

Research Report on the Proposed Assessment and Moderation Arrangements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum – January 2011

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This research was conducted by the CCEA Research and Statistics Unit from November 2010 through to January 2011. For further information about this research please contact:

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Scope of the Report

This report outlines a range of stakeholder views across the primary and post-primary sector on the (1) current assessment arrangements (Levels of Attainment) and (2) moderation proposals for the incoming Levels of Progression.

Outcomes from this research will be used to inform advice on the quality assurance and moderation of the incoming assessment arrangements.

Acknowledgements

CCEA is grateful to all those who have contributed to this research. We are particularly appreciative of the feedback received from the primary and post-primary principal groups, stakeholder organisations, teachers and school leaders.

Contents

Section		Page
1.0	Executive Summary (Contains Conclusion & Recommendations)	5
2.0	Introduction	17
3.0	Method	18
4.0	Results	20
	4.1 Primary Sector	
	4.1.1 Primary Principal	20
	4.1.2 Primary Teacher	40
	4.1.3 Primary Stakeholder	46
	4.2 Post-primary Sector	
	4.2.1 Post-primary Principal	50
	4.2.2 Post-primary Teacher	70
	4.2.3 Post-primary Stakeholder	76
	4.3 General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland	78
	4.4 Northern Ireland Teachers' Council	88
5.0	Conclusion	93
6.0	Recommendations	95

1.0 Executive Summary

This section of the report provides a summary of stakeholder perspectives on the (1) current Levels of Attainment and (2) proposed moderation processes for the incoming assessment arrangements (Levels of Progression). Qualitative and quantitative feedback was obtained from a range of key stakeholders (principals, teachers and representatives from a range of educational organisations) across both the primary and post-primary sectors. Qualitative feedback was also collected from the primary and post-primary principal groups specifically set up for the consideration of incoming assessment arrangements. The principal groups were used to gain school leader perspectives on detailed moderation proposals. Responses were also received from the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Teachers' Council.

Overall, stakeholder findings were consistent within each educational sector (primary/post-primary). For such reasons, and to best summarise results, findings within this executive summary are based upon collective results from both the primary and post-primary sector. Quantitative responses from the principal questionnaires have been used to illustrate the strength of response to particular questions.

Information collected from this research will be used to inform advice on the incoming assessment and moderation arrangements.

1.1 Key Findings

The research evidence demonstrates there is a lack of confidence in the reliability of outcomes from the current assessment arrangements (based upon the Levels of Attainment).

Such findings were evident in feedback from all key stakeholders, including 64.3% (n=280) of primary and 37.9% (n=25) of post-primary principals. Irrespective of sector, a common concern highlighted by respondents was the unreliability of assessment judgements made throughout the primary sector. Respondents strongly

suggest that the main factor impacting on the reliability of the primary sector's assessment judgements is the accountability and pressure placed upon them to meet educational targets. Findings suggest that such demands have led many primary schools to *"inflate"* assessment outcomes. One primary principal stated:

- *"Concern about the robustness of standardisation is directly related to the fact that it has been used to judge schools by the inspector".*

A new system of moderation is important to increase professional confidence in assessment outcomes throughout the primary and post-primary sector

The need for a new system of moderation was recognised by the majority of respondents, including 96% (n = 435) of primary and 100% (n=70) of post-primary principals. A common theme from the research was that a model of teacher based assessment requires a *"rigorous and robust"* moderation system *"if confidence is to be increased"* in outcomes from Key Stage assessment.

Stakeholder commentary indicates that moderation of assessment outcomes is urgently required to (1) better aid pupil transition from primary to post-primary and (2) standardise assessment outcomes.

Respondents endorsed the proposed methods of initial capacity-building and professional development of teachers to embed assessment practices and understanding of standards.

Overall, the majority of primary and post-primary respondents agreed with the proposed support for the incoming Levels of Progression (exemplification materials, professional development of teachers, internal standardisation, assessment tasks/task approval system and agreement trials).

Both primary and post-primary respondents indicated that in order for schools to effectively implement a new system of assessment and moderation, non-teaching time will be required to develop and integrate quality assurance processes. One principal stated *"it is vitally important in the early stages that [schools] are given time to set this up right as setting the foundation is key to the success"*.

Whilst the majority of respondents supported the use of agreement trials, the primary principals' group believed such events were only useful if they were cross-phase. They also recommended that the organisation of cross-phase agreement trials should be left to schools' discretion. However, contrasting findings were obtained from the post-primary principals' group who recommended that CCEA should have responsibility for organising cross-phase agreement trials to ensure the necessary substitute cover and time is provided.

Schools should have choice in the format in which they collect and submit pupil evidence for moderation.

Overall, the majority of respondents from the primary and post-primary sector supported both the electronic and paper-based collection of portfolios. However, a preference for the paper-based collection of pupil evidence was noted. This is illustrated in principal responses, with 15.9% more primary principals and 18.3% more post-primary principals supporting the paper-based collection of evidence than the electronic collection. A common suggestion made by respondents was that schools should have the choice to collect pupil evidence in the format most manageable to their school.

Primary and post-primary respondents have conflicting views on the two proposed options on the use of teacher moderators.

A greater number of primary respondents, including 59.2% (n=245) of principals were in favour of teachers being released from school for moderation duties over a 2-4 week period. Such respondents believed non-teaching time is required to enable teachers to effectively focus on moderation.

In contrast, 62.3% (n=43) of post-primary principals would prefer teachers to carry out moderation duties in their own time, over a 4-8 week period. Such principals believed this would cause less disruption to teaching. However, over half of responding post-primary teachers (n=52) preferred the alternative option (teacher release over a 2-4 week period).

Schools where moderation shows high levels of consistency should be considered as accredited schools, able to help others with moderation.

Overall a large number of primary and post-primary respondents were supportive of accrediting schools that have demonstrated quality internal assessment practices. Members of both the primary and post-primary principal groups agreed that accredited schools should require less moderation, and provide a supporting role to other schools. However, members of the primary principals' group questioned if schools would have the time to carry out such duties.

1.2 Findings from the Primary and Post-primary Principal Groups on Detailed Proposals Relating to Quality Assurance and Moderation

The primary principals' group recommended an alternative system of moderation involving visiting moderators.

Primary principals recommended that moderators should carry out their duties in individual schools. Principals believed this system of moderation to be significantly less burdensome to schools, as the process of submitting evidence is not required. They also believed that visiting moderators have the advantage of professional development for teachers, through professional dialogue.

However, members of the post-primary group disagreed, and stated such a proposal was not logistically viable in post-primary schools. Post-primary principals stated they would not be supportive of different systems between the primary and post-primary sector. Principals felt cross-phase consistency in moderation processes is vital for the incoming assessment arrangements.

Primary and post-primary principals disagreed with the proposed support for the incoming statutory assessment arrangements.

The primary principals' group disagreed with the proposed three days' substitute cover to assist Year 4 and 7 teachers in completing end of Key Stage data. Primary principals recommended that such cover should be provided to all year groups,

enabling schools to achieve a whole school approach to assessment and moderation.

The post-primary principals' group disagreed with the proposed one day substitute cover per Cross-Curricular Skill for each Year 10 class. Principals recommended that schools are provided with two days' substitute cover per Cross-Curricular Skill. Principals stated one day is required for internal standardisation and the second to carry out assessments.

Proposed processes for making summative judgements in each Cross-curricular Skill.

Both the primary and post-primary principal groups were satisfied with the proposed processes for making summative judgements in Communication and Using ICT.

However, both groups had reservations about the proposed process to form summative judgements in Using Mathematics. Both groups queried why Using Mathematics had only two components, compared to the three in Communication and five in Using ICT. Post-primary principals queried the statistical impact this may have on overall outcomes.

CCEA designed task and Task Approval System

The primary principals' group unanimously agreed with the use of the CCEA designed task. Principals stated all year groups should be numerically assessing pupils on Levels of Progression rather than Year 4 and 7 teachers only. Principals also believed that primary schools should eventually be using the task approval system that has been proposed for the post-primary sector.

The post-primary principals' group deemed the task approval to be a fundamental aspect of the moderation process. Nevertheless, principals believed it could be a contentious and a labour intensive process for teachers and strongly recommended that CCEA works in partnership with schools supporting them [when required] to modify tasks.

Evidence of pupil work

The primary principals' group did not comment on the amount of evidence required but felt that schools have responsibility to provide robust evidence for moderation for each Cross-Curricular Skill.

Post-primary principals endorsed the proposed options of evidence schools will be required to submit for each pupil randomly selected for Using ICT.

However, post-primary principals recommended an alternative range of evidence than proposed for Communication and Using Mathematics:

- Five samples of work with a minimum of one CCEA approved task for each component of Communication and Using Mathematics.

Moderation proposals indicate that CCEA/ESA will identify a random stratified sample of pupils' work to confirm assessment judgements are consistent across schools.

The primary principals' group recommended that the random sample should be made as "*robust as possible*". This group recommended that the sample should be "*targeted*". Principals believed sector level analysis should be carried out selecting schools for moderation based upon criteria such as schools who consistently improve.

Members of the post-primary principals' group also recommended that the sample should be more robust and all teaching groups should be represented within it. Post-primary principals strongly believed that departments other than English and Mathematics should be contributing to the assessment of Communication and Using Mathematics.

Should evidence for external moderation be based upon predicted or awarded levels?

The primary principals' group believed that evidence for external moderation should be based upon awarded levels. This group perceived the purpose of moderation to “*examine consistency/quality of the school’s process*”. Primary principals stated that information obtained from moderation should be used to inform subsequent moderation cycles – and not simply amend levels.

Contrastingly, the post-primary principals' group believed that the purpose of moderation should be to ensure standardisation and adjust scores accordingly. Principals stated that the accuracy of Key Stage 2 outcomes is paramount for post-primary schools otherwise they will continue to assess pupils upon their transition to Year 8.

1.3 Conclusion

It is clear from the research evidence that there is a lack of public confidence in outcomes from the current Levels of Attainment. The research has revealed a particular lack of confidence in assessment judgements made across the primary sector. The cause of this has largely been attributed to the use of Levels of Attainment data by the Education Training Inspectorate in primary school inspections. Consequently, there is wide scale agreement amongst the teaching profession that “*robust and rigorous*” moderation is required if the incoming assessment arrangements (Levels of Progression) are to have credibility. Such findings have been further reinforced by the primary and post-primary principal groups, who have strongly recommended that the proposed random stratified sample to obtain pupil evidence is made more robust.

Overall, there was general agreement on the proposed support for the initial capacity-building and professional development of teachers. However, it has been argued that the effective embedding of assessment practices and a common understanding of standards are dependent upon peer discussions both within and

between schools. The opportunity for cross-phase dialogue was deemed to be particularly important in improving confidence in the assessment practice and judgements made across both sectors. As a result, post-primary stakeholders recommended that CCEA should have responsibility for organising such events to ensure that the necessary time and substitute cover is provided.

Stakeholders were largely supportive of both the paper-based and electronic submission of pupil evidence for moderation. However, the diversity in ICT capacity across schools was recognised, as were the new issues an electronic system of submission would introduce. For such reasons, and to prevent any unnecessary burden on schools, it was proposed that schools should have choice in the format in which they collect and submit pupil evidence.

Throughout the research stakeholders made recommendations and suggestions to a number of quality assurance and moderation proposals. Firstly, respondents believed the proposed substitute cover to assist Year 4, 7 and 10 teachers to complete Key Stage data was not sufficient and needed to be increased. Secondly, whilst the primary sector agreed with the CCEA designed task, they recommended that the primary sector should eventually be using the task approval system, designed for the post-primary sector. Thirdly, whilst the primary and post-primary principals agreed with the proposed process for making summative judgements in Communication and Using ICT they had reservations regarding the process used for Using Mathematics as it is based upon only two components (compared to three for Communication and five for Using ICT). Such concerns were reiterated in the varying collection of evidence proposed to be submitted for each Cross-curricular Skill. All such suggestions have been included as separate recommendations within this report.

A recurring theme throughout the research was the need for cross-phase consistency. However, a number of preferences to the moderation proposals were sector specific. Firstly, the primary principals' group proposed an alternative moderating system involving visiting moderators which they believed to be a much more manageable process for primary schools. However, the post-primary principals' group felt such a proposal was not logistically viable for post-primary

schools. They reiterated the necessity of cross-phase standardisation and argued that one system of moderation should be common to both sectors.

Findings regarding the use of teacher moderators also differed between the primary and post-primary sector as did the evidence (predicted or awarded levels) for external moderation.

Despite findings from this research supporting the necessity of a common approach to assessment and how it is moderated, respondents also question whether one system of moderation could logistically be applied throughout the Key Stages. Furthermore, if two systems of moderation were in operation, respondents queried the impact this would have on standardisation and professional confidence in assessment outcomes.

The response to such questions may lie in the balance of a system of moderation that is (1) equally manageable for both primary and post-primary schools and (2) ensures cross-phase standardisation is achieved. If two systems of moderation were in place, quality assurance processes and cross-phase capacity building may be enough to provide trust and confidence throughout the system, achieve standardisation and subsequently aid pupil transition. As one post-primary principal stated, if moderation is successful:

- *“the impact on teaching and learning plans are huge and assessment data can be used to predict pupil performance”.*

1.4 Recommendations

Feedback from this research suggests that:

1. in order to achieve standardisation across the system the reliability of teacher assessment should be investigated and procedures established to prevent data manipulation specifically the impact targets and published assessment outcomes may have.

2. schools will require (1) time and (2) substitute cover to effectively introduce and embed quality assessment processes and internal standardisation.
3. agreement trials should encompass teachers from both the primary and post-primary sector. Such training will require substitute cover and consideration should be given to delivering such events locally, possibly within area learning communities.
4. consideration should be given to providing teachers with face-to-face training opportunities that enable professional dialogue and reflection upon how the new assessment arrangements can be introduced at all school levels (pupil, class and school).
5. following professional development and capacity building, consideration should also be given to introducing the task approval system to the primary sector.
6. post-primary schools will require support from CCEA to make any necessary modifications to tasks that are not approved through the task approval system.
7. the possibility and practicality of schools selecting the format they collect and submit pupil evidence (paper-based/electronic) for moderation should be explored.
8. further consideration should be given to two systems of moderation, which include visiting moderators within the primary sector. The potential impact two systems may have on cross-phase standardisation and public confidence should be explored.
9. proposals on the use of teacher moderators should be reassessed, ensuring that how teacher moderators carry out their duties (released from school/in their own time) is manageable to both sectors.

10. schools where moderation demonstrates high levels of consistency should be eligible to be considered as accredited schools and support other schools with moderation.
11. in order to achieve a whole school approach to assessment and moderation processes, consideration should be given to providing substitute cover to all primary teachers.
12. two days' substitute cover should be provided per Cross-curricular Skill to Year 10 teachers (rather than the current proposal of one day).
13. consideration should be given to the proposed process for making summative judgements in Using Mathematics and the statistical impact of making summative judgements on two components (compared to the three components in Communication and five in Using ICT) should be investigated.
14. consideration should be given to an alternative range of pupil evidence for Communication and Using Mathematics. Post-primary principals suggested:
 - Five samples of evidence with a minimum of one CCEA approved task for each component of Communication and Using Mathematics.
15. CCEA should ensure the random stratified sample is made as robust as possible. Consideration should be given to the use of a "*targeted*" sample (determined from sector level analysis) and a sample that includes all teaching groups.
16. consideration should be given to primary and post-primary principals' differing opinions on whether the evidence submitted for moderation is based upon predicted or awarded levels. Decisions should take account of the post-primary principals' requirement for accurate assessment outcomes.
17. consideration should be given to how CCEA can best support schools in taking a whole school approach to assessment.

1.5 Limitations of research

CCEA is very grateful for the feedback received from the primary and post-primary principal groups in relation to the detailed moderation proposals. However, as these are based on a small number of principals, findings from these groups should be considered in this context.

Poor weather in December 2010 may have impacted on the number of postal responses to questionnaires.

2.0 Introduction

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order sets out the framework for the revised NI Curriculum. It also provides for the assessment of the cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT with reference to the Levels of Progression. The Education (Pupil Reporting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 specify that, for pupils in the final year of Key Stages 1, 2, and 3, achievement in the cross-curricular skills should be assessed and reported using Levels of Progression.

A discussion paper containing proposals in relation to new assessment and moderation arrangements was prepared by the Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Business Unit and provided to CCEA's Education Committee for information in November 2010. A consultation process in relation to these proposals was conducted between November 2010 and January 2011 by CCEA Research & Statistics Unit. Feedback via questionnaire on the broad proposals was obtained from a range of key stakeholders (principals, teachers and representatives from a range of educational organisations) across both the primary and post-primary sectors. Qualitative feedback on the detail of the discussion paper was collected from the primary and post-primary principal groups specifically set up for the incoming assessment arrangements in order to gain school leader perspectives on the proposed assessment arrangements and implementation. Responses were also received from the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Teachers' Council.

This report provides a robust and inclusive analysis of stakeholder perspectives on the current Levels of Attainment and proposed moderation processes for the incoming assessment arrangements (Levels of Progression).

3.0 Method

The following section provides a summary of the methods used to collect stakeholder feedback on:

- the current assessment arrangements;
- proposals relating to the incoming quality assurance and moderation processes; and
- detailed proposals and options in relation to making summative judgements and evidence required for the incoming moderation processes.

3.1 Summary of Participants and Research Tools

3.1.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to collect feedback from all stakeholders. Questionnaires were distributed at primary and post-primary Information Seminars, facilitated to principals and stakeholders (from a range of educational organisations) by CCEA's Assessment Implementation Team. Questionnaires were also posted to a sample of primary and post-primary teachers.

Questions within all questionnaires were twofold. Scales were used to obtain quantitative evidence from respondents. Comment boxes were then used to capture the reasoning behind respondents' answers to all dichotomous and scaled questions.

3.1.2 Facilitated Discussions

Qualitative methods were also employed to further explore and reinforce information collected from the questionnaires. Discussions were facilitated with CCEA's primary (10 out of 16 members were in attendance) and post-primary (11 out of 13 members were in attendance) principal groups that were set up for the incoming assessment arrangements. Feedback from both groups was used to reinforce and further explore information collected from the questionnaires. Such groups also provided

CCEA with an opportunity to obtain a sample of school leader perspectives on detailed moderation proposals.

3.1.3 Feedback from Principals

All primary (n=866) and post-primary (n=210) principals¹ were invited to attend an information seminar on the incoming assessment arrangements. During this seminar, questionnaires were circulated on the moderation proposals. A total of 474 primary principal questionnaires were returned which represents a response rate of 54.7%.

A total of 74 post-primary principal questionnaires were returned. This represents 35.2% of post-primary principals.

3.1.4 Feedback from Teachers

An opportunity sample was used to collect feedback from teachers. The primary and post-primary principal groups agreed to circulate questionnaires to their teachers. A total of 45 primary teacher and 105 post-primary teacher questionnaires were received.

3.1.5 Feedback from Stakeholders

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Teachers Council were briefed by CCEA and given the opportunity to respond to the proposals.

16 primary stakeholders from a range of educational organisations (Curriculum Advisory & Support Service, Educational Psychologists, Education and Library Board Officers and Union Representatives) completed a questionnaire on the moderation proposals. Unfortunately, only one post-primary stakeholder questionnaire was received.

¹ (DE Statistics 2009/10)

4.0 Results

4.1 Results from the Primary Sector

4.1.1 Results from Primary Principal Questionnaire and Principal group

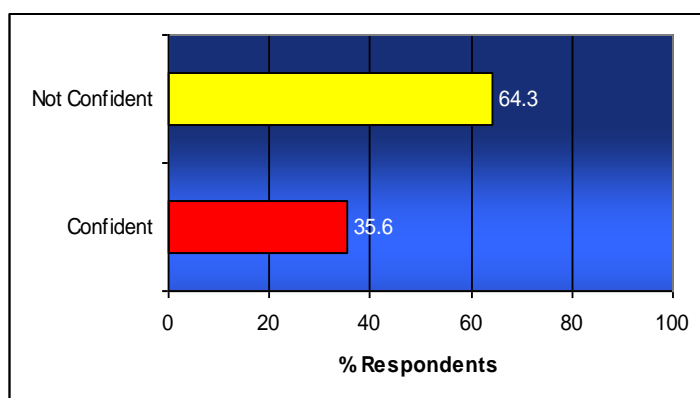
This section presents the results to each question from the primary principal questionnaire. Results are based on completed questionnaires from 474 respondents. Percentages relate to the number of principals who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall total of 474. A number of principals reiterated comments throughout their questionnaire; as a result some comments are repeated throughout this section of the report.

Qualitative information was also obtained from the primary principals' group attended by 10 principals. Feedback from this group has been analysed alongside feedback collected from the questionnaire. The purpose of the principal group was to collect in-depth information to reinforce and further explore that collected from the questionnaire. The primary principal group also provided an opportunity to collect feedback on detailed proposals relating to quality assurance and moderation processes, options in relation to making summative judgements and the evidence required for external moderation.

Current Key Stage Assessment Arrangements

**“Concern about the robustness of standardisation is directly related to the fact that it has been used to judge schools by the inspector”
(primary principal)**

Figure 1: Confidence in outcomes from current assessment arrangements



Just under 65% of respondents (64.3%, n = 280) indicated that they had no confidence in the reliability of outcomes from the current assessment arrangements (based on the Levels of Attainment).

Such respondents commented that:

- schools inflate levels to achieve targets (49 comments);
- there is a significant variation in standards across schools (46 comments);
- levels are too broad and not sufficiently pupil specific (21 comments);
- interpretation of levels varies between the primary and post-primary sector (19 comments); and
- rigorous external moderation is required (18 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Feedback from the primary principals' group reinforces that collected from the questionnaire. Principals collectively agreed that they had no faith in the reliability of outcomes from the current assessment arrangements. Principals stated that as a consequence of achieved Levels of Attainment being stated in inspection reports, some schools have resorted to *“inflating their scores”*. One Principal stated that it is widely acknowledged that there is *“a culture of manipulating results throughout the system”*.

The need for moderating assessment outcomes

The majority of principals agreed (96%, n=435) that a system of moderating assessment outcomes is important to increase professional confidence throughout the primary sector. Principals commented that throughout the primary sector moderation is required to:

- increase consistency in standards across schools (77 comments);
- ensure fairness and reliability (36 comments); and
- verify teachers' professional judgement (21 comments).

The majority of principals also agreed that a system of moderation is important to increase professional confidence in assessment outcomes between the primary and post-primary sectors (91.2%, n=382). A sizeable number of principals highlighted that the primary and post-primary sectors do not “*trust*” each other’s assessment judgements (55 comments). Principals stated that standardisation of assessment judgements is required to support pupil transition from Year 7 to 8 (42 comments).

Findings from the primary principals’ group

Feedback from the primary principals’ group supports that collected from the questionnaire. Principals unanimously agreed that a system of moderating assessment outcomes is paramount to building confidence across both the primary and post-primary sectors. Principals stated that it is imperative that a system of moderation is “*rigorous and robust if confidence is to be increased*”. One principal stated that moderation is particularly crucial as the Department of Education plans to use outcomes from the incoming assessment arrangements to assess individual schools and measure school improvement.

However, principals stated they were extremely concerned that the Department of Education plans to continue using outcomes from the incoming assessment arrangements to measure school improvement. Principals believed such plans are

Findings from the primary principals' group continued

fundamentally wrong as such an approach will compel schools to focus on targets and benchmarking as opposed to *"improving outcomes for every single child"*.

Principals were also concerned that the incoming assessment arrangements will be used to specifically measure literacy and numeracy standards. Principals stated that end of Key Stage assessments are not the most robust measure of literacy or numeracy and consequently will not provide an accurate picture of results. Principals believed outcomes from diagnostic assessments such as GL and NFER provide a much more accurate measure of pupil and school performance. Principals stated that they use outcomes from such assessments to inform teaching and learning and to assess their school's performance and set targets.

Over 95% of principals (95.3%, n=424) agreed that a model of teacher based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements. A sizeable number of principals stated that robust moderation is required to ensure confidence in the system (43 comments) and improve standardisation (31 comments). 28 principals commented that consistency of approach is important across both sectors.

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals unanimously agreed that a model of teacher based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements.

One principal felt that an external assessment would be a more robust way of assessing pupils at the end of each Key Stage. However the remainder of principals disagreed. One principal stated such a system would result in teachers simply teaching to a test and consequently skew results.

Support

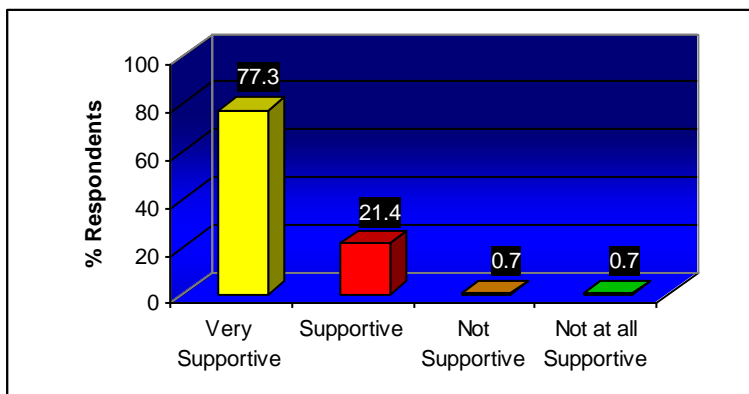
Principals were asked to indicate how supportive they were of a range of support mechanisms CCEA proposes to put in place to reinforce the moderation process.

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals had concerns commenting on proposals and materials they had not seen.

Despite the concerns, Principals reiterated that whilst they deemed the proposed mechanisms of quality assurance to be useful – “*wide scale manipulation*” of data would continue across the system as the Department of Education intends to continue to use assessment outcomes in school inspections.

Figure 2: Support for Exemplification Materials



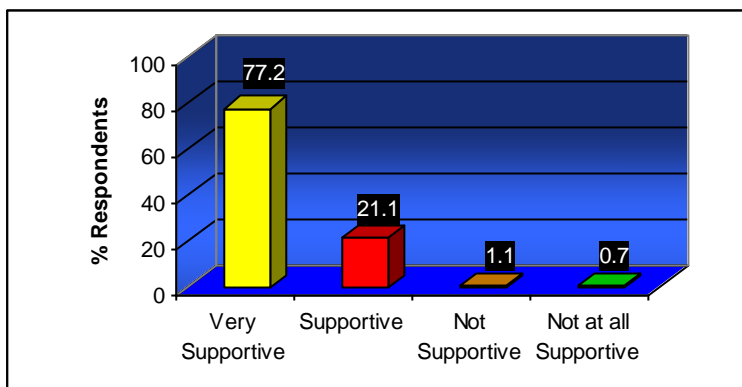
Nearly 99% of respondents indicated that they were supportive of the use of exemplification materials (98.7%, n=452).

Respondents commented that exemplification materials would be a good reference for teachers (23 comments) and help establish standards (15 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Feedback from the primary principals' group is consistent with that collected from the questionnaire. Principals collectively agreed that exemplification materials should be made available to schools. Principals believed such resources would be "very helpful" to teachers.

Figure 3: Support for the Online Library of Tasks



(Graph % rounded)

Virtually all respondents supported the proposal for the online library of tasks (98.2%, n=448).

Principals had an opportunity to comment on their response. A small number of respondents stated that an online library of tasks would:

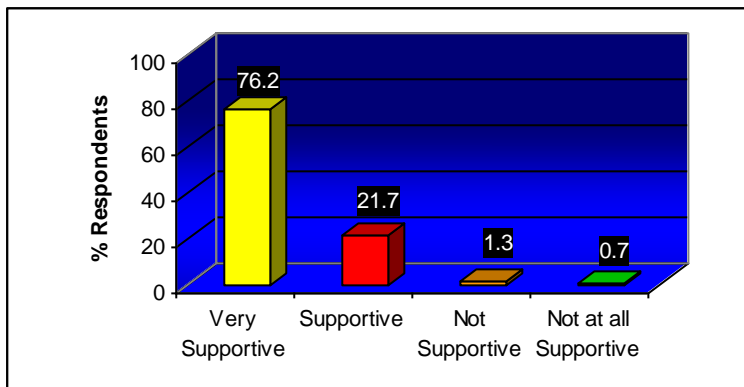
- support teachers' professional judgement (14 comments); and
- ensure all pupils are assessed in the same way (9 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals unanimously agreed that an online library of tasks would be beneficial to teachers.

However, principals queried why CCEA proposes to provide the primary sector with an online library of tasks while the post-primary sector will be required to write their own tasks. Principals believed that with time, primary schools should be required to develop tasks, and this could contribute to achieving accredited school status.

Figure 4: Support for the Professional Development of Teachers



(Graph % rounded)

Figure 4 illustrates that 98% (n=437) of respondents were supportive of the proposed professional development of teachers.

A small number of respondents stated that additional time will be required to support the professional development of teachers (16 comments). 14 principals stated that the professional development of teachers should be an ongoing process.

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals unanimously supported the proposal to create opportunities for the professional development of teachers. However, principals believed such opportunities should not be merely online or information sessions. Principals stated that teachers need to attend training events that enable them to engage in professional dialogue, participate in relevant activities and attend follow up sessions for reflection purposes. Principals stated such training is imperative to the successful development of teachers as *“teachers do not [always] have time for reflection”*.

The principals' group believed the current modes of teacher training (online, information seminars, circulation of materials) have deskilled teachers. One principal stated *“there is a whole generation of teachers who do not have the necessary skills because the system has not developed [them] and there is now a massive task to up-skill teachers”*. Throughout discussions principals reiterated that teachers require professional face-to-face training, delivered by an expert. However, principals felt the current timescale for implementation will prevent the necessary training required for the incoming assessment arrangements.

Figure 5: Support for Internal Standardisation

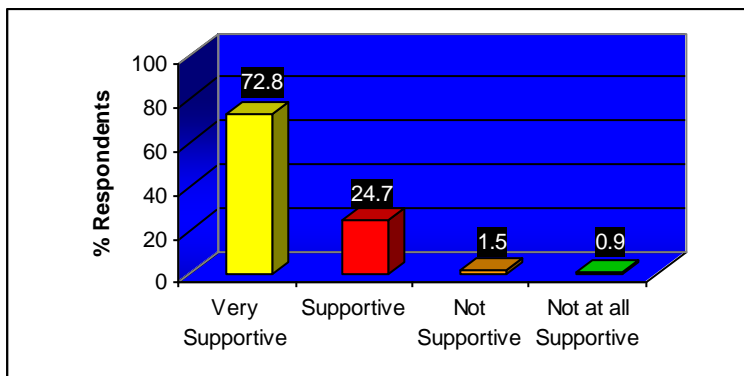


Figure 5 illustrates that 97.6% (n=442) of responding principals approved of internal standardisation to support the reliability and validity of the incoming assessment arrangements.

(Graph % rounded)

Respondents had an opportunity to comment on their answer; these have been summarised below.

- It would be useful to discuss and agree standards with colleagues (28 comments).
- Internal standardisation is common practice in schools (18 comments).
- Substitute cover is required to support internal standardisation (13 comments)

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals indicated that internal standardisation varies significantly from school to school with a varied range of staff contributing to the process. Principals highlighted that inspection reports reveal significant variations in expectations and standards throughout the system. Consequently principals felt standardisation will be *“incredibly difficult to achieve”* both within and across schools.

Principals stated that in order for internal standardisation to be *“robust and rigorous [within individual schools] a significant period of time and training”* will be required. Principals felt the proposed time frame for setting up internal standardisation processes to be *“totally unrealistic”*. One such principal stated that *“as this model sits my school development plan will be assessment and nothing else; the time frame that teachers are required to take on board and deliver the current model is not workable. School development plans will be assessment, assessment,*

Findings from the primary principals' group continued

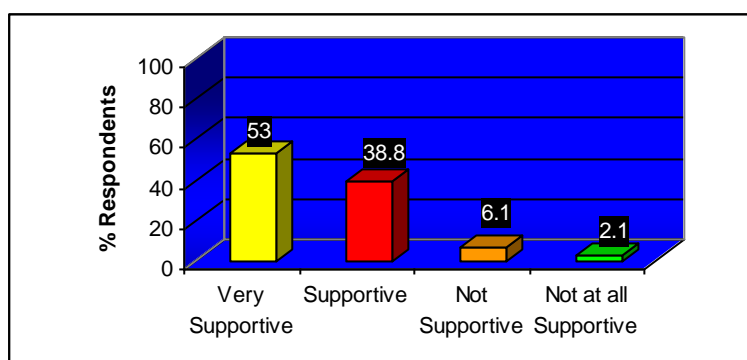
assessment and schools will miss the whole thrust of improving teaching and learning and pupil performance”.

Principals indicated that teachers outside Year 4 and 7 tend not to report on levels, and believed that this will have a major impact on the implementation of the incoming assessment arrangements. Principals agreed that internal standardisation should require teachers from all year groups to assess on the incoming Levels of Progression. One principal stated that the use of levels within each year group *“opens up opportunities for professional dialogue and staff development and means teachers are up skilled the whole way through the school”.*

Principals were asked to indicate what support they believe will be required to assist schools internal standardisation. Principals stated they will need:

- examples of levels (without the current + / -);
- breakdown of the expansion statements; and
- samples of work.

Figure 6: Support for Agreement Trials with other Primary Schools



The majority (91.8%, n=393) of principals supported the use of agreement trials with other primary schools.

Principals commented that agreement trials would support standardisation across schools (26 comments). A small number of principals recommended that agreement trials should involve cluster groups of schools.

However, principals stated agreement trials would be dependent upon:

- adequate substitute cover (28 comments); and
- honesty between teachers (10 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Findings from the primary principals' group differ to those collected from the questionnaire. Principals did not believe agreement trials with teachers from other primary schools would *"add any value to the system"*. One principal highlighted that at agreement trials teachers only produce evidence of levels that they are completely confident in, which reduces learning and professional debate. Furthermore, principals indicated that whilst agreement trials are designed to develop trust and confidence in assessment judgements, it is the application of standards that needs to be quality controlled.

Figure 7: Support for Cross Phase Agreement Trials

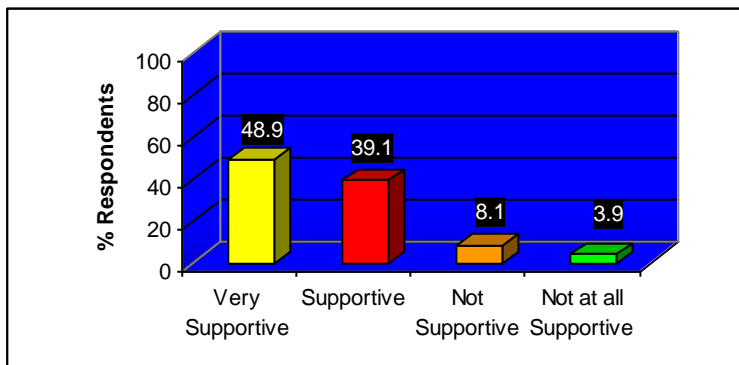


Figure 7 illustrates that 88% (n=360) of respondents were in support of cross-phase agreement trials.

Principals commented that cross-phase agreement trials would support pupil transition to the post-primary sector (19 comments). A number of principals also stated that such events would provide the primary sector with an opportunity to demonstrate that post-primary schools' assessment judgements are accurate and reliable (16 comments).

However, principals stated that schools will require dedicated time to attend agreement trial sessions (31 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals agreed that agreement trials are a useful way of building trust in assessment outcomes between the primary and post-primary sector. However, principals collectively agreed that the organisation of networking with the post-primary sector should be at the discretion of individual schools.

Collection of Pupil Evidence

CCEA is considering a range of approaches to collect pupil evidence for moderation. Principals were asked to indicate if they were supportive of electronic or paper-based collection of portfolios.

Whilst principals supported both the electronic (70.7%, n = 295) and paper-based (86.6%, n=362) collection of evidence, there was slightly stronger support for the paper-based compilation of evidence (>15.9%).

Comments from Principals are summarised below.

- Electronic collection of evidence is likely to take more time than paper-based (40 comments).
- Electronic collection of evidence is dependent upon an adequate provision of ICT (25 comments).
- Teachers are most familiar with paper-based collection of evidence (25 comments).
- Schools should have the option to choose the approach that best suits their facilities (17 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals unanimously agreed that with the current moderation proposal schools should have the option to decide how to submit portfolios of pupil work. Principals stated that there is a diverse range of ICT facilities between schools; some schools have very few computers and others a range of computer suites. For such reasons, and to alleviate any unnecessary pressure, principals stated that schools should have the ability to choose how they submit evidence.

However, principals were in favour of an alternative process of moderation than that proposed. Principals unanimously agreed that instead of schools submitting evidence to be moderated, moderation should be carried out in schools. Principals highlighted that a range of “*evidence is within schools*” (video, computer, workbooks etc) and such a process would be more child-centred as it does not detract from core school business:

- [Moderation] “*should be driven by the needs of children, not the needs of external organisations.... the collection of evidence should be child centred*”.

One principal felt that teachers should not be responsible for collating portfolios of pupil evidence, and recommended that teachers should present evidence they have readily available in school. However, another principal argued that moderators will not have time to look through a pupil's work and will want it collated into a portfolio.

Principals deemed their alternative moderation proposal (visiting moderators) to be a significantly less burdensome process than the one proposed. Principals perceived that the process of putting a portfolio together (containing descriptions of tasks, and evidence of tasks in a range of different mediums) would put “*an additional burden on teachers*”.

Findings from the primary principals' group continued

Principals stated that schools would need little notice of moderators visiting schools as the evidence in schools should be readily available. Principals recognised that this may initially put teachers under pressure; however this should reduce as the incoming assessment arrangements are embedded in teaching practice and with *“quality training, preparation and [school] planning”*.

Furthermore, principals stated that *“there’s an extra benefit of an external moderator meeting face- to-face with the teacher as the external moderator’s expertise is shared through conversation and dialogue”* which in turn contributes to internal standardisation. Principals believed that the current proposal provides no *“professional dialogue, no capacity building and has no training element”*.

Teacher Moderators

CCEA is considering two options in relation to the use of teacher moderators and asked principals to indicate if they were in favour of either option.

Figure 8: Preferred option in relation to the use of teacher moderators

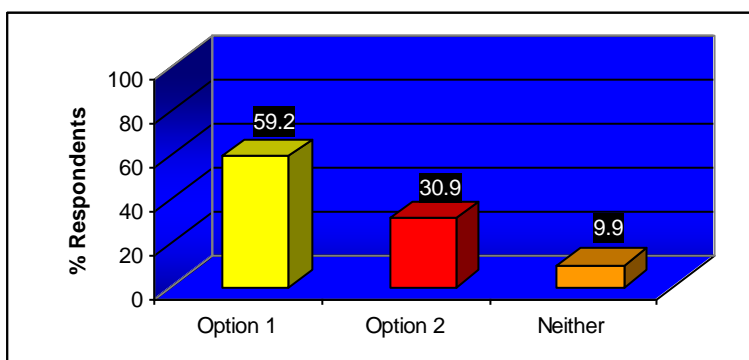


Figure 8 above illustrates that nearly 60% of principals (59.2%, n=245) indicated that they would prefer option 1, where teachers are released from schools over a 2-4 week period. Principals in favour of teachers being released from schools commented that:

- substitute cover will be required to support this option (23 comments);
- teachers are already expected to do a lot of work outside of their normal working hours (22 comments); and
- dedicated time is required to enable teachers to focus solely on moderation duties (22 comments).

Just over 30% (n=128) of principals were in favour of teachers being paid to carry out moderation in their own time over a 4-8 week period. Such principals stated this option was less disruptive to teaching and learning than the alternative proposed (24 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Principals indicated that option 2 (where teachers are paid to carry out moderation in their own time) would not be suitable with the alternative moderation proposal they have suggested. Furthermore, principals stated that teachers would not have *“quality time to look at quite a number of papers and assessments”* outside of their normal teaching hours. One principal stated such a proposal would be *“a horrendous job”* for teachers.

Principals indicated that if the current proposal was to go ahead, option 1, where teachers are released from school over a 2-4 week period, would be the only viable option.

Moderation and School Improvement

Just under 60% (59.7%, n=249) of respondents indicated that they would be supportive of a system which enables schools to demonstrate quality internal assessment practices to become ‘Accredited Schools’. Nevertheless, a sizeable number of principals commented that such practice may result in *“unhealthy competition”* between schools (45 comments).

However, other principals disagreed and believed an accredited scheme would:

- provide recognition to schools who are accurately applying standards (22 comments);
- encourage school improvement (17 comments); and
- provide an opportunity for schools to share good practice (16 comments).

Findings from the primary principals' group

Whilst principals agreed with the concept of accrediting schools that demonstrate high levels of consistency to help and support others with professional development and assessment procedures, they questioned if schools would have the time to take on such a role. One such principal stated *"it is not that [schools] do not want to share their expertise or are unwilling, it is just being realistic and pragmatic about how a school runs"*.

Principals stated that if such an initiative was introduced, schools who achieve accredited status should not be moderated for a period of three years.

Principals' Suggestions

Principals were asked to outline any other suggestions they had regarding moderation associated with the incoming Levels of Progression. The main comments made by respondents were that:

- Moderation must be *"robust"* in order for standardisation to be achieved (14 comments); and
- Teachers will require time and support to implement the new assessment arrangements (14 comments).

School Improvement

53.8% (n=212) of respondents were confident that the incoming assessment arrangements will support the wider policy context of improving pupil outcomes and school improvement. Principals had an opportunity to comment on their response; these have been summarised below.

- Incoming assessment arrangements will only work appropriately if schools report levels honestly (15 comments).
- The new assessment arrangements will create an even greater administration burden for teachers (9 comments).
- Schools will be under pressure to meet targets (7 comments).
- Moderation arrangements must be robust to ensure consistency of practice (7 comments).

Detailed Proposals Relating to Quality Assurance and Moderation

The remainder of this section of the report summarises feedback from 10 of the 16 members of the primary principals' group on proposals relating to quality assurance and moderation of the incoming assessment arrangements.

Support for Statutory Assessment Arrangements

To assist teachers in completing end of Key Stage data it is currently proposed that Year 4 and 7 classes will receive up to three days' substitute cover. Principals deemed this proposal to be "*fundamentally flawed*" as it does not take a whole school approach to assessment and moderation. Principals collectively agreed that teachers from Year 3 to 7 should also receive substitute cover. One principal stated that otherwise "*you lose the professional development of it because teachers will become very quickly disillusioned*".

Summative Judgements

Principals questioned the lack of consistency in the proposed processes of making summative judgements across the three Cross-curricular Skills. Principals unanimously agreed that *“it is helpful to make judgements on separate”* components of Communication and Using Mathematics. Principals stated that there is *“value”* in assessing Using Mathematics and Communication across component areas as it provides more reliable assessments and data is more informative to Senior Management and parents.

Summative Judgements in Communication

CCEA has proposed that in order for a pupil to achieve an overall level in Communication, at least two of the modes of Communication (Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing) need to be assessed as at, or above, the level to be awarded. Principals were asked to comment on this proposal.

The majority of principals agreed with the above proposal. However, one principal was *“not convinced it is a sufficient safeguard to ensure standardisation either within one school or between schools”*.

One principal also expressed concern regarding the targets for pupils to progress at least one Level per Key Stage, as they felt such targets were particularly difficult for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties.

Summative Judgements in Using Mathematics

CCEA has proposed that in order for a pupil to achieve an overall level in Using Mathematics, both components (Requirements/Using Maths and Knowledge and Understanding) need to be assessed as at, or above, the level to be awarded.

Principals indicated that making summative judgements in Using Mathematics was the Cross-curricular Skill that concerned them most. Principals stated that the proposed incoming assessment arrangements for Using Mathematics are

significantly different to the current system. Principals also stated that the task used to assess pupils will be *“vital [as teachers] will be looking at the process as the delivery method for measure, shape and space”*.

Principals felt summative judgements in Using Mathematics contain *“complicit dangers, by narrowing what you are actually assessing”*. One principal stated *“there is latitude for interpretation by narrowing”* what teachers are required to assess.

Summative Judgements in Using ICT

CCEA plans to assess pupils in Using ICT across five ‘E’ components (Explore, Express, Exchange, Evaluate and Exhibit). In order to achieve an overall level in Using ICT, CCEA has proposed that at least three of the ‘E’ components must be assessed as at, or above, the level to be awarded, two of which must be Explore and Express.

Principals collectively agreed with the process used to make summative judgements in Using ICT.

Evidence of Pupil Work for External Moderation

Principals were asked to provide their thoughts on the proposed options of evidence schools will be required to submit for individual pupils randomly selected for each Cross-curricular Skill. Principals had a number of questions regarding the evidence to be submitted, for example, regarding the timing of submission, material/tasks and sample of selected pupils. Consequently, principals stated they did not feel they had adequate information to make an informed decision on the options of evidence for each Cross-curricular Skill.

However, principals stated that the timing of when evidence is submitted will be *“crucial”*. One principal stated that *“one of the failings in the current system is that when schools order assessment units, teachers are almost required to have made up their mind of what level a child is at because you are required to order in a unit”*.

Principals highlighted that the timing of submitting evidence will be dependent upon how outcomes of moderation are used. For example, to (a) change pupil outcomes in the year that has been moderated, or (b) inform the moderation process in individual schools for the following year. However, principals agreed that *“the timing depends on the purpose of the outcome of the moderation, if it is not going to impact on the child you could leave it to later”* in the school year.

Principals were concerned that if moderation is used to change/adjust pupil outcomes (if necessary), teacher judgements would be made halfway through the academic year (January or February). Principals stated that this would impact upon pupil outcomes, as they *“could conceivably make great progress in three months”*.

However, principals stated that irrespective of how information from the moderation process is used, the most important factor is that *“the information is used to influence the quality of the assessment process within the school”*. Furthermore, principals stipulated that whatever system is selected to evidence pupil work, it needs to be *“robustto instil confidence across the system”*.

Use of CCEA Designed Tasks

CCEA proposes that when making summative judgements teachers must include in the evidence for each pupil at Key Stage 1 and 2, a minimum of one CCEA designed task for each Cross-curricular Skill.

Principals collectively agreed with the proposal for the use of one CCEA designed task for each Cross-curricular Skill. However, principals highlighted that teachers will require training in order for them to confidently use their professional judgement when using and selecting tasks. Principals stated such training will be imperative; otherwise teachers will simply use the designed task to obtain pupil outcomes.

Principals indicated that statements from the Levels of Progression are currently, or will be, embedded within each teacher’s scheme of work. Principals felt that tasks will *“sit nice and comfortably with [their schools] numeracy and literacy strategies”*. For such reasons, principals believed that teachers should find it relatively easy to

use their own tasks to make summative judgements on pupils and will welcome the freedom to use their own tasks which relate to their teaching.

However, principals recommended that all teachers (not just Year 4 and 7 teachers) should be required to use and assess pupils on the CCEA designed tasks. One Principal stated *“if we are serious about this system of assessment and moderation it has to be a whole school approach and therefore there has to be continuity from year group to year group”*. Principals also agreed that in order for there to be *“fairness”* and *“quality staffing”* the responsibility of applying and using the new assessment arrangements needs to include all teaching staff.

Random Stratified Sample

Principals stated that the random sample selected to moderate schools should be made *“as robust as possible”*. Principals agreed that a sample should not just be random, but *“targeted”*, based upon criteria – such as schools that *“have progressively improved year on year”*. Principals felt such a method of sampling would promptly *“change the whole dynamics in the system.....because schools would no longer be able to get away with”* awarding inaccurate Levels.

Principals felt such a method of sampling would not require evidence from every school. Principals recommended that CCEA should use sector level data to ascertain *“where the issues are”* and select schools accordingly.

Evidence for External Moderation

Principals unanimously agreed that pupil evidence collected for moderation should be based upon awarded levels. Principals believed that the purpose of moderation should be to *“examine the consistency/quality of the schools process”* and not be focused on *“changing levels”*.

4.1.2 Results from Primary Teacher Questionnaire

This section presents the results for each question from the primary teacher questionnaire. Results are based on completed questionnaires from 45 respondents. Figures relate to the number of teachers who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall total of 45. A number of teachers reiterated comments throughout their questionnaire; as a result some comments are repeated throughout this section of the report.

The number of primary teacher questionnaire responses is small (n=45); findings must therefore be viewed in this context. As the number of respondents is less than 100, numbers rather than percentages have been used.

Current Key Stage Assessment Arrangements

The majority of responding teachers (32 out of 45) revealed that they have no confidence in the reliability of outcomes from the current Levels of Attainment. Respondents commented that many primary schools *'inflate'* levels (9 comments). One such teacher commented:

- *“The system is open to wide scale manipulation as the [current] moderation system is wholly ineffective.”*

A number of respondents (n = 9) also commented that they felt there is no standardisation in the current assessment arrangements. One such teacher stated *“teacher judgement can vary greatly from school to school.”*

The Need for Moderating Assessment Outcomes

Almost all teachers (40 out of 45) agreed that a new system of moderating assessment outcomes is important to increase professional confidence across the primary sector. A third of respondents (n = 15) commented that moderation is imperative to ensure a standardised approach to assessment across primary schools. Teachers also indicated that moderation will:

- provide teachers with confidence in their assessment judgements (6 comments); and
- ensure confidence in the reliability of outcomes (4 comments).

The majority of teachers (38 out of 45) also agreed that a system of moderation is important to increase professional confidence in assessment outcomes between the primary and post-primary sectors. Nine respondents commented that post-primary schools have no confidence in the assessment judgements made by the primary sector and felt that this must be addressed. A small number of teachers (n = 7) commented that moderation is essential to ensure a standardised approach to levelling across the primary and post-primary schools.

39 out of 45 respondents agreed that a model of teacher based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements. Teachers (n = 9) reiterated that there is much discrepancy in levelling between primary schools and deemed a robust system of moderation to be essential for consistency:

- *“Moderation is important to ensure that all schools are giving the same level to [pupils] with the same ability.”*

Support

Teachers were asked to indicate how supportive they were of a range of support mechanisms CCEA proposes to put in place to reinforce the moderation process. Findings indicate that the majority of teachers support all of the proposed quality assurance mechanisms for the incoming assessment arrangements. The number of respondents in favour of each support mechanism is outlined below:

- assessment tasks (n = 40);
- exemplification materials (n = 39);
- internal standardisation (n = 39);
- professional development of teachers (n = 38);
- agreement trials with other primary schools (n = 37); and
- agreement trials between primary schools and post-primary schools (n = 34).

A small number of teachers highlighted that substitute cover will be required for schools to develop internal standardisation processes (5 comments) and for teachers to attend agreement trials (4 comments).

Collection of Pupil Evidence

34 out of 45 respondents indicated that they would be supportive of the paper-based collection of pupil portfolios. A smaller number of respondents (25 out of 45) indicated that they were supportive of the electronic collection of portfolios.

Respondents' comments on the proposed collection of pupil evidence has been summarised below.

- The electronic collection of portfolios will be time consuming for schools (11 comments).
- The paper-based collection of portfolios will be time consuming for schools (9 comments).
- Scanning tasks would be very time consuming (3 comments).

Teacher Moderators

CCEA is considering two options in relation to the use of teacher moderators and asked teachers to indicate if they were in favour of either option.

Findings indicate that option 1, where teachers are released from school over a 2-4 week period, was the preferred option among teachers (21 out of 45). Three teachers commented that this proposal is most suitable as it provides teachers with the necessary time to focus on the moderation process. However four teachers were concerned that this option would be disruptive to teaching and learning.

Fewer respondents (n = 9) indicated a preference for option 2, where teachers conduct moderation duties in their own time over a 4-8 week period. Four respondents stated that this option would place an unacceptable burden on the workload of teachers.

11 respondents stated that they were not in favour of either option. Seven such respondents commented that they do not agree with teacher moderators and stated that a method of external moderation should be used.

Moderation and School Improvement

33 out of 45 teachers indicated that they would be supportive of a system which enables schools to demonstrate quality assurance practices and become 'Accredited Schools'. Nine respondents commented that schools applying high standards should receive recognition. Furthermore, six teachers believed that this proposal would prevent primary schools from inflating their levels.

Teacher Suggestions

Teachers were asked to outline any other suggestions they had regarding moderation associated with the incoming Levels of Progression. Six respondents commented that moderation must occur annually. Four teachers stated that a system of external moderation is required for the incoming assessment arrangements. One such teacher commented:

- *“External moderation is essential every year. Marking must be checked so it is fair; [the] system must be robust, open and transparent.”*

School Improvement

29 out of 44 teachers revealed that they are not confident that the incoming assessment arrangements will support the wider policy of improving pupil outcomes and school improvement. A small number of teachers stated that the incoming assessment arrangements do not take account of the increasing prevalence of special educational needs in the classroom (4 comments). Such respondents also commented that the incoming arrangements do not take into consideration challenging behaviour and the impact this has on pupils' assessment outcomes (4 comments).

Additional Comments

Teachers had an opportunity to make additional comments at the end of the questionnaire. A small number of teachers used this opportunity to outline their concerns in relation to the incoming assessment arrangements. Four respondents commented that they have no confidence in the reliability of the incoming arrangements and stated that they have greater faith in the outcomes from standardised assessments, such as NFER and PIE:

- *“End of Key Stage is not [a] true reflection of pupil ability....InCAS similarly has no reflection on ability. The one form of testing we do have faith in is NFER testing and we use this in conjunction with other ability tests to set targets.”*

- *“External testing is a more robust method of finding true levels.”*

Teachers also stated that assessment outcomes are not reliable as many schools inflate their scores (3 comments) and that the incoming assessment arrangements have become burdensome for schools (2 comments).

4.1.3 Results from Primary Stakeholder questionnaire

This section of the report presents the results for each question from the primary stakeholder questionnaire. Results are based on completed questionnaires from 16 respondents. Figures relate to the number of stakeholders who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall total of 16. A number of stakeholders reiterated comments throughout their questionnaire; as a result some comments are repeated throughout this section of the report.

The number of primary stakeholder questionnaire responses is small (n=16), findings must therefore be viewed in this context. As the number of respondents is less than 100, numbers rather than percentages have been used.

Current Key Stage Assessment Arrangements

Over half of respondents (9 out of 16) indicated they were not confident in the reliability of outcomes from the current assessment arrangements (based on the Levels of Attainment). Respondents commented that many primary schools “*inflate*” levels (9 comments). Stakeholders indicated that judgments made on assessments vary across schools (6 comments) and schools have indicated that they would welcome a more robust assessment system (3 comments).

The Need for Moderating Assessment Outcomes

All stakeholders (n=16) agreed that a new system of moderating assessment outcomes is important to increase professional confidence across the primary sector. Stakeholders believed that a system with effective quality assurance would provide more reliability (4 comments) and validate teachers’ judgements (2 comments). One respondent stated that moderation is particularly vital to aid pupil transition from Key Stage 2 to 3.

All respondents (n=13) also agreed that a system of moderation is important to increase professional confidence in assessment outcomes between the primary and post-primary sectors. Stakeholders indicated that better collaboration (3 comments) between the sectors should lead to more accurate/reliable assessment outcomes (2 comments) and a smoother transition period for pupils (1 comment).

15 out of 16 primary stakeholders agreed that a model of teacher-based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements. Respondents commented that robust moderation arrangements would increase teacher confidence in the process (2 comments), ensure consistency of approach between schools (2 comments) and enhance the professional judgement of all teachers (1 comment).

Support

Stakeholders were asked to indicate how supportive they were of a range of support mechanisms CCEA proposes to put in place to reinforce the moderation process. Findings indicate that the majority of stakeholders support all of the proposed quality assurance mechanisms for the incoming assessment arrangements. The number of respondents in favour of each support mechanism is outlined below:

- Exemplification materials (n=16);
- Professional development of teachers (n=16);
- Internal standardisation (n=16);
- Agreement trials with other primary schools (n=16);
- Agreement trials between primary and post-primary schools (n=16); and
- Assessment tasks (n=15).

Collection of Pupil Evidence

All respondents (n=16) indicated that they were supportive of the electronic collection of pupil portfolios. Stakeholders commented that the use of an electronic system reflects good practice (1 comment) and aids professional development (1 comment). However, one respondent stressed the importance of having a reliable system and stated that technical errors would impact on teacher confidence.

A smaller number of respondents (12 out of 16) indicated that they were supportive of the paper-based collection of portfolios. Two respondents indicated that they would support a combination of both electronic and manual systems.

Teacher Moderators

CCEA is considering two options in relation to the use of teacher moderators and asked teachers to indicate if they were in favour of either option.

Findings indicate that option 1, where teachers are released from school over a 2-4 week period, was the preferred option among stakeholders (10 out of 16). Such respondents believed that bringing moderators together provides a more consistent approach.

Of the remaining respondents (n=6), one indicated that they would prefer teachers to carry out moderation duties in their own time over a 4-8 week period and one stakeholder was not supportive of either option. Four respondents declined to comment.

Moderation and School Improvement

The majority of respondents (10 out of 16) felt confident that the assessment arrangements will support the wider policy context of improving pupil outcomes and school improvement. However, stakeholders emphasised the need for a more robust moderation process (3 comments). One respondent believed that data driven outcomes will provide teachers with evidence of pupil learning and help identify areas of improvement (1 comment). Another stakeholder welcomed that all teachers are involved in the incoming assessment training.

4.2 Results from the Post-primary Sector

4.2.1 Results from Post-primary Principal Questionnaire and Principal Group

This section presents the results for each question from the post-primary principal questionnaire. Results are based on completed questionnaires from 74 respondents. Percentages relate to the number of principals who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall total of 74. A number of principals reiterated comments throughout their questionnaire; as a result some comments are repeated throughout this section of the report.

Qualitative information was also obtained from the post-primary principals' group attended by 11 principals. Feedback from this group has been analysed alongside feedback collected from the questionnaire. The purpose of the principal group was to collect in-depth information to reinforce and further explore that collected from the questionnaire. The post-primary principal group also provided an opportunity to collect feedback on detailed proposals relating to quality assurance and moderation processes, options in relation to making summative judgements and the evidence required for external moderation.

Current Key Stage Assessment Arrangements

“The current assessment process used at Key Stage 2 through to Key Stage 5 is not continuous and is not rigorous” (post-primary principal)

Figure 9: Confidence in outcomes from current assessment arrangements

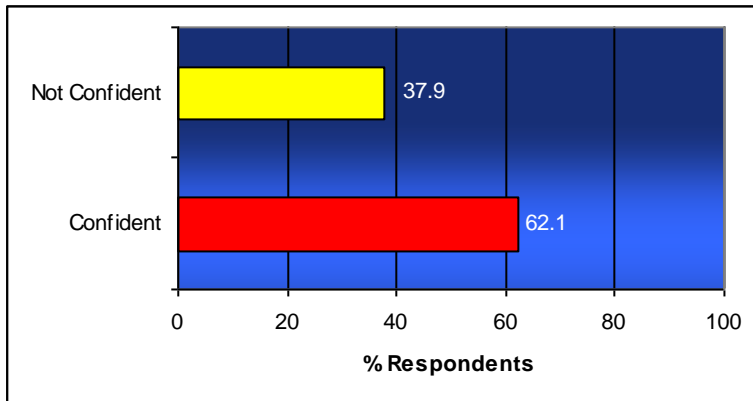


Figure 9 illustrates that 37.9% of respondents (n=25) have no confidence in the reliability of outcomes from the current Levels of Attainment.

Such respondents indicated that they:

- have reservations regarding Key Stage 2 outcomes (12 comments);
- believe greater quality assurance procedures are required (7 comments); and
- believe there is a contradiction between what is currently taught (Northern Ireland Curriculum) and assessed (Levels of Attainment) (5 comments).

Findings from the post-primary principals' group

Principals unanimously agreed that they had no confidence in the reliability of assessment outcomes from the primary sector. Principals strongly perceived the primary sector's assessments to be over *“inflated”* and noted a *“clear discrepancy”* with their assessment judgements, particularly regarding Level 4 and 5 outcomes. Principals indicated that their lack of confidence with assessment outcomes from the primary sector has led them to develop their own systems of benchmarking pupils upon their transfer to Year 8.

Findings from the post-primary principals' group continued

Principals highlighted that the discrepancy in assessment outcomes causes significant problems for post-primary schools. Principals stated that as a consequence of over-inflated levels in primary school, assessment outcomes at Key Stage 3 may suggest pupils have made little or no progress which causes parents great concern.

Principals felt that the main reason the primary sector's assessment outcomes are over-inflated is because they are under immense pressure to meet educational targets assessed by the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the Department of Education.

Principals stated the level descriptors do not account for the impact pupils' maturity may have on their answers. Principals also perceived the level descriptors to have an impact on assessment judgements. For example, whilst a pupil may meet elements of Level 4 in primary school, principals stated that they may remain a Level 4 at Key Stage 3 despite the content of their work having progressed significantly.

The need for moderating assessment outcomes

Post-primary principals unanimously agreed that a new system of moderating assessment outcomes is important to increase professional confidence across the post-primary sector (100%, n=70). Principals commented that throughout the post-primary sector moderation:

- is essential to instil confidence in the reliability of outcomes (32 comments);
- provides teachers with confidence in their assessment judgements (5 comments); and
- is required to highlight any issues that need to be addressed at all school levels (3 comments).

The majority of principals also agreed that a system of moderation is important to increase professional confidence in assessment outcomes between the primary and post-primary sectors (98.4%, n=63). A large number of principals commented that they deem assessment outcomes from the primary sector to be “*over inflated*” (22 comments) and consistency in assessment judgements is vital (15 comments). Principals also highlighted that assessment outcomes in the post-primary sector appear to show limited progression (12 comments):

- *“Over-inflated primary levels have a negative impact on the pupil, school and parental trust. Regression appears to have happened and schools spend an inordinate amount of time trying to justify their professionalism”.*

Findings from the post-primary principals’ group

Findings from the post-primary principal group reinforce those collected from the questionnaire. Principals stated that a system of moderation is “*essential*” to instil confidence in assessment outcomes. Principals felt moderation is necessary across both sectors to ensure consistency in standards.

The vast majority of principals (97.2%, n=71) agreed that a model of teacher based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements. A sizeable number of principals (n = 30) indicated that moderation is imperative in order to instil confidence in outcomes:

- *“without this there will be little faith in the system”*

Findings from the post-primary principals’ group

Attendees at the post-primary principals’ group stated that a model of teacher-based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements. One principal stated that the impact of moderating Key Stage assessment “*could have a hugely positive impact on how post-primary schools design learning and teaching programmes*”.

Support

Principals were asked to indicate how supportive they were of a range of support mechanisms CCEA proposes to put in place to reinforce the moderation process. Findings indicate that the majority of principals support all of the proposed quality assurance mechanisms for the incoming assessment arrangements.

Figure 10: Support for Exemplification Materials

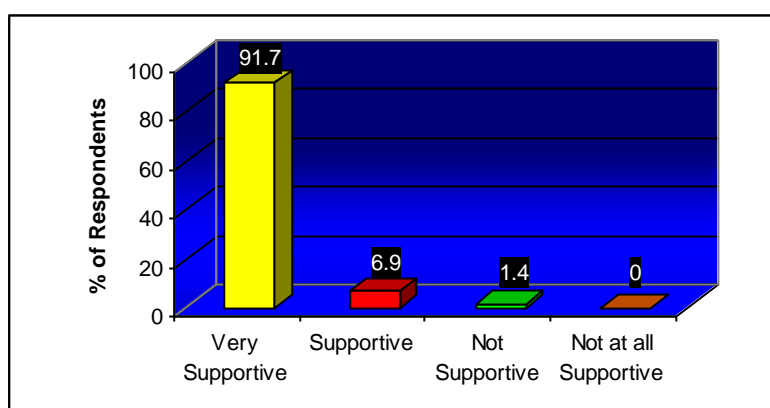


Figure 10 illustrates that 98.6% of respondents (n=71) were supportive of the use of exemplification materials.

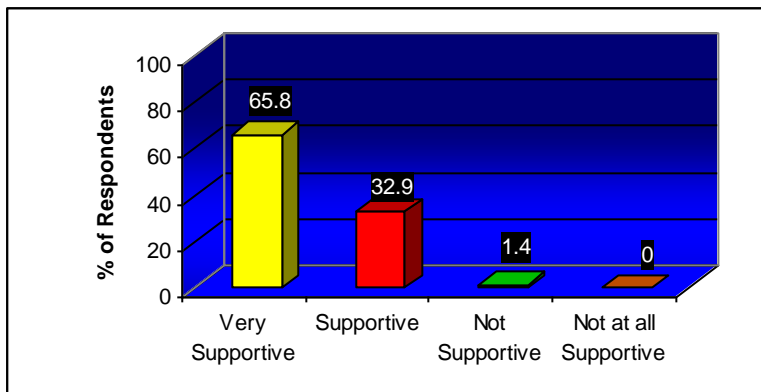
Virtually all comments regarding exemplification materials highlighted that teachers would find this resource useful when they are developing their own tasks. However, one principal stated that *“there is a risk that staff will simply follow a formula with little reflection on their own situation”*.

Findings from the post-primary principals' group

Principals unanimously agreed that exemplification materials would be very useful to teachers. They felt they would help standardise work and aid teacher training on the new assessment arrangements. However, teachers collectively agreed that exemplar materials should include portfolios of pupil work. Principals stated anything less would only provide teachers with *“snap shots”* of information.

Principals recommended that CCEA should replenish exemplification materials every couple of years. Principals stated that teachers expect updated materials and the onus should not be on teachers to revise out-of-date material.

Figure 11: Support for Task Approval System



98.6% of principals (n=72) supported the proposed task approval system.

(Graph % rounded)

Principals commented that such a system would provide teachers with confidence in the validity of their tasks (n = 13). One such principal stated that this system *“gives the school ownership of the tasks and ensures that they are at an appropriate level”*.

Four principals recommended that a bank of approved tasks should be made available for teachers to use.

Three principals expressed concerns regarding the potential work and time implications the task approval process will have for teachers. One such principal stated that a task approval process is likely to be *“time consuming for staff, followed by a wait for approval by CCEA, followed by amendment, followed by a final approval”*.

Findings from the post-primary principals' group

Findings from the post-primary principals' group reinforce those collected from the questionnaire. Principals deemed the task approval system to be a fundamental aspect of the moderation process. Principals unanimously agreed that during the first couple of years the quality assurance of this system needs to be extremely robust to achieve standardisation.

Findings from the post-primary principals' group continued

Principals believed the task approval system presents schools with an excellent opportunity to share good practice. Principals also agreed that schools like their work validated – *“there is comfort in the fact that the produced tasks are approved”*. Principals indicated they would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with other schools to develop tasks. One principal stated that working collectively *“is more robust than a fly-alone soldier”*.

However, whilst principals were in support of the task approval system they also perceived it to be the most contentious aspect of the quality assurance process. Principals stated that if teachers invest a significant amount of time developing tasks which are later unapproved, require amendments and have to be re-submitted, they are likely to become increasingly frustrated with the process.

Consequently, principals stated it is essential that CCEA works in partnership with schools; clearly outlining why tasks require amendments and providing teachers with direction on necessary modifications. Principals deemed such an approach non-intrusive and felt teachers would welcome this support.

Principals also highlighted the importance for schools to retain freedom to pursue their own tasks.

Figure 12: Support for the Professional Development of Teachers

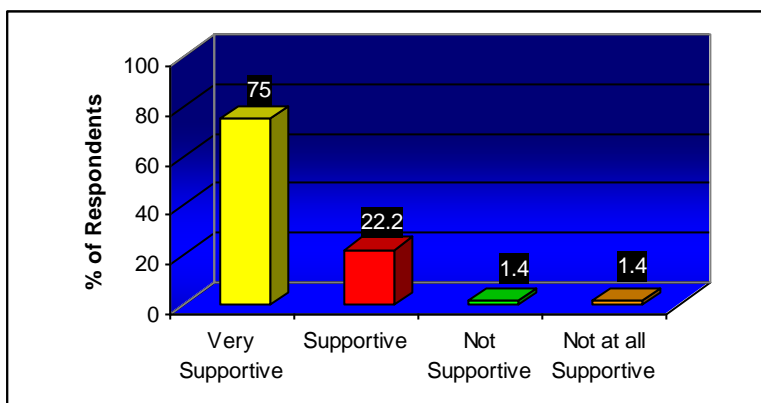


Figure 12 illustrates that 97.2% (n=70) of principals were supportive of the professional development of teachers.

Principals stated that the professional development of teachers is an important aspect of the new assessment arrangements (n=10). One such principal commented that this is *“absolutely necessary for confidence in the system and consistency across schools”*.

Despite such positive feedback, eight principals were concerned regarding the impact professional development of teachers would have on classroom teaching – *“teachers need to receive training, but once again this takes them out of the classroom. They are out for specification seminars, the list goes on, and classes suffer due to reduced contact time with their teachers”*.

Findings from the post-primary principals’ group

Principals agreed that opportunities for Professional Development should be made available to teachers. Principals stated that such opportunities are *“good practice”*, enable teachers to take *“ownership of the process”* and remove apprehension. Principals also felt such training provides teachers with an opportunity to share good practice and exchange ideas with colleagues from other schools.

Principals stated that such opportunities would be extremely useful to teachers.

Support for Internal Standardisation

All principals (n=72) approved of internal standardisation to support the reliability and validity of the new assessment arrangements. A small number of principals indicated that this is already common practice in schools (n=10). The remainder of comments highlighted that:

- time and sub cover will be required (8 comments); and that
- finding time in schools to carry this out will be problematic (6 comments).

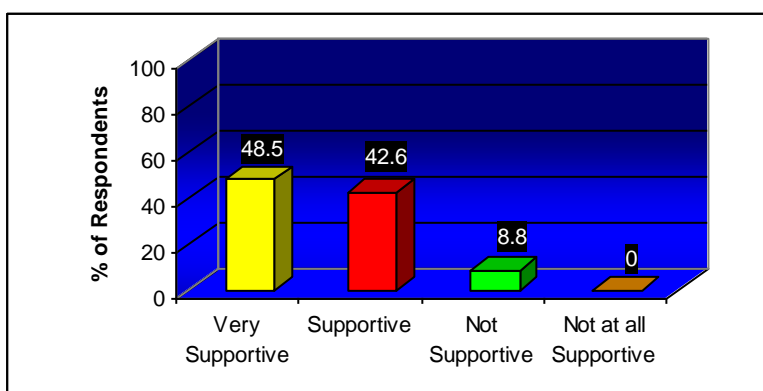
Findings from the post-primary principals' group

Principals indicated that internal standardisation is common practice in post-primary schools, as it is required for Key Stage 3, GCSE and A Level. However, principals highlighted that internal standardisation processes vary significantly from school to school with a diverse range of staff contributing to the process.

Principals were asked to indicate any support they felt schools will require with the internal standardisation process. Principals unanimously agreed that schools will require time and sub-cover to carry out internal standardisation effectively. One principal stated that *"it is vitally important in the early stages that [schools] are given time to set this up right as setting the foundation is key to the success"* of quality assuring the incoming assessment arrangements. Principals also felt agreement sessions with colleagues from other schools would be useful and promote professional development.

The majority of principals felt that collaboration with other schools on internal standardisation processes should initially involve face-to-face meetings. However, a small number of principals were in favour of using ICT to work with other schools. One principal suggested video conferencing as an option.

Figure 13: Support for Agreement Trials with other post-primary schools



(Graph % rounded)

Over 91% (91.2%, n=58) of responding principals supported the use of agreement trials with other post-primary schools.

Such respondents commented that agreement trials:

- are useful collaborative exercises for teachers (8 comments);
- promote consistency across schools (3 comments); and
- should be coordinated locally and Area Learning Communities should be considered (3 comments).

Four of the six principals who did not support the use of agreement trials with other post-primary schools had concerns regarding the impact this would have upon teaching time.

Figure 14: Support for cross-phase Agreement Trials

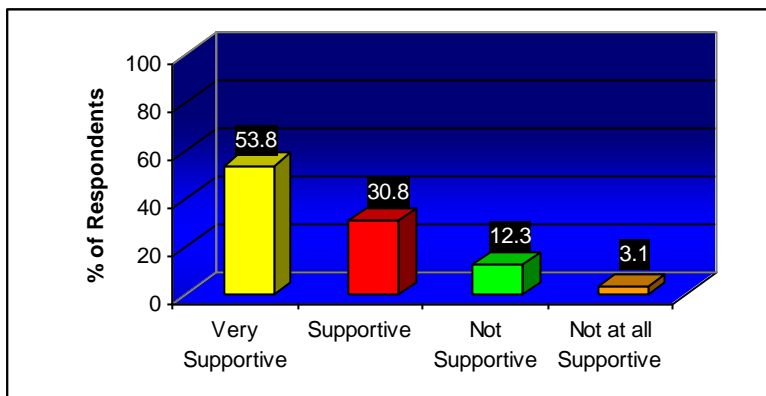


Figure 14 illustrates that the majority of principals were in support of cross-phase agreement trials (84.6%, n = 55).

Such respondents commented that cross-phase agreement trials provide teachers with an opportunity to:

- build trust and confidence between both sectors (24 comments); and
- further support pupils' transition to post-primary (3 comments).

A small number of principals not in support of cross-phase agreement trials commented that this opportunity is not viable as schools simply do not have the time (8 comments).

Findings from the post-primary principals' group

Principals unanimously agreed with the proposal of cross-phase Agreement Trials. Principals believed that cross-phase Agreement Trials were important to ensure consistency of practice, increase teachers' understanding and avoid duplication. Principals collectively agreed that in accordance with the *'Every School A Good School - A Policy For School Improvement'* it is "vital" that post-primary schools "work more effectively with [their] primary partners to aid transition from Key Stage 2 to 3".

Principals stated that cross-phase Agreement Trials require time and substitute cover. For such reasons, principals believed that CCEA should organise such events to ensure they are logistically possible for teachers to attend.

Collection of Pupil Evidence

96.8% (n=60) of respondents indicated they would be supportive of the paper-based collection of pupil portfolios. A small number of comments were received, the majority of which perceived the paper-based collection of pupil portfolios to be more manageable than an electronic collection (7 comments).

78.5% (n=51) of respondents were supportive of the electronic collection of portfolios. Comments from such respondents are summarised below.

- Approach taken to collect pupil evidence will depend upon facilities in individual schools (11 comments);
- electronic collection is more manageable (6 comments); and
- teachers will require training on the electronic collection of pupil evidence (6 comments).

Findings from the post-primary principals' group

Principals stated that there is a diverse range of ICT facilities across schools and some schools have very limited resources. Consequently, principals felt schools should have the option to choose the approach that best suits their school.

Principals highlighted that schools are likely to use a combination of approaches to collect pupil evidence.

Teacher Moderators

CCEA is considering two options in relation to the use of teacher moderators and asked principals to indicate if they were in favour of either option.

Figure 15: Preferred option in relation to the use of teacher moderators

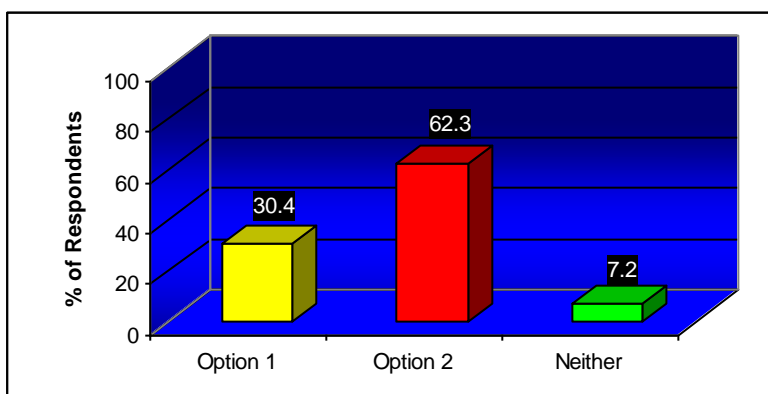


Figure 15 above illustrates that over 62% of principals (62.3%, n=43) indicated that they would prefer option 2, where teachers carry out moderation duties in their own time over a 4-8 week period. Comments from principals indicate that the main reason for selecting this option was because they felt the alternative proposal was too disruptive to learning and teaching (27 comments).

Just over 30% of principals (30.4%, n=21) indicated they preferred option 1, where teachers are released from school over a 2-4 week period. A small number of principals commented that this option provides teachers with the necessary time to focus on moderation (7 comments). One such principal stated that *“if teachers were*

released they may give it due attention in a way not offered as a bolt on, on top of teaching”.

Five respondents (7.2%) stated they were not in favour of either option. Four of the five respondents felt option 1 would be too disruptive within school and questioned if option 2 was viable as it will require a significant number of teachers to moderate outside their normal working hours.

Findings from the post-primary principals’ group

Principals unanimously agreed that teacher moderators should be used within the moderation process. One principal with previous experience as a moderator stated that the opportunity for teachers to moderate provides teachers with an *“excellent opportunity for professional development”*. Principals also felt that moderating would provide teachers with a prime opportunity to gain experience of the task approval system and insight of tasks used in other schools.

Principals unanimously agreed that if teachers are to be used as moderators, this should be done in their own time (Option 2). Principals strongly felt that moderation should not *“interrupt children’s learning”*.

Moderation and School Improvement

Over 82% of respondents (82.4%, n=56) indicated that they would be supportive of a system which enables schools to demonstrate quality internal assessment practices and become ‘Accredited Schools’. The majority of comments received were very positive. Principals felt this proposal:

- will enable schools to share good practice (6 comments); and
- promote school development (3 comments).

Those not in favour of such a system (17.7%, n=12) felt accredited status is not required (4 comments) and all schools should be working to the same standards (3 comments).

Findings from the post-primary principals' group

Principals unanimously agreed that schools who demonstrate high levels of consistency should be designated as Accredited Schools. Principals stated that accredited status would provide schools with an opportunity to demonstrate to parents and the community that they are pursuing excellence. Principals also felt that this would encourage schools to work towards achieving accredited status.

Principals agreed that it would be beneficial for specialists from Accredited Schools to share good practice with other schools.

Principals Suggestions

Principals were asked to outline any other suggestions they had regarding moderation associated with the incoming Levels of Progression. Principals stated that time will be required to enable teachers to effectively implement internal standardisation and moderation arrangements (5 comments).

School Improvement

60.9% (n=39) of respondents felt confident that the incoming assessment arrangements will support the wider policy context of improving pupil outcomes and school improvement. Principals had an opportunity to comment on their response; these have been summarised below.

- Have concerns regarding the burden on staff (11 comments).
- Impact of assessment arrangements is reliant on successful embedding (4 comments).
- Schools will require adequate support (3 comments).

Additional Comments

Principals were given an opportunity to make any additional comments at the end of the questionnaire. Only a small number of comments were received, all of which highlighted specific concerns or recommendations principals wished to further reinforce:

- *“We are measured against expected numbers at level 5. It would be fairer to be measured against value added i.e. % of pupils progressing by one level during Key Stage 3”.*
- *“I am concerned at a lack of explicit communication regarding Key Stage 4 in particular, as there is no big picture for Key Stage 4”.*
- *“Random sampling for moderation which is very thorough may work well but same problems as with current coursework may occur in assurance that it is all the pupil’s own work”.*
- *“Will the current Key Stage 3 staff release time be maintained, or perhaps a greater flexibility to use the substitute cover over the year?”*

Detailed Proposals Relating to Quality Assurance and Moderation

The remainder of this section of the report summarises feedback from 11 of the 13 members of the post-primary principals’ group on proposals relating to quality assurance and moderation of the incoming assessment arrangements.

Support for Statutory Assessment Arrangements

To assist teachers in completing end of Key Stage data CCEA has proposed that one day of substitute cover will be made available per Cross-curricular Skill for each Year 10 class. Members of the post-primary principal group were asked if they agreed with this proposal.

Principals felt that one day substitute cover per Cross-curricular Skill was not sufficient support for statutory assessment arrangements. Principals collectively agreed that post-primary schools will require two days’ substitute cover per Cross-

curricular Skill. Principals indicated that one day is required for internal standardisation and the second for the actual assessment of Cross-curricular Skills.

Summative Judgements in Communication

CCEA has proposed that for a pupil to achieve an overall level in Communication, at least two of the three modes of Communication (Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing) need to be assessed as at, or above, the level to be awarded. Principals' views were sought on this proposal.

The vast majority of principals were satisfied with the process used to make summative judgements in Communication.

However, one principal was extremely concerned regarding the equal weighting placed upon each of the three modes of Communication (Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing). This principal believed that the assessment of Communication at Key Stage 3 should replicate GCSE English, where 80% is based on Reading and Writing and 20% upon Talking and Listening otherwise outcomes would *"not be a very accurate tool for predicting outcomes at Key Stage 4"* as there would be a *"clear anomaly"* between their weighting.

The remainder of the group disagreed, and highlighted that Communication differs from English with skills that are transferable to other subject areas.

Summative Judgements in Using Mathematics

CCEA has proposed that in order for a pupil to achieve an overall level in Using Mathematics, both components (Requirements/Using Maths and Knowledge and Understanding) need to be assessed as at, or above, the level to be awarded.

Principals were concerned that summative judgements in Using Mathematics contain one less component than Communication. Principals expressed concerns regarding the statistical impact this may have on overall outcomes and felt that Using Mathematics may be disadvantaged.

Principals recommended that CCEA should investigate the processes used to assess Communication and Using Mathematics to determine if there is any potential bias between these two Cross-curricular Skills.

Summative Judgements in Using ICT

CCEA plans to assess pupils in Using ICT across five 'E' components (Explore, Express, Exchange, Evaluate and Exhibit). In order to achieve an overall level in Using ICT, CCEA proposes that at least three of the 'E' components must be assessed as at, or above, the level to be awarded, two of which must be Explore and Express.

Overall, principals were satisfied with the process used to make summative judgements in Using ICT. However, principals highlighted that they are increasingly enrolling more ICT "savvy" pupils and consequently have concerns as to how, and if, their schools can keep up with them and enable such pupils to reach their potential. Principals recommended that a monitor of expectations/outcomes of Using ICT should be carried out at Key Stage 3.

Random Stratified Sample

Moderation proposals indicate that CCEA/ESA will identify a random stratified sample of pupils' work to confirm that judgements made when assessing pupils' work are consistent across schools. The randomly chosen pupils will be selected by CCEA and schools will be informed of the pupils' evidence to be submitted. CCEA will take steps to ensure the demands on schools are the minimum necessary to support professional competence and maintain the integrity of the end of Key Stage assessment, as required by the Department of Education.

Principals recommended that the random stratified sample should be made more robust than currently proposed. Principals felt that all teaching groups should be represented in the sample. Principals stated that this sample would force "schools to

embed internal standardisation and would require every teacher to be involved in the process”.

Principals stated that it is imperative departments outside of English and Mathematics contribute to the assessment of Communication and Using Mathematics. Principals recommended that schools should get the most out of the first two years in which CCEA will support schools to implement and embed the new assessment arrangements. Principals stated that schools should use this period to set the standards in the English and Mathematics Departments and share their knowledge with other departments. Principals also recommended that schools should aspire to have at least one approved task to come from a department outside English and Mathematics.

Principals stated that it is imperative that a whole school approach needs to be taken to raising Literacy and Numeracy and the burden should not be exclusively on the English and Mathematics departments. Principals stated that *“staff development days will be essential to enable teachers to liaise with other departments”*.

Evidence of Pupil Work for External Moderation

Principals stated that *“schools are going to have to adapt very quickly”* to the new assessment arrangements. Furthermore, principals felt the new assessment arrangements are *“a continuous monitoring task”* and schools will be required to ensure that assessment becomes *“a natural part of teaching and learning in the classroom”*.

Principals recognised that the collection of evidence for Communication and Using Mathematics sits most naturally with English and Mathematics Departments, particularly for pupils achieving high levels. However, principals reiterated that where possible, evidence should be collected from other areas of the curriculum as this provides a more robust illustration of a pupil's application of knowledge and understanding.

Principals stated that it is imperative that evidence of pupil work is collected logically through tasks “*applied to a real relevant context*” and not merely a “*contrived task*” for teachers to meet specific requirements. Principals stated that the professional development of teachers is paramount to enable teachers to confidently and accurately record tasks in a pupil portfolio from a range of pupil evidence, from homework to extensive projects.

Principals stated that the collection of evidence for Communication and Using Mathematics should be similar.

Evidence of Pupil Work for Communication

CCEA has proposed three alternative options to evidence a selection of pupil work that is randomly selected for Communication².

Principals suggested an alternative form of evidencing pupil work for Communication than the three proposed. They unanimously agreed that the selection of work for each randomly selected pupil should include five samples of work at the discretion of the school. However, principals recommended that the selection of work should represent each mode of Communication, and that each mode should contain a minimum of one CCEA approved task.

Evidence of Pupil Work for Using Mathematics

CCEA has proposed two alternative options to evidence a selection of pupil work for each pupil randomly selected for Using Mathematics³.

Principals unanimously agreed that the portfolio of evidence collected for Using Mathematics should be similar to that collected for Communication. Thus, principals recommended that the random sample of pupil portfolios should include five samples of work with a minimum of one CCEA approved task for both components of Using Mathematics.

² See CCEA Discussion paper: Proposals in Relation to the New Assessment Arrangements

³ See CCEA Discussion paper: Proposals in Relation to the New Assessment Arrangements

Evidence of Pupil Work for Using ICT

Principals endorsed the proposed option of evidence schools will be required to submit for each pupil randomly selected for Using ICT⁴.

Evidence for External Moderation

Principals unanimously agreed that pupil evidence collected for moderation should be based upon predicted levels. Principals believed that the purpose of moderation should be to ensure standardisation and adjust outcomes accordingly. Principals stated that it is imperative they receive accurate Key Stage 2 outcomes; otherwise they will have to continue using other assessments to assess pupils. Principals indicated that schools have an obligation to provide pupils and parents with accurate outcomes to assessment.

Primary principals' groups Proposal for Visiting Moderators

The post-primary principals' group strongly disagreed with the proposal for visiting moderators. They stated such a proposal was logistically unfeasible for post-primary schools, particularly as a number of teachers would be involved in the assessment of each Cross-curricular Skill. Principals believed such a process of moderation would create a significant amount of additional work for schools and impact on teaching time nearing examinations season.

Principals indicated that they would not be supportive of the primary sector having an alternative moderation process to the post-primary. Principals stated that consistency of processes is imperative to the moderation of the incoming assessment arrangements.

⁴ See CCEA Discussion paper: Proposals in Relation to the New Assessment Arrangements

4.2.2 Results from Post-primary Teacher Questionnaire

This section presents the results for each question from the post-primary teacher questionnaire. Results are based on completed questionnaires from 105 respondents. Figures relate to the number of teachers who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall total of 105. A number of teachers reiterated comments throughout their questionnaire; as a result some comments are repeated throughout this section of the report.

Current Key Stage Assessment Arrangements

Over 53% of teachers (53.5%, n=53) revealed that they have no confidence in the reliability of outcomes from the current Levels of Attainment. Teachers' comments regarding the current Key Stage assessment arrangements suggest that:

- standardisation varies between schools (8 comments);
- there is a discrepancy in Key Stage 2 and 3 outcomes (8 comments); and
- they can be used as an accurate predictor of a students future attainment (7 comments).

The need for moderating assessment outcomes

The majority of teachers (96%, n=96) agreed that a new system of moderating assessment outcomes is important to increase professional confidence across the post-primary sector. Teachers commented that incoming moderation arrangements will promote standardisation.

Nearly 90% of teachers (89.5%, n=77) also agreed that a system of moderation is important to increase their confidence in assessment outcomes from the primary sector. Teachers stated that standardisation of assessment outcomes is required to aid pupil transition from Year 8 to 9. Post-primary teachers also indicated that they perceive the primary sectors assessment judgements to be inconsistent with their judgements (13 comments).

Over 90% of respondents (90.1%, n=31) agreed that a model of teacher-based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements. Teachers reinforced the need for consistency in approach to moderation across the primary and post-primary sectors.

Support

Teachers were asked to indicate how supportive they were of a range of support mechanisms CCEA proposes to put in place to reinforce the moderation process. Findings indicate that the majority of teachers supported all of the proposed quality assurance mechanisms for the incoming assessment arrangements.

Exemplification Materials

Virtually all teachers (98.1% n=102) were supportive of the use of exemplification materials. All comments regarding this support were positive.

- Good reference for teachers (15 comments).
- Will provide a meaningful benchmark/comparison against other schools (10 comments).
- Will encourage consistency across schools (2 comments).

Task Approval System

83.2% of teachers (n=84) supported the proposed task approval system.

A small number of teachers commented on the task approval system. Six teachers stated that it is imperative that this system is validated by CCEA. Four respondents felt the task approval system will ensure consistency in school approach. However, four teachers expressed concern over the additional workload this system will have on teachers.

Professional Development of Teachers

Nearly 90% of respondents (89.9, n=89) were supportive of the professional development of teachers. Teachers commented that teacher training is essential to establish the reliability of the incoming assessment arrangements (8 comments) and will be an ongoing process (6 comments).

Internal Standardisation

93.1% of teachers (n=95) approved of internal standardisation to support the reliability and validity of the new assessment arrangements. 13 teachers commented that internal standardisation is required for schools to develop consistency in assessment judgements. Five teachers stated that time will be required for schools to develop such practices.

Support for Agreement Trials with other post-primary schools

81.4% (n=83) of teachers indicated that they support the use of agreement trials with other post-primary schools. Teachers commented that such events promote consistency in standards (15 comments) and opportunities for professional dialogue and comparisons with colleagues from other schools (8 comments).

However, four teachers were concerned that agreement trials would disrupt teaching and learning.

Support for Cross-phase Agreement Trials

62.6% of teachers supported the proposed use of cross-phase agreement trials (n = 57). 12 teachers commented that cross-phase agreement trials are important for cross-phase standardisation.

However, six teachers felt this proposal would be difficult to organise, particularly due to time constraints.

Collection of Pupil Evidence

72.8% (n=75) of respondents indicated that they would be supportive of the electronic collection of pupil portfolios. However, respondents stated that computer capacity may hinder this proposal (11 comments).

A smaller number of respondents (62.6%, n=62) indicated that they were supportive of the paper-based collection of portfolios. Those in favour of this proposal highlighted that teachers are most familiar with this mode of collating pupil evidence (8 comments).

Teacher Moderators

CCEA is considering two options in relation to the use of teacher moderators and asked teachers to indicate if they were in favour of either option.

Findings indicate that over 50% of teachers (53.1%, n=52) supported option 1, where teachers are released from school over a 2-4 week period.

30.6% of respondents (n=30) indicated a preference for option 2, where teachers conduct moderation duties in their own time over a 4-8 week period. The majority of such teachers felt this option to be *“less disruptive to teaching time”*.

16.3% (n=16) respondents were not in favour of either option. However, they did not provide reasons for their response or offer an alternative.

Moderation and School Improvement

64.4% (n=67) of teachers indicated that they would be supportive of a system which enables schools to demonstrate quality assurance practices and become ‘Accredited Schools’. Seven respondents were concerned that this initiative may put additional pressure on teachers’ already heavy workload. However, other comments stated that an accredited school scheme would be a way of measuring schools that apply the standards (7 comments) and recognise good practice (6 comments).

Teacher Suggestions

Teachers were asked to outline any other suggestions they had regarding moderation associated with the incoming Levels of Progression. These have been summarised below.

- Parents' understanding and support for the incoming assessment arrangements is vital (2 comments).
- Cross-phase moderation training should be facilitated (2 comments).
- The needs of Special Educational Needs students aged 11-16 must be accounted for (2 comments).

School Improvement

42.3% (n=41) of teachers revealed that they are not confident that the incoming assessment arrangements will support the wider policy of improving pupil outcomes and school improvement. Four teachers stated that there is a danger "*complex*" moderation processes will detract from their other responsibilities.

4.2.3 Results from Post-primary Stakeholder Questionnaire

This section presents the results for each question from the post-primary stakeholder questionnaire. Results are based on a completed questionnaire from one respondent.

The stakeholder responding to the questionnaire indicated they were a Curriculum Advisory and Support Services Officer.

Current Key Stage Assessment Arrangements

This respondent indicated that they are confident in the reliability of outcomes from the current assessment arrangements.

Moderating Assessment Outcomes

However, they believed a system of moderating assessment outcomes is important at both a post-primary and cross-phase level.

The stakeholder agreed that a model of teacher based assessment requires robust moderation arrangements.

Support

The responding stakeholder indicated that they supported the following mechanisms of support CCEA proposes to put in place to reinforce the moderation process;

- exemplification materials;
- a task approval system – *“this is essential”*;
- internal standardisation; and
- cross-phase agreement trials.

The only proposed mechanism of support the stakeholder did not support was agreement trials with other post-primary schools.

Collection of Pupil Evidence

The stakeholder indicated they were 'very supportive' of the electronic collection of portfolios and 'supportive' of the paper-based collection.

Teacher Moderators

The stakeholder believed teacher moderators should be released from schools over a 2-4 week period to carryout their moderation duties.

Moderation and School Improvement

The stakeholder indicated that they would support a system which enables schools to demonstrate quality internal assessment practices to become '*Accredited Schools*' and described this system as "*good practice*".

School Improvement

The responding stakeholder indicated that they were not confident that the incoming assessment arrangements will support the wider policy context of improving pupil outcomes and school improvement. However, they did not provide reasons for their response.

4.3 Feedback from General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Following a briefing from CCEA on the proposals for assessment and moderation, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) provided a written response to the consultation. The following section contains the specific response received by CCEA.

The Council welcomes this opportunity to respond to the CCEA consultation 'Proposals in Relation to New Assessment Arrangements'. It also wants to put on record its thanks to Richard Hanna who briefed an open meeting of the Council's Policy and Professional Education Committee on the proposed arrangement on Thursday 9 December.

The Council is mindful that the current proposals represent policy in development and it urges CCEA and DE to ensure that the final policy on assessment has the confidence of both the teaching profession and the wider community in Northern Ireland. In this context, it is helpful to distinguish between the intended and actual uses of assessment as well as the potential multiplicity of uses. Moreover, assessment information has become a proxy measure that is supposed to facilitate judgements on the quality of most elements of our education system: its teachers, head teachers, schools, support services, local authorities and even the government itself. (Assessment in schools: Fit for Purpose – A Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, Page 7). The Council, therefore, takes the view that the current policy development process provides an opportunity to ensure that an unambiguous understanding of the purposes of the proposed statutory assessment arrangements is agreed by all stakeholders. In this respect, the Council believes that there is merit in adopting the guidance provided in the 2008 publication of the Assessment Reform Group, 'Changing Assessment Practice – Process, Principles and Standards'. This important document attempts to reconcile what was referred to earlier as the multiplicity of uses to which assessment information (data) may be put. It provides (in Appendix 1):

- Standards for classroom assessment practice;
- Standards for use by School Management Teams;
- Standards for use in National and Local Inspection and Advice Arrangements;
and
- Standards for use in National Policy Formulation.

Consultation specifics

The Council acknowledges the statutory context upon which the new assessment arrangements will be developed and welcomes the fact that the new arrangements will not apply until 2012. This will provide a full school year in order to prepare for the new arrangements. This preparatory period will be crucial and the confidence of teachers needs to be established at the outset. Critically, DE and crucially the ETI must provide leadership in this respect to ensure that unambiguous understanding of the new arrangements is communicated to all stakeholders.

At this stage in the response, the Council wishes to elaborate on what it means by unambiguous understanding and communication. The Council is aware that during the roll out of the revised curriculum, communication was often identified as a problem. In the critical area of assessment, it is, therefore, essential that no ambiguity in communication is allowed to arise; this is of the utmost importance with regard to the interpretation and application of the levels of progression. Furthermore, it is essential that the ETI have a clear and shared understanding with teachers about the interpretation and application of the levels of progression to pupil assessment. Indeed, there might be some merit in collaborative professional development between teachers and the ETI in this area.

The Council is conscious that schools will not only develop assessment arrangements to meet the requirements of their statutory obligations but also, potentially, supplementary assessment arrangements to support teaching and learning e.g. standardised tests such as NFER, class tests and whole school/year group testing often from a value added point-of-view e.g. Yellis etc. There is a danger that schools, teachers and pupils will experience assessment overload. It is,

therefore, essential that both CCEA and DE (with the ETI fully informed) provide clear guidance to schools on the new statutory assessment arrangements in respect of the N. Ireland Curriculum. A statutory curriculum with its concomitant assessment arrangements should, it is to be hoped, obviate the need for extraneous ‘in-house’ assessments which inevitably lead to assessment duplication and overload.

Overview of Board Principles and Key Characteristics of Assessment

The Council endorses the key characteristics of assessment as outlined in the consultation document. However, the use to which assessment data is put can often be problematic for teachers and schools. Clearly the pre-eminent function of assessment for teachers is to support teaching and learning. Indeed, in many ways assessment is the key feedback linkage between teaching and learning and it is often useful to think of this relationship as a feedback loop of teaching, assessment and learning (TAL). It is, therefore, essential that the proposed assessment arrangements do not undermine this complex and subtle relationship by putting too strong an emphasis on systems accountability. This is particularly the case with respect to managerialist accountability with its over-emphasis on a technical and pragmatic approach to curriculum often driven by a calculus of economy and efficiency. The Council would be concerned that a narrow view of assessment would have a detrimental impact on the Revised Curriculum. That said, the Council’s own survey data shows that the teaching professional is positively disposed to professional accountability see table 1. However, this positive predisposition is something that needs to be nurtured and built upon rather than undermined by narrow managerialism. In this context, DE, ETI, employers, and unions should agree a consensus as to what constitutes professional accountability.

Table 1 Survey responses to the question ‘There are different reasons why the work of teachers is held accountable. How important are the following in your view?’

	Important	Not sure	Unimportant
	%		
To promote and maintain the highest standards of teachers’ professional competence	92	7	1
To promote school improvement.	90	8	1
To maintain public confidence in standards of teaching.	85	10	3
To provide information about pupil learning including assessments for use by parents.	84	12	2
To promote and maintain the highest standards of teachers’ personal conduct	75	18	5
To demonstrate effective use of public expenditure on schooling.	46	31	20
To enable the government to monitor the implementation of its educational policies.	37	41	19

(GTCNI Survey of Teachers 2010)

Assessment of Areas of Learning and ‘Other Skills’

The Council welcomes the delegation to schools in these areas and also the guarantee there will be no requirement to assess the areas of learning of ‘language and literacy’ and ‘mathematical and numeracy’ twice.

Levels of Progression/Expected Levels

The Council welcomes the characterisation of the levels of progression as ‘can do’ statements. However, it will be incumbent on CCEA to ensure that exemplar material and professional development enables teachers to develop a common understanding as to how ‘can do’ assessments can be operationalised in classroom contexts. It must also be emphasised that not all learning is made manifest in behavioural outcomes. Therefore, the complex and often hidden nature of learning must be allowed for in assessment tasks in order to ‘bring out’ (education as *educare*) what may potentially remain *terra incognita*.

In terms of the ‘assignment’ of levels of progression and their relationships with ‘expected levels,’ the collective and professional experience of teachers’ i.e. professional judgement must be supported by quality and focused professional development. The Council is conscious that it will be around the levels of progression and the expected levels that professional accountability becomes public. This is also the area of assessment that can negatively feedback to the curriculum. In this context, ‘teaching to the test’ (assessment) still potentially casts its shadow over the Revised Curriculum.

Means of Assessment for cross-curricular skills

The Council welcomes the primacy of teachers’ professional judgement as those best placed to assess pupils’ progress. This important development is consistent with the Northern Ireland Teacher Competences which now apply across the whole profession. According to the GTCNI 2010 survey data, teachers expressed relatively high levels of confidence when carrying out both formative and summative assessment but less confident with respect to diagnostic assessment (76 per cent, 78 per cent and 49 per cent respectively). This general sense of confidence vis-à-vis assessment is consistent with the Council’s 2006 survey data, although surprisingly, higher percentages expressed either being very confident or confident in carrying out formative, summative and diagnostic assessment (88 per cent, 87 per cent and 61 per cent respectively)! However, what remains clear is that professional

development relating to assessment remains a high priority for teachers with, according to the 2010 survey data, 66 per cent of teachers regarding it as a high priority (this was only surpassed by professional development in the use of ICT to promote pupil learning as 69 per cent).

The outline provided at paragraph 3.5 is a useful summary of the proposed moderation processes. The Council also understands that CCEA is seeking to promote a cultural shift away from a 'heavy engineering' approach to modernisation [sic] to one that recognises the professionalism and expertise of teachers. In this context, the concept of accredited schools is a welcome development. However, there may well be merit in developing a formal professional recognition for individual teachers vis-à-vis their assessment competence. The Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors may well provide a useful model for consideration.

System Check

The Council recognises that systems checks are important in order to maintain public confidence in the statutory assessment arrangements. At this stage, it is not clear how the outworking of the data analysis models will operate. However, it is essential that there is no 'slippage' from the system checking in terms of bureaucratic demands on teachers and schools.

In terms of 'system checking,' the Council is concerned about the managerialist implications that may potentially arise and its impact on professional accountability. There is also a close relationship between assessment outcomes (especially summative end of Key Stage Assessments) and the measurement of school effectiveness both at individual school and systems level. While this response is not the vehicle to deal with this issue in detail, the Council is aware of the devastating critique on school effectiveness measurement by Stephen Gorard [Serious Doubts about School Effectiveness, Gorard., S. British Educational Research Journal Vol 36 Number 5, October 2010 pages 745 – 766]. At this stage, the Council only wants to alert senior policy makers to this critique before any further development work is done on school effectiveness measurement in N. Ireland.

Workload Issues and Cross-Curricularity

The Council acknowledges that decisions regarding the new assessment arrangements have been informed by the Northern Ireland Teacher Competences and the emphasis in the consultation that *'assessment should support – and not impede – the core business of teaching and learning and the scope of teachers to engage in that core business'*.

The Council, for its part, asks CCEA and DE to ensure that 'assessment time' is put in place to enable teachers to fulfil the requirements of competence 18 which states:

'Teachers will manage their time and workload effectively and efficiently and maintain a work/life balance'.

While it is recognised that DE Circular 2010/05 provides for 5 additional School Development Days each year for the period 2010/11 - 2014 the Council takes the view that within the context of Every School a Good School, the Revised Curriculum and Assessment arrangements and emerging proposals around special needs and inclusion, the opportunity now exists for DE to reach agreement with the teaching profession on long term-planning, preparation and assessment time. There is now an opportunity for an agreed settlement on this matter that could provide for a stable educational environment for the next decade.

Part B Proposals relating to Quality Assurance and Moderation Processes

The Council recognises that CCEA and DE are trying to engage positively with the profession regarding the practical arrangements for statutory assessment. The Council is also aware that CCEA intends to avoid adapting a 'heavy engineering' approach to moderation. This is a welcome development.

Over the years CCEA has developed significant expertise in respect of moderation processes and in terms of quality control (External Moderation), the Council

acknowledges that CCEA sees external validation as intended to recognise the primacy and professionalism of teachers as those best able to assess the progress of their pupils, but that provides a level of rigour that should command confidence by confirming that judgements made when assessing pupils' work are consistent across schools [page 7, paragraph 8]. In this context, the proposed Code of Practice proposed in paragraph 8 page 7 will provide an important guide that should underpin best assessment practice. The Council would suggest that CCEA should seek to contextualise this proposed code with the GTCNI general Code of Values and Professional Practice.

The Council recognises that for the first two years of the statutory assessment processes (i.e. 2012/13 – 2013/2014) all schools will be required to take part in external moderation. With any new assessment system this is inevitable in order to build confidence, however, the Council would urge CCEA/DE to move towards sample modernisation [sic] of schools at the earliest opportunity. Moreover, a highly competent and engaged profession will provide an opportunity to move towards sample moderation procedures while, at the same time, ensuring that the confidence in the assessment arrangements is sustained.

In terms of the employment of teacher moderators two options are given in paragraph 8.5 (page 8). Both options have certain advantages and disadvantages and individual preferences will certainly come into play. The Council has no strong views on either option only to suggest that there might be merit in trialling both options over two successive years and basing the final decisions on an evaluation of the trials.

In terms of the support for moderation outlined at paragraph 8.7, the Council is satisfied that these arrangements are fit-for-purpose and recognise teacher professionalism within local teaching communities. In terms of the support arrangements for statutory assessment arrangements, the time allocation for teachers of year 4 and 7 (up to 3 days of substitute cover to be made available) and for each year 10 class, 1 day of substitute cover to be made available, while welcome does not negate the importance of a review of teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time referred to earlier. There is a sense that too many

ad hoc arrangements are being put in place rather than a strategic long term settlement of the issue. Moreover, managing ad hoc arrangements in terms of teacher release/substitute cover adds to general stresses for school leaders and can be very disruptive for general class/timetable organisation.

Part C. Proposals and options in relation to making summative judgements and evidence for external moderation.

The description at paragraph 9 'Making summative judgements' is a useful summary of how teachers should judge a pupil's level based on what he/she can do. However, in the professional development provided for teachers, emphasis will have to be placed on the concepts 'best fit' and 'can do' in the context of a pupil being able to work consistently and independently in most aspects of that level. In general, this assessment model is covered by the Northern Ireland Teaching Competences numbers 25 and 26 and their associated phase exemplars as follows:

Competence 25: 'Teachers will select from a range of assessment strategies to evaluate pupils' learning and use this information in their planning to help make their teaching more effective'.

Competence 26: 'Teachers will assess the levels that pupils' attain against relevant benchmarking data and understand the relationship between pupil assessment and target setting'.

Summative judgements

The Council concurs that the models laid out for Communication, Using Mathematics and ICT are appropriate. The use of the mode is really the only statistical measure of central tendency available in these contexts. This approach may well go some way to counteract the criticisms often associated with the 'standards conundrum' and, in particular, the critique by Morrison and Wylie (1999) that previous curriculum testing was based on a 'methodological thought disorder' especially when it attempts to assume additive structures based on qualitative judgements.

In terms of the evidence demands for external moderation, the Council welcomes CCEA's reassurance that it will 'take steps to ensure the demands on schools are the minimum necessary to support professional competence and maintain the integrity of the end of key stage assessment, as required by DE'.

In terms of the guidance at 10.2 on the use of assessment tasks, the Council welcomes the reassurance that tasks should not be regarded as tests.

Conclusion from GTCNI

The Council looks forward to working with CCEA on matters relating to curriculum and assessment. However, it is essential that a comprehensive training and communications strategy is put in place in respect of the statutory assessment arrangements. Moreover, comprehensive guidance needs to be issued to schools vis-à-vis statutory assessment, and especially how the arrangements can blend with the routine work of schools in terms of teaching and learning. Furthermore, schools themselves will need to critically evaluate their own 'in-house' assessment processes to ensure that they 'fit' with the statutory requirements and, crucially, to ensure that unnecessary assessments do not burden pupils and teachers.

GTCNI References

TLRP Assessment in schools: Fit for Purpose-A Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme and ARG.

Assessment Reform Group (2008) *Changing Assessment Practice-Process, Principles and Standards*.

Gorard, S. (2010) *Serious Doubts about School Effectiveness*, British Educational Research Journal, Vol 36 number 5 pages 745-766.

GTCNI (2007) *Teaching: the Reflective Profession*.

Morrison, H. G. & Wylie, E.C. (1999) *Why national curriculum testing is founded on a methodological thought disorder*, Evaluation and research in Education, 13(2) pages 92-105.

4.4 Feedback from Northern Ireland Teachers' Council

Following a briefing from CCEA on the proposals for assessment and moderation, the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council provided a written response to the consultation. The following section contains the specific response.

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council is a body that represents all five teacher unions in Northern Ireland. The NITC has welcomed the engagement with CCEA in developing the proposals for the new assessment arrangements.

General Comments

The NITC is clear that ongoing assessment of pupils' work is an integral feature of effective teaching practice. The NITC shares the view set out by the Department in its assessment strategy that effective and appropriate assessment practices involve teachers being given the scope to make appropriate use of their professional judgment to shape approaches to curriculum content and assessment to meet learning needs.

Many school-level arrangements for formative assessment or assessment for learning are unnecessarily bureaucratic and time consuming, often as a result of a perceived need to demonstrate to inspection teams or other external auditors of school performance that effective approaches to formative assessment have been put in place. The NITC is clear that assessment for learning undertaken on this basis is of limited use to parents or pupils in identifying and working towards future learning goals; adds to teachers and principals' workload burdens; and distracts them from focusing on activities directly related to supporting pupils' achievement and progress.

The NITC's view is that the proposed CCEA materials, implemented effectively, have the potential to improve assessment practice in schools. CCEA produced material has the potential to provide an opportunity to replace existing bureaucratic and workload-intensive internal school assessment practices with a more streamlined and purposeful approach to making professional judgments about pupil progress and achievement.

The CCEA materials can have other benefits when introduced by different schools in the same locality. In terms of the transfer of pupils between primary and secondary schools, could allow secondary teachers to make more effective use of assessment information from primary schools to the benefit of all staff concerned. Similarly, with increasing collaboration between schools involved in local consortia would reduce burdens on teachers by ensuring that teacher assessments are undertaken within a commonly deployed framework.

CCEA assessment introduced without adequate support or with insufficient time for teachers to become familiar with the materials.

CCEA assessments should be introduced in a phased and consistent way in order to support the development of teachers' familiarity with the materials and to identify any potential implementation issues. The DE must ensure that additional financial support for the introduction and implementation of the new arrangements including professional development materials and resources. NITC insists that the DE guarantees centrally funded substitute cover and School Development Days for INSET. The NITC insists that the DE introduces measures to allow substitute and unemployed newly qualified teachers' access to the professional development and training provided.

CCEA assessments implemented in addition to existing assessment arrangements

The CCEA assessments should make clear that it is a complete assessment system and there should be no need in any circumstances to continue with any existing assessment systems. This not only risks increased workload burdens as a result of replication of assessments of pupil progress and attainment, it also undermines the ability of CCEA to operate a unified, clear and consistent approach to whole school assessment practice.

CCEA assessments implemented with excessive frequency of pupil assessment

The potential in both the primary and secondary phases on the use of CCEA assessments being used a number of times throughout the school year would be to the detriment of the pupils and the curriculum.

All pupils' work is subject to in-school moderation

The arrangements for in-school moderation should only involve a small sample of pupils' work with the possibility of samples across a number of schools. Moderation of all pupils work for this purpose is unnecessary.

Arrangements involving the production of detailed portfolios of pupils' work or the implementation of specific assessment tasks

The CCEA assessments needs to emphasize that it is appropriate to use the work that's already in pupils' exercise books or to make use of any notes in which teachers have captured pupils' spoken contributions in class. There is no need to undertake specific activities or to generate dedicated portfolios of pupils' work to meet the requirements of external moderation.

Part A: Legislative Context and Broad Principles as a fundamental basis for assessment in schools.

NITC would agree and highlight the central importance of the issues contained within section 3.7 *Workload issues and 'cross-curricularity'* as described in Part A : Legislative Context and Broad Principles as a fundamental basis for assessment in schools.

- *Assessment should support – and not impede – the core business of teaching and learning and the scope of teachers to engage in that core business.*
- *Decisions have been informed by the agreed NI Teacher Competences Framework – with particular regard to competences 24-27 which focus on assessment.*
- *Assessment tasks and approaches in this area should not be artificial or contrived – the focus must be on connected learning and good practice in planning for the consolidation of core skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.*
- *Training to support the introduction of new assessment arrangements should be integrated with wider training/support on literacy and numeracy and curriculum delivery and not set apart.*

Part C: Proposals and options in relation to making summative judgements and the evidence required for external moderation.

The NITC has a major difficulty with the workload implication contained within the external moderation section Part C: Proposals and options in relation to making summative judgements and the evidence required for external moderation.

The NITC recognises the importance of the professional judgement highlighted in section 9 Making summative judgements and procedure and guidance for allocating levels of attainment in section 9.1.

However, NITC totally rejects the proposed sections **10 Evidence for external moderation** and **10.1 Keeping evidence of pupil work for moderation due to unnecessary bureaucracy and workload implications involved.**

The NITC is seriously concerned that the section 10.2 Use of Assessment Tasks will create a real threat to distortion of the curriculum. NITC agrees with the guidance on assessment tasks as described within the introduction section.

‘Assessment tasks are a support mechanism for teachers to use as part of their on-going classroom assessment practices. The tasks will assist teachers in planning for and gathering evidence on an on-going basis.

Tasks should not be regarded as ‘tests’. Nor should they be used teachers to confirm their judgements - as was the case with Assessment Units (AUs). Rather they should be regarded as one element of on-going teacher assessment, alongside samples of work from across the curriculum. The use of tasks will assist whole school internal standardisation processes. In addition, discussion about and moderation of samples of work from across the curriculum will help build capacity, competence and confidence to make reliable judgements. This in turn will help to enhance assessment practices and support target-setting and self-evaluation.’

However NITC rejects the inclusion of such tasks for the purposes of external moderation due to the threat of curriculum distortion and the potential ‘teach to the test’ scenario.

NITC would urge that the professional judgement of the teacher to be the essential ingredient to any assessment and reporting system and rejects all over elaborate procedures and processes that only serve to undermine the professionalism of teachers.

5.0 Conclusion

It is clear from the research evidence that there is a lack of public confidence in outcomes from the current Levels of Attainment. The research has revealed a particular lack of confidence in assessment judgements made across the primary sector. The cause of this has largely been attributed to the use of Levels of Attainment data by the Education Training Inspectorate in primary school inspections. Consequently, there is wide scale agreement amongst the teaching profession that “*robust and rigorous*” moderation is required if the incoming assessment arrangements (Levels of Progression) are to have credibility. Such findings have been further reinforced by the primary and post-primary principal groups, who have strongly recommended that the proposed random stratified sample to obtain pupil evidence is made more robust.

Overall, there was general agreement on the proposed support for the initial capacity-building and professional development of teachers. However, it has been argued that the effective embedding of assessment practices and a common understanding of standards are dependent upon peer discussions both within and between schools. The opportunity for cross-phase dialogue was deemed to be particularly important in improving confidence in the assessment practice and judgements made across both sectors. As a result, post-primary stakeholders recommended that CCEA should have responsibility for organising such events to ensure that the necessary time and substitute cover is provided.

Stakeholders were largely supportive of both the paper-based and electronic submission of pupil evidence for moderation. However, the diversity in ICT capacity across schools was recognised, as were the new issues an electronic system of submission would introduce. For such reasons, and to prevent any unnecessary burden on schools, it was proposed that schools should have choice in the format they collect and submit pupil evidence.

Throughout the research stakeholders made recommendations and suggestions to a number of quality assurance and moderation proposals. Firstly, respondents believed the proposed substitute cover to assist Year 4, 7 and 10 teachers to

complete Key Stage data was not sufficient and needed to be increased. Secondly, whilst the primary sector agreed with the CCEA designed task, they recommended that the primary sector should eventually be using the task approval system, designed for the post-primary sector. Thirdly, whilst the primary and post-primary principals agreed with the proposed process for making summative judgements in Communication and Using ICT they had reservations regarding the process used for Using Mathematics as it is based upon only two components (compared to three for Communication and five for Using ICT). Such concerns were reiterated in the varying collection of evidence proposed to be submitted for each Cross-curricular Skill. All such suggestions have been included as separate recommendations within this report.

A recurring theme throughout the research was the need for cross-phase consistency. However, a number of preferences to the moderation proposals were sector specific. Firstly, the primary principals' group proposed an alternative moderating system involving visiting moderators which they believed to be a much more manageable process for primary schools. However, the post-primary principals' group felt such a proposal was not logistically viable for post-primary schools. They reiterated the necessity of cross-phase standardisation and argued that one system of moderation should be common to both sectors.

Findings regarding the use of teacher moderators also differed between the primary and post-primary sector as did the evidence (predicted or awarded) for external moderation.

Despite findings from this research supporting the necessity of a common approach to assessment and how it is moderated, respondents also question whether one system of moderation can logistically be applied throughout the Key Stages. Furthermore, if two systems of moderation were in operation, respondents queried the impact this would have on standardisation and professional confidence in assessment outcomes.

The response to such questions may lie in the balance of a system of moderation that is (1) equally manageable for both primary and post-primary schools and (2)

ensures cross-phase standardisation is achieved. If two systems of moderation were in place, quality assurance processes and cross-phase capacity building may be enough to provide trust and confidence throughout the system, achieve standardisation and subsequently aid pupil transition. As one post-primary principal stated, if moderation is successful:

- *“the impact on teaching and learning plans are huge and assessment data can be used to predict pupil performance”.*

6.0 Recommendations

Feedback from this research suggests that:

1. in order to achieve standardisation across the system the reliability of teacher assessment should be investigated and procedures established to prevent data manipulation, specifically the impact targets and published assessment outcomes may have.
2. schools will require (1) time and (2) substitute cover to effectively introduce and embed quality assessment processes and internal standardisation.
3. agreement trials should encompass teachers from both the primary and post-primary sector. Such training will require substitute cover and consideration should be given to delivering such events locally, possibly within area learning communities.
4. consideration should be given to providing teachers with face-to-face training opportunities that enable professional dialogue and reflection upon how the new assessment arrangements can be introduced at all school levels (pupil, class and school).
5. following professional development and capacity building, consideration should also be given to introducing the task approval system to the primary sector.

6. post-primary schools will require support from CCEA to make any necessary modifications to tasks that are not approved through the task approval system.
7. the possibility and practicality of schools selecting the format they collect and submit pupil evidence (paper-based/electronic) for moderation should be explored.
8. further consideration should be given to two systems of moderation, which include visiting moderators within the primary sector. The potential impact two systems may have on cross-phase standardisation and public confidence should be explored.
9. proposals on the use of teacher moderators should be reassessed, ensuring that how teacher moderators carry out their duties (released from school/in their own time) is manageable to both sectors.
10. schools where moderation demonstrates high levels of consistency should be eligible to be considered as accredited schools and support other schools with moderation.
11. in order to achieve a whole school approach to assessment and moderation processes, consideration should be given to providing substitute cover to all primary teachers.
12. two days' substitute cover should be provided per Cross-curricular Skill to Year 10 teachers (rather than the current proposal of one day).
13. consideration should be given to the proposed process for making summative judgements in Using Mathematics and the statistical impact of making summative judgements on two components (compared to the three components in Communication and five in Using ICT) should be investigated.
14. consideration should be given to an alternative range of pupil evidence for Communication and Using Mathematics. Post-primary principals suggested:

- Five samples of evidence with a minimum of one CCEA approved task for each component of Communication and Using Mathematics.

15. CCEA should ensure the random stratified sample is made as robust as possible. Consideration should be given to the use of a “*targeted*” sample (determined from sector level analysis) and a sample that includes all teaching groups.

16. consideration should be given to primary and post-primary principals’ differing opinions on whether the evidence submitted for moderation is based upon predicted or awarded levels. Decisions should take account of the post-primary principals’ requirement for accurate assessment outcomes.

17. consideration should be given to how CCEA can best support schools in taking a whole school approach to assessment.