



# Quality Assurance — Assessment Arrangements

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# Introduction

Every year from September to December, SQA's Quality Enhancement Managers visit a sample of schools and colleges across Scotland to ensure that they have effective internal systems and procedures in place for requesting assessment arrangements.

For many centres this is the first time they will have an opportunity to discuss systems with an auditor, and the first time that they will have undergone such a visit. Several centres undergoing this process for this first time commented that they would have appreciated information prior to the visit, for example what paperwork to prepare or what staff to have available.

The audit visit is based around six types of evidence and these appear on the QA2 report form that you will receive from the Quality Enhancement Manager after the audit visit has taken place.

In an effort to make our systems more transparent, we have prepared a checklist based around the same six types of evidence. This will help prompt you to find out if you have the appropriate evidence for the audit.

# Checklist

Reference	Key questions	(✓)
<b>1 Evidence of the internal verification meeting<sup>1</sup></b>	Do you hold a formal verification meeting to ensure that all relevant information and evidence has been gathered and considered in determining any request for assessment arrangements?	
	Do you have a formal signed and dated minute of the meeting?	
	Is it clear which diet of exams your verification meeting is for?	
	Is the meeting held at an appropriate time in the year?	
	Are appropriate personnel present?	
	Are requests formally authorised by a senior member of staff?	
	Is the senior member of staff independent of the learning support structure in the centre?	
	Have you a procedure for making decisions on late requests?	
<b>2 Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements</b>	If your candidate is under 16, does an appropriate adult (eg parent, carer etc) countersign for them?	
	Have your candidates signed in all cases?	
	Is it clear which diet of exams this agreement refers to?	
	Have you a record of any candidate refusals of assessment arrangements?	

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<sup>1</sup> The verification meeting is the **key stage** in your internal quality assurance procedures. You need to be confident that your decisions to request, or not or not to request, an assessment arrangement are in line with both SQA guidance and the relevant equality legislation. This is why having a senior member of staff who is independent of the support-for-learning process in your centre is so important; it adds rigour to the process.

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Reference	Key questions	(✓)
<b>3 Evidence of disability/additional needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation</b>	Have you the relevant information/evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty?	
	Have you evidence how the disability/difficulty has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom and that subject teachers are involved?	
	Is your evidence current?	
<b>4 Evidence of need for current support, how this is met, and how it relates to the arrangements requested</b>	Does your evidence show that decisions are made on the actual arrangement proposed, based on the support provided?	
	Have you evidence that subject teachers are involved?	
	Have you evidence of candidate work with/without support to show that the arrangement removes the disadvantage?	
	Is your evidence current?	
<b>5 Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account</b>	Have you evidence available for each subject? <sup>2</sup>	
	Have you evidence that subject staff have been involved in gathering evidence?	
	Have you evidence that subject staff agree to the arrangement proposed?	
<b>6 Evidence for particular arrangements</b>	Is there evidence of how a particular arrangement has been determined (eg amount of extra time needed)?	

<sup>2</sup> While evidence must show that varying needs across subjects have been considered (eg a candidate who may require a scribe in English may not need a scribe in Maths), evidence that shows a candidate needs a scribe in English can also be used to show that the candidate needs a scribe in History, as both subjects require extended written responses.

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QA2 form completed by Quality Enhancement Manager after visit

<b>SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE AVAILABLE IN CENTRE TO SUPPORT A REQUEST FOR AN ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENT</b>			
<p><i>The Auditor will have sampled evidence to ensure that your centre's systems and procedures continue to comply with the centre's responsibilities for Process 1: Management of an SQA centre.</i></p> <p><i>Criterion 1.5 There are systems in place for the management of appropriate assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs.</i></p> <p><i>The centre:</i></p> <p><i>1.5 e) demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunity in the selection, admission, support and assessment of candidates</i></p> <p><i>1.5 f) seeks SQA approval for assessment arrangements and implements these arrangements as agreed</i></p> <p><i>1.5 g) retains evidence justifying the need for assessment arrangements</i></p> <p><i>(SQA's Quality Framework: A Guide for Centres March 2006)</i></p>			
<b>Centre name</b>		<b>Centre number</b>	
<b>Candidate sample</b>			
<b>Auditor</b>			
<b>Date</b>			
<b>Evidence requirements</b>	<b>Overall comments</b>		
<b>1 Evidence of the verification meeting</b>			
<b>2 Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements and are intending to use them</b>			
<b>3 Evidence of disability /additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation</b>			

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<p><b>4 Evidence of need for current support, how it is met and how it relates to the arrangements requested</b></p>			
<p><b>5 Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account</b></p>			
<p><b>6 Evidence for particular adjustments</b></p>			
<p><b>Good practice</b></p>			
<p><b>Required Action Points (RA) and Recommendations (REC)</b></p>			
<p><b>Action agreed with centre with dates</b></p>			
<p><b>Current requests can be processed.</b></p>			<p><b>Tick</b></p>
<p><b>Signature</b></p>		<p><b>Date</b></p>	

# Frequently asked questions

## **Why has my centre been chosen?**

The selection of centres is normally carried out on a random basis, making sure that we cover local authority schools from each authority, independent schools and colleges.

## **What will happen with my current requests in the meantime?**

Your access to the software for submitting assessment arrangements (AA) requests will be temporarily placed on hold until the conclusion of your visit. During this time, if you wish to seek any advice regarding the arrangements that you are planning to request once your access to the system has been released again, or the current support that you are providing your candidate(s), you should contact the Assessment Arrangements team.

## **Can you choose another centre instead of mine?**

No, the selection has been made and approved, but we are flexible as to when we come to visit.

## **When will the visit take place?**

Audit visits are likely to take place during September/October of each year and will involve a retrospective review of evidence to support your requests for assessment arrangements in the previous session's diet of examinations. There will also be general discussion regarding your proposed request submissions for the forthcoming diet.

## **How long will the visit take?**

The length of the visit will vary and be dependent on many factors. On average we will be with you for about three hours.

## **Who should attend?**

The Principal Teacher for Support for Learning, the SQA Co-ordinator, and any other relevant members of staff. Subject teachers do not have to attend unless you think it's necessary.

## **What do I need to do in preparation for the meeting?**

Please make sure that you have all the relevant information evidence to hand for your requests for both the previous and the current examination diets. This doesn't mean that you have to have everything in one place, just that you know where it is and ensure that we can access it quickly, if required.

## **Will you look at evidence for all of our candidates?**

Not necessarily. If you have a lot of candidates for whom assessment arrangements have been requested, we will not be able to discuss everyone. We will decide during our visit which specific candidate evidence we will look at. Please ensure that you can access evidence for all your candidates.

## **Will you be able to approve my current requests during your visit?**

No, we are visiting to look at your processes for managing requests for assessment arrangements and the evidence you have available to support your requests.

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### **Will you be able to comment on the appropriateness of an arrangement for an individual candidate?**

No, any queries regarding appropriateness of arrangements should continue to be discussed with the Assessment Arrangements team in Dalkeith (0131 561 6890).

If we discover any issues during our visit, we will discuss these with you and make arrangements to come back and visit the centre again.

### **What is the reporting mechanism?**

At the end of the visit, we will discuss our findings with you. This will form the basis of a report that is sent to the Assessment Arrangements team and copied to you. At the end of the session, copies of the report are also sent to the local authority where appropriate.

## **Additional guidance**

The following additional information is intended for guidance only. It gives examples of different types of evidence which can support a request for an assessment arrangement.

Section A refers to evidence required for all candidates for whom a request is being made.

Section B refers to the additional evidence required to support specific assessment arrangements.

## Section A: Evidence for all candidates

	Evidence requirement	Rationale	Suggested form of evidence	Notes
1	Evidence of the internal verification meeting	Centres should have in place their own internal verification process which ensures that the information/evidence is available to support each request. An essential part of this process is the internal verification meeting, where all available evidence and information gathered is fully considered prior to submitting a request for assessment arrangements to SQA. SQA's Customer Enhancement Manager will follow a similar process when visiting centres.	Minutes or notes of verification meeting, dated and signed. Names and position of personnel involved.	Membership of the verification meeting will vary according to centres. It should involve a person not actively involved in the support process. It could, for example, involve a local authority educational psychologist, or the quality manager or a senior manager for the centre.
2	Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the arrangements and are intending to use them	It is important that candidates (and parents or guardians where relevant) are fully involved and have agreed to the arrangements. It is also important that candidates have agreed to information about their difficulty being passed on to SQA.	Pro forma or statement signed by the candidate.	Centres may wish to involve parents. Centres may wish to record details of any candidate who does not wish a request to be made.
3	Evidence of disability/additional support needs and	In order to determine the need for an assessment arrangement, the nature and degree of the difficulty	Candidate files containing all relevant information such as psychological and other	In schools the information may start in primary and be comprehensive. In FE it is likely be part of the

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	Evidence requirement	Rationale	Suggested form of evidence	Notes
	how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation	will need to be have been assessed together with the impact on learning and assessment.	assessments, individual learning plans, support plans and records.	Personal Learning and Support Plan (PLSP).
4	Evidence of need for current support, how it is met and how it relates to any arrangements requested	Most candidates requiring assessment arrangements will need on-going support on a regular basis to ensure they are not disadvantaged during their course. This support should link to the arrangement needed for the assessment.	Plan and record of support from Support for Learning staff in class and/or in support base and/or details of support regularly required from subject teachers.	The following are key elements of the evidence required to support a request. They answer the questions: How has the candidate been supported during the course? Have you considered the varying needs of different subjects? Have you evidence that the arrangement requested is appropriate?
5	Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	As needs may vary across subjects, the need for arrangements should be considered on a subject-by-subject basis.	Evidence of consultation and negotiation with subject staff which takes into account different subject assessment/examination requirements.	
6	Evidence for particular arrangements (See Section B)	The particular arrangement should match the candidate's individual need.	Evidence of need for a particular arrangement. (See Section B)	

## **Examples of good practice for evidence requirements**

### **Evidence of the internal verification meeting**

St Barnabas's HS hold their internal verification meeting in November each year which is chaired by the local authority psychologist. The Principal Teacher (Support for Learning) and the SQA Co-ordinator are also present. Relevant information/evidence available for each candidate is fully considered against the guidance from SQA using a checklist (see Appendix 3).

Only requests for those candidates where the evidence is complete are verified. Where evidence is unclear or incomplete, decisions are made as to whether it is possible to reasonably produce the evidence, whether the request is really valid, or if there is a need to contact SQA for further guidance.

Minutes of the meeting are taken which notes those present and the decisions taken.

The Regional Psychology Service also takes responsibility for trying to achieve a consistent approach to requests for arrangements from all its centres. It does this by monitoring requests and suggesting common approaches and processes.

In Thomas Carlyle College the internal verification meeting is chaired by the Assistant Principal with responsibility for quality. The Extended Learning Support staff and the administration staff responsible for SQA entries are also present.

The evidence, which is contained within each candidate's Personal Learning and Support Plan (PLSP), is considered against the guidance from SQA using a checklist. Only requests for those candidates where the evidence is complete are verified. Where evidence is unclear or incomplete, decisions are made as to whether it is possible to reasonably produce the evidence, whether the request is really valid, or if there is a need to contact SQA for further guidance.

Minutes of the meeting are taken including those present and the decisions taken.

### **Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements and are intending to use them**

In Castle Semple High the Support for Learning Department devised a pro forma for each candidate which summarises the assessment arrangements for each subject. This is discussed with each candidate. All candidates are encouraged to discuss the arrangements with their parents or carers before signing.

In the case of candidates under 16, a parent or carer is also asked to sign.

Staff also use parent evenings as an opportunity for subject teachers to discuss the assessment arrangements required for their particular subject.

At John Logie Baird College all candidates with support needs meet with their support tutor mid-session to review their Personal Learning and Support Plan. At this meeting all candidates requiring assessment arrangements are asked to sign a pro forma confirming their agreement to the arrangements.

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### **Evidence of disability/additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation**

Craignure High School keeps relevant information on candidates in two main places. A pupil file contains general information including details transferred from primary school, medical records, educational psychologist reports etc. The Support for Learning department also has its own files containing current evidence including details of assessment of need, records of support given etc. Together these files give details of the difficulty each candidate has experienced and how it affects the candidate's learning and teaching.

In Conan Doyle's College it is the usual practice to ask schools for information on students with additional support needs who are transferring to college. Most schools complete a pro forma but in other cases information is relayed by phone and notes taken. This informs the college's own assessment of need for the college situation and the new support plan. All this information is available in the Personal Learning and Support Plan.

Each year a number of older students who come to the college refer themselves for support or are referred by subject lecturers who notice they are having difficulties. Support lecturers work with each student to identify the difficulty, the most appropriate support, and any assessment arrangement which may be needed. This is all recorded in the PLSP.

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

In Dundee Grammar the Support for Learning department keeps detailed records of those pupils who are currently receiving support. This also includes information from subject teachers about support needed in class.

In one pupil's case, the file indicates that he has scribing support from an auxiliary for some of his subjects (English and Modern Studies). He also attends the support base for one hour a week to finish off work he cannot complete in other classes. Subject teachers also record that they have needed to act as scribe for this pupil on occasions.

In Maryhill College the support lecturers assess students to determine any difficulties and how these might affect the learning and teaching situation. This is recorded in the student's Personal Learning and Support Plan. The plan also outlines the support required and the need for any assessment arrangements. Subject lecturers are routinely involved in this process and are asked to record any support regularly provide in class as evidence of need for assessment arrangements.

The PLSP for one student records that he is partially sighted. Tests show that he can manage confidently with text if it is font size 18. Subject lecturers are informed of the need to ensure that all handouts and assessments are enlarged to the appropriate size.

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### **Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account**

In Robert Adam's College, and one of its local feeder schools, support staff routinely consult individual subject lecturers/teachers about each candidate's need for assessment arrangements. The particular requirements of the assessment or examination are taken into account. Records of this consultation and decisions are kept.

In Lammermuir High School the records show that, for one candidate with specific learning difficulties, all subject teachers have been consulted. Teachers in subjects where extended writing is required (eg English, Modern Studies) confirm that a scribe is required. In Maths and Physics, however, it is felt that the candidate is able to write his own responses and prefers to do so.

## Section B: Specific assessment arrangements

For some candidates the evidence for their need for a particular assessment will be well established and recorded within the evidence base outlined in Section A. For example, for a visually impaired candidate using Braille, a deaf candidate using BSL, a candidate with a specific learning difficulty using ICT, a candidate with an autistic spectrum condition using a prompter, or a severely physically disabled candidate using assistive technology.

Arrangement	Suggested forms of evidence
<p><b>Use of reader</b> Centres should have clear evidence that a reader is needed. When asking for a reader, there should be evidence that a candidate has difficulty with accessing written text.</p>	<p>Recent test of reading speed and accuracy. Evidence of class work or assessments done with and without the use of a reader. On-going use of a reader for support in class noted in support records.</p>
<p><b>Use of scribe</b> Centres should have clear evidence that a scribe is needed When asking for a scribe there should be evidence that a candidate has difficulty writing  For candidates who are unable to produce any written work, written confirmation of this from a specialist teacher will be acceptable.</p>	<p>Speed, accuracy and legibility assessment by specialist teacher/lecturer (which might include spelling assessment, speed of production of free, dictated, or word processed work). Example of class work or assessments produced with and without scribe. On-going use of scribe for support in class noted in support records.</p>
<p><b>Transcription with correction</b> This arrangement is designed to meet the needs of candidates who have substantial difficulties with written communication but who are unable to use ICT and/or to dictate their responses.</p>	<p>Same evidence requirements as for scribe.</p>
<p><b>Extra time</b> If extra time is required for other assessment arrangements — eg candidates using scribes, readers, signing — no additional evidence is required. When extra time is the only assessment arrangement requested there should be evidence of an on-going history of significant difficulty in completing tasks (class tasks, assignments, assessments) in normal allocated time. It is not expected that centres will have absolute values for the extra time needed. It is important, however, that evidence is available to show that the extra time requested is reasonable and reflects, on average, the candidate's needs. NB Evidence that extra time is used when given, for example in a timed assessment, is not sufficient evidence on its own of the need for additional time.</p>	<p>Samples of work which indicate a difference in candidate's performance given extra time. Evidence of the need of subject teachers to allocate extra time for assignments and assessments and that this extra time has been used on an on-going basis. Evidence that the amount of extra time requested is reasonable and appropriate.</p>

## **Examples of good practice for evidence required for specific assessment arrangements**

### **Use of a reader**

In St Barnabas's, a number of candidates have difficulty with reading. In addition to recording the evidence detailed in Section A, the Support for Learning staff also assess reading speed and accuracy regularly, and maintain records of when a reader is used.

One pupil has had reading difficulties since primary school. On a yearly basis support staff have tested his reading and although there have been improvements which enable him to cope with some tasks independently, testing shows that he still has difficulty with reading and comprehension. This information is on file. Resources do not allow for a reader to be available in all classes, but his support plan shows that he has regular auxiliary help in English and History. Notes from subject teachers show that they have to, on occasion, help him with reading in class. The Support for Learning department provides a reader for all class tests and he has a regular time in the support base where he can be helped to complete assignments and homework. This pupil also requires a scribe and equivalent evidence is available.

### **Use of a scribe**

In Thomas Carlyle College, some students every year have significant difficulty in producing written communication. In addition to recording the evidence in Section A, support lecturers also assess and record the speed, accuracy and legibility of the student's written work and produce a support plan. All of the students are given the opportunity to be trained in the use of assistive technology but, although many take this up, not all are competent or confident to use ICT in external examinations.

One student is an adult who has referred herself to the Learning Support staff. She has significant difficulty with producing written work. Initial testing shows that she produces very slow and laborious script with a large number of spelling errors. The samples, with time taken to complete, are filed. Arrangements are made for formal diagnostic testing for specific learning difficulties. The student is very anxious about her difficulty and does not want personal support in the classroom. The option of using ICT is raised but she is not keen and she agrees to reconsider this at a later time. As part of her support plan, a number of strategies are used to overcome note-taking difficulties. Subject lecturers are made aware of her difficulty and allow her to complete class tasks in her own time. For all assessments, support staff provide a scribe in separate accommodation. The above details are included in the student's PLSP.

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### Transcription with correction

In Castle Semple HS there are some pupils who have difficulty with written communication but who are unable to dictate their responses or to use ICT. In these cases, the school produces the same additional evidence as for a scribe.

One pupil has a well documented writing difficulty — samples of writing are available on file. Her writing is extremely untidy and gets very hard to decipher when she is under pressure, especially in assessments. As she gets more nervous and anxious, she stammers and this makes using a scribe difficult. She is not sufficiently competent in the use of ICT, and a decision is taken to request transcription in order to meet her needs most effectively. Her Support for Learning teacher knows her writing sufficiently well to be able to transcribe her written responses.

### Extra time

In Robert Adam's College and one of its feeder schools they have a number of students who, for a variety of reasons, have difficulty completing work on time. As outlined in Section A, evidence is available in files about their difficulty and the need for ongoing support. In addition, both centres ensure that evidence is available to support the amount of extra requested and that it makes a difference to the students' performance.

One pupil at Lammermuir HS has recently been assessed as having a specific learning difficulty. In her case she is slow at interpreting written information and producing text. Her Support for Learning file contains examples of assessments completed with and without extra time. There are also timed examples of her writing. In the classroom she is frequently unable to complete tasks within the lesson time and this is reported to the Support for Learning staff. A support strategy is put in place which suggests a variety of tactics minimising the pupil's need for writing without affecting her learning. This is recorded. Evidence is also available which shows that giving extra time improves her mark or grade. This also shows that, on average, she requires 20% extra time for extended writing tasks

A student at Maryhill College has Asperger's syndrome. He has a difficulty in prioritising his work and managing time. Subject lecturers record that he rarely completes tasks in class. He regularly attends the support base to complete work and this is recorded in his Personal Learning and Support Plan. Support staff are working with him to develop strategies to improve his time management. The evidence on file shows that in timed exercises he is unlikely to finish in the allocated time. It is noted in the records that 25% extra time is usually sufficient. The student is happy with this.

A pupil at Dundee Grammar was assessed as having a mild specific learning difficulty in primary school. He is now in S3 and starting a Standard Grade course. He has received no extra support in the classroom in secondary school but his mother has raised the question of whether he should have extra time in his assessments. He is assessed by the Support for Learning department who find that he still has a slight problem with spelling but that this has no marked effect on the time he needs to produce work. Subject staff are also consulted, and say that he has no difficulty finishing tasks in class. There is no evidence available to support the need for extra time.

# Appendix 1: Suggested checklist for internal verification process

**Checklist of evidence to support a request for an assessment arrangement**

<b>Centre</b>	
<b>Candidate</b>	
<b>Assessment arrangement</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

<b>Types of evidence</b>	✓
Evidence of the verification meeting	
Evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to the assessment arrangements and are intending to use them	
Evidence of disability/additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation	
Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	
Evidence for particular arrangements	