

Memorandum to the Education Select Committee relating to the Primary Assessment report



We welcome the Education Select Committee's report and its valuable consideration of key aspects of primary assessment following a time of significant change. The report draws important distinctions between formative assessment, internal summative assessment and statutory summative assessments, the last of which are regulated by Ofqual. The Committee's inquiry also brings helpful attention to the pressures that accountability can place on assessment, particularly on teacher assessment, and the need for consideration of these pressures to inform high quality assessment design and delivery.

The Committee's report recommends a review of our regulatory role in relation to National Assessments. While such a review could bring welcome focus to the role of regulation, it may not add significant value, as our objectives, powers and duties have been set out in statute taking into account the way that National Assessments are developed and delivered. Our role and powers for National Assessments are different to those we have for qualifications, where we set and enforce rules governing a competitive market. We are clear about our National Assessments role, but we accept the Committee's finding that our responsibilities in relation to National Assessments are not well understood by the public and stakeholders.

In regulating National Assessments, Ofqual's objectives are to promote standards and confidence in statutory early years and national curriculum assessments, such as those at Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2). We regulate at national, systemic level, for example, while we do not have powers to investigate complaints about National Assessments, we consider stakeholder concerns when deciding where to focus our activity.

We focus on the validity of assessment, in particular, on technical aspects such as test development, standard setting or marking. We also monitor wider activity, such as delivery and risk, at a high-level and we provide advice to inform future approaches to assessment. We do not have a role in deciding whether or not there should be particular statutory assessments, or in curriculum policy, accountability policy or internal school assessment. Further, we do not approve decisions made by the Standards and Testing Agency.

Nonetheless, we provide independent post-hoc assurance about assessment quality, for example, as we did in relation to standard setting for the new KS1 and KS2 tests in 2016. More information on Ofqual's specific powers and duties in relation to National Assessments can be found in our [Regulatory Framework for National Assessments](#).

We acknowledge that we must do more to improve the visibility and transparency of our regulation of National Assessments and we intend to do this, including by:

- providing a National Assessments annual report, setting out our activities and views
- publishing high quality research into aspects of validity, such as our recent [content validation study](#) of the new 2016 KS2 tests, which provides important insights into the test development process and the accessibility of 2016 reading test
- publishing more of our findings and views, such as our recent [response](#) to the primary assessment consultation, and
- ongoing engagement with stakeholders to explain our regulatory activity, role and findings

We will shortly be consulting on an updated [Regulatory Framework for National Assessments](#). The framework sets out our responsibilities and provides guidance to the Standards and Testing Agency and other bodies involved in developing and delivering National Assessments. We want our framework to provide clearer and better information about our role and what this looks like in practice. We look forward to hearing public and stakeholders' views on our consultation.

We would be pleased to answer any questions the Select Committee may have about our National Assessments role and activity in our forthcoming evidence session.