



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Business Plan

1 October 2011 – 31 March 2013

April 2012

This plan will be updated annually

1. The Standards and Testing Agency

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) was established as an Executive Agency of the Department for Education on 1 October 2011 and formally commenced operating on Monday 3 October.

The STA's remit is to provide an effective and robust testing and assessment system that objectively measures and monitors children's progress from the early years up to the end of Key Stage (KS) 3 (age 14).

The policy framework set by Ministers defines the requirements for tests or assessments, such as through the National Curriculum.

The STA has responsibility, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, for the development and delivery of statutory assessments and testing in England under statutory instruments. In carrying out these functions, the STA:

- develops high quality and rigorous National Curriculum tests and assessments in line with Ministerial policy;
- undertakes operational delivery of National Curriculum tests and assessments (including printing, distribution, provision of systems, marking and data capture);
- supports the process of teacher assessment moderation in order that data are robust and can be used for national statistics; and
- supports schools and other stakeholders to deliver National Curriculum tests and assessments.

The STA is responsible for setting and maintaining test standards, including standards related to marking, and producing guidance and exemplification materials for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile and KS1.

2. Objectives

The STA's objective is to provide an effective and robust testing and assessment system that objectively measures and monitors children's progress from the early years up to the end of KS3 (aged 14). As at April 2012 this includes:

- ensuring the consistency and accuracy of data generated by teacher assessment for the EYFS Profile and KS1 through the monitoring and support of local authorities (LAs);
- implementing and supporting arrangements for 2013 EYFS Profile from September 2012;
- test production and delivery of KS1 tests;
- implementation and delivery of the Year 1 phonics screening check from 2012;
- the timely development and delivery of valid and reliable KS2 National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics and science sampling tests;
- investigating any matter brought to its attention relating to the accuracy, correctness or validity of results of any pupil in the National Curriculum and science sampling tests;
- implementing and supporting arrangements for the moderation of end of KS2 English writing teacher assessments in 2012;
- implementing and supporting the system of moderation of end of KS2 English writing teacher assessments from 2013, subject to an evaluation of the arrangements in 2012;
- secure timely preparation of valid and reliable statutory tests and assessments for the 2013 and 2014 test cycles, including the new Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test which will be first delivered in 2013;
- ensuring that all deliverables take account of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010;
- collecting statutory teacher assessment data for KS2 and 3;
- making optional tests for years 3, 4 and 5 and years 7, 8 and 9 available for schools to order; and
- collecting item level data for years 3, 4 and 5 optional tests from a nationally representative sample of schools in 2012.

The remit of the STA reflects the current priorities of the Government as set out in the following reviews.

In 2010, the Secretary of State commissioned Lord Bew to lead an external review of KS2 testing, assessment and accountability. The recommendations from this review, published in June 2011, were accepted in full by the Government in July 2011, with a commitment to implement the recommendations as quickly as practicable.

The EYFS has been reviewed by Dame Claire Tickell and STA is responsible for producing the guidance and exemplification materials for the new EYFS Profile which becomes statutory in September 2013.

3. Priorities

The STA will undertake the following activity in 2012-13:

Develop high quality and rigorous National Curriculum tests and assessments

Using recognised procedures, such as pre-testing and expert review, and statistical analysis, the STA will:

- develop high quality test materials for use in 2012: KS2 English reading; KS2 English writing (internal and external); KS2 mathematics; KS2 science sample; and Year 1 phonics screening check, by January 2012;
- carry out the level-setting process for all tests and assessments used in 2012;
- develop and sign off a technically robust specification for the new Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test by October 2012 and develop a high quality first test for use in 2013 by January 2013;
- develop high quality test and assessment materials for use in 2013; KS2 English reading; KS2 mathematics; KS2 science sample; and Year 1 phonics screening check, by February 2013; and
- develop and sign off new technically robust specifications for National Curriculum tests as a result of the changes following Lord Bew's review of KS2 testing, assessment and accountability and the National Curriculum Review as required by the Department's implementation plan.

Undertake operational delivery of National Curriculum tests and assessments

To ensure successful operational delivery the STA will:

- ensure achievable plans and relevant project and programme management (PPM) documentation are in place to maintain tight control and visibility of all delivery cycles;
- ensure risks and issues are continually identified and actively managed in accordance with the risk and issue management strategy;
- provide systems that enable schools to order tests, register pupils, apply for access arrangements, submit teacher assessments and access pupil results;
- ensure that schools receive their test materials on time;
- ensure that opportunity for loss or breach of security of materials is minimised;
- ensure marking is of a high quality and completed on time;
- ensure that test results are returned to schools on time and accurately reflect the marks awarded; and
- follow rigorous procurement processes to ensure value for money and that high quality suppliers are in place to deliver the programme of work.

Support and implement arrangements for moderation of teacher assessment judgements

In ensuring that teacher assessment is moderated to support the transition of pupils to the next key stage and to ensure the consistency of national standards, the STA will:

- at EYFS and KS1, support and monitor LAs' and moderation agencies' moderation processes;
- review LAs' plans for the moderation of the EYFS Profile and end of KS1 assessments in settings and schools and report on how LAs are complying with their duty to ensure that the data is accurate and consistent;
- provide a helpline facility to support Early Years setting and LA users of the EYFSP eProfile (this work will cease under the new EYFS Profile);
- develop a process for the standardisation of moderators within LA teams, and guidance and exemplification development for KS2 English writing;
- externally moderate LA arrangements for KS2 English writing moderation; and
- develop guidance and exemplification for the revised EYFS Profile by December 2012.

Support schools and other stakeholders to deliver National Curriculum tests and assessments

The STA will:

- publish and disseminate clear, timely, accurate, accessible guidance and communications on statutory national assessment arrangements (EYFS to KS3);
- provide a helpline facility where all staff are thoroughly trained to ensure the information is accurate and provided in a timely manner;
- investigate and resolve all customer complaints and where possible use intelligence from customer complaints to drive service improvements; and
- ensure stakeholders are consulted when process changes are being considered, and that intelligence from complaints, the helpline and other forums is used to drive continual service improvements.

4. Measuring success

In 2012-13 the STA will measure its success by:

Develop high quality and rigorous National Curriculum tests and assessments

- All tests are developed using recognised procedures, such as pre-testing and expert review, and statistical analysis which generate evidence to demonstrate that the tests satisfy the Ofqual common assessment criteria of validity, reliability, comparability, minimising bias and manageability.
- Development activities for all tests and assessments are completed as planned to ensure that assessments and tests are available on time.

Undertake operational delivery of National Curriculum tests and assessments

- Ensure all test and assessment materials are high quality and delivered to all schools that order or require them by the specified date.
- Successfully and securely deliver KS2 National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics, and KS2 science sample tests in May 2012. For the externally marked tests, 99.9 per cent of results are available to schools by the agreed date, and levels of lost scripts and missing results are comparable to 2011. Quality of marking is at least as good as previous years.
- Appropriate systems and arrangements are in place to collect statutory teacher assessment data for KS2 and 3 with target rates of 99.7 per cent in both phases by the agreed date.
- Best endeavours are made to meet the targets for collecting optional test data for years 3, 4, and 5 as set out in the Assessment Technical Requirements Document (ATRD).
- All data feeds are sent to the Data Services Division as set out in the ATRD.
- A full evaluation for the operational delivery of every test and assessment is completed by October 2012, to ensure that lessons learned can be used to make improvements to future delivery cycles.
- Secure timely preparation and procurement of National Curriculum test contracts for 2013 delivery following rigorous processes to ensure value for money.
- Robust procurement documentation for the post-2013 Test Operations contract is prepared following Cabinet Office Government Framework procedures by January 2013.

Support and implement arrangements for moderation of teacher assessment judgements

- EYFS Profile and KS1 results are robust and reliable as a consequence of moderation by October 2012.
- KS2 English writing moderation guidance and procedures are developed and evaluated by September 2012.
- Guidance and exemplification for the revised EYFS Profile is developed by December 2012.

Support schools and other stakeholders to deliver National Curriculum tests and assessments

- Publish and disseminate guidance on statutory national assessment arrangements (EYFS to KS3).
- Investigate and respond to customer queries and complaints within 10 working days.
- Hold three reference group meetings per year to proactively seek stakeholder feedback.

5. Resources

Expenditure 2011-12

As the agency came into existence on 1 October 2011, the following figures relate to six months of operation only:

	£'000
Administration budget ¹	4,000
Programme budget	15,111
Capital budget	0
Total	19,111

Projected expenditure 2012-13

For the first full year of operation the Agency's projected expenditure is:

	£'000
Administration budget ²	5,428
Programme budget	35,668
Capital budget	0
Total	41,096

A high level organisation chart is at Annex A.

¹ This figure includes some one off shared services set-up costs.

² Shared services are accounted for on a nominal basis and are not, therefore, included in these figures.

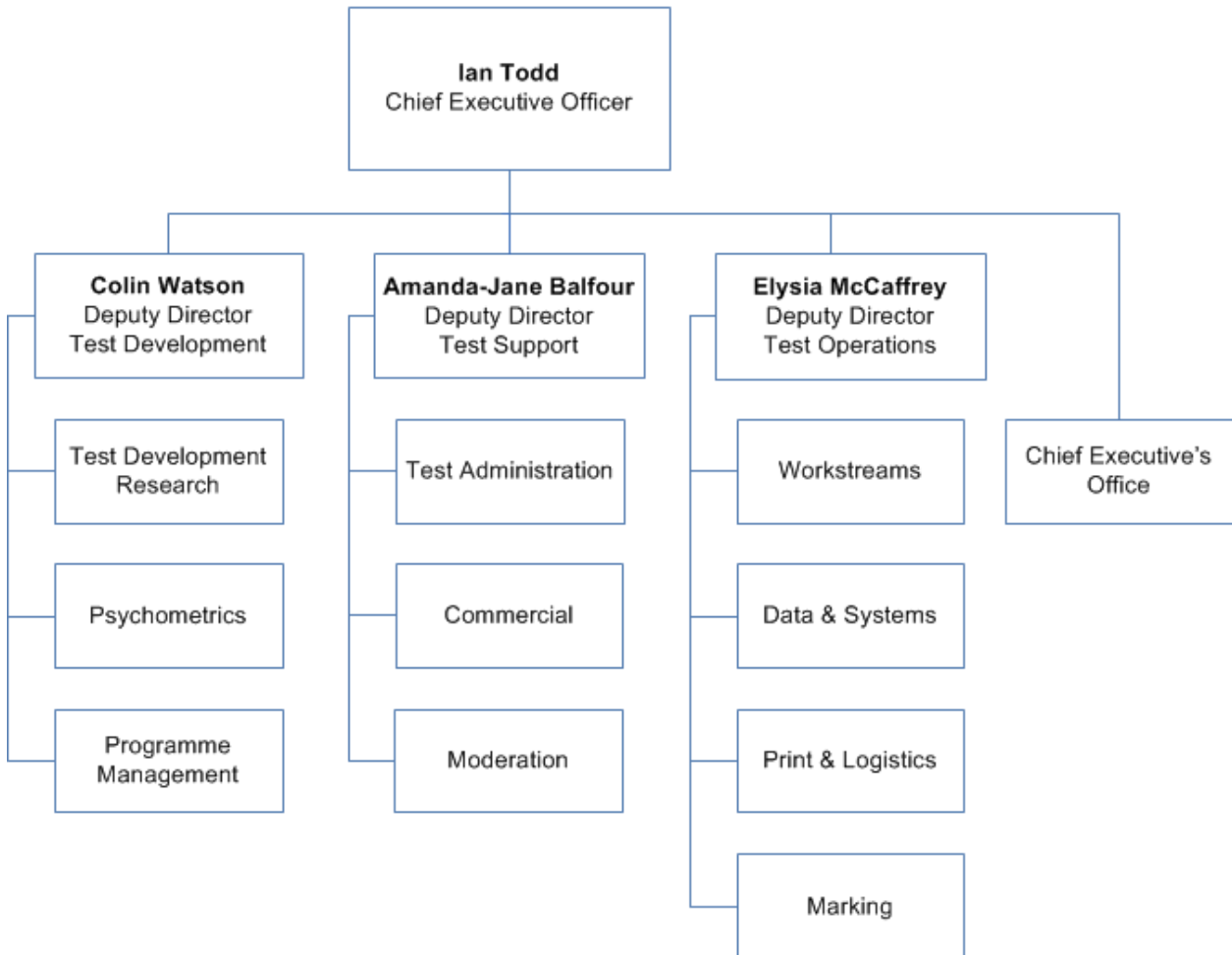
6. Governance and accountability

The high level governance arrangements for the STA are set out in the *Standards and Testing Agency Framework Document*.

Ofqual's role in regulating assessment arrangements is set out in the *Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009* (ASCLA). Ofqual's principal regulatory role is to keep all aspects of National Curriculum and EYFS assessment arrangements under review.

The detailed governance, accountability and audit arrangements are outlined in the *STA Corporate Governance Framework*.

Annex A - Organisation Chart





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