



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

National Qualifications Framework Levels 1–3, 2005

Languages

National Moderator's Report

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General Guidance for Assessors of Achievement and Unit Standards

The purpose of external moderation is to provide reassurance that assessor judgments are at the national standard and are made on the basis of assessment materials that are fair and valid.

All assessment materials are expected to:

- give the learner the opportunity to meet the requirements of the standard
- have an assessment schedule that gives evidence of appropriate learner responses and clear judgments at all levels.

The Ministry of Education contracted subject experts to write assessment resources for achievement standards. These are not pre-moderated. The intention is that they are modified to suit teaching programmes and learner needs. They do not provide 'rules' but suggest different ways of assessing to the nationally registered standard.

General Overall Comment

Moderation of internally assessed achievement and unit standards in Languages in 2005 showed most schools used or modified the exemplars from the TKI website. As has been noted previously, these cannot be downloaded and administered as they are; they must be personalised to suit each school's particular cohort of candidates. Some exemplars need adjusting to fit the requirements of moderation and should be checked for language at the required level. It is pleasing to see some teachers are creating their own tasks. However, if teachers do this they are reminded that the task needs to be pre-moderated by a colleague in the same or another school. This is to ensure it meets the requirements of the standard and learners will not be disadvantaged when it is administered under assessment conditions.

Teachers should refresh themselves on the importance of the 'Assessment triangle'. This consists of the **standard** (and its appropriate version), the **task** (ensuring it is familiar, less familiar, requires the use of complex language, opinion, point of view, etc), and the **assessment schedule** (appropriate for the standard and the task). All three must be interrelated. Teachers are also reminded that the assessment schedule is not the same as a student feedback sheet. This is the combination of the standard, the task, and the assessment schedule and must be clear and transparent to all concerned. It needs to show that the requirements of the standard (ie time, word/character count, etc), the terms of the assessment schedule (variety of language, development of relevant information, organisation and point of view if required, seeking of information if required), and the overall communication (significant errors hindering, no errors hindering, etc) have been met and how the final judgment has been reached.

Very few unit standards were used in assessment. It was also pleasing to see the general improvement in teachers' understanding and interpretation of the standards and in assessor judgements. Most teachers have followed advice given in previous moderation rounds. However, there is still a concern over the variation in the conditions set by teachers for assessments. It is important that teachers follow the Guidelines for the Management of Internal Assessment so there is equity and consistency nationwide.

These guidelines have been updated recently by the Ministry of Education, and can be found at http://www.tki.org.nz/r/ncea/lang_guidelinesv2_20jan06.doc.

AS 90073; AS 90079; AS 90085; AS 90091; AS 90097; AS 90103; AS 90109; AS 90120; AS 90126

Speaking Assessment

Most teachers used Version 2 of the standards for their assessment instructions and assessment schedules. However, there was confusion over what was actually meant by ‘version’ on the cover sheet of the submission. Many thought it referred to the version of the web activity being used. Teachers are encouraged at the beginning of each year to check the NCEA website to refresh their memories of the standards and versions and to ensure they are aware of all changes that have been made. This applies to all levels of the standards and is something that Language HODs could do with their colleagues at the beginning of each year.

Although the requirements of vocabulary and structures at Curriculum Level 6 are now generally made clear to candidates in the activity, they must also be expressed in the assessment schedule. In French and German, however, where the curriculum may not be so strictly defined as other languages, the achievement objectives for that level of the curriculum should be used to assist in the assessment of learner work and be part of the wording of the activity.

Examples of learner response are required in the assessment schedule and these were often misplaced. If the teacher wishes, candidates may also be given examples in the target language in the activity or on another activity. However, if the examples relate to the activity being assessed, students need to be reminded that all work must be their own and any examples of language taken from the assessment activity need to be significantly manipulated to show it is their own work.

Again, the quality of the tapes supplied from schools with their submission materials was a concern to moderators. These talks must be audible if there is to be any moderation of assessor judgments. In some cases, interference from background noise meant the speaker was inaudible. If a tape-recorder is stopped during a talk it is helpful for moderation purposes and for national consistency to be told the reason for this. Learner material recorded on video was, on the whole, of a much better standard.

NCEA assessment is not about counting. It is disturbing to still see some teachers at all levels of assessment still using the words ‘some’, ‘most’ and ‘all’ when referring to relevant information and structures. Teachers are reminded that the information points in the task (ie you could mention, write about, etc) are to guide learners, not restrict them. What is important is relevant information, which relates to the topic, and in what way that information has been developed and expressed, up to and including the required curriculum level. This, along with how successfully the communication has been achieved, is the criterion that teachers should use in order to reach a final judgment.

AS 90074; AS 90080; AS 90086; AS 90092; AS 90098; AS 90104; AS 90110; AS 90121; AS 901267

Conversation assessment

The same confusion as in 1.2 occurred over the placement of the examples of learner response. These must be included in the assessment schedule and be written in the target language.

The conversation standards give the most concern. The tasks need to be set and administered in such a way that candidates have the chance to speak for the required length of time and add (substantial) development. Sometimes, in an attempt to have ‘natural’ conversations, teachers allow candidates to give very brief answers which do not contain enough language even for Achievement. Some teachers also give a significant amount of help (rephrasing questions, prompting candidates to

seek information, etc) whereas others do not. Teachers should be careful not to dominate the conversation but simply contribute in a way that allows students to continue to speak.

Under a national assessment system, candidates must have equal opportunities to achieve. How to ensure this is a concern for both teachers and moderators. The idea that all students should be given the same questions is to ensure all have questions of the same level of difficulty and thus, the same chance to achieve. This does not mean that appropriate prompts, feeders, and comments in the target language cannot be used to aid a less able speaker to achieve or to allow the really able student to excel.

Candidates should not be given the questions before the assessment takes place. Teachers variously interpret the “clear/clearly” of the achievement standard with most dealing with any lack of audibility or comprehensibility by means of the communication/errors statement.

AS 90077; AS 90089; AS 90095; AS 90101; AS 90107; AS 90113; AS 90130

Drafted writing assessment

As for 1.2 and 1.3 at least one Level 6 structure and language must form part of the criteria of the assessment schedule. Teachers are reminded that the purpose of this standard is to allow students the chance to draft, craft and produce a piece of work over a set period, usually three consecutive periods of class time. It is not the same as 1.5, which is done in an external examination at the end of the year. It is, therefore, important for the task to reflect these requirements of drafting and crafting to produce a final piece for assessment. Emails, postcards or letters are not especially suitable topics. It is more appropriate for the student to be asked to produce a brochure, handbook, guide book, etc. Teachers are also reminded that while only the final piece of writing is assessed, the student needs to show evidence of the drafting and crafting in their work.

A portfolio approach is only possible if the authenticity of the learner work is maintained. The wording in the achievement criteria for Excellence: “*Language is used confidently*” can mean a number of things. For example in Japanese, it can mean that kanji has been used where it is appropriate, rather than just evidence of at least one required kanji at the appropriate curriculum level to meet the standard. It can also mean that the writing, because of the period of time allowed, is of a better quality than that of the 1.5 done in an external exam.

AS 90383; AS 90389; AS 90396; AS 90402; AS 90408; AS 90485; AS 90414; AS 90420; AS 90427

Speaking Assessment

Teacher feedback from the Level 2 standards review supported the focus on ‘appropriate language’. In practice, this means individual vocabulary items and structures should not be used solely to reach the standard. Student work should represent a culmination of communication functions which have been learned up to and including Curriculum Level 7. In 2004, the Level 2 standards were reviewed and, in 2005, Version 2 of the standard was implemented. While most teachers did use Version 2, some teachers still assessed according to Version 1. Moderators were instructed that, as long as all documentation presented related to Version 1, they were to moderate accordingly. However, it was not acceptable to have a combination of Versions 1 and 2. In 2006, only Version 2 will be acceptable for moderation.

Teachers are also reminded that at Level 2, tasks need to be “*less familiar*”. This means the knowledge required to complete the task needs to be outside the everyday experiences of the learner.

Assessment tasks need to give learners clear opportunities to provide evidence of ‘appropriate’ Level 2 language. As for Level 1, language exemplars should clearly indicate language at Achievement, Merit and Excellence for Level 2. (Teachers should be aware that language exemplars on the Ministry of Education’s website have not been modified to show the change to ‘appropriate’ language.) If used by the learner, all work provided by the teacher to indicate Achievement, Merit and Excellence should be significantly manipulated to show it is their own work.

When making judgments, the whole piece of the learner’s work needs to reflect clear evidence of the level being assessed. Individual vocabulary items and structures should not be used solely to reach the required standard for Level 2.

According to Explanatory Note 6, the spoken presentation must be “*of a minimum length of two minutes*” not “*about two minutes*” as in the time length for the conversation standard. However, the emphasis should lie on the quality of the presentation. The wording of the title needs care, as it is not a ‘talk’ but a ‘presentation’.

At Merit and Excellence levels, it is important that the spoken presentation is “*organised*”, as this forms part of the criteria of the standard and must be adhered to if national consistency is to be achieved. Candidates need to be told this in the instructions to their activity. “*Delivery is confident and fluent*” is a criterion of Excellence only. Assessors should make sure that “*substantial development*” is adhered to for Excellence, as there is some inconsistency in the interpretation of “*substantial*” nationwide.

AS 90384; AS 90390; AS 90397; AS 90403; AS 90409; AS 90486; AS 90415; AS 90421; AS 90428

Conversation assessment

Until all standards are reviewed, care must be taken with the wording for the time length. There are inconsistencies in the wording of Explanatory Note 6 between the three conversation standards, when referring to evidence, and the candidate’s contribution to the conversation. Candidates’ contribution to the conversation may be “*about two minutes*”; they should be given direction about this in the instructions. However, the final decision regarding the time requirement must be: “Has the student met the standard?” Quality is always more important than quantity. As in 1.3, it is important for the activity to be set carefully for the conversations to sound natural and yet still offer candidates an opportunity for “*substantial development*” and “*wide variety of vocabulary and structures*”.

It needs to be noted again this year, especially when cutting and pasting from one level to another, that the word “*simple*”, which appears in Level 1, has been removed from the language criterion at Level 2 and that “*interaction is confident and fluent*” is a criterion of Excellence only.

Teachers should also note that the requirement for the learner to convey and seek information should not just be a prepared speech, with the teacher asking questions at seemingly pre-ordained places; or simply allowing the student to give what appears to be a prepared speech to a variety of questions and then, at the end, asking the learner if he/she would like to ask a question. The conversation should be as natural as possible.

AS 90387; AS 90400; AS 90406; AS 90412; AS 90489; AS 90418; AS 90431

Drafted writing assessment

Version 2 of the standard created a difference between the error statements for Achieved and Merit. The emphasis is on “*crafted writing*” and this applies to each of the levels, Achievement, Merit and Excellence.

The required minimum word length (see Explanatory note 6) must be given to the candidates in their instructions and also form part of the criteria of the assessment schedule. Teachers should note that “*extensive development*” in Excellence should cover depth as well as the number of points developed.

AS 90547; AS 90553; AS 90559; AS 90565; AS 90672; AS 90571; AS 90577; AS 90583; AS 90589

Speaking Assessment

Level 3 standards were reviewed in 2005. The version of the Level 3 standards for 2006 is now Version 2. It is most important for all teachers of Languages at Level 3 to check the NCEA website to ensure they thoroughly understand all changes.

The wording of the speaking time, “*a minimum of two to three minutes*”, appears to have caused some confusion among teachers. It would be advisable to take a minimum of two minutes. However, as with all speaking assessments, the emphasis should lie on the quality and breadth of the speech, especially when assessing Merit and Excellence. At Merit and Excellence, the candidate must give a speech, which “*(substantially) develops relevant information and/or ideas*”. Candidates should be carefully prepared to ensure they meet these requirements. Confusion was also apparent over the criterion, “*a variety of complex vocabulary and language structures*”, with teachers often thinking that the “variety” had to be at Curriculum Level 8. However, Explanatory Note 4 defines and makes clear “*complex*” as involving language “*up to and including Level 8 of the curriculum or equivalent*”. The criteria for Achievement and Merit both require this “*variety of complex vocabulary and structures*”. Because of this it was appreciably hard for both teachers and moderators to assess candidates in situations where they did not make errors that significantly hindered communication, did develop ideas and did have some vocabulary and structures at the appropriate level, but did not really have a variety. Despite this difficulty, assessor judgments were generally correct.

It is a criterion of this standard, at all levels, that candidates express a point of view. Many teachers are asking for the point of view to be developed for Merit and Excellence although this is not a requirement. However, a point of view must be clearly expressed and should not have to be inferred. Many topics chosen by teachers are not really conducive to the expression of a point of view. Candidates should be encouraged to use phrases that clearly express a point of view.

AS 90548; AS 90554 AS 90560; AS 90566; AS 90673; AS 90572; AS 90578; AS 90584; AS 90590

Conversation assessment

As for 3.2, the achievement criteria for Achievement and Merit both require a “*variety of complex vocabulary and structures*”. This caused some problems and made these standards sometimes difficult to assess.

It is important that there is ‘exchange’ at all levels in these standards. In a conversation, this is just as important as ‘development’. Some topics lent themselves better than others to providing opportunities for the candidates to add (substantial) development. Teachers had problems with whether the candidate had to ask a question in order to ‘exchange information’. The candidate is expected to seek information, but it is preferable for the teacher to say as little as possible and not be obliged to share too much information through responses and feedback.

As in 2.3, the exchange of information should not just be a prepared speech with the teacher asking questions at appropriate places. In these standards as well, the conversation time from the student as “*a minimum of two to three minutes*” caused some difficulties in assessing learner performance. The emphasis should lie on the quality and breadth of the contribution, especially when assessing Merit and Excellence. (See note for 3.2.) Assessors should remember that for Excellence the interaction must be “*confident and fluent*”.

“Confident and fluent” can also cause concern as teachers are not always sure what they mean. It does not mean the student should give a ‘performance’ or speak with the speed and flow of a native speaker. Pauses can be present. As long as they are natural and do not interfere with the gist of the conversation and do not hinder communication, they should not be penalised.

AS 90551; AS 90563; AS 90569; AS 90749; AS 90575; AS 90581; AS 90593

Drafted writing assessment

As for Level 2, the criterion for the crafted text which “*extensively develops ... relevant information*” should cover depth as well as the number of points developed. This makes a distinction, therefore, between the Excellence criterion and the Merit criterion, “*substantially develops*”.

Despite resources being available, as allowed in these standards, it was difficult for some candidates to gain Achievement. Learners need a lot of training and preparation in the classroom to be able to use resources effectively and independently.