

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN ASSESSMENTS IN STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - REGULAR STREAM

A Framework for Fair, Consistent and Effective Assessment Practice

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1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

These Guidelines set out clear expectations for assessment practice in all State Secondary Schools. They are intended to help educators, Heads of Department (HOD) and Rectors ensure that every assessment is fair, consistent and genuinely useful for students.

They apply to school-based written assessments across all grades, except FPLNS. The document lays out guidelines for assessments in 2 parts:

- Part I: Guidelines for common assessments, mock exams and end of year exams
- Part II: Guidelines for Continuous / Formative assessments.

They complement, but do not replace, the NCE, NEB and CIE assessment syllabuses. Where there is any conflict, National/ International examination body regulations take precedence.

2 KEY TERMS

Term	Meaning
Validity	An assessment is valid when it tests what it is meant to test, at the right level and in line with the syllabus.
Reliability	An assessment is reliable when it produces consistent results across different sections, markers and administrations.
Vetting	The review of an assessment paper by the HOD before it is given to students to check for accuracy, alignment and clarity.
Common Assessment	A paper given to all sections of the same grade on the same day, under the same conditions.
Command Words	Words from the official CIE, NEB or NCE syllabuses that tell students what kind of response is expected (e.g., Describe, Explain, Evaluate).
Mark Scheme	A document prepared alongside the assessment that sets out acceptable answers and how marks should be awarded.
Cumulative Assessment	An assessment that covers all topics taught during the term, not just the most recent ones.
Assessment File	A departmental record of all assessments, including papers, mark schemes and any evidence of vetting.

PART I: GUIDELINES FOR COMMON ASSESSMENTS, MOCK AND END OF YEAR EXAMINATIONS

3 PREPARING THE ASSESSMENT/ EXAMINATION PAPER

3.1 Format and Presentation

- Every paper should include: subject, grade, date, duration, total marks, number of printed pages, mark breakdown by section and clear instructions. For mock examinations, subject codes should be included.
- Diagrams must be clearly drawn, accurately labelled and relevant to the question.
- When assembling the paper, the educator should check both sides of each sheet to ensure that nothing is missing or out of order.

3.2 Content

- Questions should be based on topics taught in class.
- Questions should align with the learning objectives in the CIE, NEB or NCE syllabuses for that grade/level.
- Only command words prescribed in the syllabus should be used.
- Question papers should be aligned with the Assessment Objectives specified in the syllabus.
- The educator should ensure that the literature texts examined are drawn from the prescribed Cambridge syllabus texts approved by the school for the specific cohort and academic year.
- The mark scheme should be prepared at the same time as the question paper. The mark scheme should be sealed separately.
- For upper secondary language (essay writing) and literature papers, CIE mark schemes should be used to ensure consistency and alignment with Cambridge assessment standards.

4 VETTING OF ASSESSMENT / EXAMINATION PAPERS

4.1 Who Vets and When

- The educator prepares the question paper and mark scheme, verifies both and submits them together to the HOD.
- The HOD vets and signs both documents before the master copy of the paper is sent for photocopying.

- A brief record of the vetting (who vetted, date, outcome) should be kept in the departmental file.

4.2 What to Look for During Vetting

- All content is accurate and based on the prescribed syllabus for the relevant grade.
- Command words are appropriate and correctly used.
- Instructions are clear and unambiguous.
- Marks are appropriately distributed across questions.
- All required header information is present.
- Diagrams are accurate and clearly labelled.

5 PAPER HANDLING AND SECURITY

5.1 From Preparation to Photocopying

- The number of students sitting for the assessment and the number of copies needed should be finalised and included in the paper setter and markers schedule that is submitted to the administration.
- The school should determine an appropriate number of extra copies to be made for each paper.
- Access to the master copy should be limited to those directly involved in the process.
- Photocopying of the exam papers should ideally be done in the presence of the paper setter to ensure confidentiality.
- Damaged sheets during the photocopying process should be properly disposed.
- The vetted master copy should be sealed alongside the question papers and the vetted mark scheme should be sealed in a separate envelope, prior to submission to the administration.

5.2 Records

- Log books/files should be maintained to record (a) issue of exam/assessment papers and (b) collection of scripts for marking. These documents should be properly titled.
- Senior Educator/ Deputy Rector should monitor these records and ensure that proper entries are made by officers concerned – exam supervisors and paper markers.
- Any records template used for the conduct of exams/ assessments should reflect the actual steps involved and should clearly show who is accountable at each stage.

PART II: GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUOUS/ FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

This part of the document lays out simplified guidelines for continuous/ formative assessments.

- Assessment papers should be typed wherever possible. If papers are handwritten, care should be taken to ensure that handwriting is clear and diagrams are accurate and well-drawn.
- Assessment details such as class, date, duration and total marks should be specified on the paper.
- The same assessment paper should not be administered to different sections of the same grade on different days.
- Assessment paper and mark scheme should be vetted by the HOD prior to administering the paper as per approved deadline established at school or departmental level.
- There should be evidence of vetting by the HOD on the assessment paper and mark scheme.
- HOD should keep a copy of the assessment paper and mark scheme in the departmental file. HODs are encouraged to keep a record of vetting for the department.
- A reasonable gap should be maintained between assessments in different subjects. Schools are encouraged to earmark assessment weeks at the beginning of the term.
- Students should be informed of the assessment at least one week in advance.
- Assessments should, as far as possible, follow a cumulative approach.
- Assessment scripts to be returned to students within a reasonable timeframe. This practice should be formalised and consistently implemented by the school.
- Schools can consider standardising the total marks allocated for continuous assessments across the various grades.
- Senior Educators should periodically check assessment records across departments and share any good practices observed.
- Assessment practice should be a standing item on the agenda of HOD meetings each term.

6 SUPPORT AND MONITORING BY QAID

QAID's role is to support schools in improving assessment quality and monitor progress, with a focus on strengthening the validity and reliability of assessments across schools.

How QAID Will Support Schools

- Continue to review a sample of assessment and examination papers and mark schemes and provide constructive feedback to support the continuous improvement of assessment practices.
 - Meet with departments to discuss assessment practices and agree on actions to strengthen the quality and consistency of assessment.
 - Share examples of good practice in assessment design, vetting and record-keeping from across the school system.
 - Monitor the implementation of agreed actions during school visits and provide targeted support where required.
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Appendix

GUIDELINES FOR COMMON ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS AT A GLANCE

The table gives a summarised version of the assessment guidelines for common assessments, mock and end of year examinations.

Standard	Key Requirements	Responsibility
Paper format and Presentation	- Every assessment paper should include the subject, grade, date, duration, total marks, number of printed pages, mark breakdown by section and clear instructions. For mock examinations, the subject code should also be included. - Diagrams should be clearly drawn, accurately labelled and appropriate to the questions.	Educator/ HOD
Content coverage	Questions should: - be based on topics taught in class. - align with the learning objectives in the CIE, NEB or NCE syllabus for that subject and grade/level. Question papers should reflect the Assessment Objectives (AOs) specified in the relevant syllabus.	Educator/ HOD
Command words	Command words should be used in accordance with the requirements of the CIE, NEB or NCE syllabuses.	Educator/ HOD
Mark scheme	A mark scheme should be prepared alongside every assessment paper.	Educator/ HOD
Vetting	- All assessment papers and corresponding mark schemes should be vetted and approved by the HOD before administration. - Evidence of vetting and approval should be kept on file.	HOD

Standard	Key Requirements	Responsibility
Record-keeping	An assessment file should be maintained by each department, containing all required assessment documents and records.	HOD/ Senior Educator
Paper handling and security	- Access to the master copy should be restricted to personnel directly involved in the assessment process. - Photocopying of examination papers should, where possible, be carried out in the presence of the paper setter. - The vetted master copy should be sealed together with the examination papers before submission to the administration. - The vetted mark scheme should be sealed separately before submission to the administration.	Educator/ Administration
Records	- Records of the issue of examination/assessment papers and the collection of scripts for marking should be maintained using appropriately titled documents. - The Senior Educator/Deputy Rector should monitor these records and ensure that all required entries are completed by examination supervisors and paper markers.	Senior Educator/ DR
Post assessment feedback	Corrected scripts should be discussed with students within a reasonable timeframe to provide feedback and support learning.	Educator