



Department
for Education

Consultation Response Form

Consultation closing date: 18 December 2014

Your comments must reach us by that date

**Performance descriptors for use in key
stage 1 and 2 statutory teacher assessment
for 2015 / 2016**

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: David Reedy	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of Organisation (if applicable): United Kingdom Literacy Association	
Address: University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Gov.uk ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please insert an 'x' into one of the following boxes which best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other

Please Specify:

Subject Association

1 Do the names of the draft performance descriptors allow teachers and parents to understand the meaning of, and differentiate between, each performance descriptor?

If no, please provide details.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure
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Comments:

The names and the range of performance descriptors at each key stage are inconsistent, confusing and over complicated.

They are inconsistent both within and across subjects. For example in Reading there are four descriptors in KS1 but only one at KS2. Mathematics is the same. In Writing there are 4 descriptors at KS1 and 5 at KS2. There should be consistency in the number of descriptors between the key stages (see answer to question 2 below for suggestions).

The names are also confusing. 'Working towards' the national standard and 'below national standard' mean essentially the same thing – not there yet. As working towards implies a continuum it is almost impossible to define at a fixed point.

Mastery is a problematic term. Surely if children have met the national standard that implies that they are competent for their age. In addition how can a seven year old be a 'master' of writing? 'Mastery' implies a level of knowledge, understanding, and skill that few of us could say with confidence that we have achieved as adults. It therefore does not seem an appropriate term for children of primary school age. 'Exceeding National Standard' would be preferable name (see below), if these different levels are to be maintained.

There is also a discrepancy over the use of the term 'performance descriptors', which is used for both the levels (e.g. mastery), and later the criteria themselves. Different terminology for the things the children are able to do is needed.

UKLA contends that It would be more consistent, and understandable for all stakeholders, for there to be a single national standard in each subject at both key stages (as there is for Science).

If the current descriptors were retained it would simply be interpreted as reverting to levels under other names. The names of the new descriptors are likely to encourage continued labelling and could even make it worse – being Level 2 does not necessarily have the same pejorative connotation as being 'below' the national standard.

2 Are the performance descriptors spaced effectively across the range of pupils' performance to support accurate and consistent judgements?

If no, please provide details.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Given the problems outlined in our response to question 1, it seems sensible to completely review the consistency of the numbers and names of the descriptors across the key stages.

For consistency it seems more sensible for every area to have a single set of criteria defining the national standard at each key stage. Teachers could then make straightforward summative assessments under the following headings:

working towards the national standard: this means that the children are not fully secure in their attainment of all the criteria yet (teachers can highlight which ones);

meeting the national standard: this means that children are secure in most of the criteria;

exceeding the national standard: for these children the criteria are embedded and they comfortably demonstrate their use all the time.

Another benefit of the above would be that Teacher Assessment would then be brought more into line with the judgements made at the end of the EYFS, ensuring better coherence across the whole of the primary age range.

3 In your opinion, are the performance descriptors clear and easy to understand?

If no, which bullets lack sufficient clarity to allow for effective teacher assessment?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

No. The Performance Descriptors are not clear. In Reading and Writing a considerable number use qualifiers capable of different interpretations, e.g.; 'some', 'mostly', 'judicious', etc. These are ambiguous. With only one National Standard (see above), these confusing indications of degree would not be necessary.

In handwriting there is the use of the word 'correctly' for holding a pencil. Nowhere is 'correctly' defined nor any indication that there are a range of ways a child can hold a pencil comfortably to be an efficient handwriter. The term 'correctly' implies only one.

Much that is essential to the development of motivated and effective readers and writers is not included. For example there is no pleasure in writing mentioned and

the development of reader response is missing at KS1, which makes no mention of play with language, enjoyment of words, how the child brings knowledge of other words into reading, or the formation of opinions.

There is inconsistency between key stages. For example in writing, oral based work is mentioned in KS2 but not in KS1

4 In your opinion, does the content of the performance descriptors adequately reflect the national curriculum programmes of study?

If no, please state what amendments are required.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments: In Reading and Writing there are many cases where the performance descriptors are not assessment statements, but a re-statement of NC programmes of study slightly amended.

There is an excessive amount of detail. A KS1 teacher assessing whether a child is not yet at national standard across reading, writing, maths and science would have to consider 129 assessment bullet points, while a KS2 teacher would have to consider 144. The introduction of this assessment scheme would therefore considerably increase the time teachers take in making end of key stage summative judgements and thus impact on workload and teaching time.

UKLA believes that, as the draft descriptors currently stand, because of the lack of thorough consideration of purpose and audience, a child could meet all of the national standards, yet not produce an effective piece of writing.

5 Should any element of the performance descriptors be weighted (i.e. should any element be considered more important or less important than others?).

If yes, please detail which performance descriptor(s), which element(s) and why.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The descriptors are already weighted implicitly. There is an implicit weighting towards transcriptional elements in writing (approximately 80% of the criteria), and similarly on decoding in reading. This should be corrected to give equal weighting to composition and transcriptional elements in writing and to comprehension and word identification in reading.

As is clear from research (Harlen 2014), assessment has an unavoidable impact on the curriculum content and pedagogy experienced by pupils. If the descriptors are unbalanced then the curriculum as experienced will inevitably be so too.

These issues need to be addressed so that current weightings are rebalanced.

Reference:

Harlen,W (2014) *Assessment, Standards and Quality of Learning in Primary Education* (CPRT Research Survey 1), York: Cambridge Primary Review Trust. ISMB 978-0-9931032-0-9

6 If you have any further comments regarding the performance descriptors, please provide details. For example, is there further supporting information that would be helpful in understanding and using the performance descriptors?



Comments:

- UKLA contends that, like the curriculum, these performance descriptors constitute a mechanical view of what children's reading and writing is expected to look like at the end of the first two Key Stages. Not enough attention has been focused on children's development as readers and writers with their own enthusiasms, purposes and patterns of experience.

Where reading is concerned, there is a lack of understanding of the demands made on the young learner by the complexity of English orthography and also on the cognitive resources that young learners possess that enable them to make sense of such complexity. Consequently there is a lack of attention to the broader approaches to word identification that involve larger units than phoneme-grapheme correspondences, pattern recognition, and use of syntactic and semantic cues. There is also insufficient attention to the making of personal meaning from text, and no reference at all to reading on screen or multi-modal reading, both pervasive activities in the outside world.

In terms of writing, there is too little attention to the increasing range and sharpness of focus in addressing different audiences and the broadening of

the child's experience of writing for different purposes.

- For any set of criteria to be workable, exemplification that indicates clearly what the National Standard might look like is essential.
- An important criticism of the levels that this new scheme is intended to replace (see Tim Oates video on DFE site) was that “the whole system has been focussed on getting kids to move quickly through the levels” moving them on to harder, more advanced learning, rather than focusing on fewer things in greater depth and thereby developing deep conceptual understanding. However the new curriculum and these associated performance descriptors replicate this problem situation.
- Furthermore, as is clear from research (Harlen 2014) assessment has an unavoidable impact on the curriculum content and pedagogy experienced by pupils. If the descriptors are unbalanced then the curriculum as experienced will inevitably be so too.
- The table on page 3 setting out the descriptors and how they will be used for accountability purposes states in the final column that teacher assessment at KS1 will be part of a floor standard for KS1. This has not previously been the case and there has been no announcement that a floor standard for KS1 was to be introduced. Further information and proper consultation about the new floor standard is essential for this unexpected addition to the accountability framework.
- In whatever form they emerge, extensive professional development will be needed both for teachers and moderators to prepare for the use of the new performance descriptors. In the first few years of use a key issue will concern how these descriptors, based on the new National Curriculum, will be applied to children who have not followed the curriculum for the whole of the Key Stage. They should not be penalised for being the first cohorts.
- Finally we would ask: what is the validity of producing a curriculum, then testing, and then assessment? Have appropriate trials taken place?

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply.

X

E-mail address for acknowledgement: admin@UKLA.org

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 18 December 2014

Send by post to:

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Assessment Policy Team
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Sanctuary Buildings
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SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: PerformanceDescriptor.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk