



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Standards and Testing Agency business plan

1 April 2014 - 31 March 2015

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The Standards and Testing Agency

Purpose

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is an executive agency of the Department for Education. Our primary purpose is to provide an effective and robust testing, assessment and moderation system to measure and monitor pupils' progress from the early years up to the end of key stage 2.

We are responsible for the development and delivery of assessments and testing in England, under statutory instruments, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. In carrying out these functions, we:

- develop high quality and rigorous national curriculum tests and assessments in line with Ministerial policy;
- undertake operational delivery of national curriculum tests and assessments (including printing, distribution, provision of systems, marking and data capture);
- support the process of teacher assessment moderation in order that data is robust and can be used for national statistics; and
- support schools and other stakeholders (by providing guidance, communications and helpdesk support).

We are responsible for setting and maintaining test standards, including standards related to marking, and producing guidance and exemplification materials for the early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile, key stage 1 and key stage 2 English writing teacher assessment.

Responsibility for the management of the Professional Skills Tests for prospective teachers was transferred from the National College for Teaching and Leadership to the STA in November 2013. Responsibility for the logistics service provided to centres and examiners was transferred to us on 1 April 2014.

Vision

Supporting schools in raising standards in education, through the successful delivery of world class tests and assessments that enable every child to realise their unique potential.

'Supporting schools' means:

- providing clear, timely, accessible guidance and communications;
- providing a helpline that meets its service level agreement;
- ensuring customer complaints are investigated and resolved in a timely manner;

- ensuring that teacher assessment is properly moderated, based on a robust and reliable model, to ensure consistency against national standards;
- ensuring stakeholders are consulted when process changes are being considered, and that intelligence from complaints, the helpline and other forums is used to drive continual service improvements;
- where the integrity of pupils' results is questioned, investigating in a sensitive professional manner; and
- investigating potential cases of maladministration.

'Successful delivery' is:

- developing the required tests to the agreed timeline;
- providing systems that enable schools to order tests, register pupils, apply for access arrangements, submit teacher assessments and access pupils' results;
- ensuring that schools receive their test papers on time;
- ensuring that opportunity for loss or breach of security of materials is minimised, including when transported to and from schools;
- ensuring marking is of a high quality and completed on time;
- ensuring that test results are returned to schools on time and accurately reflect the marks awarded;
- ensuring that teacher assessment is moderated to provide a robust and reliable national dataset;
- following rigorous procurement processes to ensure Value for Money and that high quality suppliers are in place to support delivery;
- ensuring all deliverables are achieved within a tightly managed and controlled budget; and
- ensuring all staff have access to training and development opportunities that enable them to fulfil their role.

'World class tests and assessments' are:

- designed to meet the purpose of the assessment, with questions that appropriately assess the curriculum and standards that reflect the range of the pupils being assessed;
- intended to support the breadth and depth of teaching across the relevant curriculum;
- developed using recognised procedures, such as pre-testing, expert review and statistical analysis;

- high quality such that they meet Ofqual's common assessment criteria of validity, reliability, comparability, minimising bias and manageability; and
- where appropriate, designed to take account of the changing way in which pupils learn and use technology.

Values

To deliver our vision we intend to be:

- customer focused - meeting the varied requirements of all of our stakeholders including pupils, schools and ministers;
- a learning organisation - recognised for our willingness to learn and improve our services year on year;
- an employer of choice - valued by our staff for our focus on training and development;
- financially sound: living within our means and always looking to reduce the burden on the taxpayer; and
- innovative - ensuring that all aspects of test development and delivery maximise the potential offered by technology and new ways of working.

Objectives

At March 2014 we are responsible for:

- test production and operational delivery of existing key stage 1 tests;
- the timely development and delivery of a valid and reliable phonics screening check;
- test production and operational delivery of existing key stage 2 tests in English and mathematics;
- collecting statutory teacher assessment data for key stage 2;
- test production and operational delivery of the new matrix sampling key stage 2 science tests in 2014;
- ensuring the consistency and accuracy of data generated by teacher assessment for the EYFS Profile, key stage 1 and key stage 2 English writing through the monitoring and support of local authorities (LAs);
- secure, timely preparation of valid and reliable statutory tests and assessments for the 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 test cycles;
- fulfilling orders placed for optional tests for years 3, 4 and 5, and years 7, 8 and 9¹;
- developing new key stage 1 and key stage 2 tests, to sit alongside the new national curriculum, due for launch in 2016;
- developing and preparing for operational delivery of the matrix sampling key stage 2 science tests in 2016;
- operational delivery of the new matrix sampling key stage 2 science tests in 2014;
- providing a logistics service for collection of test scripts and other materials from centres and delivery to examiners for general qualifications, functional skills and other accreditations;
- completing the reprocurement of the supply contract for the delivery of the skills tests and managing the transition from the current service provider while maintaining uninterrupted service to prospective teachers; and
- preparing for the introduction of the new reception baseline assessments to be introduced in 2015.

The 'Assessment and reporting arrangements', which we publish jointly with the Department, contains the statutory information and guidance on all aspects of national

¹ Optional tests will be discontinued from July 2014.

curriculum assessment and reporting for the EYFS, and key stages 1 and 2. They cover topics such as administering the tests or check, access arrangements, teacher assessment and reporting pupils' achievements to parents.

The level-setting process includes the review of statistical and judgemental evidence to ensure standards are maintained year-on-year and is carried out in the presence of Ofqual and teacher association representatives. STA's chief executive has a specific role with respect to test standards and level-setting. The chief executive signs off the content of the national curriculum tests and the level-setting process, acting independently of the Department and ministers to ensure confidence in the validity of test outcomes.

Programmes of work

Early years foundation stage

Reception baseline

On 27 March 2014, the Department announced plans to introduce a new floor standard from September 2016. This will be based on the progress made by pupils from reception to the end of primary school.

The Department will use a new reception baseline assessment to capture the starting point from which the progress that schools make with their pupils will be measured. The content of the reception baseline will reflect the knowledge and understanding of pupils at the start of reception, and will be clearly linked to the learning and development requirements of the EYFS and key stage 1 national curriculum in English and mathematics. The reception baseline will be administered within the first half term of a pupil's entry to a reception class.

The purpose of the reception baseline is to support the accountability framework and help assess school effectiveness. It will provide a score for each pupil at the start of reception which reflects their attainment against a pre-determined content domain. This will be used as the basis for an accountability measure of the relative progress of a cohort of pupils through primary school.

STA's role is to develop an approved list of suppliers from which schools may select a quality reception baseline for use in the accountability framework.

EYFS Profile

The EYFS Profile summarises and describes pupils' attainment at the end of the EYFS. We are responsible for ensuring the consistency and accuracy of data generated by teacher assessment judgements. LAs have a responsibility for the implementation and moderation of the assessment process in schools and settings. We scrutinise practice in LAs and undertake external moderation visits to a sample of LAs to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities.

Key stage 1

Key stage 1 English and mathematics

The statutory key stage 1 national curriculum tasks and tests are designed to help inform the final teacher assessment judgement reported for each pupil at the end of key stage 1. They must be administered to all eligible pupils who are working at level 1 or above in reading, writing and mathematics. We provide a website where schools and LAs can order standard and modified materials. We also manage the printing, production and delivery of the materials.

Work continues on the development of new key stage 1 tests, to assess the new national curriculum from 2016.

Key stage 1 English and mathematics moderation

Teacher assessment is used to assess pupils at the end of key stage 1. STA is responsible for ensuring the consistency and accuracy of data generated by teacher assessment judgements. LAs have a responsibility for the implementation and moderation of the assessment process in schools and settings. We scrutinise practice in LAs and undertake external moderation visits to a sample of LAs to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities.

Phonics screening check

STA is responsible for developing and delivering the phonics screening check. Pupils in year 1 at maintained schools and academies must take the check. This includes pupils registered at maintained nursery schools who will reach the age of 6 before the end of the school year. Pupils in year 2 must also take the check if they did not meet the required standard in year 1 or have not taken it before.

Key stage 2

English and mathematics tests

We follow international best practice to develop the English reading, English grammar punctuation and spelling and mathematics tests.

For the 2014 test cycle, STA is responsible for developing and delivering levels 3-5 and level 6 tests.

We manage the printing, collation and delivery of test materials to schools. We also manage the collection, external marking and return of pupils' marked test scripts and provide a review marking service to schools.

To support this activity, we provide a website where schools can:

- order standard and modified test materials;
- register pupils;

- make access arrangements applications; and
- view test results and test scripts which were marked on screen.

LAs can also use this website to view schools' access arrangements applications and test results.

We support schools and LAs in fulfilling their statutory duties with respect to the tests by:

- producing statutory and supporting guidance and communications; and
- providing a helpline and customer complaints facility.

We are responsible for investigating any reported incident that casts doubt on the integrity of a school's test results.

In readiness for future test cycles we are:

- developing tests for use from 2015-2017;
- mobilising our resources, and the services of our suppliers, in preparation for the 2015 test cycle;
- implementing changes to accommodate the introduction of the new curriculum in 2016; and
- planning and preparing to source suppliers to support operational delivery of services from 2017.

STA is responsible for the development of key stage 2 tests in English and mathematics at levels 3-6. As the test development process takes up to 3 years, in 2014-15 STA will be developing tests for use from 2015-2018. This includes work on new key stage 2 test development, to assess the new national curriculum from 2016.

Moderation of key stage 2 English writing

STA is responsible for supporting and ensuring implementation of the arrangements to moderate key stage 2 English writing teacher assessments. LAs are responsible for the implementation and moderation of the assessment process in schools and other settings. We will scrutinise practice in LAs by undertaking external moderation visits to a sample of LAs to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities.

An evaluation of 2014 arrangements will be undertaken to assess the moderation process and the effectiveness of supporting guidance, the standardisation exercise and exemplification materials.

Science sampling tests

Science sampling tests were introduced in 2010 to monitor national standards in science at the end of key stage 2. We are responsible for developing and delivering a key stage 2 test, covering levels 3-5, that is administered in a sample of schools.

From 2014 this is delivered as biannual pupil-level matrix sampling. This will provide a better reflection of performance across the country, with a greater breadth of the curriculum covered. Under this system each school will be required to administer the test to a sample of their pupils, rather than a sample of schools administering the tests to all of their eligible pupils.

Tests were administered in 2014 and will be delivered next in 2016. This will also allow benchmarking across the introduction of the new national curriculum.

To better understand our pupils' performance in international comparison tests, STA continues to investigate what can be learned from embedding questions from the Trends in Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) international survey within these sample tests.

Key stage 2 teacher assessment

STA is responsible for collecting data for teacher assessment of pupils' attainment in the core subjects at the end of key stage 2. To support this activity, we provide a website where schools and LAs can submit their data electronically.

Optional tests

Optional tests provide teachers with evidence to support teacher assessment. They are available for years 3, 4 and 5, and years 7, 8 and 9 in English and mathematics, and for science in year 9. STA provides a process for schools (including international schools) to purchase optional tests, running this service on a cost recovery basis. STA manages the printing and delivery of optional tests.

The present suite of optional tests is fully integrated with the current national curriculum. As a new curriculum is being introduced, these optional tests will be discontinued from July 2014.

General Qualifications Logistics

STA provides a traceable exam scripts dispatch service for exam centres via Parcelforce Worldwide, known as the Yellow Label Service. This is used to deliver unmarked exam scripts, coursework and controlled assessments for externally assessed general qualifications, functional skills and other eligible accredited qualifications to examiners.

As the delivery period for these programmes aligns with the school year, the key milestones for these programmes largely cover the 2014 delivery cycle.

Professional skills tests for prospective teachers

The Skills tests were introduced in 2000 in response to concerns about the standard of literacy and numeracy of new teachers. They were established to assess skills and knowledge which all teachers should have to carry out their wider professional role effectively. STA took responsibility for oversight of the Skills test delivery contract in November 2013.

In 2014-15, we will complete the mobilisation of the Skills test delivery to a new supplier, overseeing the creation and full operational delivery of new Skills tests.

Deliverables

Guidance and support for schools and local authorities

- Publish and disseminate guidance on statutory national assessment arrangements from EYFS to key stage 2.

Project, programme and risk management

- Achievable plans and relevant project and programme management (PPM) documentation are in place to maintain tight control and visibility of all cycles.
- Risks and issues are continually identified and actively managed in accordance with the Risk and Issue Management strategy.

Financial and commercial management

- STA delivers its remit and operational business within the budget agreed for 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.
- Rigorous procurement processes are followed to ensure Value for Money and that high quality suppliers are in place to deliver the programmes of work for all cycles.
- Suppliers are managed consistently in a way that can demonstrate best value and contracts are monitored to ensure that supplier performance is as agreed.
- STA conducts its business operations using best commercial practices and in compliance with EU Rules, UK procurement regulations and Cabinet Office and Departmental policies.

Improving services and processes

- A full evaluation for every workstream is completed by October 2014, to ensure that lessons learned can be used to make improvements to future cycles.
- Stakeholder feedback is sought at regular intervals through a range of channels and stakeholders are consulted when process changes are being considered.

2014 early years foundation stage profile and moderation

- EYFS profile teacher assessment data is reliable as a consequence of moderation.
- EYFS profile moderation arrangements are evaluated.

Reception baseline

- List of approved suppliers following appropriate procurement process.

2014 key stage 1

- Key stage 1 teacher assessment data is reliable as a consequence of moderation.
- Key stage 1 test materials, free from printing errors, are provided to those schools that order them.

2014 phonics screening check

- Phonics screening check materials are developed and delivered to all schools with eligible pupils.

Development of all statutory tests and assessments

- Tests are developed using recognised procedures, such as pre-testing, expert review and statistical analysis, which generate evidence to demonstrate that the tests satisfy Ofqual's common assessment criteria of validity, reliability, comparability, minimising bias and manageability. This includes additional processes required to introduce tests of the new national curriculum.
- High quality test materials are developed and handed to print for key stage 2 English reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling, mathematics, science and phonics screening check.

2014 key stage 2 English and mathematics tests

- National curriculum tests in English and mathematics are delivered successfully and securely, and levels of lost scripts and missing results are comparable to 2013.
- Quality of marking is at least as good as previous years.
- All data feeds are sent to the Data Services Division as set out in the Assessment Technical Requirements Document.
- Secure timely mobilisation of the national curriculum tests for delivery in 2015.

2014 key stage 2 science sampling tests

- Successfully deliver key stage 2 science sampling tests.

Key stage 2 teacher assessment data collection and moderation

- Appropriate systems and arrangements are in place to collect statutory teacher assessment data for key stage 2.

- Key stage 2 writing teacher assessment data is reliable as a consequence of moderation.
- All data feeds are sent to the Data Services Division as set out in the Assessment Technical Requirements Document.

Optional test materials

- Optional test materials are provided to those schools that order them.

Performance indicators

Provision of key stage 2 results

99.9 per cent of assessing pupils receive a complete set of test results data at their respective school, containing a correct test result (not withstanding any marking or process reviews) for every test sat by a pupil by 00:01 on Tuesday 8 July 2014.

Return of key stage 2 test scripts to schools

99.9 per cent of assessing pupils receive a complete set of test scripts marked on paper, at their respective school; and their respective school has access to a complete set of test scripts marked onscreen through the script return website.

Helpline service

At least 90% of inbound calls to the helpline, for any single working day, are answered by an operator within 5 rings (15 seconds) during helpline operating hours.

Web-based systems to support schools

NCA tools is available 24 hours a day with an availability of at least 99.8%.

Professional skills tests for prospective teachers

The system for delivering and operating tests is available for at least 99.9% of the time that the test centres are open for testing.

General Qualifications Logistics

99% of all consignments are collected from centres and delivered for marking.

Programme delivery milestones

2014 early years foundation stage profile and moderation	Date
External moderation visits complete	June 2014
Completion of moderation process	September 2014

Table 1: 2014 early years foundation stage profile and moderation delivery milestones

2015 Reception baseline	Date
Publish evaluation criteria	July 2014
Publication of approved suppliers	January 2015

Table 2: 2015 Reception baseline delivery milestones

2014 key stage 1 moderation	Date
External moderation visits complete	July 2014
Completion of moderation process	September 2014

Table 3: 2014 key stage 1 moderation delivery milestones

2014 phonics screening check	Date
All phonics screening check materials in schools	June 2014
Check week	16 June 2014

Table 4: 2014 phonics screening check delivery milestones

2014 key stage 2 English and mathematics tests	Date
All key stage 2 test materials in schools	May 2014
Test week	12 May 2014
Level setting for all 2014 key stage 2 statutory tests completed	June 2014
Statutory deadline for schools to submit teacher assessment data	June 2014
Return of pupils' results to schools and local authorities	July 2014
Review outcomes returned to schools	September 2014

Table 4: 2014 key stage 2 English and mathematics tests delivery milestones

2014 moderation of end of key stage 2 English writing teacher assessment	Date
External moderation visits complete	July 2014
Evaluation of key stage 2 writing moderation process complete	September 2014

Table 5: 2014 moderation of end of key stage 2 English writing teacher assessment delivery milestones

2014 key stage 2 science sampling test	Date
Science sampling test materials to administrators	May 2014
Science sampling test period	August 2014

Table 6: key stage 2 science sampling delivery milestones

Development of statutory tests and assessments	Date
Technical pre-test for future statutory tests completed	July 2014
Item validation trial for future statutory tests completed	October 2014
Item writing for future statutory tests of the new national curriculum completed	October 2014
All 2015 statutory tests constructed and content signed off	January 2015
Expert review of future statutory tests completed	February 2015

Table 7: development of statutory tests and assessments delivery milestones

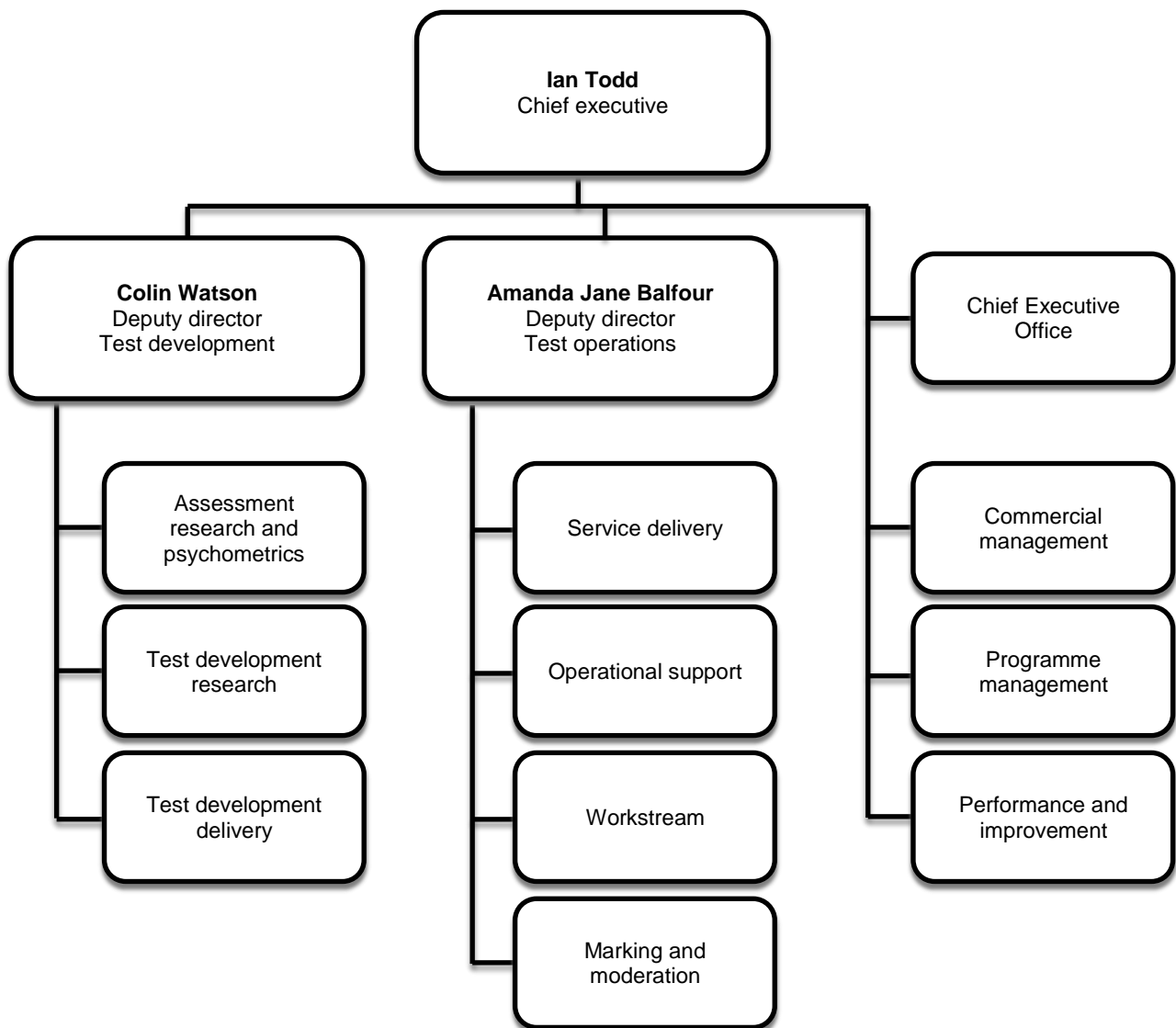
Delivery of 2015 statutory tests and assessments (provisional at this stage)	Date
Key stage 1 (including phonics screening check) 'Assessment and reporting arrangements' published	October 2014
Key stage 2 'Assessment and reporting arrangements' published	October 2014
Key stage 1 test orders deadline	November 2014
Key stage 2 test orders deadline	November 2014
All 2015 statutory tests sent to print (including modified tests)	February 2015

Table 8: delivery of 2015 statutory tests and assessments delivery milestones

General Qualifications logistics	Date
May Functional skills series	May 2014
Date of first examination on common timetable for Summer series	May 2014
Date of final examination on common timetable for Summer series	June 2014
June Functional skills series	June 2014
July Functional skills series	July 2014
October Functional skills series	October 2014
Date of first examination on common timetable for November series	November 2014
Date of final examination on common timetable for November series	November 2014
November Functional skills series	November 2014
January Functional skills series	January 2015
February Functional skills series	February 2015
March Functional skills series	March 2015

Table 9: General Qualifications logistics delivery milestones

Annex A: Organisational structure



Annex B: Expenditure

For 2014-15 STA plans to spend:

Area of spend	£'000
Administration budget*	5,073
Programme budget	42,702
Capital budget	0
Total	47,775

* Shared services are accounted for on a nominal basis and are not, therefore, included in these figures.



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