

Assessment Support Packs

Writer's Guide

July 2007

Preface

This document provides guidance to writers of Assessment Support Packs. Advice is provided on the structure and content of ASPs and on the characteristics of good assessments.

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1. Introduction

Assessment Support Packs (ASPs) are designed to support teachers and lecturers in implementing National Qualifications and to assist in establishing and maintaining assessment standards. ASPs are provided for all key National Units which are part of National Qualifications Group Awards (National Certificates and National Progression Awards).

All assessments for inclusion in an ASP must be based on the appropriate National Unit specification as published by SQA. A writer's brief is provided to give further assistance.

When writing an ASP, you should bear in mind that Unit assessment must:

- be valid and reliable
- be manageable and practicable for candidates and centres
- cover the full standards expressed in the Unit – Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements

In addition, writers should be aware that, under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, SQA has a responsibility to ensure that its National Qualifications are, by design, as accessible to as many candidates as possible and that there are no unnecessary barriers to access for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs. The Instruments of Assessment contained in ASPs must also be written so that there are no unnecessary barriers to achievement.

ASP materials should be submitted to the Assessment Materials team as a complete draft ready for vetting. A good check of the quality of the material at this stage is whether you would be content to see the assessment, subject to desktop-publishing, given to candidates. If not, the material is not ready for submission.

Where the assessment includes graphical material, a clear copy of the original (together with details of the source) should be provided. Any instructions for amendments to be made by SQA's graphics artists should be provided also.

All ASPs will be desktop-published prior to issue. To facilitate this you should use appropriate software package/s and submit both a paper copy and a disc of the completed work. (Further advice on this matter can be obtained from the NAB Officer in the Assessment Materials Team.)

Please note that writers are responsible for completing a copyright form for any material which requires copyright clearance.

Overview of the Assessment Support Pack

All ASPs contain the following sections:

Introduction

How to generate evidence

Instruments of Assessment

Guidance for making an assessment decision

Assessment record sheets

Much of the text in both the *Introduction* and *How to generate evidence* sections is standard and you should only add Unit specific information where the shell you have been given indicates that this is required.

Section 3, *Instrument of Assessment*, contains the Instruments of Assessment which will allow candidates to generate evidence of achievement and may be used by centres for this purpose. Section 4, *Guidance for making an assessment decision*, contains guidance about what candidates must do to achieve the Unit. It is important that you are very familiar with the *Statement of Standards* and the *Guidance on approaches to assessment* in the relevant Unit Specification and have a clear understanding of the Writer's Brief before completing either of these sections.

Standard Candidate and Class Record Sheets are found at the back of the pack. These should be customised to reflect the requirements of the specific Unit.

2. Detailed guidance for writers

Guidance is provided below and follows the order of the sections as they appear in the Assessment Support Pack shell.

Introduction

In this section of the ASP you should only insert information under the following headings:

Guidance on Context

- Insert the title and level of the relevant Group Award where indicated.
- If there are other Units within the qualification which have [a close relationship to] the relevant Unit, insert the Unit Code (if this is known), Unit title and SCQF level in the table provided.
- You could add any helpful information about the use of the Assessment Support Pack in the context of the Group Award. For example, the pack may be intended to provide an integrated assessment for more than one Unit or it might be helpful to give information about the sequencing of the assessment within the delivery of the qualification as a whole. It is important that the information you give in this section matches the guidance given in the Unit specification and Writer's Brief.

Example - integrated assessment

This pack is intended for use within the National Qualification Group Award *Information Technology (SCQF level 6)*. The materials within this pack cover two Units, ie *Using Software Application Packages (DXXX XX)* and *Information Technology: Applications Software (DXXX XX)*. The assessments cover all five Outcomes within both of these Units. This pack should be used where both units are taught on an integrated basis.

Core Skills

You will find the information regarding embedded Core Skills in the Unit Specification and/or in the Writer's Brief provided by the Qualifications Manager.

If there are no Core Skills embedded in the Unit delete all the information, leaving only the default statement which is:

'There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.'

How to generate evidence

In the second introductory paragraph you need only insert the Unit title and SCQF level where indicated.

Instruments of Assessment

You should provide a summary of the Instruments of Assessment in the table provided.

Examples of descriptions of Instruments of Assessment might include:

- A Practical Assignment
- An end of Unit test
- Planning and producing a report
- Producing a discursive essay
- Producing a spreadsheet

Examples of suggested evidence to be retained will **always** include the Instruments of Assessment, marking information and candidate assessment records. Additional evidence might be in the form of, for example:

- assessor observation checklist/s
- all candidate responses to the questions in a test
- the candidate's report plan and final report
- the candidate's essay
- the candidate's completed product

The Outcomes which relate to each Instrument of Assessment must be worded exactly as they appear in the Unit Specification.

Details of any additional significant features that teachers/lecturers and/or candidates should be aware of can be given beneath the summary table. For example, the Instrument of Assessment may have been designed with a cut-off score or it might be useful to give additional information if the tasks involve the integration of assessment for more than one Unit.

Example – cut-off score

The end of Unit test has been designed with a cut-off score of 70%. Candidates who achieve a score of 70% or above will have produced evidence that they have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria for the Unit.

Assessment conditions, including timing and duration

It is important that the assessment conditions and any information on timing and/or duration for the Instrument of Assessment match those stated in the Evidence Requirements of the Unit Specification. For example, if the Evidence Requirements state that evidence must be produced under 'controlled, supervised, open-book conditions' it would be **inappropriate** to require candidates to attempt an end of Unit test under closed-book conditions.

Where several tasks have been included in the Instrument of Assessment it is important to indicate clearly the conditions under which each separate task should be completed.

Information in this section might include:

- whether the task should be attempted unseen or can be seen by the candidate before the assessment event
- whether the assessment is open or closed-book
- advice on the level of guidance it is appropriate to give to candidates
- the most appropriate time during the delivery of the Unit for candidates to attempt the assessment/a particular assessment task

- whether the Instrument of Assessment should be attempted on a single occasion or related tasks can be attempted on different occasions throughout the Unit
- the length of time candidates should be given to attempt a closed-book end of Unit test

Quality assurance, Reassessment and Open learning

These parts of the Assessment Support Pack contain standard text. Do not add any further information.

Instruments of Assessment

Assessment Support Packs are available to a wide audience. You should bear this in mind when writing the Instruments of Assessment and make your material as comprehensive and self-explanatory as possible.

You should consider the following guidance before beginning to plan and write the Instruments of Assessment:

Validity

The Instrument/s of Assessment should:

- provide coverage of all Outcomes
- be set at a standard consistent with the Performance Criteria.
- match the stated Evidence Requirements

Reliability

Assessment instruments should allow consistent judgements to be made by all assessors, while retaining any necessary flexibility in Unit delivery (as reflected in the stated evidence requirements).

Where the Instrument of Assessment is a test or question paper it should:

- keep candidate choice to the minimum consistent with any stated flexibility; all areas of choice should be clearly signalled; and alternative questions/tasks or activities/contexts should be equivalent in demand. Remember, choice of questions lowers consistency (reliability) of candidate results
- have enough questions included to generate sufficient evidence of candidate achievement
- be supported by comprehensive marking instructions which relate clearly to the evidence requirements
- where appropriate, include a cut-off score which represents the minimum mark required to achieve success in the Unit in the marking information.

Practicality and compatibility with good teaching and learning

Unit assessment should be as holistic as possible, ideally involving no more than two Instruments of Assessment.

It should also be capable of being readily set up and conducted without undue demand on centres and the teachers and lecturers concerned. The Instrument of Assessment should be relatively easy to arrange, in terms of context and required resources, irrespective of location; there should be no significant cost implications for centres.

Accessibility

Unit assessments should be as accessible to as wide a range of candidates as possible. The assessment instrument should

- have all instructions, questions and tasks expressed in straightforward, easily interpreted language, using familiar technical or specialist terms as appropriate but avoiding jargon
- wherever possible be expressed in the active voice
- be written in such a way as be accessible to as many candidates as possible.

Guidance for making an assessment decision

For each Instrument of Assessment you should include clear guidance which will help centres to reach an assessment decision. Such guidance might be in the form of:

- detailed assessor checklist/s
- an example of a possible candidate response with assessor's comments
- detailed marking information for a test

Further guidance in relation to sampling Unit content and avoiding bias can be found in the appendices which follow.

Appendix 1

Note on sampling the content of a Unit

The production of evidence, direct or inferred, for all Outcomes and Performance Criteria is required for Unit assessment. **Outcomes and Performance Criteria cannot be sampled: all Outcomes and PC must be covered on each assessment occasion.** However sampling of content can be considered when designing Unit assessments. Particularly in knowledge-based Units, you may be using some kind of **sampling of content** in order to be able to infer that a candidate would be competent in those parts of the Unit content not assessed on that particular occasion.

Where sampling is used it is normally carried out in supervised conditions and a different sample chosen on each assessment occasion so that candidates are not able to predict what they will be asked. If, though, there are certain items of knowledge or skills which **must** be assessed on each assessment occasion in order to demonstrate competence in the Outcome/Unit then this should be stated in the Evidence Requirements.

The way in which a sample is chosen will depend on the subject matter of the Unit and the section to which it relates. There is no minimum size of sample but if the proportion chosen for sampling is low, then the evidence generated by the sample may make it more difficult to infer that candidates are competent across all the **mandatory content** of the Unit. The sample must provide an opportunity to candidates to produce **sufficient** evidence to meet the requirements of **all** Outcomes and Performance Criteria and to allow an assessor to judge them competent in terms of the complete content of the Unit, ie to infer from the evidence generated by the sample that candidates will be able to demonstrate the same skills and knowledge to the same standard in any sample. As long as these conditions are met, then the choice of sample should be governed by the subject matter and context of the Unit. To sum up, in relation to sampling, the Evidence Requirements should specify clearly:

- whether any items should be included on each assessment occasion and which they are - this will apply if the Unit contains items which are considered crucial to the achievement of competence for the Unit, or if the Unit has an embedded Core Skill
- that a different sample or questions - where the same areas are covered in each assessment - should be chosen on each assessment occasion (apart from those items which must be assessed on every occasion)
- the conditions of assessment
- the standard of attainment required to demonstrate competence (refer to NAB)

If you are embedding a Core Skill, you need to ensure that assessment of the Core Skill is also covered in the Evidence Requirements of the carrier Unit. This will be particularly important if you are using sampling as a method of assessment, since the Core Skill will have to be covered in every sample selected.

Appendix 2

Checklist for Bias in Instruments of Assessment

Checklist for Bias

Assessment instruments should offer all candidates an equal opportunity to demonstrate their attainment. The tasks, the language in which they are presented and any associated illustrative material should reflect an inclusive view of society.

While this checklist does not claim to be definitive, it will assist you in the preparation of fair and inclusive assessment tasks which relate to a contemporary environment.

- Are males and females equally represented?
- Are situations and contexts, used in the question paper, equally within the experience of male and female candidates?
- Are females and males portrayed as being of equal status and as being equally competent?
- Is the respective contribution of women and men to shaping society and impacting on history, adequately presented?
- Are females portrayed in passive, sensitive role and males in more aggressive active roles?
- Is the word order relating to gender varied, ie, not always “men and women”, “boys and girls” and “he or she”?
- Are occupations referred to in a gender-neutral way (eg, police officer rather than policeman; firefighter rather than fireman)?
- Where people are portrayed, do they reflect the diverse and changing nature of modern Scotland?
- Do your questions avoid ethnic stereotyping, tokenism and Eurocentricity? By Eurocentricity we mean: are the notions of power, leadership and competence to make decisions or initiate development represented solely as attributes of Europeans?
- Are people from diverse backgrounds seen to be participating in a realistic and positive way?
- Are the situations and contexts that you used outwith the experience of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds?
- Is the use of words with racially sensitive connotations avoided?
- Are the customs, cultures and religions of non-western and non-white people marginalized or positioned as inferior in your question paper?
- Does the text and related questions make assumptions about cultural, social or religious backgrounds which will make them inaccessible to any candidate?

- Does the text and related questions make assumptions about cultural, social or religious backgrounds, which will make them offensive or off-putting to any candidate? (We emphasise that there should be **NO** racist or derogatory language in any assessment situation, even in an anti-racist context.)
- Do your questions avoid stereotyping on the basis of factors such as gender, race and disability?
- Do your questions avoid making assumptions about disabled people?
- Are disabled and non disabled people seen as having equal status?
- Are disabled people seen in a positive role?
- Do any of your questions include positive promotion of inclusion and equality?

Appendix 3 – Copyright Form

Scottish Qualifications Authority



Identification of copyright material quoted in ASPs

Please complete a copy of this form for each item of copyright material included in the ASP.

Course _____ Unit _____

Level _____ ASP Code _____

Question number _____ Text/Photo/Artwork (please delete as applicable and attach a photocopy of the material).

Particulars of Copyright Material

1	Name of author(s).	
2	Title of book or other work from which the quoted passage has been taken (including the ISBN number which is normally found inside the cover).	Title: ISBN:
3	Name and address of the publisher of the book or other work or the publisher of the paperback/reprint versions used. Please give date of original publication where this is shown.	
4	The name and address of the copyright holder if known. (The precise terms of any printed copyright notice should be given in full).	
5	Page(s) (or other means of identification) indicating from which part of the book or other work the passage has been taken.	
6	Please state length of quoted passage (words) and length of book (pages).	
7	If a poem/short story is being quoted, please indicate, roughly, what proportion you are using.	
8	If a photograph from a newspaper is used, please give details of the caption or story which accompanied it, together with the date of publication.	
9	Has the extract been adapted? (Please indicate yes or no). Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	If adapted, whether Greatly adapted <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly adapted <input type="checkbox"/>

Signature _____ Date _____