



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Rewarding Learning

Fair access by design

Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive vocational qualifications

April 2006

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1 Introduction

- 1.1. This document is for awarding bodies offering vocational qualifications, their recognised centres, and the regulatory authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It provides advisory guidance on how assessments within vocational qualifications can be designed to give all candidates the fairest possible opportunities to show attainment.
- 1.2 It is a requirement of the regulatory criteria that awarding bodies must ensure access and equality of opportunity while safeguarding the integrity of the qualifications (*The statutory regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004*, criterion 9) “Both in setting the structure and content of qualifications, and in its processes and arrangements for assessment and awarding, the awarding body must:
- a) ensure access and equality of opportunity while safeguarding the integrity of the qualifications
 - b) not create unnecessary barriers to achievement
 - c) guarantee fair assessment for all candidates, including those with particular assessment requirements
 - d) take account of all current legislation in relation to equality of opportunity.”
- 1.3 The guidance is advisory only and is intended for vocational awarding bodies to adopt in their own contexts. Awarding bodies adopting the guidance will take responsibility for their own use and implementation of the document, and for its publication and use by their recognised centres. Awarding bodies are responsible for any amendments/adaptions they make in customising the guidance to suit the different qualifications they offer.
- 1.4 The recommendations in this guidance are not exhaustive and are designed to support and complement the best practice of awarding bodies in the design of qualifications. This guidance is applicable from 1 April 2006. Awarding bodies are responsible for checking any updates and changes to the law.
- 1.5 Awarding bodies need to review their own arrangements on a regular basis including their:
- procedures for designing assessments
 - working practices
 - staff development programmes
 - printing arrangements
 - house style.

- 1.6 As part of their regular review of arrangements awarding bodies should evaluate feedback on the design of their qualifications from user groups including:
- centres
 - candidates
 - employers
 - their own assessment specialists.
- 1.7 Awarding bodies can use this feedback to help maintain and improve standards in assessment design and continue to promote access to fair assessment.
- 1.8 The design principles and design points in this guidance have been represented in example checklists (Annex A). As part of their quality assurance arrangements awarding bodies could adapt the checklists for their own use when signing off development work undertaken on vocational qualifications.
- 1.9 Wherever possible the illustrations of good and poor design in qualifications/assessments used in this guidance are based on actual examples.
- 1.10 Advances in technology continue to impact on the design of vocational qualifications. Electronic marking, on line testing, and e-assessment are some of the emerging applications.
- 1.11 Assistive technologies have helped to extend access and these electronic and mechanical devices continue to evolve in order to meet candidates' needs.
- 1.12 To help maintain fair access to assessment awarding bodies must keep under review technology based assessment options. Awarding bodies should establish whether the use of technology based assessment options extend access to groups of candidates who might otherwise be excluded.
- 1.13 Developments in electronic marking, e-assessment and assistive technologies are rapid. As a result of the continued evolution currently taking place in these areas details on these topics have not been included in this guidance.
- 1.14 On-line testing has been included as a sub-group within the design points for written questions.
- 1.15 Awarding bodies offering vocational qualifications and specialist groups were consulted in the preparation of this guidance. We gratefully acknowledge the help of those who gave their time and expertise throughout the consultation in developing this guidance.

- 1.16 Some individual design points are included a number of times in different sections of this guidance. During the preparation of the guidance the representatives consulted felt that this repetition helped to minimise the need for cross-referencing within the document.
- 1.17 In 2005 the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) published a *Good practice guide – The application of reasonable adjustments and special consideration in vocational qualifications*.
- 1.18 The regulatory authorities (QCA, ACCAC¹, CCEA) published *Fair access by design – Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications* in October 2005.
- 1.19 Having consistency in the published information on ensuring fair access to qualifications is important. Details contained in this guidance have been aligned wherever possible to both of the published documents referred to in the previous paragraphs.
- 1.20 Both of these documents were used as source material in preparing this guidance on designing fair access in vocational qualifications. We gratefully acknowledge the work undertaken by their authors.
- 1.21 This guidance will be reviewed in the light of any feedback received from users. Please send any comments to Nia.Jones3@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK by 31st January 2007.

¹ As of 1st April 2006 ACCAC has been merged with the Welsh Assembly Government to form the new Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS)

2 Diversity amongst candidates

- 2.1 Awarding bodies can demonstrate their commitment to ensuring fair access to assessment by recognising the diverse needs of candidates at the design stage of qualifications and assessments.
- 2.2 By considering the needs of all candidates when developing qualifications, tasks and assessments awarding bodies can help minimise any later need to make reasonable adjustments for candidates who have particular requirements.
- 2.3 Throughout this document the phrase “all groups” may include candidates:
- at all levels of learning and attainment
 - of any gender
 - from different socio-economic backgrounds
 - from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
 - with physical and sensory disabilities
 - with difficulties in aspects of communication, language and literacy
 - with emotional or behavioural difficulties
 - at all levels of maturity
 - with long term illness.
- 2.4 Further information on candidates who may require access arrangements in vocational qualifications can be found in the guidance published by the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB): *Good practice guide – The application of reasonable adjustments and special consideration in vocational qualifications*.
- 2.5 Details on access arrangements in GCE, AEA, VCE, GCSE, GNVQ, Entry Level and Key Skills qualifications are published annually on 1 September by The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ): *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration - Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations*.
- 2.6 Further information on GCSE and GCE qualifications can be found in *Fair access by design – Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications* (QCA, ACCAC, CCEA, October 2005).

3 Design principles

3.1 Developing vocational qualifications

3.1.1 Awarding bodies and relevant Sector Skills Councils or standard setting bodies should consider the needs of all groups of candidates when developing or reviewing national occupational standards on which many vocational qualifications are based.

3.1.2 Each of the following design principles should be considered when awarding bodies contribute to the development of vocational qualifications.

- a Ensure titles used in vocational qualifications for each mandatory unit and any optional units denote relevant learning outcomes.
- b Ensure that mandatory subject matter is essential.
- c Ensure any optional units are accessible to all groups and are equally demanding whilst maintaining the integrity of the qualification.
- d Avoid creating barriers for particular groups; where a barrier cannot be eliminated by good design, awarding bodies should provide a clear justification for it.
- e Limit prior knowledge and experience to essentials.
- f Consider all candidate groups' needs when assigning credit and level to units and qualifications.
- g Take account of the candidate's usual way of working.
- h Reflect the current working practices of the particular vocational setting where possible and appropriate.

3.2 Design principles for content

3.2.1 Each of the following design principles should be considered when awarding bodies decide on the content of vocational qualifications.

- a Avoid over-assessment by constructing outcomes that focus on the required knowledge, understanding, skills, scope and range.

Example

Assessment grids used as analytical tools chart whether assessment criteria matches the qualification's learning outcomes. A similar grid could be used to analyse the accessibility of objectives for candidates with disabilities.

- b Avoid introducing any unsuitable or unnecessary testing.

Examples

a) Some on-screen testing methods can require a degree of IT competence that goes beyond the occupational skills being measured.

b) Some small monitors do not display the whole of an on-screen page. In order to be able to read a complete question a candidate may have to scroll up and down, and across.

- c Provide opportunities for progression in order to make content relevant to all groups of candidates.

Examples

Assigning credit and level to units and qualifications.

Mapping of key skills.

Allowing opportunities for developing wider understanding of the following:

- moral issues
- social issues
- legislative issues
- economic issues
- cultural issues
- sustainable development
- health and safety
- European developments

3.3 Design principles for assessment

- 3.3.1 There are two main types of assessment used in vocational qualifications; assessment not taken under examination conditions and assessment taken under examination conditions. Awarding bodies should consider the needs of all candidates at the design stage when developing and selecting assessment methods for both examination and non-examination conditions.
- 3.3.2 By considering the needs of all candidates at the design stage awarding bodies can help minimise any later need to make reasonable adjustments for candidates who have particular requirements.
- 3.3.3 Within each main assessment type a variety of methods can be used separately or in various combinations. Where a variety of assessment methods are permitted, awarding bodies should ensure parity for all candidates.
- 3.3.4 Each of the following design principles should be considered when awarding bodies develop assessment used within vocational qualifications.
- a Use contexts for questions that reflect the experience of all groups of candidates in a balanced way.
 - b Avoid narrow, negative or stereotypical representations of different groups.

Example

“Plan a rota for 8 part-time women workers manning a 24-hour telephone help line.”

The same question has been re-written to avoid sexual stereotypes.

“Plan a rota for 8 part-time workers to staff a 24-hour telephone help line.”

- c Avoid biased, derogatory or racist language.
- d Express assessment objectives clearly at the design stage.
- e Express assessment requirements clearly at the design stage.
- f Incorporate inclusive assessment methods at the design stage.
- g Develop assessment strategies that use a varied but coherent combination of methods.

- h Allow a variety of response modes and specify alternative assessment methods where possible.

Example

Some candidates have disabilities that make it difficult for them to make oral presentations. In some circumstances a written presentation, signing or the use of an interpreter could provide equally valid alternative response modes.

- i At the design stage ensure assessment methods are reliable, valid and fit for purpose.
- j 'Reliable' in this context means asking the question "Is the assessment outcome repeatable?"

Questions to consider

- a) Would two or more assessors reach the same judgement about the same assessment?
- b) Would the assessment outcome be the same on a different occasion?

- k 'Valid' in this context means asking the question "Does the method of the assessment measure the required competence, skill or knowledge?"

Questions to consider

- a) Does the method match the criteria?
- b) Are all the required criteria covered?

- l 'Fit for purpose' in this context means asking the question "Are the assessment arrangements affordable, practical and flexible?"

Questions to consider

- a) Are timings achievable?
- b) Is access to equipment and buildings readily available?
- c) Are staffing requirements realistic?
- d) Are arrangements cost-effective?
- e) Does the assessment method reflect current working practice?
- f) Does the assessment method reflect the candidate's usual way of working?

4 Design points

4.1 Collecting evidence over a period of time not under examination conditions

4.1.1 Awarding bodies use different terms for assessments where evidence is collected over a period of time not under examination conditions. The following are some examples:

- portfolio of evidence
- coursework
- workbased observations
- oral questions
- assignments
- projects.

4.1.2 Portfolio, coursework, workbased observations, oral questions, assignment and project assessments should provide opportunities for all groups of candidates to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do in given circumstances.

4.1.3 Each of the following design points should be considered when awarding bodies develop assessments not taken under examination conditions and where evidence is collected over a period of time.

- a Specify any mandatory requirements for the type and amount of evidence.
- b Specify any mandatory requirements for the presentation of evidence.
- c Differentiate between mandatory requirements for evidence and any advice on possible alternatives.
- d Design assessment criteria that measure a candidate's ability rather than particular modes of demonstration.

- e Provide tasks with valid alternative modes for collecting information and communicating responses.

Example

Task

“Sample the opinions of six employees about a training course they have attended. Evaluate their comments and summarise their views on the strengths and weakness of their training.”

The wording of this task means that candidates with hearing or communication difficulties could gather the required information in a variety of ways or formats, including a written questionnaire, a computer programme, via signing or the use of an interpreter. The summary could be presented verbally, using text or diagrams, on screen or as a hard copy.

- f Consider external factors and their likely impact on the collection of evidence over time. Specify any resulting assessment arrangements.
- g Define timescales for the currency of acceptable evidence.
- h Define the required methods to authenticate evidence.
- i Provide clear guidance on centre devised tasks.
- j Provide clear instructions for candidates, assessors and centre staff.
- k Reflect the current working practices of the particular vocational setting where possible.
- l Take account of the candidate’s usual way of working.
- m Adopt the relevant design points for presentation, layout and readability in any written material developed for assessments where evidence is collected over a period of time (see paragraphs 4.5 to 4.8).

4.2 Assessment during specially arranged occasions not taken under examination conditions

4.2.1 Specially arranged occasions should provide opportunities for all groups of candidates to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do, and include:

- practical demonstration
- role play
- simulation.

4.2.2 Each of the following design points should be considered when awarding bodies develop assessments or advise centres on the development of assessments for specially arranged occasions not taken under examination conditions.

- a Reflect the current working practices of the particular vocational setting where possible and appropriate.
- b Take account of the candidate's usual way of working.
- c Select tasks that are within the experience of all groups of candidates in a balanced way.
- d Consider the type of actions required and the sequence/stages of the required actions.
- e Take account of health and safety requirements by carrying out a risk assessment at the design stage.
- f Consider practical arrangements and resource implications including required timings, equipment, staffing, cost-effectiveness and access to buildings.
- g Specify any alternative assessment methods and allow a variety of response modes.
- h Consider external factors that may influence performance and specify any resulting assessment arrangements.
- i Specify any required conditions.
- j Consider how an individual can be assessed within groupwork.
- k Provide clear instructions for candidates and assessors including the design of assessment recording instruments.
- l Use mark schemes to help ensure consistent judgements are made of the standards being demonstrated.

- m Design specially arranged occasions so that live evidence can be recorded and authenticated when required.
- n Adopt the relevant design points for presentation, layout and readability in any written material developed for the assessment of specially arranged occasions not taken under examinations conditions (see paragraphs 4.5 to 4.8).

4.3 Assessment of specially arranged discussions not taken under examination conditions

4.3.1 Specially arranged discussions should provide opportunities for all groups of candidates to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do, and includes:

- individual interview
- panel interview
- professional discussion
- oral questions.

4.3.2 Each of the following design points should be considered when awarding bodies develop assessments for specially arranged discussion not taken under examination conditions.

- a Reflect the current working practices of the particular vocational setting where possible and appropriate.
- b Take account of the candidate's usual way of working.
- c Select discussion tasks that are within the experience of all groups of candidates in a balanced way.
- d Consider practical arrangements and resource implications including required timings, equipment, staffing, cost-effectiveness and access to buildings.
- e Consider the relevant stages needed to complete the specially arranged discussion.
- f Provide understandable, clear, questions.
- g Avoid the use of multiple questions where the candidate may be confused as to which question to answer.

- h Avoid the use of closed questions unless a “yes” or “no” answer is required. Use open questions with why, what, how, where and when.

An example of poor practice

An individual interview described as a “professional discussion” was designed with seven closed questions out of nine.

The interview questions should be rewritten using why, what, how, where, and when as appropriate. The use of open questions provides more opportunities for all groups of candidates to demonstrate attainment.

- i Consider external factors that may influence performance and specify any resulting assessment arrangements.
- j Specify any required conditions.
- k Consider how an individual can be assessed within groupwork.
- l Provide clear instructions for candidates and assessors including the design of assessment recording instruments.
- m Use mark schemes to help ensure consistent judgements are made of the standards being demonstrated.
- n Design discussions so that live evidence can be recorded and authenticated when required.
- o Adopt the relevant design points for presentation, layout and readability in any written material developed for the assessment of specially arranged discussions not taken under examination conditions (see paragraphs 4.5 to 4.8).

4.4 Assessment of speaking and listening skills tests taken under examination conditions

4.4.1 Speaking and listening skills tests taken under examination conditions should provide opportunities for all groups of candidates to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do, and includes:

- oral test
- aural test.

4.4.2 Each of the following design points should be considered when awarding bodies develop assessments for speaking and listening skills tests taken under examination conditions.

- a Select speaking and listening tasks that are within the experience of all groups of candidates in a balanced way.

Example

A speaking task invited candidates to describe a recent holiday. Not all candidates experience regular holidays. Some candidates could not relate to this task as holidays were not part of their culture.

The speaking task was re-designed and the revised task invited candidates to describe a recent journey. The candidates could relate to the revised task.

- b Consider the type of actions required in the speaking and listening tasks and the sequence/stages of the required actions.
- c Consider practical arrangements and resource implications including required timings, equipment, staffing, cost-effectiveness and access to buildings.
- d Allow a variety of valid response modes where possible.

Example

A music aural test requires a candidate to identify a note given immediately after the named tonic. In response the candidate can either give the letter name of the note (D, E etc.), play the note on a musical instrument, or record the note on a musical staff.

These alternatives provide a variety of valid response modes.

- e Consider external factors that may influence performance and specify any resulting assessment arrangements.

- f Specify any required conditions.
- g Avoid the unnecessary use of taped assessment material.

Example

Most taped material contains background noise. Some candidates may find even low levels of background noise distracting.

Where possible use live assessment material in speaking and listening skills tests to avoid disadvantaging certain candidates.

- h Avoid the unnecessary use of dialects in assessment material.
- i Provide clear instructions for candidates and assessors including the design of assessment recording instruments.
- j Use mark schemes to help ensure consistent judgements are made of the standards being demonstrated.
- k Design speaking and listening tasks so that live evidence can be recorded and authenticated when required.
- l Adopt the relevant design points for presentation, layout and readability in any written material developed for the assessment of speaking or listening tasks taken under examination conditions (see paragraphs 4.5 to 4.8).

4.5 Written questions used in examination conditions

4.5.1 Written questions must tell candidates unambiguously and economically what information is needed and how the information should be presented; these include:

- multiple choice question papers
- essay
- short answer papers
- online testing.

4.5.2 Each of the following design points should be considered when awarding bodies develop written tests taken under examination conditions.

- a Ensure the level of language used matches the level of the qualification.
- b Use understandable, clear language, rubrics and syntax in written questions.
- c Consider alternative ways of presenting written questions. Involve language experts and specialists in sight and hearing impairments at an early stage of development to assist in the selection of appropriate communication options.
- d Present any necessary diagrams, illustrations, typography clearly.
- e Use a logical numerical sequence for any necessary labels.
- f Use visual images only when necessary.

Example

Provide a written description as an alternative to a diagram or picture.

- g Ensure experts, who have had no previous involvement with the assessment materials, evaluate the written questions at the design stage.
- h Allow alternative response modes when designing written questions.
- i Use a procedure to second check and sign off written questions. The procedure should cover the key principles and design points. Authorisation for signing off written question papers should be at an appropriate level.

4.6 How written questions taken under examination conditions are used

4.6.1 Each of the following design points concerning how questions are used should be considered when awarding bodies develop written tests taken under examination conditions.

- a Create sufficient items in a question bank to avoid the over use of individual questions.
- b Consider how selections are made from a central question bank.

An example of poor practice

A “question bank” actually only contained four fixed examination papers. These papers were intended to be delivered on line. However if there were technical difficulties during the examination the awarding body faxed a test paper to centres. Over a short space of time, because technical difficulties were frequent, one centre had received all four papers.

The future security of the qualification was jeopardised as centre staff had copies of all the possible questions.

The way selections from a central bank of questions are made can adversely affect the integrity of the qualification over time.

- c Avoid questions in which failure to answer an earlier section makes it impossible to answer later parts successfully.

4.7 Readability of written questions used in examination conditions

4.7.1 Each of the following design points concerning the readability of questions should be considered when awarding bodies develop written tests taken under examination conditions.

- a Use simple sentence structures with accurate punctuation.
- b Avoid subordinate clauses and divide information into shorter sentences.
- c Avoid the passive tense.
- d Avoid jargon unless it is a requirement of the assessment.
- e Avoid dense text, superfluous words, clumsy phrases, unnecessary metaphors and redundant information.

Example

The following question is made more complex by the use of a long sentence. The punctuation is incorrect. It is expressed partly in the passive tense.

“Identify two faults that have been made in the central heating system (illustrated in figure 3); describing in each case how the fault can be corrected.”

The same question has been re-written to give candidates clearer instructions by using shorter sentences. The punctuation has been corrected and an active voice is used.

“Identify two faults in the central heating system illustrated in figure 3. Describe how to correct each fault.”

- f Avoid negative or partly negative expressions.

Example

Using the words “not” or “only” in questions may be confusing. If a negative is essential to the question use **bold type** to draw attention to it.

- g Separate questions from other information.

Example

“Most local councils offer a domestic recycling service, name one everyday domestic product that can be recycled, identifying the main material that can be removed.”

The text contains two questions within a statement. Separating the questions improves clarity.

“a) Name one everyday domestic product that can be recycled.

b) Identify the main material that can be recovered from the product.”

Avoid asking multiple questions. Avoid the use of questions within associated statements.

- h Use plain language at a level suitable to the test.

Example

“use” rather than “utilise”

“find” rather than “locate”

“make” rather than “produce”

- i Use verbs consistently as agreed command words.

Example

The following verbs are known as command words and require different responses as answers:

- list
- analyse
- describe
- compare

A list of command words used in GCSE and GCE examinations is available in *Fair access by design – Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications* (QCA, ACCAC, CCEA, October 2005)

- j When written questions are offered through the medium of Welsh, Irish, or Gaelic have the draft documents checked by a language expert to help maintain the integrity of the assessment.

Example

When translating assessment material ensure the accuracy of any technical terms.

- k When written questions are offered through the medium of British Sign Language use a language expert to help maintain the integrity of the assessment.

Example

Some British Sign Language uses descriptive hand gestures as a means of communicating meaning.

In signing a BSL version of “*What is photosynthesis?*” the descriptive hand gestures used may inadvertently provide candidates with clues to the correct answer.

It is advisable to consult specialists on candidates’ particular needs. A list of sources of specialist information on candidates’ needs is to be found in the *Good practice guide – The application of reasonable adjustments and special consideration in vocational qualifications* (FAB, 2005).

- l Avoid hand-written material unless it is a requirement of the assessment.
- m Consider how the need to enlarge written papers for some candidates can adversely affect layout and readability.
- n Avoid biased or stereotyped views unless this is a requirement of the test (in this case ensure the question draws attention to this fact and seeks comments on the nature of the representation).

4.8 Legibility, appearance, presentation, and layout of written questions used in examination conditions

4.8.1 Each of the following design points concerning the legibility, appearance, presentation and layout of questions should be considered when awarding bodies develops written tests taken under examination conditions.

- a Adopt a clear typeface of sufficient size.

Example

A 12-point font size is frequently used.

Even a small change in font size can impair readability (font 10).

The Arial typeface is legible.

Times New Roman although popular may be less easy to read.

As a general principal a sans serif typeface is easier to read.

- b Use underlining, italics, boxes and shading consistently.
- c Avoid long lines of dense text.
- d Use headings, sub headings, bullet points and numbers to ensure questions are presented clearly and consistently.
- e Provide enough space for candidates' responses.
- f When necessary note on the question paper the allocation of marks for each question or sub-section.
- g Where possible present any required information close to the relevant question or on a facing page and not overleaf.

- h Avoid the unnecessary use of colour in written tests.

Examples

Awarding bodies sometimes use coloured papers to prevent illegal photocopies of test papers being taken.

Some dyslexic candidates, or those with visual impairments, may find certain types of coloured paper or coloured lettering distracting. However some candidates may find some coloured paper or coloured lettering helpful (some Usher candidates find yellow paper easier to read).

Some candidates using assistive technologies may be disadvantaged if colour is being used in a question as the sole carrier of meaning. Some on-screen displays may change or distort colour or it may not appear at all.

Use coloured paper or lettering only when necessary. Before deciding on the use of colour it is advisable to consult specialists on candidates' particular needs. A list of sources of specialist information on candidates' needs has been published in the *Good practice guide – The application of reasonable adjustments and special consideration in vocational qualifications* (FAB, 2005).

5 Support material

5.1 When ensuring fair access to assessment awarding bodies need to consider the content, presentation and layout of support materials which include:

- source material
- mark schemes
- guidance notes.

5.2 Source material

5.2.1 Each of the following design points should be considered when awarding bodies use source material in vocational qualifications.

- a Position the text of a question and any supporting source material closely together on the same page or double spread.
- b Use appropriate typeface and font size in support material.
- c Present any necessary diagrams, pictures and photographs of sufficient size, with sharp contrast and clear definition.
- d Label complex diagrams with keys rather than arrows and lines.
- e Avoid the unnecessary use of diagrams, pictures or photos, as many cannot be converted to Braille.
- f Present tables with clearly separated columns and avoid excess data.
- g Ensure that examples used in source material reflect the diversity of today's society and that people are presented with respect.
- h Where possible ensure source materials reflect the current working practices of the particular vocational setting.

5.3 Mark schemes

- 5.3.1 Each of the following design points should be considered when awarding bodies develop mark schemes as support material for use in vocational qualifications.
- a Design mark schemes alongside tasks.
 - b Design mark schemes that are valid and legible.
 - c Detail what, where and how marks are to be awarded in relation to a particular test or task.
 - d Discriminate between candidates only on the grounds of performance.
 - e Ensure each assessment component is reflected in the associated mark scheme.
 - f Use the agreed interpretation of key command words consistently.
 - g Experts, who have had no previous involvement with the assessment materials, should evaluate mark schemes at the design stage.

5.4 Guidance notes

5.4.1 Guidance notes can be designed for:

- assessors
- candidates
- verifiers
- examiners/moderators.

5.4.2 Each of the following design points should be considered when an awarding bodies develops guidance notes as support material for use in vocational qualifications.

- a Determine the necessary content for the target audience.
- b Resolve any potential contradictions in guidance notes for a particular audience.
- c Use appropriate language for the target audience and avoid jargon.
- d Set out the relevant information clearly.

Annex A Example Checklists

The following checklists summarise the main principles and design points in the guidance. Awarding bodies could use the checklists during the development of standards, question papers, assessment and support material as part of their quality assurance arrangements.

Example Checklist A1

Before signing off development work undertaken on vocational qualifications and content complete the following checklist.

Vocational qualifications and content matter	Further work required	Completed
The titles and mandatory content are relevant to all groups of candidates within the attainment range.		
Any prior knowledge and experience is limited to essentials.		
Any optional routes are accessible to all groups and equally demanding.		
All text is free from unnecessary material that could present obstacles to particular groups of candidates.		
Any assessment criteria that may present an obstacle to particular groups of candidates are justified.		
The needs of all candidate groups have been considered.		
There is no unsuitable testing.		
There is no unnecessary testing.		
A variety of response modes have been specified.		
The current working practices of the particular vocational setting are recognised.		
The candidate's usual way of working is recognised.		
Opportunities for progression are identified.		

Name _____ Signed _____

Role _____ Date _____

Further work to be completed by _____ Date _____

Further work to be checked by _____ Date _____

Example Checklist A2

Before signing off development work undertaken on question papers, tasks, source material and guidance notes complete the following checklist.

Question papers, tasks, source material and guidance notes	Further work required	Completed
All text is written in plain, clear and consistent language.		
All text is free from jargon or bias.		
All pictures, tabular and graphic material is presented clearly.		
All pictures, tabular and graphic material is presented in an uncluttered manner.		
All pictures, tabular and graphic material is presented logical manner.		
Diagrams, pictures and photographs are of sufficient size.		
Diagrams, pictures and photographs are presented with sharp contrast.		
Diagrams, pictures and photographs are presented with clear definition.		
All support material is positioned closely to the text of a question.		
The typeface used in support material matches that used in the question.		
The font size used in support material matches that used in the question.		
Source materials reflect the current working practices of the particular vocational setting.		
Diagrams are labelled with keys rather than arrows and lines.		
Any hand written material present is a requirement of the test.		
Written papers can be enlarged for some candidates without adversely effecting the layout and readability		
Coloured paper is only used when necessary.		
Visual distractions have been avoided.		

Example Checklist A2 (continued)

Before signing off development work undertaken on question papers, tasks, source material and guidance notes complete the following checklist.

Question papers, tasks, source material and guidance notes	Further work required	Completed
There is enough space on the paper for the candidate's answers.		
Examples of people used in assessment material are presented with respect.		
Examples used in assessment material reflect the diversity of today's society.		
Tasks have been selected that are within the experience of all groups of candidates in a balanced way.		
If any biased or stereotyped views used in assessment material are a requirement of the test, attention is drawn to this fact and comments on the nature of the representation are invited		
Appropriate language has been used in guidance notes.		
The content used in guidance notes is relevant for the target audience.		
There are no contradictions in guidance notes designed for a particular audience.		
Live evidence can be recorded if required.		
Language experts and specialists in sight and hearing impairment have checked the draft documents where necessary.		
There are sufficient questions in a bank to prevent over use of some items.		
Selections from a central question bank are made appropriately.		

Name _____

Signed _____

Role _____ Date _____

Further work to be completed by _____ Date _____

Further work to be checked by _____ Date _____

Example Checklist A3

Before signing off development work undertaken on assessment criteria and mark schemes complete the following checklist.

Assessment criteria and mark schemes	Further work required	Completed
Assessment outcomes focus on the required knowledge, understanding and skills.		
Assessment objectives are clear.		
Assessment methods are reliable.		
Assessment methods are valid.		
Assessment methods are fit for purpose.		
Assessment requirements are clearly expressed.		
If various assessment strategies are present they are used in coherent combinations.		
Each assessment component is reflected in the associated mark scheme.		
External factors have been considered and any resulting assessment arrangements are specified.		
Mark schemes are valid.		
Mark schemes are legible.		
Mark schemes detail what, where and how marks are to be awarded in relation to a particular test or task.		
Mark schemes only discriminate between candidates on the grounds of performance.		
Mark schemes consistently reflect the agreed interpretation of key command words.		
Experts who have had no previous involvement with the assessment materials have evaluated the mark schemes.		

Name _____

Signed _____

Role _____ Date _____

Further work to be completed by _____ Date _____

Further work to be checked by _____ Date _____

Example Checklist A4

Before signing off development work undertaken on assessments not taken under examination conditions, including specially arranged occasions, discussions and the collection of evidence over time, complete following checklist.

Assessment not taken under examination conditions	Further work required	Completed
The mandatory requirements for the type of evidence are specified.		
The mandatory requirements for the amount of evidence are specified.		
All mandatory requirements for the presentation of evidence are included.		
Advice on possible alternative evidence is provided.		
The required methods to authenticate evidence are included.		
Timescales for the currency of acceptable evidence are given.		
There are clear instructions for candidates.		
There are clear instructions for assessors.		
There are clear instructions for centre staff.		
External factors and their likely impact on tasks and demonstrations have been taken into account.		
Required timings for tasks or demonstrations are realistic.		
Required equipment for tasks or demonstrations is practical		
Required staffing levels for tasks or demonstrations are realistic.		
The required conditions for practical demonstrations are specified.		
A risk assessment of the practical demonstration has been carried out.		
Required access to buildings is practical.		
Live evidence can be recorded and authenticated if required.		
A language specialist has checked any draft documents where necessary.		
A subject expert has checked the assessment draft where necessary.		
Assessment material reflects current working practice.		
Any necessary mark schemes are provided.		

Name _____

Signed _____

Role _____ Date _____

Further work to be completed by _____ Date _____

Further work to be checked by _____ Date _____

Annex B Glossary of selected terms

This content is based on the glossary provided in *Fair access by design – Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications* (QCA, ACCAC, CCEA, October 2005).

Assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a candidate's work meets the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit, or part of a unit.
Assessment criteria	The requirements that candidates need to meet in order to achieve success (or a given grade) in a qualification or unit, or part of a unit.
Assigning credit and level	The processes used by awarding bodies to attach a number of credits and a level to a unit or full qualification.
Assessment scheme	A description of the components, methods, processes and kinds of tasks used to assess a qualification or unit.
Assistive technologies	Mechanical or electronic devices which help individuals with particular needs to overcome limitations.
Competence	The ability to carry out activities to the standards required.
Content	The coverage of a qualification, programme, module, unit or other component, expressed as the knowledge, understanding, skills or area of competence that is covered.
Coursework	Tasks completed by a candidate during the course of study and assessed against criteria made explicit in the specification.
Learning outcomes	What the candidate has to be able to do or know in given circumstances.
Mark scheme	Detail of how marks are to be awarded in relation to a particular assessment task.

Reasonable adjustments	Arrangements which are approved in advance of an examination or assessment to allow attainment to be demonstrated by candidates with either a permanent or long-term disability or learning difficulty, or a temporary disability, illness or indisposition.
Reliability	The extent to which assessment results are an accurate measurement of the candidates' demonstration of the abilities specified by the assessment criteria.
Source material	Material from external sources that candidates are invited to draw on in order to respond to a task.
Validity	The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme.