

Update on Standardisation and Moderation - end of KS2/3

Following a recommendation by Estyn in its annual report to Welsh Government, a consultation was undertaken between December 2014 and March 2015 on the standardisation and moderation of end of key stage 2 and 3 assessments. Amongst the recommendations was to develop a procedure to ensure consistency between clusters across the region and a role for the consortia to oversee the process from 2015-16 onwards, ensuring reliability and improving confidence in teacher assessment.

During the spring term 2015, GwE Challenge Advisers, Associate Partners and primary and secondary school practitioners collaborated to produce exemplary profiles for Welsh first language, English, mathematics and science. These were distributed to all clusters across the region.

One member from secondary core subject departments and one representative from the primary cluster were invited to attend regional training sessions in March. 98% of clusters were represented in each session. A representative from 57% of the region's secondary schools attended each training session with 98% of secondary schools represented in at least one session. A representation from 24% of the clusters lead on some sessions as part of the training.

In response to Welsh Government consultation, an External Verification Programme was set up to Secure 2014-15 Teacher Assessments. This is a three-year programme initially and all four consortia have responsibility for it. End of KS2/3 teacher assessments in mathematics and science were verified in a 10% sample of schools in Wales. This means that 9 secondary school assessments and 44 primary school assessments have been verified within the GwE region. In addition, GwE Challenge Advisers attended 30 cluster moderation meetings across the region in order to identify good practice, offer support and give feedback on this year's process.

A Statutory Order came into force in Wales on 1 September 2015 – 'Moderation of Assessment Arrangements for the Second and Third Key Stages'. It is now statutory for all Headteachers to ensure school representation in at least one cluster moderation meeting during the spring or summer term.

In September 2015, a report to Welsh Government on findings of external verification was agreed upon by representatives from the 4 consortia. In GwE, the main findings were there was agreement with most level 4 awards and many of the level 5 awards in mathematics and science in the primary sector. In secondary schools, there was agreement with each level 5 award and most of the level 6 awards in science. In mathematics, there was agreement with the majority of level 5 awards and many of the level 6 awards.

At the end of September, representatives from the 4 consortia (Challenge Advisers and members of local authority Welsh advisory groups) produced level 4, 5 and 6 national standardised portfolios and profiles in the four core subjects. It is hoped that this documentation will be available by the end of January. In addition, the four consortia agreed on general national guidelines on the moderation process along with specific subject guidelines, which have already been shared with clusters within GwE. One important amendment is a focus on a complete representation of pupils' work i.e. his/her workbook, rather than a sample of work.

In November, sessions to share information were held across the region for KS2 and KS3 assessment leaders from each cluster. There was representation from 94% of clusters. By requesting the attendance this year of one 'assessment leader' rather than subject representatives, more representation from primary senior management teams was secured and, more significantly, from the secondary sector also.

This year, all clusters will be expected to present the dates of their cluster moderation meetings to GwE and the Verification Programme by 29 January 2016. A Challenge Adviser will attend one moderation meeting in each cluster and report back to the cluster, GwE and the Local Authorities. As part of the external verification programme, a 20% sample of cluster moderation meetings will be verified and a report produced focusing on the process, school participation, attendance of senior management team members and quality of the meeting.

In June 2015, an external verifier will visit a 10% sample of schools with a focus on Welsh first/second language or English this year. The findings of these visits, along with observations from the cluster meetings, will form a national report for Welsh Government.

Impact to date:

Although it is early days, it is fair to say that clusters' and schools' awareness of the need for effective moderation has increased. Following producing exemplary profiles, arranging training sessions and the external verification process, many clusters invested a lot of time in the process in 2014/15, developing comprehensive profiles in all four core subjects. GwE Challenge Advisers were witness to detailed discussions and feedback to many schools on the quality of the work seen in profiles

This year, many clusters have strengthened their procedures and developed their practice since last year, securing an improved role for senior management team members and more time for the process. Some have asked for specific meetings with GwE Challenge Advisers so as to develop and strengthen their processes. Overall, GwE training has focused on practical guidelines for cluster 'assessment leaders' on the content of the 'profiles', effective cluster moderation meetings and keeping brief and purposeful minutes.

There is no doubt that the capacity to develop this process has increased as a result of publication of the exemplary profiles and training sessions in March and November. Using individuals from our schools as external verifiers has reinforced the expertise in some of the clusters. We know of external verifiers who have shared good practice from other regions, arranging sessions back in their clusters on level 5 requirements and effective recording methods.

The national guidelines produced in collaboration by the four regions reinforce the good work that has already taken place. Schools and clusters are looking forward to see the national profiles and portfolios, which will give schools clear guidelines on what is expected on levels 4, 5 and 6. By the end of 2015/16, the attendance of a Challenge Adviser or an external verifier in one moderation meeting in each cluster will strengthen the monitoring process and accountability within the region.

By the end of this year, we believe that participation and the quality of cluster moderation meetings will have increased significantly and that the professional dialogue will lead to more understanding and consistency in expectations with regard to pupils' attainment levels.