



Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements in Internal and External Assessments: Information for Schools

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Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements (AAs)

SQA has a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is rigorous and fair for all candidates and for this reason SQA must ensure that assessment arrangements (AAs) are appropriate and only provided to those candidates who are eligible.

This guidance is to support staff in schools to ensure that appropriate assessment arrangements are provided for candidates who need them. It must be read in conjunction with the [Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for Centres](#) (Publication code: FA4378) which details the key principles that should be followed when making a decision about assessment arrangements.

Your school must have an effective internal quality assurance system for identifying and verifying candidates' eligibility for assessment arrangements in National Qualifications. You must ensure that you are fully conversant with all relevant assessment arrangements guidance on [SQA's website](#), and that your own school's policies and processes align with this guidance.

Your school's quality assurance system should include processes to:

- ◆ identify, as early as possible, any difficulty a candidate might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures
- ◆ determine the most appropriate assessment arrangement for the candidate
- ◆ verify the candidate's need for the assessment arrangement in an internal or external assessment
- ◆ authorise assessment arrangements.

All of the processes outlined above and explained below must be documented, implemented and monitored to meet SQA requirements. At all stages in these processes, professional dialogue is essential between teaching staff, learning support staff, those responsible for quality assurance, and those responsible for submitting requests for assessment arrangements to SQA. In some cases, evidence from other key professionals, such as therapists, specialist teachers or educational psychologists, may also form part of the school's wider evidence base. This could assist in deciding whether or not an assessment arrangement is appropriate for an individual candidate and, if so, the nature and extent of that arrangement in the individual case.

However, in all cases, SQA co-ordinators should work closely with staff in learning support to ensure they are aware of the assessment arrangements that may be required for candidates.

Quality Assurance Processes: School

Identify, as early as possible, any difficulty a candidate might have in demonstrating their attainment through the published assessment procedures

Wherever possible, a candidate's difficulties in accessing an assessment should be identified before they embark on a qualification. In some cases, however, the candidate's difficulties may only become apparent, or be disclosed, during the candidate's course of study. The candidate's difficulties could be identified by the candidate, by learning support staff or by the subject teacher. Further information from the candidate's parents may also be relevant and may form part of the school's wider evidence base.

Determine the most appropriate assessment arrangement

This is the stage in your internal quality assurance system where you determine what assessment arrangements will be required. Any such arrangements should adequately assist the candidate to demonstrate their attainment without compromising the integrity of the assessment. This could be quite straightforward (for example, the provision of a braille question paper for a blind candidate in the external examination) or it could require more detailed discussion with SQA (for example, where the assessment in a National Qualification could potentially be compromised by the proposed assessment arrangement).

Formally verify the candidate's need for an assessment arrangement

This is a key stage in your school's own internal quality assurance system. It ensures that there is an evidence base, which clearly demonstrates the candidate's need for the assessment arrangement and that this evidence has been formally confirmed by the school. Documentary evidence of your formal assessment arrangements verification process, and the personnel involved, must be available to SQA. Verifying the candidate's assessment needs is extremely important for two reasons:

- ◆ you need to be assured that your decision to provide, or not to provide, a particular assessment arrangement can be justified, and that it accords with both SQA guidance and relevant equality legislation
- ◆ we need to be satisfied that schools have in place their own robust internal assessment arrangements verification system, which ensures that **all relevant** information and evidence has been gathered and considered. The evidence requirements are set out in more detail below at "Documentary evidence to support the provision of assessment arrangements".

Authorise assessment arrangements

The head of centre, or a member of senior management, is responsible for authorising the provision of an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment, or any request to SQA for an assessment arrangement in the external examination by the published deadline date.

In providing an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment or submitting a request for an assessment arrangement in an external examination, your school is confirming that SQA's quality assurance procedures have been adhered to and that it has met its responsibilities in terms of quality assuring the eligibility of the candidate and the appropriateness of the assessment arrangement. In addition, by submitting a request for an assessment arrangement to SQA, the school is confirming that it has obtained the written consent of the candidate (and parent/guardian, where applicable) to submit the request on their behalf and to share the personal data required for the request with SQA.

Quality Assurance Processes: SQA

The focus of SQA's quality assurance is on assisting schools to comply with SQA's requirement for the school to operate an effective internal quality assurance system for the provision of assessment arrangements for candidates in SQA internal and external assessments

To this end, SQA's quality enhancement managers are allocated schools and the allocations are made under an intelligence-led, risk-based model. Schools will be selected for a quality assurance visit based on a number of factors, these might include:

- ◆ length of time since last quality assurance visit
- ◆ school size and type
- ◆ prevalence of assessment arrangements requests submitted through SQA's Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system
- ◆ prevalence of late requests
- ◆ compliance with closing dates

If you are selected for a quality assurance visit, your access to the software for submitting assessment arrangements requests in external examinations, the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) software, will be temporarily placed on hold until the conclusion of the visit. During this time, if you need to seek any advice regarding the assessment arrangements that you are planning to provide in internal assessments or the assessment arrangements that you are planning to request for external examinations, you should contact the Assessment Arrangements Team at aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

The quality enhancement manager will initially contact your SQA co-ordinator to inform you of the proposed visit and to negotiate a mutually convenient date for the visit. Ongoing contact will also be with your SQA co-ordinator, who should take responsibility for informing all relevant staff about the date of the visit, requirements for documentary evidence, and for arranging for the required staff to be available during the visit.

The length of the visit will vary and be dependent on many factors. On average, it will take about three hours. The quality enhancement manager will review all documented processes and supporting evidence that you should have available on the day. Appendix 1 is a blank template which you may wish to use to list the actual evidence you have available to support the provision of an assessment arrangement.

The quality enhancement manager will provide verbal feedback at the end of the visit to the SQA co-ordinator and any other staff you choose to have present. The feedback will cover their findings against every type of evidence requirement and any recommended or required actions. They will also comment on the sufficiency of your evidence and any points of good practice. There should be nothing included in the final written report to SQA, and copied to you, that you were not made aware of on the day of the visit.

Recommendations are made so that a school can enhance its existing processes. They are not mandatory and you do not need to act upon them. However, required actions must be acted upon and are given when a judgement has been made that there is either insufficient evidence, little evidence or no evidence. The actions should also be clear and specific, with an agreed date for achievement. Once these actions are met, you will be able to access the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) software.

In the unlikely event that your system and processes do not meet our requirements by the date agreed with the quality enhancement manager and as noted in your Action Plan, we will contact you to discuss the issue further. We may ask you to submit the documented evidence for all your candidates for whom assessment arrangements are being proposed. We will consider the supporting evidence and make a decision on a case-by-case basis.

Note: Appeals against decisions involving assessment arrangements are covered in our general guidance on appeals, *The Appeals Process: Information for centres* (publication code: FF5480, August 2016).

Your SQA co-ordinator will be sent a link to a feedback questionnaire along with the report of the visit. Please take the time to complete this feedback and send it back to SQA, as it will provide the quality enhancement manager with valuable information to help to make future improvements and help us to further improve our quality assurance processes.

Documentary Evidence to Support the Provision of Assessment Arrangements

The quality enhancement manager's quality assurance visit is based around seven key types of documentary evidence which must be available in the school. Documents may be held electronically or in hard copy but should include documentary evidence of (i) your school's quality assurance processes and (ii) the evidence used to assess a candidate's eligibility for a particular assessment arrangement.

1 Evidence of your school's internal assessment arrangements verification meeting(s)

You must have documentary evidence of the meetings/discussions at which all relevant candidate information and evidence was considered and assessed before the provision of an assessment arrangement in an internal assessment and/or before submitting the request to SQA for an assessment arrangement in an external examination. This might be the minutes or agreed notes from the verification meeting(s). They must be signed and dated.

2 Evidence that your candidates have agreed to the provision of assessment arrangements and to their details being disclosed to SQA

You must have confirmation from your candidates that they have been involved in discussions about, and have agreed to, the assessment arrangements being provided, and that they intend to use them. You must also obtain consent from candidates for you to submit the request on their behalf and to share their personal data required for the request with SQA. You may wish to involve parents/ carers in this discussion

3 Evidence of your candidates' disabilities/difficulties and how this affects them in the learning and teaching situation

In all cases, there must be documentary evidence of the nature and extent of the candidate's disability or difficulty and how this has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom. Information, where relevant, from other professionals (for example, therapists, specialist sensory impairment teachers or educational psychologists) may also be available. For example, the evidence might include relevant medical reports, results of screening assessments, minutes of meetings, notes of case conferences, ongoing consultations on current intervention strategies etc.

4 Evidence of your candidate's current need for support in the classroom, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements being requested or provided

In nearly all cases, candidates requiring specific assessment arrangements will need similar on-going support to be available during their course to ensure they are not disadvantaged. There must be documentary evidence that links this ongoing support in class to the assessment arrangements needed for the SQA assessments. The evidence might include plans and records of support from support-for-learning staff in class and/or in support

base and/or details of support regularly required from subject teachers in class.

5 Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account

As needs may vary across subjects, there must be documentary evidence that the need for assessment arrangements has been considered on a subject-by-subject basis. Evidence might include records of consultation and negotiations with subject staff, their comments and observations which takes into account the assessment demands of different subjects.

6 Evidence for specific types of assessment arrangements

For some candidates, the evidence of their need for a particular assessment arrangement will be well established for example, for a visually impaired candidate using braille or a deaf candidate using BSL. However, for some types of assessment arrangements, for example, a candidate's need for extra time, a scribe, a reader or for the use of assistive technologies, there must be additional documentary information/evidence of the need for the particular arrangement in the assessment concerned.

7 Evidence of a system for the management of SQA assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management

You must have documentary evidence of a whole-school approach to assessment arrangements, for example, as part of wider inclusive practices/policy, etc.

Quality assurance of assessment arrangements checklist

The following checklist, based around the seven types of documentary evidence, is designed to help prompt you to find out if you have the appropriate evidence for the quality assurance visit.

The quality enhancement managers will work from exactly the same guidance.

Reference	Key questions	(✓)
1 Documentary evidence of the internal assessment arrangements verification meeting(s)¹	Do you hold a formal assessment arrangements verification meeting or meetings to ensure that all relevant information and evidence has been gathered and considered in determining the provision of assessment arrangements for candidates in both internal and external assessments?	
	Do you have a formal minute/note of the meeting(s) that has been signed and dated?	
	Is it clear which assessments your assessment arrangements verification meeting(s) is for?	
	Are the meetings held at an appropriate time in the year?	
	Are appropriate personnel present?	
	Are requests for or the provision of assessment arrangements formally authorised by a senior member of staff?	
	Is this senior member of staff independent of the learning support structure in the centre?	
	Do you have a procedure for making late decisions?	

¹ The assessment arrangements verification meeting is the **key stage** in your internal quality assurance procedures. You need to be confident that your decisions to provide, or not to provide, an assessment arrangement in both internal and external assessments 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.

Reference	Key questions	(✓)
2 Documentary evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to (i) the provision of assessment arrangements,(ii) the school submitting the request on their behalf and (iii) the school sharing their personal data required for the request with SQA	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 assessments this agreement refers to?	
	Do you have a record of any candidate refusals of assessment arrangements?	
3 Documentary evidence of the candidate's disability/difficulty and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation	Do you have the relevant information/evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty?	
	Do you have evidence of how the disability/difficulty has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom and that subject staff are involved in relevant discussions and in recording relevant information?	
	Is your evidence current?	
4 Documentary evidence of your candidate's current need for support in the classroom, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements being requested or provided	Does your evidence show that decisions are made on the actual assessment arrangement proposed and based on the current support provided in normal teaching and learning?	
	Do you have evidence that subject staff are involved in relevant discussions and in recording information?	
	Do you have evidence to show that the assessment arrangement is effective and removes the disadvantage? Does it have the potential to make a significant difference to the candidate's ability to be assessed fairly against the national standards?	
	Is your evidence current?	

Reference	Key questions	(✓)
5 Documentary evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account	Do you have evidence of the need for current support available for each subject?	
	Do you have evidence that subject staff have been involved in gathering evidence?	
	Do you have evidence that subject staff support the arrangement proposed?	
6 Documentary evidence for particular assessment arrangements	Do you have appropriate evidence of how a particular assessment arrangement has been determined. For example, for extra time, does this include (i) evidence indicating that extra time is appropriate and (ii) evidence that a specific amount of extra time is appropriate?	
7 Documentary evidence of a whole-school system for the management of SQA assessment arrangements, which is supported by senior management	<p>Do you have evidence that there is a whole-school policy in relation to the provision of assessment arrangements?</p> <p>Do you have evidence of dissemination of this policy to all relevant staff?</p>	

Appendix 1: Suggested checklist for internal verification process

Checklist of evidence to support the provision of an assessment arrangement
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Centre	
Candidate	
Assessment arrangement	
Date	

Types of evidence	✓
Documentary evidence of the internal assessment arrangements verification meeting.	
Documentary evidence of confirmation from the candidate that they have agreed to (i) the provision of assessment arrangements,(ii) the school submitting the request on their behalf and (iii) the school sharing personal data required for the request with SQA.	
Documentary evidence of disability/additional support needs and how this generally affects the learning and teaching situation.	
Documentary evidence of need for current support, how this is met, and how it relates to the assessment arrangements requested.	
Documentary evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account.	
Additional documentary evidence for the use of specific assessment arrangements.	
Documentary evidence of a whole-school system for the management of SQA assessment arrangements, which is supported by senior management.	

Appendix 2: Sources of support

SQA Contact Centre telephone number: 0303 333 0330

Quality enhancement managers

E-mail: asv@sqa.org.uk

Providing information and advice relating to the audit visit and the systems requirements for the provision of assessment arrangements

Assessment Arrangements Team

Contact details

E-mail: aarequests@sqa.org.uk

First point of contact for specific assessment arrangements queries