

## Intermediate 1 Computing Studies



### Introduction

Five classes in three schools were involved in this pilot. The scheme involved submitting candidates' results from online electronic NAB (e-NAB) assessments as evidence of their attainment in the Units of Intermediate 1 Computing Studies. The Computing Studies Course had five Units: Systems; The Internet; Computing Application Software; Software Development; and Information Systems. For each Unit, three e-NABs were produced — one for practice, one as the summative assessment, and the final one for any re-sits required. The practice e-NAB was made available at all times, while the other two could only be accessed by specific request from the school. A key feature of the e-NABs was that they were automatically marked, giving the candidates their results immediately and providing important information to allow the teacher to analyse both individual and class performance by curriculum area. The following FAQs answer some of the concerns of those involved in this pilot.

### FAQs

#### 1. How secure are e-NABs?

Security did not turn out to be an issue. The e-NABs were only released at the time of the assessment and access was closed after completion. The limited access to e-NABs can be seen as an improvement to the storage of paper NABs in the classroom. Indeed this enhanced security is part of the rationale behind the use of e-NABs.

#### 2. Is cheating any more of an issue with e-assessment than with paper-based tests?

For the short period that the test was being undertaken, the teachers acted as invigilators to minimize any risk of cheating. No evidence of cheating was identified.

#### 3. Is being a Computing Studies teacher an advantage in using e-NABs?

No — subject-specific knowledge was of no particular advantage as it was all so straightforward.

#### 4. How do candidates cope with sitting online e-NABs?

Candidates had used the Unit practice e-NABs and so by the time of taking the assessment they were very familiar with the testing medium. The online tests consisted of objective questions and the candidates tended to finish the e-NAB much more quickly than they would a paper NAB. To lessen any disruptive effect from the candidates who finished quickly, other work was available for the pupils when they had submitted their responses. In general the candidates preferred being tested this way rather than paper-based.

#### 5. Are there any benefits to candidates in using e-assessments, rather than paper-based assessments?

At this level of ability, some candidates find reading difficult and also have problems in expressing themselves in writing. The online approach had two advantages over the written paper. First, the display of the questions was simple to read, as each appears separately on the screen. This is in contrast to the paper NAB, where several items could appear on any page. Second, whereas before the candidate had to construct and write down a response, the objective test approach meant that these abilities were no longer required. This could have been seen as a weakness in that the assessment had been made simpler and consequently less valid. However this was not the case — if anything, the validity of the assessment was enhanced because candidates were being assessed on their knowledge of Computing Studies, and not on their language skills. The candidates also liked the fact that they got their results so quickly. Marking and recording were instant and automatic.

#### 6. Are there any benefits to teachers in using e-assessments, rather than paper-based assessments?

Teachers appreciated the reduction in the work required in issuing, marking and recording the result of a NAB. There is a reporting system which allowed the teacher to see at a glance the areas of strength or weakness both of individual candidates and of the class as a whole. This made it an extremely useful formative tool.

#### 7. How are e-assessments moderated?

As all the information was available online, it would have been easy to moderate via the Internet. However, to ensure that all possible issues were covered, moderation visits were arranged to the three schools. In one school the moderator looked only at the evidence on screen, while in another he looked at it on screen as well as a paper copy. In all of the schools the moderator was satisfied that the evidence should be accepted.