may find this helpful in looking at your own system for managing assessment arrangements.

It is also clear from our Quality Assurance Managers' reports that centres would welcome further guidance on particular aspects of the SQA's quality assurance process. It is our intention to revise our current guidance in the light of this feedback and also to provide further exemplification which will assist you in meeting your responsibilities in this area. **Appendix 3** provides three examples of reports produced last year which might be of interest to staff in those schools/ colleges yet to be included in the monitoring exercise.

Evaluation of Quality Assurance Manager Visits 2005/2006

Centres involved in 2005 monitoring exercise were sent a questionnaire asking for feedback on the visits by our Quality Assurance Managers. They were asked to comment on the various stages of the quality assurance process, the pre visit arrangements, the effectiveness of the communication, the questions asked by the Quality Assurance Managers and whether they felt that they had been given the opportunity to demonstrate effectively their processes and to produce evidence. The overwhelming majority of centres were very positive about all aspects of the quality assurance process and said that they had found the overall process very helpful to them.

What did you think of the arrangements prior to the visit (organising date and information received)?

All but one of the centres responded very positively to this question. The Responses ranged from Satisfactory (5 centres) to Very Good, Excellent and Very Comprehensive.

1 centre thought that a 2 week delay did prove a little problematic.

3 centres thought that more information in advance would be useful, perhaps a checklist of what the centre should have to hand.

What did you think of the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Manager's communication during the visit?

All of the centres responded encouragingly to this question, ranging from the 1 'Satisfactory' to the 14 who thought it 'Excellent', 'very effective', 'very thorough' or 'very good'

Did you feel that the questions asked were appropriate and allowed you to fully demonstrate your processes and present appropriate evidence?

All centres replied that 'Yes' the questions were appropriate, 3 centres also included comments that there was ample opportunity for explanation, exemplification and evaluation.

Were you provided with sufficient opportunity to raise any issues/concerns?

All of the centres thought that they were provided with sufficient opportunity to raise any issues/ concerns, with 4 centre indicating that they were either very happy or thought that this was particularly helpful.

What information would you find most helpful after an Audit?

12 centres thought that the feedback (in the form given) was either appropriate, helpful, useful, constructive or excellent! 6 Centres gave further suggestions including:

- Exact details of what work we have to do to address any weakness in our procedures
- Feedback on key points
- Summary of evidence
- General Discussion on issues raised
- Next steps. Successful Strategies elsewhere. In-service if appropriate (2)
- Feedback to develop future practice

Did you find the overall process helpful?

All of centres thought that the overall process helpful. 5 thought it very or extremely helpful and 1 centre found the process reassuring. 1 centre thought that despite the extra work it helped with self evaluation.

Do you have any comments on the visit or any suggestions which you feel could enhance the process (a) during the event and/or (b) after the event?

“A very professional visit”

“The audit process served exactly the purposes intended, and was well conducted. This school does still have some areas of concern, currently being discussed with Patricia McDonald, about some of the issues involved in making decisions about whether or not an arrangements should be requested for certain candidates. But it is hard to see how these issues might be resolved through the audit process as such – and may, indeed, never be resolved!”

“Only as mentioned above – the whole process was very helpful in clarifying a number of points”

“Examples of good practice are always helpful” (2)

“Confidentiality is always a concern so I had some slight misgivings over the sensitive nature of some our files to be looked at. However this was carried out in a sensitive manner, but I wonder how much background information we should be required to provide. The SQA exam information is held within/alongside a Personal Learning Plan for Extended Learning Support”

“As this was our first moderation we were unsure of the format and what to have available. However this is a minor comment as we found the visit to be very beneficial”

“As indicated above, I found the process both informative and pleasant”

“I think it would be helpful if the guidelines from SQA re ASN were a bit more specific. We have had to contact SQA on a number of occasions since the visit re scribing etc. Further clarification on these areas would be useful”

“No, it was a very beneficial visit”

“Clarification of internal paperwork expected. It would be useful to see exemplars of forms which could be used in school. The visit was very helpful, particularly as this is my first year as SQA Coordinator, Thank you”

“Audit has assisted the college to implement a more rigorous process”

“Frank Allan has offered to visit us again at a small meeting of the other independent schools in Aberdeen to help the other schools in organising their submissions – rather than wait for individual audits”

“I can only thank and praise Barbara Irvine for her help and support through the AA moderation exercise. Barbara is very approachable and considerate and a great ambassador for SQA. A True professional”

“Felt that visit took rather a long time, instead of explaining all the “evidence” required, which we were aware of - perhaps could just look at our own evidence, and where not satisfactory, tell us why?”

“The visit was reassuring and indicated the thoroughness of our arrangements, assessments and record keeping. The Quality Assurance Manager was extremely professional. In my case the process – albeit time consuming, served to reinforce provisions HMI visits and evaluations. No recommendations in this case!”

“Networking with other schools – within and out with our own authority would be beneficial”

“I found this a very positive experience which highlighted current good practice and areas requiring action”

Managing requests for Assessment Arrangements

Many examples of good practice were found by the Quality Assurance Managers during their visits to centres in 2005/2006. This checklist may be of help.

Does your system include any of these features?

(✓)	Good Practice
	written procedures for managing assessment arrangements
	roles and responsibilities defined for all parties (including candidates)
	timetable for managing the process, with key dates
	all relevant documents signed/dated and version control of all documents
	checklist of evidence required to support a request for an assessment arrangement
	planned review of systems
	monitoring of actual candidate use of the requested arrangement, to inform future decisions
	evidence of candidate work with/without support is taken from naturally occurring situations, and is not an additional activity for candidates
	parent signature
	record of refusal of an offered assessment arrangement
	evidence from schools for colleges – partnership
	training of scribes/readers
	monitoring of scribes/readers

Appendix 3

<p>SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE AVAILABLE IN CENTRE TO SUPPORT A REQUEST FOR AN ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENT</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">QAM2</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY</p>
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Centre	Glendinning High School	
Candidate sample	11	
QAM		
Date	26 September 2005	
		Overall Comments
E1	Evidence of the verification meeting	The school has a robust verification process involving members of the learning support department and the senior educational psychologist. Documentation evidenced that decisions pertaining to assessment arrangements are reviewed and amended. Records of all verification meetings are signed and dated by the senior educational psychologist.
E2	Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements and are intending to use them.	Signatures were seen in the candidate files to confirm that parents and candidates had agreed to the support which would be provided. It was suggested to the centre, to ensure that if support or alternative assessment arrangements was declined, then evidence for this should be obtained
E3	Evidence of disability /additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation	There was clear evidence of assessed need, particularly for candidates with a Record of Needs. A pro-forma had been developed to allow class teachers to record the support delivered during the learning and teaching processes.
E4	Evidence of need for current support, how it is met and how it relates to the arrangements requested.	There was a range of evidence of support available to candidates on an on-going basis eg - learning support teachers in class, individualised educational programmes and support plans. Evidence of scripts and work completed with and without assessment arrangement applied.
E5	Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	Staff sign and return evidence of the use of support during classes. Evidence indicates variations in the support needs in different subjects.

E6	Evidence for particular adjustments	<p>Strong evidence in all cases, based on up to date information, supported by well-designed recording documents.</p> <p>Colour coded files and forms, and master file given by Curriculum Support dept to each teaching department each year. Centre also has a procedures manual for assessment arrangements for the current year.</p>
No Required Action. Requests cleared for processing		Tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Required Action Points (RA) and Recommendations (REC)		
Action agreed with centre with dates N/A		

Signature:

Date: 4 October 2005

Quality Assurance Manager - Audit Team

Appendix 3

<p>SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE AVAILABLE IN CENTRE TO SUPPORT A REQUEST FOR AN ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENT</p>	<p>QAM2</p>  <p>SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY</p>
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Centre	St Aeldred's HS	
Candidate sample	12	
QAM		
Date	3 October 2005	
		Overall Comments
E1	Evidence of the verification meeting	For all of the candidates for whom assessment arrangements have been requested there is a psychologist's report however there is no supporting evidence or record of any other meeting being held to record any decisions made in respect of these candidates.
E2	Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements and are intending to use them.	There was no evidence of confirmation from the candidates that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements. The centre indicated that, in future, this will be included within the Personal Learning Plan(PLP).
E3	Evidence of disability /additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation	There was either insufficient or no evidence available of assessed need in 3 out of 7 cases sampled.
E4	Evidence of need for current support, how it is met and how it relates to the arrangements requested.	In 5 out of 11 candidate files sampled there was either insufficient or no evidence available of current support given on a regular basis and/or how support is linked to the arrangements required for assessment.
E5	Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	No audit trail available to evidence this however the centre indicated that new procedures are being introduced this year to address this.
E6	Evidence for particular adjustments	Differing support was requested for candidates, although the extra time allocation was the same for each candidate. This criterion should be further addressed for next session.

No Required Action. Requests cleared for processing	Tick
<p>Required Action Points (RA) and Recommendations (REC)</p> <p>RA</p> <p>E1 Verification meeting to be held in accordance with SQA requirements, and decisions to be documented</p> <p>E2 candidate signatures to be obtained to indicate their agreement to arrangements requested for the 2007 diet of examinations</p> <p>E3 evidence of need to be recorded for all candidates for whom assessment arrangements are being requested</p> <p>E4 evidence of current support to be recorded for all candidates for whom assessment arrangements are being requested</p> <p>E5 evidence of varying needs across subjects to be available for all candidates for whom assessment arrangements are being requested</p> <p>REC</p> <p>E6 consider documenting centre criteria for determining the amount of extra time requested for individual candidates for 2006 diet</p>	
<p>Action agreed with centre with dates</p> <p>QAM return visit arranged for 12 January 2006. Evidence of completed action on all RAs to be available on that date</p>	

Signature:

Date: 16 October 2005

Quality Assurance Manager - Audit Team

Appendix 3

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE AVAILABLE IN CENTRE TO SUPPORT A REQUEST FOR AN ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENT		 <p>SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY</p>
Centre	Thomas Carlyle College	
Candidate sample	Six	
QAM		
Date	10 October 2005	

		Overall Comments
E1	Evidence of the verification meeting	The College has documented – ‘ <i>Procedures for Assessment Arrangements</i> ’ (Revised June 2005). Minutes of several meetings evidenced review and verification of assessment adjustments prior to submission to SQA. The College has further reviewed procedures and for the 2006 Examination Diet, will hold a formal verification meeting. Any late identification of a request for assessment adjustment(s) will also be supported by minutes of an additional verification meeting.
E2	Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements and are intending to use them.	The College has devised a pro forma listing assessment adjustments and subjects. Candidates are given the opportunity to accept, make amendments or reject the assessment adjustments prior to submission to SQA. Candidates sign and date the pro forma and return to the administration manager.
E3	Evidence of disability /additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation	The College has documented – ‘ <i>Access to Mainstream Programmes: Selection and Support Procedures for Students with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs</i> ’ (June 2005). Evidence of disability/additional support needs was available for all candidates sampled. The information held in individual candidate files varied but included examples of – educational psychologists’ reports, medical reports, student and lecturer requests and results of diagnostic tests administered by the College’s supported learning team.
E4	Evidence of need for current support, how it is met and how it relates to the arrangements requested.	The College’s procedures detail the referral routes for initial identification of candidates requiring additional support. Support is provided by staff for candidates with physical disabilities. Learning support is provided by several methods – recorded in individual Learning Support Plans, communicated to teaching staff. The College makes every effort

		to provide required resources – human, materials, flexible learning classes and assistive technology. The programme team leader communicates any assessment dates to ensure that the adjustment is in place for both internal and external examinations. The college prints a list of all assessment adjustments for each examination diet.
E5	Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	<p>The College’s system includes both –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) subject lecturer referral to Support for Learning of any concerns relating to need for support for individual candidates b) feedback on the requirement of an assessment adjustment in particular subjects. <p>Subject lecturers confirm the support provided or indicate actual support. The lecturer and candidate sign to evidence confirmation of support and assessment adjustment. Review of the system will result in members of the Supported Learning Team meeting with subject lecturers to ensure that adjustment is relevant for individual subjects.</p>
E6	Evidence for particular adjustments	The College maintains records to evidence specific assessment adjustment(s) for individual candidates. Evidence is retained in the form of psychological/medical reports, diagnostic test results and personal learning support plans.
No Required Action. Requests cleared for processing		Tick ✓
Required Action Points (RA) and Recommendations (REC)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College will extend documentation and consultation to ensure that if any candidates require only extra time, there is evidence of work with and without the assessment adjustment. The candidate work will evidence the need for extra time and ensure request for identified subject areas. (E6) 		
Action agreed with centre with dates		

Signature:

Date: 14 October 2005

Quality Assurance Manager - Audit Team