

Evaluation Report on the Primary and Post Primary Shadow Year Trial July 2012

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This research was conducted by the CCEA Research and Statistics Unit from September 2011 through to June 2012. For further information about this evaluation please contact:

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Scope of the Report

This report outlines a range of stakeholder views from the primary and post primary Shadow Year schools that trialled (1) proposed assessment arrangements and (2) moderation proposals for the incoming Levels of Progression.

Outcomes from this evaluation will be shared with management during the lifespan of the project, allowing the information gathered to inform advice on the quality assurance and moderation of the incoming assessment arrangements on an ongoing and timely basis.

Acknowledgements

CCEA is grateful to all those who have contributed to this evaluation. We are very appreciative to all Shadow Year school teachers and school leaders for participating in the trial and providing regular feedback.

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Executive Summary

In advance of the implementation of the incoming assessment arrangements, a small number of primary (n=21) and post-primary (n=11)¹ schools took part in a trial of the new assessment arrangements during the 2011/12 school year. The trial was known as a Shadow Year trial as it ran alongside the current assessment arrangements.

Primary and post-primary schools participating in the Shadow Year were required to assess and report on the cross-curricular skills of Communication and Using Mathematics using the incoming 'Levels of Progression'. CCEA's Research & Statistics Unit tracked this cohort of schools through aspects of the assessment cycle.

Key Findings

Following 10 months of research and evaluation of the Shadow Year trial regarding the new assessment arrangements using the Levels of Progression, the main findings are summarised below:

Areas of Support:

All training throughout the evaluation process was rated as good. This includes the training received by primary and post-primary moderators and post-primary revisers.

Internal Standardisation was rated as being a useful and beneficial process by both primary and post-primary schools throughout the evaluation. Nearly all respondents felt the Internal Standardisation meeting encouraged professional

¹ It should be noted that the number of schools involved in the Shadow Year trial reduced due to Industrial Action by INTO

debate in assessment practice and was an essential part of the assessment process. The majority of schools involved in the Internal Standardisation case studies (primary and post-primary) commented on the usefulness of the CCEA Level of Progression grid and Expansion document.

Although the use of tasks and task approval system provided challenges in schools, many teachers valued the use of tasks and requested a CCEA validated/approved library of tasks for primary and post-primary use.

The majority of primary and post-primary respondents felt the number of samples required for each Pupil Portfolio was sufficient.

The majority of both the primary and post-primary schools indicated that they felt better prepared for the next academic year due to their involvement with the Shadow Year.

Areas of Concern:

Concerns were raised at the initial overview day at the start of the trial (28th September 2011) by both primary and post-primary schools regarding the timescales. Participants in the trial were unsure about how they could meet the deadlines or manage the process in the time proposed. Teachers also felt that pupils were being assessed too early in the academic year and questioned how an accurate reflection of a child's end of Key Stage ability could be collected in February.

Due to the feedback received at these early events, the timescale was amended and extended from February to the 14th March 2012 for the submission of levels. However, even with this change, concerns regarding the difficulty of meeting timescales and submission dates continued to be reiterated throughout the evaluation process.

Following four months of evaluation, proposals regarding a staged moderation approach were introduced to both primary and post-primary schools at an event held on the 23rd March. In general, this proposed staged approach had support from the majority of post-primary attendees but the minority of primary attendees. Whilst the post-primary group felt that accountability would be increased in the staged proposal, some primary attendees felt the proposed approach would be less robust than current arrangements. Primary school attendees felt that Levels of Progression should be used for schools, pupils and parents only and not used as a measure of school performance. This, in their opinion, would make the proposed assessment and moderation process fit for purpose.

Shadow Year participants were unsure whether the proposed moderation would ensure the assessment system was robust and transparent. Throughout the ten month evaluation period many respondents suggested that a model of visiting moderators would be the most robust and manageable.

The majority of primary and post-primary respondents felt the number of samples required for each Pupil Portfolio was sufficient. However half of the questionnaire respondents did not consider the requirements of the Shadow Year model for moderation manageable due to workload and timings.

Some primary Shadow Year participants deemed the current CCEA Assessment Tasks as inadequate and, “*not fit for purpose*”.

Post-primary respondents rated their experience of the task approval process as poor. This was primarily due to the software used being “ineffective” and “time consuming”.

Despite the problems with the current assessment tasks and the task approval system, many teachers valued the use of tasks and requested a CCEA approved library of tasks for primary and post-primary use.

A number of Shadow Year schools believed that the current algorithm used by CCEA to identify Pupil Portfolios for moderation could result in uneven work load in schools, with some teachers not having any Pupil Portfolios to submit and others having up to 18. Teachers felt this unfairness may raise ill feeling amongst staff. Attendees at the primary focus group in June shared this concern.

Feedback from primary Shadow Year schools indicated that they felt the moderator feedback was not useful. All groups at the primary focus group in June discussed how they felt the feedback was “disappointing” or “inadequate”. Finally, other concerns expressed or reiterated throughout the evaluation were:

- the increase in workload;
- robustness of the new proposed moderation system;
- use of data by ETI and DE (e.g. for target setting / benchmarking); and
- parents understanding or lack of understanding of the Levels of Progression.

Recommendations

Following this evaluation, the research suggests the following recommendations for the roll out of the new assessment arrangements in the 2012 / 2013 academic year:

Policy:

- Timescales should be reviewed for the moderation process, in particular:
 - a) the date for submitting levels to CCEA (currently the 14th March) should be later in the academic year.

b) the date for submitting requested Pupil Portfolios should be later in the academic year.

- Primary / post-primary own tasks should be approved and made available online for other schools to access and use.

Support:

- A guidance document should be produced for all primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. This document should provide an overview of the new arrangements and contain detailed information surrounding all aspects of the moderation process, for example, what must be included in a Pupil Portfolio for Communication etc.
- A clear and detailed communication is required for parents explaining the new Levels of Progression.

Operational:

- If possible, visiting moderators should be used for both primary and post-primary schools.
- More CCEA Assessment Tasks need to be created and made available online for September 2012.
- Primary moderator feedback needs to be improved upon and should provide more detailed information.
- Pupil Portfolio coversheet should be revised to include tick boxes to ensure the administration process is less time consuming.
- Moderators (primary and post-primary) have suggested that the forms "EMA 3" and "EMA 4" should be in electronic format.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Assessment Arrangements

The implementation of the incoming primary and post-primary assessment arrangements has been confirmed for 2012/13. In advance of this, a small number of primary (n=21) and post-primary (n=11) schools took part in a trial of the new assessment arrangements during the 2011/12 school year. The trial was known as a Shadow Year trial as it ran alongside the current assessment arrangements.

CCEA's primary and post-primary Curriculum Team selected schools that were best equipped to participate in a Shadow Year trial for the incoming arrangements. In addition to other factors (e.g. demographic detail) schools were selected based upon the following criteria:

1. primary schools that have participated in a pilot of assessment training between April and June 2011; and
2. post-primary schools that have: availed of optional capacity-building training in the assessment of cross-curricular skills; had teachers who are revisers, contributed to the exemplification database or the task approval process.

Primary and post-primary schools participating in the Shadow Year were required to assess and report on the cross-curricular skills of Communication and Using Mathematics using the incoming 'Levels of Progression'. CCEA's Research & Statistics Unit tracked this cohort of schools through aspects of the assessment cycle. Participating schools were temporarily exempted from their statutory duties, under the provision within paragraph 14 of the Education (NI) Order 2006. Thus, enabling them to concentrate on the incoming assessment arrangements and exempting them from the current 'Levels of Attainment'.

1.2 Rationale

The rationale of the trial was to ensure that the incoming statutory assessment arrangements, and in particular moderation procedures, are fit for purpose, manageable and will build confidence throughout the school system.

Information from research on the Shadow Year for the new assessment arrangements will provide CCEA with intelligence on schools' practice, decisions and problems encountered implementing the incoming assessment arrangements. CCEA will also determine if schools are taking a coordinated approach in implementing the Levels of Progression at all the necessary levels (individual, class, department and at a whole school level). Such information will inform CCEA of how best to support schools with each stage of assessment implementation in 2012/13 by:

- informing CCEA's communication strategy for implementation;
- eliminating mistakes / anticipating possible problems;
- improving implementation plans; and
- enabling Shadow Year schools to inform the implementation to best meet school needs.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Shadow Year was to trial aspects of the incoming assessment arrangements, and in particular moderation procedures to inform the system wide implementation of the Levels of Progression (encompassing Key Stage 1, 2 and 3) in 2012/13.

The aim was achieved by meeting the following objectives:

1. Evaluating all training and resources provided to support schools implementing the incoming assessment arrangements.
2. Evaluating the adequateness of the proposed teacher release provided to assist teachers.
3. Evaluating aspects of moderation (includes associated quality assurance and quality control processes).

Chapter 2: Evaluation of the Shadow Year Overview Day

This section of the report provides a summary of feedback collected at an initial meeting between CCEA, the Department of Education and Shadow Year participants. The Principal and a second member of staff from all primary (n=21) and post-primary (n=11) schools participating in the trial were invited to the seminar in September 2011. The purpose of the seminar was to (1) meet with CCEA officers supporting the trial; (2) discuss the aims, objectives, issues and expectations of the Shadow Year trial; (3) confirm timescales involved; and (4) outline support provided.

As part of the first phase of research and evaluation attendees' verbal feedback was noted throughout the course of the day. Feedback was also obtained from a questionnaire circulated at the end of the information seminar. Outcomes from both discussions and questionnaires were used to gauge participants' initial views and concerns with the proposed Shadow Year trial.

2.1 Primary Baseline Questionnaire

This section of the report presents the findings from the primary baseline questionnaire. Results are based on 35 completed questionnaires, representative of 20 of the 21 primary schools involved in the Shadow Year trial. Figures relate to the number of attendees who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall number of responses (n=35) to the questionnaire.

Initial Feedback:

By the end of the information seminar, almost all respondents indicated that they were clear on (1) their school's role in the Shadow Year trial (n=34) and (2) the system of moderation that will support the incoming assessment arrangements

(n=31). However, feedback demonstrated that respondents had concerns about the timescales for the implementation of the incoming assessment arrangements (10 comments).

The majority of respondents (22 out of 31) felt the primary pilot of training had sufficiently equipped schools for the implementation of the incoming assessment arrangements. However, six of such respondents also felt teachers required more in-depth training. Five respondents requested non-teaching time to become more familiar with the Levels of Progression and three respondents felt it would be necessary for teachers to revisit the online training course.

Further procedures to support the incoming assessment arrangements had been put in place by 12 out of 20 primary schools. Over half of the respondents indicated that their school had dedicated time to specifically plan for the incoming assessment arrangements (13 comments). Nine respondents also indicated that they had initiated Internal Standardisation procedures for the incoming Levels of Progression.

Almost all respondents (n=32) expressed concerns about their school's participation in the Shadow Year. The majority of respondents (n=31) felt they may encounter challenges during the trial. The main concern reiterated throughout the questionnaires was in relation to the timescales for assessment and moderation (21 comments). Respondents strongly believed that schools will not have enough time to meet the February deadline for the submission of levels (9 comments). Consequently, respondents requested additional non-teaching time for schools participating in the Shadow Year trial. Respondents indicated that such time was particularly required to enable schools to embed Internal Standardisation procedures (6 comments).

Feedback from the questionnaires also indicated that respondents felt the current moderation proposals require schools to assess pupils too early in the school

year and would not provide an accurate reflection of pupils' abilities when reported to parents in June 2012 (6 comments). Respondents also stressed the need for CCEA and the Department of Education to inform parents about the transfer from the current Levels of Attainment to the new Levels of Progression, in order to negate any confusion or concerns about falling standards (8 comments).

A smaller number of respondents highlighted the following additional concerns:

- the incoming assessment and moderation arrangements will be burdensome for schools (5 comments);
- reservations regarding the robustness of the proposed moderation system (2 comments);
- schools require more assessment tasks (2 comments); and
- clarification is required on how to ease Year 7 pupils transition from a primary school which used the new Levels of Progression to a post-primary school using the Levels of Attainment (2 comments).

School Management and Internal Standardisation:

Feedback demonstrated that 12 of the Shadow Year schools have an established system of Internal Standardisation in place. Procedures varied across schools. Respondents indicated that meetings are led by the²:

- Vice Principal (7 out of 12 schools).
- Principal (6 out of 12 schools).
- Assessment Coordinator (6 out of 12 schools).
- Key Stage Coordinator (5 out of 12 schools).
- Literacy / Numeracy Coordinator (4 out of 12 schools).

² Respondents were able to indicate more than one staff member.

Feedback revealed that Internal Standardisation meetings are attended by³:

- Staff within the whole school (6 out of 12 schools).
- Staff within a Key Stage (6 out of 12 schools).
- Staff within a given year group (5 out of 12 schools).
- Staff across Key Stages (4 out of 12 schools).

Within most schools (n=10) Internal Standardisation meetings take place once or twice a year. Respondents provided a brief description of the approach taken within their school's standardisation meetings. Respondents reported that teachers meet to review samples of work and agree on the level to be assigned (12 comments).

Additional Comments:

Respondents had the opportunity to provide additional comments at the end of the questionnaire. Many reiterated comments they had made throughout their questionnaire. Respondents emphasised that schools require more time to implement the assessment arrangements (8 comments) and stressed that the February deadline is unfeasible for schools to submit levels (6 comments). Respondents were also concerned that the moderation process will not be robust enough to prevent manipulation of assessment outcomes (3 comments).

The following quote summarises the main concerns reflected throughout the questionnaires:

- *“Model of moderation is not fit for purpose. Time frame of submission of materials is too short. Gap between assessment and reporting is too long. Younger pupils make greater gains in the second half of the school year, yet a level is already recorded against them. Developing a whole school approach without the*

³ Respondents were able to select more than one option.

necessary time for training for all year groups. 'Educating' parents is a big issue which DENI must take responsibility for. Will the system adapt in light of feedback?"

2.2 Post-Primary Baseline Questionnaire

This section of the report presents the findings from the post-primary baseline questionnaire. Results are based on 19 completed questionnaires, representative of the 10 post-primary schools involved in the Shadow Year trial. Figures relate to the number of attendees who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall number of responses (n=19) to the questionnaire.

Initial Feedback:

By the end of the information seminar, respondents indicated that they were clear on (1) their school's role in the Shadow Year trial (n=19) and (2) the system of moderation that will support the incoming assessment arrangements (n = 16). However, two respondents deemed the timescale for the implementation of the incoming assessment arrangements to be unrealistic. Two respondents also requested exemplar materials to be shared with Shadow Year schools as soon as possible.

Questionnaire findings revealed that all post-primary schools participating in the Shadow Year trial had adopted procedures to support the incoming assessment arrangements. Respondents commented that their schools:

- facilitate ongoing departmental discussions (4 comments);
- have revised assessment procedures (3 comments);
 - with a particular emphasis on reporting (2 comments);
- conduct SMT planning and discussion meetings (2 comments); and
- had reviewed and developed tasks (2 comments).

The majority of respondents (n=15) felt they may encounter challenges participating in the Shadow Year trial. Respondents (n=14) also expressed concerns about their school's participation in the Shadow Year trial. Respondents

(n=10) repeatedly commented that schools have insufficient time to implement the incoming assessment arrangements, with particular concern about the February deadline for the submission of levels:

- *“Very rushed and pressurised timings.”*
- *“Time and coverage of curriculum content, as well as assess[ing] levels accurately will be a challenge.”*

Respondents (n = 7) were also concerned about the impact of teacher release on pupils’ learning.

School Management and Internal Standardisation:

Feedback demonstrated that seven of the Shadow Year schools have an established system of Internal Standardisation for Key Stage 3. In all schools, meetings are administered within departments and are generally led by Heads of Department (four out of seven schools) or the Vice Principal (three out of seven schools). The majority of respondents (n=7) revealed that meetings are normally facilitated two or three times a year.

Respondents provided a brief description of the approach taken within their school’s Key Stage 3 standardisation meetings. Respondents outlined that teachers either review (6 comments) or conduct cross-moderation on (3 comments) samples of pupil work.

2.3 Feedback from Attendees at the Shadow Year Information Seminar

Data implications regarding the transition to a new system of assessment:

At the initial meeting, Shadow Year participants raised a number of concerns regarding the impact the transfer from the current assessment arrangements (Levels of Attainment) to the incoming Levels of Progression would have on Key Stage data at all levels (individual pupil, school and sector). Issues raised varied from those specific to the trial and the wider implementation scheduled for 2012/13.

Target Setting:

Participants were particularly concerned regarding their ability to set targets for the end of Key Stages in the first term (under The Education (Target Setting in Schools) Regulations (NI) 1998 legislation) within the Shadow Year trial and also for the full implementation. These concerns remained for the majority of participants at the end of the trial.

Attendees queried when schools could expect to receive new statistics for benchmarking and target setting purposes.

Principals also asked how Key Stage data would be shared for Year 7 pupils involved in the Shadow Year trial who would be assessed using the new Levels of Progression and then transfer to a post-primary school which uses the current Levels of Attainment⁴

⁴ It should be noted this statement was relevant to the primary schools participating in the Shadow Year trial (2011/2012 academic year) only.

Change in Standards:

There was a strong perception amongst attendees that the transfer from the current assessment arrangements to the Levels of Progression would result in a decline in assessment outcomes. Participants emphasised the negative impact this may have on:

- reporting to parents (changes in standards and inability to use the Level of Progression data in a Northern Ireland context during the Shadow Year trial);
- use of school data by DE and ETI; and
- sharing Level of Progression outcomes in school prospectuses.

For such reasons attendees emphasised the importance of:

- CCEA communicating the likely fluctuation in school assessment outcomes to all educational agents (DE, ETI etc);
- school guidance for all Shadow Year schools on how to share Level of Progression Data with parents; and
- a CCEA/DE communication to parents informing them about their school's participation in the Shadow Year trial.

Preparation for the Incoming Levels:

Primary representatives highlighted that school planning and Internal Standardisation will have a fundamental role in enabling primary schools to take a whole school approach to the incoming assessment arrangements. For such reasons attendees highlighted the importance of non teaching time to allow individual schools to establish how they will implement the incoming arrangements and necessary internal quality assurance procedures. Primary

attendees emphasised the importance of engaging teachers outside of Year 4 and 7 in the school planning and Internal Standardisation process.

Timescales for Moderation:

The most significant concern attendees had regarding the incoming assessment arrangements was in relation to the timescales for external moderation. Both primary and post-primary attendees unanimously agreed that the proposed timescales for the submission of teacher data and Pupil Portfolios for moderation were too early in the school year. This opinion was expressed with regards to both the Shadow Year trial and sector wide implementation and, despite some changes to timescales, remained a concern at the end of the trial.

Attendees perceived the timescales to be driven by moderation processes to the detriment of pupil assessment outcomes. Post-primary attendees were especially concerned that schools will not have covered all course content for English and Mathematics by the assessment time. Attendees highlighted that assessment judgements made in February would not be an accurate reflection of pupils' ability by the time they were reported to parents in June.

Robustness of Moderation Process:

Primary attendees questioned the robustness of the proposed moderation arrangements. A sizeable number of attendees stated that they had hoped for a much more rigorous system of moderation. Even with the use of a random sample selecting Pupil Portfolios for moderation, attendees feared the proposed moderation system could be easily manipulated by schools.

A large number of such attendees stated that they felt a moderation system utilising visiting moderators would be much more robust. Furthermore, attendees

felt that visiting moderators provide opportunities for professional development, through professional dialogue and capacity building.

Cross-Curricularity of Assessment:

Post-primary attendees requested clarification on the extent to which assessment tasks should be cross-curricular. While attendees recognised that a degree of cross-curricularity is required, for the purposes of manageability attendees indicated that they planned to embed assessment arrangements within their English and Mathematics departments before rolling out to other departments.

Impact on Pupil Learning:

A number of post-primary attendees raised concerns about releasing teachers for training and moderation duties, with the view that this will negatively impact on pupil learning.

Consultation Outcomes:

Primary and post-primary attendees queried if feedback and recommendations from the Shadow Year trial would inform any necessary changes to the proposed assessment and associated moderation arrangements.

Chapter Three: Evaluation of the Primary Shadow Year Moderation Information Seminar

In January 2012 CCEA held a second Information Seminar with Shadow Year primary schools. The purpose of the event was to update schools on assessment and moderation developments and discuss their Shadow Year experiences to date.

This section of the report summarises discussions from the seminar and presents findings from an evaluation questionnaire distributed on the day.

Results are based on 25 completed questionnaires. Figures relate to the number of attendees who answered each question, which may be fewer than the overall number of responses (n=25).

All respondents felt they had a clear understanding of the timescales involved in the moderation process. However, 22 out of 24 respondents felt that the timescales were not appropriate. 19 respondents commented that the timescales were too tight.

Following the seminar, all respondents had an understanding of how to make a summative judgement on a piece of pupil's work in Communication. 21 respondents had an understanding of how to make a summative judgement on a piece of pupil's work in Using Mathematics.

The majority of respondents had a clear understanding of what should be included in their portfolios which are being submitted for moderation (n=22).

Respondents were asked to rate how clear their understanding was on a number of logistics / procedures regarding the Shadow Year moderation arrangements.

- 23 respondents had a clear understanding regarding the samples for moderation.
- All respondents had a clear understanding regarding the Form 1: Declaration of Internal Standardisation (EMA1).
- 22 respondents had a clear understanding regarding the Form 2: Portfolio Cover Sheets (EMA2).
- All respondents had a clear understanding regarding the collection of Pupil Portfolios by CCEA.

The majority of respondents found the session on schools sharing their experience of Internal Standardisation useful (n=23 out of 24). 12 respondents commented that they found it useful to hear of the challenges other schools encountered. All respondents rated the guidance booklet as useful.

Following the information seminar, all respondents who answered felt prepared regarding the moderation process for the Shadow Year. However, eight respondents commented that the timescales were too tight / unrealistic. Respondents were provided with the opportunity to make any additional comments they may have had at the end of the evaluation questionnaire. Five respondents commented that teachers need more time out of class to prepare (and need sub cover for this). Three respondents stated that the day provided them with clarification / reassurance about the moderation process.

Summary of Discussions at the Primary Shadow Year Moderation Information Seminar

Internal Standardisation:

Two Shadow Year schools were asked to give a presentation on their experiences of the trial to date, with a particular focus on Internal

Standardisation. Both schools were very positive about the process of Internal Standardisation and felt it was a beneficial and worthwhile exercise.

School A discussed how they had found creative writing pieces easiest to level for Communication and overall found Using Mathematics more difficult to level than Communication. The Principal explained that the school was affected by the INTO Union Industrial action during the trial, but that out of good will, INTO members were willing to participate in the Shadow Year trial until the end of the submission of the portfolios.

The Principal also explained how they have a large percentage of pupils on the SEN register (31%) and found levelling (especially in Using Mathematics) very difficult for these particular pupils.

School B described how the Internal Standardisation meeting was a good learning process for their teachers. They found there was more debate on the tasks used rather than the levels as some staff members felt the class work didn't show enough breadth. The Principal explained how some members of staff took a level and created an activity from it and they found it easier to write their own tasks. The Principal also stated that they found the cover sheet difficult and felt they would need further training on how to complete the cover form, especially for Using Mathematics. It was also stated that the process was time consuming and the timeframe for reporting was unrealistic. School B felt that the assessment tasks were not useful or fit for purpose and would prefer to use Assessment Units.

Both schools had concerns regarding the communication of the new levels to parents. Both schools felt the communication sent out to schools for parents from the DE was very confusing and not informative enough.

Moderation Procedures:

Attendees were unaware they would have to forward what they considered a high number of portfolios for both the cross-curricular skills of Communication and Using Mathematics. The group strongly felt that either: a) half the participating schools should submit the full number of portfolios for Communication and the other half Using Mathematics or b) the number of portfolios requested for both skills should be lowered. It was discussed that next year (2012/2013) schools would only have to forward the number of portfolios for one of the skills. The participating primary Shadow Year schools felt this was unfair that they had to provide double what other schools would have to provide next year. Some of the group stated that at this stage, they felt there was no reward for participating in the Shadow Year trial, just additional work and stress.

Timescales for Moderation:

Attendees expressed great concern regarding the timescale available for the moderation process. It was noted that schools would have a turnaround time of a week from learning which portfolios to send for moderation, to sending them to CCEA. Attendees felt this was not possible considering they would have to send the same number of portfolios for both Communication and Using Mathematics. It was noted that this could end up having a negative impact, as schools already feel over burdened. Teachers commented that due to the CCEA algorithm for portfolio selection, there could be an imbalance of portfolios across classes. It was discussed that this could cause ill feeling among staff members within a school.

Teacher Release:

The group felt that teacher release and substitute cover was required to enable schools to manage the process of moderation.

Moderation for Pupils with a Special Educational Need (SEN):

There were some concerns raised about the moderation and levelling of pupils with a special educational need. It was felt that the levels may not be suitable for some SEN pupils.

Industrial Action:

Some of the attendees informed the group and CCEA representatives that they had various members of their teaching staff who were part of the INTO Union and therefore involved in the industrial action. It was noted that due to staff commitment, some were still willing to participate in the trial until the submission of the portfolios.

Pupil Feedback:

Attendees were asked if they would object to CCEA asking for pupil feedback regarding the assessment tasks used for moderation. None of the schools present raised any objection regarding this. One school stated that they would welcome a CCEA Research Officer coming to the school and talking to their pupils face to face about their thoughts on the assessment tasks.

Assessment Tasks:

The general view amongst the group was that the assessment tasks were not fit for purpose. Some of the group stated they preferred Assessment Units (AU's) and although they were not perfect, they were better than the current assessment tasks. Attendees felt there needed to be a much larger range of tasks available and that currently there is not enough variety.

Chapter 4: Internal Standardisation Case Studies

As part of the Shadow Year evaluation process, CCEA Officers from the Research & Statistics Unit attended a total of 10 Internal Standardisation visits in Shadow Year primary and post-primary schools. These observational visits enabled the Research & Statistics Unit to gather information on how the Internal Standardisation meetings were conducted. It also provided the opportunity for CCEA to witness any difficulties encountered during the process and allowed the schools to provide their feedback on the Internal Standardisation process. Internal Standardisation is a collaborative process by which teachers within a school consider work produced by their own pupils and, using pre-determined criteria, reach a common agreement on standards as being typical of work at a particular level.

The visits provided the CCEA Officers from the Curriculum Team with information on the different approaches primary and post-primary schools took to the Internal Standardisation process using the new Levels of Progression.

The following is a brief summary of common approaches and themes used for Internal Standardisation. Detailed reports for each school on the Internal Standardisation research visits are included in Appendix C (Primary) and Appendix D (Post Primary).

4.1 Primary Case Studies

Common School Approaches to Internal Standardisation:

At all Internal Standardisation meetings, all teaching staff members were in attendance. There was a high level of engagement from teachers observed in all six primary meetings.

All schools referred to the Levels of Progression grid or the Expansion document (or both) for support during the Internal Standardisation meeting.

Five of the six meetings attended focused on the cross-curricular skill of Using Mathematics. The majority of schools (five out of six) focused on samples of work during their Internal Standardisation meeting. Schools were able to come to a general consensus regarding the appropriate level for each sample of work.

Common Themes from Primary School Visits:

All schools commented that the Levels are *'too broad'* and the gaps between levels *'too wide.'* Schools expressed concerns about the lack of time to level pupils' work, select samples and compile portfolios. It was highlighted by all schools that it was difficult to capture evidence, particularly in Using Mathematics as pupils are reluctant to demonstrate 'using', i.e. their 'working out'.

Two of the schools recognised the challenge in levelling samples as a singular piece of work without reference to which pupil completed it. Teachers argued that it will be difficult for moderators to assess a piece of work without any knowledge of the pupil and the processes employed.

Teachers from two of the schools questioned the suitability of the Levels of Progression for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). One teacher highlighted that many pupils with MLD will not progress beyond Level 1 by the end of Key Stage 2. Teachers were also concerned about the impact of the levels of pupils with MLD on the overall school scores. Teachers from two of the schools reflected that pupils often demonstrate elements of a higher level but not all requirements and are consequently rewarded the lower level. In one school teachers requested clarification on whether pupils have to demonstrate all requirements to receive the higher level; in another school teachers commented

that the requirements were too complex and reported that there would be a significant drop in the number of pupils achieving higher levels.

On a positive note, all schools stated they found the Internal Standardisation meeting to be beneficial. It was also discussed by all schools that the support documents (Level of Progressions grid / Expansion document) were useful.

4.2 Post-primary Case Studies

Common School Approaches to Internal Standardisation:

All schools (n=4) awarded a level to each piece of pupil work prior to the Internal Standardisation meeting. During the meetings, all schools looked at pieces of work levelled at a Level 5, 6 and 7.

In all four schools, teachers quality assured each other's levelled pieces of pupil work during the Internal Standardisation meeting. In three of the four schools, teachers worked individually whilst quality assuring the levelled pieces of pupil work.

All schools were able to come to a general consensus regarding the level that was appropriate for each piece of pupil work. Most of the schools had a high level of engagement and discussion during the Internal Standardisation meeting.

Common themes from Post-Primary School Visits:

Two of the four schools raised concerns over the timescales involved in the moderation process. Both felt the timescales currently in place were too tight. Further to this, two schools commented on the heavy workload post-primary schools face, especially in relation to the moderation process (creating tasks, assessing pupils, conducting Internal Standardisation and compiling Pupil

Portfolios). It should be noted that other comments / issues detailed by the schools are noted under the individual case studies.

On a positive note, two of the four schools stated they found the Internal Standardisation meeting to be beneficial. It was also discussed by two schools how the support documents (Level of Progressions grid / Expansion document) were useful.

At this stage it should be noted that a member(s) of the Curriculum Team attended some of the Internal Standardisation visits alongside the Research Officer. This may have skewed how the Internal Standardisation visit would normally have been conducted by the school. This is noted in the individual case studies throughout the report. When a member of the Curriculum Team was in attendance, some teachers present at the Internal Standardisation meeting looked to CCEA for guidance or reassurance on the appropriate level for individual pieces of work.

Chapter Five: CCEA Assessment Tasks – Pupil Feedback

As part of the overall primary Shadow Year trial evaluation, pupil questionnaires were distributed to the participating schools. The purpose of these questionnaires was to gather the Year 4 and Year 7 pupils' feedback regarding CCEA Assessment Tasks, completed as part of the moderation process.

5.1 Pupil feedback on CCEA Assessment Tasks - Communication

A total of 869 pupils from Shadow Year schools responded to the pupil questionnaire regarding the CCEA Assessment Tasks on Communication.

Respondent numbers are broken down as follows:

	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Pupils
Girls	446	51.3%
Boys	422	48.6%
Missing value	1	0.1%
Total	869	100%

	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Pupils
Year 4	480	55.2%
Year 7	386	44.4%
Missing value	3	0.3%
Total	869	100%

Over 85% of pupils found the Communication Assessment Task easy (85.2%, n=737). Comments from pupils who found it easy are summarised below.

- Able to / knew where to find the information they needed (75 comments).
- Enjoyed completing the task / thought it was fun (64 comments).

Comments from those pupils who found the Communication Assessment Task hard are summarised below.

- Couldn't read some of the words (13 comments).
- Found it difficult coming up with ideas (12 comments).
- Difficult to find the information needed (11 comments).

Just under 18% of pupils encountered a problem completing the Communication Assessment Task (n=17.3%, n=150). The main problems encountered by pupils are summarised below.

- Did not know what to write / found it hard to think of something (12 comments).
- Did not understand the question (10 comments).
- Found it hard writing / spelling certain words (10 comments).

The majority of pupils did not think the Communication Assessment Task could be better (80.3%, n=683). Of those who felt it could be better (19.7%, n=168), 28 commented that it should have been harder; 18 thought it should have been easier; 15 thought it should have been shorter and 12 commented that more instructions/examples for the task should have been provided.

5.2 Pupil feedback on CCEA Assessment Tasks - Using Mathematics

A total of 833 pupils from Shadow Year schools responded to the pupil questionnaire regarding the CCEA Assessment Tasks on Using Mathematics.

Respondent numbers are broken down as follows:

	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Pupils
Girls	426	51.1%
Boys	405	48.6%
Missing value	2	0.2%
Total	833	100

	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Pupils
Year 4	408	49%
Year 7	419	50.3%
Missing value	6	0.7%
Total	833	100

Over 77% of pupils found the CCEA Using Mathematics Assessment Task easy (77.5%, n=632). Comments are summarised below.

- Knew the answer / had been taught about it in class already (72 comments).
- They are good at / like Maths (38 comments).

Those pupils who found it hard made the following comments:

- Did not understand / were confused by the task (52 comments).

- The questions were hard (38 comments).

Just under a third of pupils encountered a problem completing the CCEA Mathematics Assessment Task (30%, n=247). The main problems encountered by pupils were:

- a diagram was not drawn properly / measurements incorrect (37 comments);
- pupils didn't understand the task (21 comments); and
- the question(s) / paragraph were not worded well / clearly (19 comments).

Just under half of the pupils who responded, felt the CCEA Mathematics Assessment Task could be better (47%, n=382). The following suggestions were made:

- make the task harder (88 comments);
- better / clearer wording of questions / paragraphs (50 comments);
- make the task easier (38 comments); and
- provide more detail / explanation (26 comments).

Chapter Six: Evaluation of March Research Workshop – Staged Moderation Proposal

In March 2012 new moderation proposals were designed, based on prior feedback obtained from Shadow Year schools (Appendix E). Curriculum and Assessment staff held additional meetings with Shadow Year Principals on March 23rd to communicate the proposals. The proposals were also shared with primary and post-primary Principals' groups for Assessment Implementation at a meeting on March 27th.

These meetings provided an opportunity to discuss the moderation proposals and feedback was facilitated and collected by Research & Statistics (R&S) Officers in attendance.

The purpose of the meetings was to:

- share new proposals for moderation and ascertain participants initial opinions on the new proposed moderation arrangements;
- discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a staged approach to moderation in general, and the specifics of the CCEA proposal; and
- inform planning and advice on the moderation arrangements.

Following discussions CCEA Officers asked the groups to complete a poll designed by Research & Statistics with the aim of approximately estimating the groups' reaction to the moderation proposals.

The following section of the report contains feedback collected at the three meetings and provides a summary of the key issues.

Appropriateness of a Staged Approach to Moderation:

During the post-primary meeting there was support for a staged approach to moderation. Respondents requested that CCEA select the samples for moderation as this will improve robustness and confidence in the system. The group felt that accountability would be increased with a staged approach and felt that it would be important for parents to trust that schools are making secure assessment judgements. During the meeting the overall group was split into smaller groups to aid discussion and to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to provide feedback.

Overall the post-primary groups deemed the advantages of a staged approach to be: improved timescale; increased confidence in the assessment and moderation system and in schools' judgements; and giving pupils time to develop to the end of the Key Stage 3 year before making assessment judgements. One group suggested that CCEA should provide clarification and guidelines for the moderation process.

The results of the poll showed that 18 of the 21 post-primary Shadow Year attendees thought a staged approach to moderation was appropriate, three did not.

There was a lack of consensus in the primary group; some attendees could see the potential benefits to a staged approach, some were unsure and some felt that a staged approach would be less robust than the current assessment arrangements.

15 of the 24 primary Shadow Year respondents polled thought a staged approach to moderation was appropriate, eight did not, and one did not answer. Only one respondent commented, stating that the staged proposal was open to abuse.

Suitability of Proposed Timings:

The discussions during the post-primary meeting suggested that attendees would prefer assessment deadlines to be later in the year, possibly in May when GCSE pupils are not in attendance. This would allow schools time for portfolio preparation.

14 of the 21 post-primary respondents to the poll thought the proposed timings were suitable for Stage 1 and Stage 2, seven did not. Two people that supported a staged approach commented that the sample should be later in the year; one asked that CCEA ask for a further sample in May/June to ensure accountability. 14 of the 21 respondents thought Stage 3 timings were appropriate, five did not, and two did not answer.

The primary discussions did not focus on the timings as the group was more concerned about the robustness of the proposals and the validity of assessment data. Those who did mention timings were concerned that schools would have to maintain evidence of pupil work from previous years. One primary group commented that having prior portfolios could be beneficial to teacher work load, a further comment suggested that giving schools more control about when submissions were made would be advantageous.

'[beneficial] If you had more control and were able to generate work for the portfolios at a time that really suits, in relation to things that you are naturally planning to do'

14 of the 24 primary respondents to the poll felt the proposed timings were suitable for Stage 1, seven did not and three failed to answer. 11 of the 25 primary respondents felt Stage 2 timings were appropriate, eight did not, five did not answer. 8 of the 24 primary respondents felt Stage 3 timings were

appropriate, nine did not and seven chose not to answer. Of these, one stated that they could not comment and one was not sure.

Robustness of Moderation Proposals:

At the post-primary meeting Stage 1 of the proposal was deemed less robust than the other stages, and during discussions attendees stated that only participating Shadow Year schools should be allowed to enter Stage 1 in the first year.

Despite uncertainty about Stage 1 robustness, attendees were satisfied that the accountability of the suggested moderation samples was appropriate. They also commented that robustness and rigour could be maintained (even in Stage 1) if random quality assurance checks were conducted.

10 of the 21 post-primary respondents to the poll felt the proposed staged approach to moderation was suitably robust. Eight did not and three did not answer. One commented that the sample must be sufficient and random, one asked for a sample to be requested by CCEA in May/June.

During the primary group discussions the majority felt that the proposals weakened the robustness of moderation. All agreed that robustness is the key to successful assessment arrangements and the system needs to be '*watertight*'. A small number of attendees stated that robustness should be upheld '*irrespective of the manageability*'.

There was a view that the moderation process was going to be used to measure schools' performance and attendees were concerned that this would skew the assessment process thus making it inadequate.

Attendees welcomed a CCEA selected portfolio and felt that the quality assurance checks were vital if the system is to have credibility.

Much of the discussion focused on the robustness of the proposals. The majority of the primary group felt that the proposals were not robust enough to ensure the system had integrity among schools and with parents. When questioned further by R&S they suggested that removing target and benchmarking requirements from the process, allowing Levels of Progression to be used for schools, pupils and parents only and ensuring the Department of Education do not use the results to measure school performance, would make the proposed assessment and moderation fit for purpose. Attendees also suggested having external visiting moderators/assessors facilitate portfolio discussions in schools. They suggested that engaging in professional dialogue will build teachers capacity and introduce more robustness to the assessment and moderation system.

Only three of the primary respondents polled felt that the proposed staged approach to moderation was suitably robust. 19 did not and two did not answer. Comments relating to robustness included '*but nothing is [robust]*' and '*more of the same old*'.

One supporter of a phased approach commented that '*to be robust any samples provided must be selected by CCEA*'.

Manageability of Moderation Proposals:

15 of the 21 post-primary respondents to the poll felt the proposed approach to moderation was manageable, four did not and two did not answer. Comments showed respondents were concerned with timings but one felt that if moderation was moved to later in the school year they would be satisfied.

Dialogue during the meeting suggested that the proposed moderation approach would not be manageable for primary schools. Attendees were concerned about

keeping portfolios of pupil work and felt that an unfair burden was being placed on Year 4 and Year 7 teachers.

Six of the 24 primary respondents to the poll felt the proposed approach to moderation was manageable, 10 did not and eight did not answer. Two commented that they were unsure and one suggested that manageability would be achieved if the current levels of substitute cover were maintained.

Additional Comments:

The post-primary group discussed many specific issues such as problems with the task approval system, lack of progression between the KS3 assessment and GCSE, number of tasks needed for moderation, difficulties communicating changes in Using Mathematics and Communication to parents, and discrepancies in understanding how the portfolios should balance and how a level should be decided. These issues were discussed with CCEA Curriculum and Assessment Officers but highlight the need for detailed guidance to be available for all schools prior to September 2012. The group asked that CCEA provide schools with additional support during the first years of the new assessment arrangements.

'Schools not involved in the Shadow Year have a mountain to climb'

Only one post-primary respondent made additional comments in the poll, stating that they support the staged approach but with submission of levels in June.

The primary group articulated a number of additional issues. These included a discussion on the unsuitability of a large number of CCEA tasks and how they were not consistent with the Levels of Progression. Attendees discussed how the assessment was designed to complement the Northern Ireland Curriculum yet it

appears to be a way to measure school performance and this is not only flawed but detrimental to children's education.

Like the post-primary group, the primary group felt that the one positive aspect of the change was the proposal for random quality assurance checks. Attendees felt that this could help instil confidence in the assessment system in Northern Ireland.

14 primary respondents made additional comments in the poll. Of those who supported the idea of a staged approach the comments were:

- Proposed moderation is not robust/ system not trusted (3 comments).
- System will be more robust if CCEA select portfolios (1 comment).
- Too time consuming (1 comment).
- Is moderation about teachers' knowledge of levels or about pupils achieving levels (1 comment).
- Better than current arrangements (1 comment).

Seven comments were made by those who did not support a staged approach.

- Levels should not be used as an external measuring tool, i.e. benchmarking for DE. This can result in schools manipulating results (6 comments).
- If this process is unfit will there be enough time to implement changes? (1 comment).

Chapter 7: Final Evaluation

7.1 Final Primary Evaluation

This section presents the results from the final primary evaluation questionnaire and research workshop. Results are based on completed questionnaires from 28 respondents. Qualitative information obtained from a research workshop attended by 20 Principals / teachers in June (representing 13 out of the 18 schools) was analysed alongside feedback collected from the questionnaire. The purpose of workshop was to collect in-depth information to reinforce and further explore that collected from the questionnaire.

Internal Standardisation:

27 out of 28 respondents had participated in an Internal Standardisation meeting this academic year for Communication and 24 out of 28 respondents had for Using Mathematics. 23 respondents commented their whole staff attended the Internal Standardisation meeting(s). The majority of respondents indicated staff were grouped in a mixture of year groups to standardise pieces of work (n=22 out of 26).

Nearly all respondents noted their Internal Standardisation meeting(s) focused on Levels of Progression (n=26). 12 respondents indicated that their meeting focused on an aspect of a cross-curricular skill.

Respondents were asked how the samples of work were selected for the Internal Standardisation meeting(s). 14 out of 21 respondents answered that the samples of work were collected and collated by one person and issued to teachers. The majority of respondents indicated that samples of work were collected from a range of classes (n=26).

Teachers were asked to indicate how many pieces of work were standardised during the Internal Standardisation meeting(s). The majority of respondents looked at 10 pieces of work (n=5) or 30 pieces of work (n=5). The fewest number of pieces of work standardised was two (n=1) and the most was 60 pieces of work (n=1).

The majority of respondents looked at levels 1 – 4 during their Internal Standardisation meeting. 26 out of 28 respondents felt this was an adequate number of Levels to support their understanding of the standards. The majority of respondents assessed samples individually, then discussed collectively (n=17 out of 24). Four respondents commented they found it a useful / helpful exercise.

Respondents were asked to indicate what support materials were used during the Internal Standardisation meeting and their usefulness in supporting them to arrive at judgements on pieces of work. The table below displays the information received.

Support material	No. of respondents who used the support material	No. of respondents who rated it as useful
Levels of Progression	27	26 out of 27
Expansion document	27	27 out of 27
Exemplification materials	20	16 out of 20
CCEA Internal Standardisation Guidance	19	17 out of 19

Nearly all respondents felt the Internal Standardisation meeting encouraged professional debate in assessment practice (n=27). 23 respondents indicated

that a consensus was reached for each sample considered. Four respondents commented that this general consensus was reached after some discussion / debate.

The majority of respondents felt confident contributing to the Internal Standardisation meeting(s) (n=27). Nearly all respondents felt confident using the Levels of Progression in making assessment judgements (n=27).

22 respondents felt the Internal Standardisation process informed planning and 24 felt it informed assessment decisions. Four respondents commented that it made them more aware of the new Levels of Progression. 20 respondents indicated that actions had been identified as a result of Internal Standardisation meetings. Four respondents indicated that they planned to hold more / further Internal Standardisation meetings.

Focus group feedback

All groups found Internal Standardisation a useful process. Four of the five groups commented that their whole staff were involved in this process. Three of the groups remarked that this allowed all staff to become more familiar with the levels, in particular, Foundation Stage teachers. Three groups commented that their teachers were more confident making judgements following Internal Standardisation. Three of the five groups noted that Internal Standardisation was important / good practice.

However, one group commented that Internal Standardisation "*highlighted that the process is very subjective*". This group also felt it was easier to use the Levels of Progression to make assessment judgements for numeracy than literacy and that the lines of development are more useful than the Levels of Progression. Another group commented that they felt there were discrepancies in some of the Level of Progression statements in terms of lines of development and that they found the expansion document, "*quite vague*" in places.

Submitting Assessed Levels of Progression to CCEA:

The majority of respondents did not have any difficulty assigning a level to individual pupils in Communication (n=17) or Using Mathematics (n=16).

Just under half of respondents felt the timing of the submission of levels was not appropriate (n=13). 12 respondents commented that it was too early in the school year. Further to this, the majority of respondents did not feel the timing of the request for Pupil's Portfolios was appropriate (n=16). 11 respondents commented that the timeframe was too tight and that more time is required between the request for Pupils' Portfolios and their submission.

Focus group feedback

All groups felt that the timescales for submitting the assessed levels was too early in the year. Three groups commented that pupils were still learning and being taught at this stage, therefore the awarded level is not summative or end of Key Stage. Three groups also felt there was not much time between portfolio request and submission of the portfolios. Despite this, nearly all groups (four out of five) found the current C2K system manageable. One group commented that the form filling (administration) was very time consuming and suggested a tick box would be more useful. All groups agreed with this suggestion.

One group commented that they encountered difficulty accurately showing a child's ability and demonstrating the breadth of progression statements with only three pieces of work. This group also remarked they found it hard to show the required elements for Using Mathematics. Another group felt that the levels (especially Levels 2 and 4) "*became much too wide*". Finally one group stated they would need additional substitute cover for Year 4 and Year 7 to provide portfolios for moderation. They also commented that they would like to have the option to use more "quality" CCEA generated tasks.

CCEA Assessment Tasks:

CCEA Communication Assessment Tasks

Respondents were asked which assessment task they had used for Communication. Respondents indicated that they had used the following CCEA Assessment Tasks.

- Myths, Legends, Novels and Fairytales (n=10)
- Finding Facts (n=5)
- My Hero (n=5)

21 out of 27 respondents felt the CCEA Communications Assessment Task provided sufficient opportunity for pupils to demonstrate performance at the level(s) indicated. However, four respondents commented that they found it difficult to monitor the task in a classroom setting. Respondents felt the CCEA Communication Assessment Task was appropriate for the following pupils:

- Pupils with a statement of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) – (n=13 out of 16).
- Newcomer pupils – (n=7 out of 8).
- Rest of the class – (n=21 out of 25).

Respondents were asked to rate their pupils engagement with the assessment task. 26 out of 27 teachers stated their pupils were engaged with the CCEA Communication Assessment Task. 22 out of 27 respondents rated the CCEA Communication Assessment Task as useful for supporting their professional judgement of the standard that their pupils have achieved.

CCEA Using Mathematics Assessment Tasks

Respondents were asked which assessment task they had used for Using Mathematics. Respondents indicated that they had used the following CCEA Assessment Tasks.

- Cross Country Running (n=5)
- Sports Day (n=5)
- Marathon Mania (n=5)
- How does your garden grow? (n=5)

14 out of 23 respondents felt the CCEA Using Mathematics Assessment Task provided sufficient opportunity for pupils' to demonstrate performance at the level(s) indicated.

Respondents felt the CCEA Using Mathematics Assessment Task was appropriate for the following pupils:

- Pupils with a statement of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) – (n=7 out of 11).
- Newcomer pupils – (n=4 out of 7).
- Rest of the class – (n=15 out of 22).

18 out of 23 teachers stated their pupils were engaged with the CCEA Using Mathematics Assessment Task. 12 out of 23 respondents rated the CCEA Using Mathematics Assessment Task as useful for supporting their professional judgement of the standard that their pupils have achieved at this point. Four respondents commented that not all pupils “fell” easily into one clear level.

22 respondents found the layout of the CCEA Assessment Task user friendly and 20 respondents rated the “Assessing Pupils’ Responses to the Task” useful for supporting them to assess pupils’ work.

Just under half of the respondents indicated that the approach suggested in this assessment task differed from their usual assessment activities (n=13).

Pupil Portfolios:

The majority of respondents felt the number of Pupil Portfolios requested from their school was sufficient (n=15). The remaining five thought too many were requested. However, half the respondents were not satisfied with the distribution of Pupil Portfolios selected for submission to CCEA (n=10).

Of those who answered, just over half felt the number of pieces of work required in a Pupil Portfolio for Communication was sufficient (n=9 out of 16).

The majority also felt that the number of pieces of work required in a Pupil Portfolio for Using Mathematics was sufficient (n=12 out of 16).

However, the majority of respondents felt they did not have sufficient time to compile the Pupil Portfolios requested by CCEA (n=14).

Focus group feedback

Again the majority of groups commented that the timescales were too tight / early for the submission of Pupil Portfolios to CCEA. It was suggested that after Easter would be more appropriate. Three groups felt that the coversheet was too time consuming and again it was suggested that a tick box would maybe be more suitable for this. Whilst one group felt the tasks were useful, the remaining groups did not. It was commented that they were not, "*fit for purpose*" and were, "*vague and confusing*". This is contradictory to the findings from the online questionnaire. One group felt it would be beneficial for some tasks to be adapted to another level and also for more CCEA tasks to be available. Three of the five groups felt there was clarity about what should be included in the Pupil Portfolio. However one group commented that the content and type of task to be included was vague. This group also felt the Communication Portfolios should have included some reference to Talking & Listening.

Whilst two of the groups felt the Pupil Portfolios did provide an overall view of the pupil, two groups did not. One group strongly felt that face to face moderation would be much more useful and would help to avoid manipulation. Finally, one group stated they require additional substitute cover for the preparation of portfolios.

Verification of Standards

All groups felt that the feedback received from moderators was disappointing / inadequate. Four of the groups commented that more detailed feedback is required. One group stated they would like individual feedback for each pupil. Another group felt the moderator feedback did not reflect the amount of work teachers put into preparing portfolios. This group also raised the concern that the amount of feedback from moderators would reduce even further as this is rolled out to all schools next year. Questionnaire findings demonstrated that the majority of respondents (11 out of 17) rated the moderator feedback as not useful or not at all useful.

All groups felt that outcomes from this year's Levels of Progression were different from what would have been achieved using the Levels of Attainment. Two of the five groups commented that the levels were lower (not as many Level 3's at Key Stage 1 and Levels 5's at Key Stage 2). However one group stated they found similar Key Stage 1 outcomes. Another group voiced that they found the outcomes less useful than the outcomes from the Levels of Attainment. They commented that almost all Year 4's were a Level 2 and Year 7's a Level 4. One group remarked that face to face moderation is needed to ensure standards are correct.

Following the Shadow Year trial experience, just over half of respondents felt the assessment and moderation process was unmanageable (n=15). Nine respondents commented regarding the amount of time required for this process. One such respondent said,

“It was a stressful time with a huge amount of admin involved. It left little time for the ongoing class preparation”

Respondents were provided with the opportunity to make any additional comments they had regarding the Shadow Year experience. Seven respondents mentioned the time constraints and workload involved throughout the process. One such respondent commented:

“We have been overwhelmed by this task. Even with extra days out of the classroom a lot of evenings were given to preparing and marking. I have questions about delivering this to all schools next year. I don’t think it is workable in its present form”.

However, four respondents commented positively, stating they found it a useful / helpful process. One comment made was:

“Having participated this year leaves me better prepared for next year”.

Overall views / experiences of the Shadow Year

Positives

Four of the five groups commented that having been involved in the Shadow Year trial, they felt better prepared for next year. Three of the four groups commented that Internal Standardisation was useful and a large positive part of the process. Three groups also felt the whole school approach was beneficial.

Negatives

The main negatives detailed by the groups were: the timescale (four groups); the robustness of the system (three groups); and that the process is time consuming (three groups). Two groups remarked that there was not enough substitute cover available and that the feedback from moderators was inadequate. Two groups also commented that the pupils were awarded the levels too early in the year as both teaching and learning were incomplete at this point.

Concerns

Two of the five groups remarked that they felt there was far more assessing than teaching with the new assessment arrangements. One group commented that they felt there would be a drop in pupil attainment with the new Levels of Progression. Another group stated that they felt the levels are very subjective and that opinion will vary from teacher to teacher.

The majority of the groups felt it would be beneficial to use approved tasks created by primary schools and have these available on a Task Library for other schools.

One group commented that they felt disheartened by the lack of change in response to feedback given throughout the year from the Shadow Year schools. All groups agreed with this statement.

7.2 Post-Primary Final Evaluation

This section presents the results from the final post-primary evaluation questionnaire and research focus group. Results are based on completed questionnaires from 16 respondents. Qualitative information obtained from the focus group attended by 11 Principals / teachers in May (representing six out of the eleven schools) was analysed alongside feedback collected from the questionnaire. As previously stated, the purpose of the focus group was to collect in-depth qualitative information to reinforce and further explore that collected from the questionnaire.

Experience and Views of the Shadow Year Moderation Trial:

The majority of respondents agreed that the Shadow Year model of moderation helped to achieve the following statement: *“The purpose of moderation is to validate teacher judgement and assure consistency within and between schools”* (n=12). The majority of respondents also agreed that the Pupil Portfolios their school submitted for moderation were: *“representative of the level standard the pupil is working at”* (n=11). However, five respondents commented on the short timescale available to complete the Pupil Portfolios with adequate and representative pieces of work.

The majority of respondents did not feel the timing of the submission of levels was appropriate (n=14). Nine respondents commented that the submission of levels was too early in the academic year. Further to this, the majority of respondents did not feel they had sufficient time to compile Pupil Portfolios requested by CCEA (n=13). Eight respondents commented that there was not enough time available and therefore they were under a lot of pressure.

Overall, half the respondents felt the requirements of the Shadow Year model for moderation were manageable (n=8) and half did not (n=8). Seven respondents commented that more time is needed to manage the workload effectively.

The majority of respondents felt the number of samples required for each Pupil Portfolio was sufficient (n=14). Respondents were asked to indicate the type of evidence they included in their Pupil Portfolios (other than the CCEA approved task). Nine respondents included other assessment tasks and four respondents included class work. Two respondents included pieces of homework.

Focus group feedback

The groups unanimously agreed that assessment levels had to be reported too early in the academic year (14th March). The group felt that pupils may have achieved a higher level if the levels were reported later e.g. May.

After some discussion it became evident that there was some confusion surrounding the acceptable and correct procedure for moderation. One school believed that all three pieces of work in Using Mathematics had to be 'at' or above the submitted overall level. However other schools stated that as long as two out of the three pieces of work were at the same level then this was acceptable (e.g. if three pieces of work were Level 4, Level 4 and Level 3 then an overall Level 4 could be awarded). The teachers present felt that CCEA had provided mixed messages surrounding the correct information. One attendee was a moderator and advised that it was clear from the Pupil Portfolios he had moderated that there was some misunderstanding or confusion regarding this.

Various members of the group indicated that the CCEA Task Approval system did not function well which subsequently delayed the assessment process. The group agreed that they welcomed the idea of a Task Writing Tool; however, the length of time taken to get approval was unsatisfactory. One teacher remarked that tasks were approved more vigorously than GCSE level and there was a lot of work involved in trying to get approval. All teachers present at the focus group strongly felt that the approved tasks should be made available in an online library for other schools to use or refer to.

The group felt they had sufficient time to compile the Pupil Portfolios as most completed them prior to submitting the levels. However, this feedback contradicts the results gathered from the online questionnaire. Participants took the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the time of year for submission of portfolios and requested that CCEA consider May as an alternative.

Having participated in the Shadow Year, everyone agreed that their major concern was the time available for moderation next year. Participants suggested that DE provide substitute cover for the moderation process. Many schools were unaware of the assessment and moderation plans for next year (2012/2013) or what will be involved in the process. The group felt that some schools that received assessment training in 2011 will find the process challenging to implement in 2012/13. The group felt schools not involved in the Shadow Year process may leave the assessment and portfolio collection to the last minute as they will not be aware of how much work the new arrangements require.

The group unanimously agreed that guidance needs to be produced by CCEA and provided to all post-primary schools. It was also suggested by one teacher that it may be beneficial for representatives from Shadow Year schools to speak to other schools and share their experiences.

Teachers requested more guidance regarding task writing. A few members of the group remarked that when they had produced their tasks they felt they had successfully reflected the appropriate standard, and were surprised that the tasks were unapproved after first submission.

Task Approval Process:

Respondents were asked how many tasks they submitted for approval. The table below displays the breakdown of responses.

No of tasks submitted	No. of respondents
0	1
1	6
2	2
3	4
4	2
5	1

Five respondents indicated that they had one task approved on first submission. Eight respondents had one task approved on second submission.

Half the number of respondents rated the feedback from the CCEA Task Approval Team as useful (n=7 out of 14). Four respondents commented positively on the feedback received. However three respondents commented that the task approval system was ineffective. One such respondent commented, *“Took far too long to get approval back – months in fact due to technical*

problems and delays. In the end I had to email the tasks several times and pester CEA to get a response.”

The majority of respondents rated their experience of the task approval process as poor (n=13). 10 respondents commented negatively about the software (task writing tool) used for the task approval process. It was commented that it was, “*ineffective*” and, “*time consuming*”.

Respondents were asked to outline their experience of the task approval process. Again, seven respondents commented on the ineffectiveness of the software used (task writing tool). One comment made was, “*support offered was great throughout but I think technology and time really can be a letdown and I would be concerned how the process will cope next year under the strain of having every school submitting tasks for approval.*”

The majority of respondents did not feel they required further support in relation to assessment task design and approval (n=12); this contradicts focus group findings.

Focus group feedback

The entire group encountered a lot of technical issues when commencing the task approval process. One teacher stated she received no feedback through the task system and contacted CCEA directly by email. It was remarked that there was only a small number of schools involved this year with the Shadow Year and participants were concerned that the system will not work next year with such a large number of schools involved.

Again the group commented that they liked the idea of the system, especially the opportunity to submit tasks online. However, problems with the software meant that schools did not receive approval in a timely manner. Participants suggested that CCEA should "*spread*" task approval over a number of years. The group discussed that it is imperative that the technical aspect of the task approval process works as this year has been a "*disaster*".

The entire group acknowledged the benefits to having an approved task, believing that any problems are "*ironed out*" by the approval mechanism. Teachers were initially cross and/or upset with the feedback received on tasks that were not approved first time. However on reflection, teachers felt the feedback was justified and the advice provided by the revisers was constructive. Participants found the approved task much easier to score and this provided consistency in their marking.

A number of teachers commented on verbal feedback received from CCEA and found this very helpful. CCEA had provided a lot of support to the group throughout the moderation process but they acknowledged that this level of support could not be sustained in future years due to the volume of schools involved.

The group all agreed that three or four tasks were a sufficient number and any more would be too many. A few members of the group voiced that this number enabled a good spread of tasks. However, the attendees representing Communication all felt that Communication should have three tasks rather than four; one task for Reading, one for Writing and one for Talking and Listening.

The group all strongly agreed that they would like clarification if tasks should be completed under controlled conditions. It was discussed amongst the group that if a teacher does not tick the box for planning and edit on the task approval coversheet then they do not have to produce and include drafts in the portfolios. The conditions under which tasks were completed should be included on the cover sheet to ensure fairness. Again attendees asked CCEA to produce guidelines and include instructions on this matter. Instructions for missing or incomplete portfolios should also be included in the guidance.

The group felt that it was more difficult to achieve a Level 5 or higher with the new Levels of Progression. They were unsure whether this information has been shared with senior teachers and parents. A concern raised was that it would appear to those who are unaware of the new levels that standards have fallen and schools / pupils have, "*gone backwards*".

Finally the group conversed about including pieces of class work in Pupil Portfolios and some of the group was unsure what this meant. The majority of attendees felt the work in pupil folders would not be suitable. The group all felt it would be better to include three tasks as it would be more difficult using class work as evidence.

Internal Standardisation:

All respondents had participated in Internal Standardisation meeting(s) during the school year and found it useful to do so. Nine respondents commented that this was an essential part of the process in order for comparisons to be made. One teacher stated it allowed teachers to, "*Stand over their marks*".

Having participated in Internal Standardisation, respondents were asked to rate their confidence in relation to making an assessment judgement using the Levels of Progression for; an individual piece of pupil work, a pupil overall and for a mode (Communication only).

- All respondents were confident regarding an individual piece of pupil work.

- The majority of respondents were confident regarding a pupil overall (n=15).
- All respondents were confident regarding a mode (n=7 out of 7).

Focus group feedback

The entire group unanimously agreed that Internal Standardisation was a very useful process. The group all agreed that they were confident after participating and felt that they "*could do their job*". It was also remarked that this enabled teachers to complete moderation and therefore Pupil Portfolios could be completed and ready for submission if requested by CCEA.

In particular the group found Internal Standardisation beneficial for discussing and debating borderline pieces of work. However, teachers were concerned that there may not be enough time to carry out additional Internal Standardisation for Talking and Listening. The group all agreed that they require information about how Talking & Listening is going to be moderated in the future.

Overall Views and Experiences of the Shadow Year:

Respondents were provided with the opportunity to make additional comments about any aspect of assessment and moderation of the Shadow Year. Four respondents commented that they found the process difficult and stressful. Three respondents indicated that they liked the idea behind the Shadow Year but there were a number of problems (e.g. time scales) which need resolved for the process to be successful. One such respondent commented,

"In theory, the idea behind the Shadow year was good but the timescale, requirements, technical difficulties, poor communication and ultimate frustration made it very difficult to remain positive. My department worked tirelessly to adapt to the changes and embrace them, but we were hit with every possible obstacle. Once again, the expectations falling on the shoulders of the English department added to our pressures this year in what was already challenging enough in terms of new controlled assessment, new format exams and the ongoing implementation of the revised curriculum."

Focus group feedback

The group all provided their feedback individually regarding their views / experiences of their involvement in the Shadow Year. Each attendee provided both positive and negative comments.

The group unanimously agreed that the support and help received from CCEA staff was excellent and much appreciated. The entire group felt better prepared for next year even though the workload was heavy this year. The group also commented that they found it beneficial to have the opportunity to attend the focus group to share their feedback and to discuss experiences with colleagues from other schools. The attendees felt it would be useful for schools to have a means to keep in contact regarding the new assessment arrangements. A discussion forum or learning community would enable schools to support each other.

A number of attendees discussed how their pupils found the Shadow Year a positive experience and liked having to complete set tasks. One teacher remarked that her pupils had a greater awareness of the Levels of Progression and what they meant, and also how the pupils were proud of their Pupil Portfolio.

One teacher thought that using tasks in the new assessment arrangements prepared pupils for GCSE, and another commented that pupils seemed to be more excited and interested in the topic when they could see the relevance of mathematics in day to day life and how it was used. A good proportion of the group felt that it improved the application of skills greatly amongst their pupils.

Pupils' experiences seemed positive; however, one teacher stated that his pupils became fed up completing tasks and felt pressurised completing them. Another believed that pupils were much more focused when they had the end of year Key Stage 3 test.

Some of the attendees added that being involved in the Shadow Year process has helped clarify their own understanding of the Levels of Progression.

Again the main negative aspect mentioned was the tight timescales and the unsuitability of the timing of the submission of levels.

Some attendees remarked they felt there was a lot of unnecessary administration required in the Shadow Year trial moderation, and this could be cut down greatly, e.g. repetition on coversheets.

Another issue raised by some of the group was regarding other subject areas. One teacher stated that in her school, other subject areas had been very keen to be part of the cross-curricular aspect of the tasks for Communication and Using Mathematics. She commented that she was disappointed when this didn't happen as she felt it was a lost opportunity. The majority of the group felt that there should be more cross-curricularity and teachers of other subject areas should be aware of the new Levels of Progression. A few attendees commented that they believed it is unfair that the English and Mathematics departments were left solely with this workload and pressure. However, other members of the group felt that English and Mathematics departments should be the only departments involved in the marking and levelling of assessments.

Finally, the group asked that a guidance document is produced for all post-primary schools. This should provide information and guidelines on the moderation process, new Levels of Progression and Pupil Portfolios. The group felt it would be very beneficial if CCEA provided a suggested timeline in this document for schools not involved in the Shadow Year to give them an awareness of when aspects of the process should be completed. There was the concern amongst the group that other schools are not aware of the amount of work involved in the new arrangements.

Participants asked that an online bank of approved tasks for post-primary schools to upload to, refer to or use is provided by CCEA.

8.0 Conclusions, Recommendations and Limitations

8.1 Conclusions

In conclusion to the research, there have been a number of concerns raised and reiterated throughout the evaluation of the Shadow Year trial. It is imperative that these concerns are considered when future decisions are made regarding the assessment arrangements. The main concerns raised throughout the evaluation were:

- timescales for the submission of Levels and Pupil Portfolios are problematic;
- pupils are assessed too early in the academic year;
- the arrangements will create increased workload;
- robustness of the new proposed moderation system is not evident;
- use of assessment data by DE and the ETI for target setting / benchmarking is inappropriate given the lack of standardisation of assessments; and
- parents are not aware of the new Levels of Progression.

It is worth noting that this trial was conducted during a period when a number of other initiatives are being introduced in schools. In the 2012/2013 academic these include; the introduction of the new computer based assessments NILA and NINA in primary schools and training for the "Using ICT" Levels of Progression.

Despite this, schools involved with the Shadow Year (both primary and post-primary) recognised some benefits to participating in this trial. Internal Standardisation was rated as a useful and beneficial experience by all schools. Primary schools particularly liked the whole school approach to this process.

The majority of primary and post-primary Shadow Year schools also conveyed that they felt better prepared for the next academic year due to their involvement with the Shadow Year.

8.2 Recommendations

Following this evaluation, the research suggests the following recommendations for the roll out of the new assessment arrangements in the 2012 / 2013 academic year:

Policy:

- Timescales should be reviewed for the moderation process, in particular:
 - a) the date for submitting levels to CCEA (currently the 14th March) should be later in the academic year.
 - b) the date for submitting requested Pupil Portfolios should be later in the academic year.
- Primary / post-primary own tasks should be approved and made available online for other schools to access and use.

Support:

- A guidance document should be produced for all primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. This document should provide an overview of the new arrangements and contain detailed information surrounding all aspects of the moderation process, for example, what must be included in a Pupil Portfolio for Communication etc.
- A clear and detailed communication is required for parents explaining the new Levels of Progression.

Operational:

- If possible, visiting moderators should be used for both primary and post-primary schools.
- The Pupil Portfolio coversheet should be revised to include tick boxes to ensure the administration process is less time consuming.
- More CCEA Assessment Tasks need to be created and made available online for September 2012.
- Primary moderator feedback needs to be improved upon and be more detailed.
- Moderators (primary and post-primary) have suggested that the forms "EMA 3" and "EMA 4" should be in an electronic format.

8.3 Limitations

There are a small number of limitations which affected the evaluation of the Shadow Year trial. These are summarised below.

- The Shadow Year trial involved a small sample of schools. The research is based on a final number of 18 primary schools and 11 post-primary schools. Their views and opinions may not accurately reflect the views and opinions of the remaining primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland (there are a total of 854 primary schools and 216 post-primary schools in Northern Ireland excluding special schools).
- There was a limited number of CCEA Assessment Tasks available this academic year on the Task Library.
- CCEA Assessment Tasks were not identified in the research. Therefore unless named, it is difficult to know which task pupils are referring to.
- Many schools across Northern Ireland were involved with the Industrial Action undertaken by the Union, INTO. Some of the participating schools had to withdraw their involvement with the Shadow Year trial due to this

action (initially 21 primary schools were involved with the trial). Some of the remaining schools had members of their staff involved with the industrial action.

Appendices

Appendix A: Post-Primary Reviser Training

As part of the overall Shadow Year evaluation, post-primary revisers were provided with the opportunity to share their feedback and experiences of the reviser training. In turn, this information may be used to inform the development of future training of post-primary revisers. A total of six respondents completed an evaluation questionnaire. Two respondents were involved in approving tasks for Communication and four respondents were involved in approving tasks for Using Mathematics. It should be noted that as numbers are below 100, the results are displayed as (n=).

Reviser Training:

- All respondents felt the quality of training was good (n=6).
- All respondents felt the training content was relevant (n=6).
- All respondents felt they were ready to approve tasks following the training (n=6).
- All respondents found the support materials useful (n=6).

Three revisers commented that although the training was very good they could not be fully ready until they commenced revising submitted tasks.

Assessment Tasks:

Most of the respondents felt the key characteristics for successful task approval matched the approval criteria (n=5).

All respondents felt that teachers need further support when designing tasks (n=6).

Readiness of Teachers:

Over half the respondents felt that schools were / are not ready to write / develop their own tasks for moderation at Key Stage 3 (n=3 out of 5). Interestingly, all three respondents were revising Using Mathematics tasks.

Approval Criteria:

All those who answered deemed the draft approval criteria appropriate for the task approval process (n=4 out of 4).

Task Approval Process:

The majority of respondents felt the task approval process could be improved (n=5).

All respondents felt they had adequate time to approve / revise tasks received from schools (n=6).

Appendix B: Evaluation of the Moderator Training

Primary Moderator Training

As part of the overall primary Shadow Year trial evaluation, questionnaires were distributed to the primary moderators. The purpose of these questionnaires was to gather their feedback regarding the moderation of the Pupil Portfolios received from the participating primary Shadow Year schools.

A total of 37 questionnaires were received. It should be noted that as numbers are below 100, the results are displayed as (n=).

Moderation Training:

All respondents rated the quality of training for Communication and Using Mathematics as excellent or good (n=37). 11 respondents commented the training was clear / concise. Following the training, all respondents felt confident moderating the portfolios independently (n=37). 11 respondents remarked that the support available from CCEA was / will be beneficial and eight respondents commented on the usefulness of the samples of work.

Procedure and Support:

All respondents found the “Moderators’ Handbook” useful (n=37). Eight respondents commented that they have referred or will refer to it.

All respondents who answered found the “EMA 3” form clear (n=36 out of 36). The majority of respondents found the form “EMA 4” clear (n=35 out of 37). Nine respondents commented that a comment bank would be useful. A further nine respondents commented that the forms were clear / easy to complete.

All respondents who answered found the transfer of information / data between forms “EMA3” and “EMA 4” manageable (n=36 out of 37). 14 respondents commented that an electronic version would be helpful and save time copying the same information e.g. names / UPI number.

The majority of respondents had used the Quality Assurance (QA) referral process (n=26 out of 37). Of the 26 who had used it, all those who answered rated the process as good (n=22 out of 22). Nine respondents commented they found it reassuring to have this system.

Of those who answered, just under half indicated that they required help / support whilst moderating (n=17 out of 35). The majority of those who did require help / support whilst moderating, acquired it by telephone (n=14). The majority of those who required help / support, enquired about Pupil Portfolios which contained more than one CCEA task.

Portfolios:

The majority of respondents spent between 20 and 30 minutes moderating each Pupil Portfolio (n=17). 11 respondents commented it took them between 15 and 20 minutes.

Respondents were asked to comment on the similarities / differences between portfolios at the same level and at different levels. 30 respondents commented that, at the same level, there were too many portfolios containing the same samples of work; therefore there was a lot of repetition.

At different levels, 11 respondents commented in some cases it was difficult to differentiate between levels with the same task. Seven respondents commented on teacher annotation and the variety of the effort put into this task.

Moderation of Communication:

The majority of respondents felt the process of confirming the overall level of Communication portfolios was sufficiently clear / understandable (n=35 out of 37).

Moderation of Using Mathematics:

Of those who answered, the majority of respondents felt the pieces of work / examples contained in the Using Mathematics portfolios demonstrated aspects of the “Requirements” and the “Knowledge and Understanding” (n=26 out of 34). Nine respondents remarked that there was not enough detail / more evidence was required for “Requirements”. Eight respondents highlighted the importance of robust teacher annotation.

Moderation Process:

The majority of respondents did not encounter any problems / difficulties during the moderation process (n=22 out of 36). Five respondents highlighted that some teacher annotation was not detailed enough.

27 respondents made recommendations for the moderation process. The main recommendations were: to have cluster moderation groups (n=12); and to use electronic formats of the forms EMA 3 and EMA 4 (n=6).

All respondents indicated that they have learnt / gained something from their involvement in this process that they will take back to their teaching role. 13 respondents commented they now have a better understanding of the Levels of Progression and 10 respondents commented they have a greater understanding of the process. A further 10 respondents commented they are now in the position to advise / support their colleagues.

36 out of 37 respondents would be interested in continuing to act as a moderator next year.

Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to make any additional comments regarding the moderation process. Nine respondents praised the facilitators / training. Eight respondents commented they enjoyed moderating.

Group Feedback:

Moderators were also provided with the opportunity to give additional qualitative feedback in groups. Moderators were split into eight groups and each group was asked to comment on three areas: the Moderator training; Working from home; and the Moderation process. Respondents noted the positives and negatives / suggestions for improvement under each heading.

The main positives noted from all three headings were:

- The live samples / scripts used during the training were useful – five groups.
- The training was informative – four groups.
- The forms (EMA 3 and EMA 4) were explained well – three groups.
- There was good support from CCEA staff – three groups.

The main areas of suggestions were:

- have the forms in electronic format – three groups;
- make use of Cluster groups for moderation – three groups;
- provide more examples of difficult portfolios – three groups; and
- need uninterrupted time to complete moderation – three groups.

The main negative detailed by three groups was regarding their concern over the volume of work which will need to be moderated next year.

Post-Primary Moderator Training

A total of 10 questionnaires were received from post-primary moderators. It should be noted that as numbers are below 100, the results are displayed as (n=).

Moderator Training:

Five respondents were involved in the moderation of Communication and five with Using Mathematics.

All respondents rated the training as very useful in preparing them for their role as a moderator (n=10).

Following the training, the majority of respondents were confident moderating their allocated portfolios (n=9).

Procedures and Support:

All respondents found the 'Moderation Handbook' useful (n=10).

The majority of respondents found the EMA3 – Moderation Record form straightforward (n=9). All respondents found the EMA 4 – Moderation Report form straightforward (n=10). Four respondents commented it would be useful if pupil names / numbers could be printed on the forms to avoid wasting time.

All respondents found both forms fit for purpose (n=10).

The majority of respondents found it manageable to transfer the information between the 'EMA 3' to the 'EMA 4' (n=9). Again, five respondents commented it would be useful if pupil names / numbers could be printed on the forms to avoid wasting time.

The majority of respondents felt confident completing the EMA 4 – Moderation Report form (n=9).

Half of the respondents required help or support whilst moderating (n=5). Of those who answered, the majority accessed the help / support via email (n=3 out of 4).

Moderation of Portfolios:

The majority of respondents spent approximately 15-20 minutes moderating one Pupil Portfolio (n=4). Three respondents spent between 20 and 30 minutes.

Over half of respondents found the process of verifying a portfolio straightforward (n=6).

The majority of respondents found it useful to have one Approved Task in each Pupil Portfolio (n=9). Seven respondents commented the approved task was easier to moderate.

Moderation of Communication Only

The majority of respondents did not agree with the rule applied (for individual reasons) to whether or not the Pupil Portfolio is at the right level (n=3 out of 5).

Moderation of Using Mathematics Only

Of those who answered, half the respondents felt the pieces of work / examples contained in the Using Mathematics portfolios demonstrate aspects of the 'Requirements' and the 'Knowledge and Understanding' (n=2 out of 4).

Moderation Process:

The majority of respondents did not encounter any problems / difficulties during the moderation process (n=6 out of 9). Six out of nine respondents had recommendations for improvements to the moderation process.

All respondents felt they have learnt or gained from their involvement in this process.

Appendix C: Primary Internal Standardisation Case Studies

Primary School A

School Organiser of Meeting: Numeracy Coordinator

First IS Meeting of the Year:

No - the meeting attended by CCEA Staff on the 5th January 2012 was the school's second Internal Standardisation meeting of the year and focused specifically on Using Mathematics. Teachers did not focus on a particular aspect of this cross-curricular skill; rather samples of work covered all aspects of Using Mathematics.

The first meeting was facilitated on the 7th November 2011 and centered on Communication. The format and structure of the day was consistent with the meeting on the 5th January 2012, which is summarised below. Feedback from the Principal and teachers reflected that the first Internal Standardisation meeting was generally very successful; teachers were positive about the structure of the meeting. all felt they had the opportunity to contribute and teachers were able to reach agreement on the majority of pieces of work.

Future Plans for IS Meetings:

The school had no plans to facilitate further Internal Standardisation meetings during the year. By the 5th January, the school had used three school development days for statutory assessment; two for Internal Standardisation⁵ and one for planning purposes.

⁵ Both Internal Standardisation meetings were whole day events.

At the meeting, the Principal indicated that the next stage would involve the compilation of Pupil Portfolios which were submitted to CCEA for moderation by the 28th March 2012.

Planning and Preparation:

It was apparent that the meeting required a great deal of planning and preparation by all teachers, led by the numeracy coordinator. All teachers were required to administer classroom activities and provide subsequent samples of work to the numeracy coordinator between the 6th and 16th December 2011. From these samples, a total of 30 pieces of work were selected (18 from Key Stage 1 and 12 from Key Stage 2) to be reviewed during the Internal Standardisation meeting.

Prior to the meeting, the numeracy coordinator compiled a template for teachers to use while levelling pieces of work. This template included space for teachers to provide a comment and indicate a level for each sample of work (see example below):

Example 1: Template for teachers to use while levelling the samples

Sample Number	Title	Comments	Level
1A	'Toys in my stocking'		
1B	'Toys in my stocking'		
1C	'Toys in my stocking'		
2A	'The 3 Bears eat their porridge'		

In addition, all samples of work were annotated and contained comments on pupils' individual performances prior to the meeting.

Structure of the Meeting:

All staff (including Foundation Stage) were in attendance at the meeting. Following a brief presentation by the Principal, teachers were divided into three groups of four; all groups had a mixed composition of Foundation, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers. Within groups, teachers discussed and allocated a level to each sample of work, using the hardcopy template to record feedback. Towards the end of the afternoon, all staff came together to meet as a whole group and come to agreement on the levels allocated to each sample.

The processes employed by teachers to: (1) level samples within groups; and (2) come to agreement as a whole staff will be explored in more detail below.

Levelling Work in Groups:

The approach taken by teachers varied between groups. In some cases, teachers worked in pairs; in other cases, all teachers within a group discussed the samples. Regardless of the approach taken, all teachers took each sample individually and commented on: (1) the purpose of the task; (2) the processes involved in completing the task; (3) which aspects of Using Mathematics were covered; and finally (4) which level they would attribute to the task.

In one group, teachers commented on their experiences of using the tasks with their pupils. Teachers reflected on any problems encountered and commented on the importance of context and clarity to ensure that pupils understand the task requirements and are able to complete the activity.

There was a high level of teacher engagement in all groups.

Whole Staff Agreement on Samples:

Following the group levelling of samples, the whole staff came together and commented on which level they attributed to each sample of work.

Overall there was a high level of agreement between groups. Teachers explained why they allocated a particular level, often referring to the level requirements, especially whenever groups failed to come to agreement. Teachers typically assigned a lower level whenever they believed pupils provided insufficient evidence.

Consistent to the approach taken by one group during the levelling exercise, some teachers commented on their personal experiences of using the samples with their pupils. In such instances, teachers reported whether pupils required support to complete the task. Teachers also remarked on their knowledge of individual pupils' abilities and recognised that some pupils may not have demonstrated the evidence to achieve a higher level within a particular sample, but stated that they have the ability to do so. Many teachers recognised the challenge in levelling samples as a single piece of work without reference to which pupil completed it. Teachers argued that it would be difficult for moderators to assess a piece of work without any knowledge of the pupil and the processes employed.

In a few cases, the staff were unable to assign a level to a sample of work. Teachers concurred that such samples were unsuitable as the requirements of the activity were unclear.

Support :

Throughout the meeting teachers referred to the Levels of Progression grid and Expansion document (level descriptors and level requirements). Whilst

participating in the levelling exercise, teachers commended the usefulness of these documents. However, one group of teachers reflected that the requirements for Using Mathematics were too complex and it is too difficult for pupils to meet all requirements in order to achieve a high level.

Additional Comments:

During the meeting, teachers highlighted a wide range of concerns in relation to the statutory assessment arrangements and the Levels of Progression, all of which are summarised in this section of results.

(1) Accountability

The first concern expressed by teachers was in relation to the '*shift in accountability*'. Teachers commented that all teachers are now responsible for target setting and consequently hold a greater degree of accountability.

(2) Inflation of Levels

Teachers recognised that the pressure of accountability and school closures has led many primary schools to inflate their levels. Teachers stressed that a robust system of moderation is required to prevent such inflation.

(3) 'Drop in Levels'

Teachers commented that the requirements of the Levels of Progression are too complex to enable pupils to achieve high levels. Specifically, teachers felt there will be a significant drop in the number of pupils obtaining Level 5. Teachers were concerned that such a '*fall in levels*' will be negatively misconstrued by parents and the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) as a '*drop in school standards*.'

(4) Communication for Parents

Such concerns led to teachers consistently reiterating the need for a communication to parents explaining the transfer from the current Levels of Attainment to the new Levels of Progression. Teachers requested that such a communication is clear and comprehensible for parents. They expressed concerns that parents have limited understanding of the current Levels of Attainment and were apprehensive that they would fail to understand the implications of the change to the Levels of Progression.

Teachers recommended a clear communication which explains to parents what is required of pupils to achieve a level 1 / level 2 etc. Whilst teachers accepted that schools will have to provide a degree of clarity to parents, they stressed the need for an official communication to parents from the Department of Education (DE).

(5) Breadth of attainment within the Levels of Progression

Teachers commented that the levels are '*too broad*' and were concerned that pupils will not show enough attainment to progress to a higher level year on year. Teachers reflected that pupils can often demonstrate elements of a higher level, but not all and consequently are rewarded the lower level. Teachers recognised the importance of including a plus or minus to clarify which stage the pupil is sitting within a level.

Teachers were concerned that pupils will '*sit within the same level*' for a long period of time and felt that this may cause apprehension for parents. Consistent with previous feedback, teachers emphasised concern that parents have no understanding of the level requirements. In particular, Foundation Stage teachers felt parents will be dissatisfied to hear that their child is 'working towards Level 1', and felt this will be negatively construed by parents that no progression has been made.

(6) Applying Knowledge and Understanding

A common concern cited during the meeting was in relation to 'applying' and 'using' mathematics, and the '*mismatch*' between illustrating pupils' skills and their knowledge and understanding. Teachers recognised that pupils often have the knowledge; however they struggle to apply and translate this knowledge. Consequently, pupils struggle to fulfil all task requirements.

Teachers also recognised that pupils were reluctant to demonstrate the 'working out' and consequently found it difficult to capture the required evidence.

(7) Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

Teachers were extremely concerned about the suitability of the Levels of Progression for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. In this primary school, 30% of pupils have some form of MLD. Teachers commented on the difficulty in assessing pupils with MLD using the Levels of Progression, particularly as such pupils are often unable to apply their knowledge and understanding. Teachers were concerned that this would have a huge impact on the overall school levels.

Furthermore, teachers commented on the manageability of assessing pupils with MLD. They felt that CCEA and the Department of Education must take cognisance of the different teaching and assessment strategies required for pupils with special educational needs.

(8) Classroom management

Such comments about the manageability of the Levels of Progression for pupils with MLD led to general concerns about classroom management of the new assessment arrangements. Teachers commented on the time consuming nature of allocating a level to each pupil and preparing portfolios for moderation.

Teachers reflected on the high level of annotation required on the samples submitted to CCEA for moderation and commented that this is too time consuming.

Teachers commented that it was difficult to use assessment activities within a large classroom setting, and consequently felt that these should be administered within small groups. Teachers felt this was the most user-friendly way to measure pupils' individual input and performance. However, teachers reflected on problems in supervising the remainder of the class while completing activities within a small group. Key Stage 2 teachers also commented that they are disadvantaged by the lack of provision of classroom assistants within these year groups.

Primary School B

School Organiser of Meeting: Principal

First IS Meeting of the Year:

This was the first IS meeting of the year.

Future Plans for IS Meetings:

The Principal outlined future plans for Internal Standardisation meetings and indicated that there will be a whole staff meeting once a term focusing on a different aspect of each cross-curricular skill (CCS). Prior to the meeting, teachers would be required to develop tasks based on a particular aspect of a CCS and administer these within classroom teaching⁶. Subsequent Internal Standardisation meetings would be facilitated following the completion of the tasks by pupils.

The Principal aimed to have a portfolio of tasks based on all aspects of Communication / Using Mathematics / Using ICT by the end of the school year (2012/13).

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

All staff members (Years 1 – 7) were in attendance. Although the Principal led the meeting, all staff had a high level of engagement. The meeting focused on

⁶ While teachers recognised that there is no requirement for the primary sector to develop their own tasks, they commented on the benefit for teachers and reflected on the professional development gained from the construction of assessment tasks.

Using Mathematics: Number. Prior to the meeting, every staff member had developed a task which was completed by pupils during class teaching⁷:

- Year 1 & 2 teachers produced **Level 1** tasks.
- Year 3 & 4 teachers produced **Level 2** tasks.
- Year 5 & 6 teachers produced **Level 3** tasks.
- Year 7 teachers produced **Level 4** tasks.
- The Principal produced a **Level 5** task; however this was not completed by any pupils.

Each task was discussed individually during the meeting. All teachers commented on their experiences of administering the tasks; specifically, teachers provided a clear explanation of how pupils calculated an answer and explained whether pupils met the task level. All teachers brought annotated samples of pupils' work to the meeting, with comprehensive notes on individual pupils' performances. Generally, samples demonstrated that pupils met the task level.

Evidence demonstrated that teachers used their own observations and professional judgement when assigning levels. All teachers recognised that pupils were reluctant to demonstrate the 'working out' and consequently struggled to capture the required evidence. Teachers queried how to level pupils if they:

- achieved the correct answer yet failed to show the calculation; or
- did not achieve the correct answer yet demonstrated the proper processes / calculation required.

All teachers contributed fully to the discussion and questioned others on how they came to decide upon a level, leading to negotiation when teachers disagreed with their colleague's judgement. In some instances, two teachers

⁷ A total of 7 tasks were discussed during the meeting.

trialled the same task and embarked on comparisons of approach, particularly reviewing different strategies adopted by pupils to complete the task.

Support:

Teachers often referred to the Expansion document (level descriptors and level requirements), particularly whenever there was negotiation on whether the correct level had been assigned.

Additional Comments:

Teachers made a number of additional comments in relation to the administration of tasks and Internal Standardisation, with particular emphasis on problems encountered whilst administering the tasks.

Teachers highlighted the importance of clarity of the task question to ensure pupils' understanding. Teachers commented that pupils' level of literacy impacted on their ability to complete the task and recognised that failure to read the question was detrimental to pupils' understanding of the task requirements.

Teachers were in agreement that the levels are too broad and felt these should be further broken down to account for varying abilities. Teachers also commented that the 'gaps between levels are too wide'.

Teachers were also concerned about the deadlines for the submission of teacher assessed levels. While teachers welcomed the deadline extension to the 14th March 2012 for Shadow Year schools, they continued to express apprehension that this date may disadvantage pupils who are likely to progress later in the school year.

Teachers commented on the amount of time required to develop assessment tasks and indicated that they require further time to support this development.

Primary School C

School Organiser of Meeting: Principal

First IS Meeting of the Year:

This was the first IS meeting of the year.

Future Plans for IS Meetings:

As this was the first Internal Standardisation meeting, further meetings would be held regarding Communication. This again would be with the whole staff. Prior to the meeting, samples of work would be submitted again.

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

All staff members (Years 1-7) were in attendance (total of nine staff members). Although the Principal led the meeting, all staff had a high level of engagement. The meeting concentrated on Using Mathematics. The meeting was focused and the Principal ensured that each sample of work was discussed in the time allocated.

Prior to the meeting, each staff member had submitted a sample of pupil work to the numeracy coordinator, who compiled a booklet. Each teacher also provided a description alongside the sample of work detailing a description of the activity and the pupil's prior learning / experience. This booklet was then handed out to all staff at the start of the meeting. If required, each member of staff spoke of and further explained their own submission of pupil work. The staff worked collectively and looked at each piece of work in turn, before awarding it a level and then moving on to the next item. Teachers were able to come to an

agreement about what level should be awarded although some samples of work required more discussion than others.

A total of 10 samples of work were examined during the meeting. These ranged from and included a Level 1 through to a Level 5 piece. Some of the tasks were designed specifically for levelling and others were simply class work that teachers had administered as normal.

The Foundation Stage teachers voiced their opinion that they felt the Foundation Levels of Progression were very ambiguous and found foundation pupils a lot more difficult to level due to this.⁸

As facilitator of the meeting, the Principal queried some minor points in the activity descriptions, for example, “was a calculator used for this?” or “did the pupil receive any teacher assistance?” He reiterated to staff to ensure they complete the activity description accurately and fully as the cover sheets for the portfolio would require similar detail.

Support:

Teachers often referred to the Levels of Progression grid and also the Expansion document for assurance on the correct level to award.

Additional Comments:

Teachers made a number of additional comments in relation to the administration of tasks and Internal Standardisation, using this opportunity to raise any concerns they had.

⁸ It should be noted that this school was involved in the trialling of the Foundation Stage Developmental Stages. It must also be noted that levelling of Foundation Stage is not a statutory requirement.

It was noted that whilst levelling the samples of work, teachers felt that some of the activities used were slightly restrictive / limited for the pupils and did not allow them to demonstrate their full knowledge and understanding. This in turn could mean the difference between two levels. Teachers noted that the Internal Standardisation process is beneficial as they could now see how the activity / task could or should be adapted in order for a better level to possibly be achieved.

Teachers were in agreement that the levels were too broad and felt these should be further broken down. It was suggested that the levels should be broken down to a layout similar to the Foundation Stage Developmental Stages with a “working towards” option. It was also stated that some of the levels in Using Mathematics were too similar, and there was not enough definition between them. It was also noted by the teachers that ICT is not mentioned in the Levels of Progression and they felt this was a weakness that should be highlighted.

The issue about the levels being too broad also raised concerns about reporting the new levels to parents. Teachers were concerned that parents do not have enough understanding of the new levels and they would be concerned if their child was not appearing to progress, e.g. remaining on the same level over a couple of years.

Teachers were concerned about the time of year that portfolios had to be submitted. It was discussed that not all content had been covered by February / March time as only half the years teaching had been completed by this point. Teachers felt this is not an accurate reflection of a pupil's level and that, if left to a later point, there would be the possibility a pupil may achieve a higher level. One teacher suggested that portfolios should be submitted in September for the previous academic year. This would enable a full year's teaching and, in her opinion, be a better reflection of the pupil's ability.

Primary School D

School Organiser of Meeting: Principal

First IS Meeting of the Year:

This was the school's third IS meeting of the year.

Previous / Future Plans for IS Meetings:

This was the school's third Internal Standardisation meeting. They had held two previous full day meetings for both Communication and Using Mathematics. As they are such a small school (44 pupils in total), they planned to hold an Internal Standardisation meeting once a month with all staff (three teaching staff including Principal). The Principal discussed how during the last academic year the staff met once a month to look at samples of work (although not for levelling purposes) so this was not a new process for them.

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

All staff members (Years 1-7) were in attendance (total of three staff members including the teaching Principal). Although the Principal led the meeting, all staff engaged and discussed the tasks. The meeting focused on Using Mathematics – Data Handling. The meeting was focused and the Principal ensured that each sample of work was discussed in the time allocated.

As this was such a small school, the same topic (shoe sizes) was used for the entire school. A task was then devised for each appropriate year group / Key Stage based on the topic. This way, a very clear progression could be seen in the samples of work brought along by each teacher. Each member of staff spoke of and further explained their own sample of pupil work. The staff worked

collectively and looked at each piece of work in turn, before awarding it a level and then moving on to the next item. Teachers were able to come to an agreement about what level should be awarded fairly easily. The samples of work were annotated during the meeting using a form the school had devised themselves. The teachers preferred their own version of the form compared to CCEA's Internal Standardisation form as they felt CCEA's was rather vague.

A total of three samples of work were looked at during the meeting

- Year 1 & 2 teacher produced a **Level 1** task.
- Year 3 - 5 teacher produced a **Level 2** task.
- Year 6 & 7 teacher produced a **Level 5** task.

Support:

Teachers often referred to the Levels of Progression grid and also the Expansion document for assurance on the correct level to award. It was observed that teachers would refer to both the level below and above the level they felt was suitable to ensure correct placement. Teachers noted that they found the expansion levels very useful.

Additional Comments:

Teachers made a number of additional comments in relation to the administration of tasks and Internal Standardisation, using this opportunity to raise any concerns they had.

It was noted that whilst levelling the samples of work, teachers felt that some of the activities used were maybe slightly restrictive / limited for the pupils and did not allow them to demonstrate their full knowledge and understanding. This in turn could mean the difference between two levels. Teachers noted that the

Internal Standardisation process is beneficial as they could now see how the activity / task could or should be adapted in order for a higher level to possibly be achieved. Teachers discussed how this was a learning process for them in seeing how their tasks could be improved.

Teachers were in agreement that the levels were too broad and felt these should be further broken down. It was suggested that the levels should be broken down to a layout which consisted of a negative and positive within the Level e.g. “-2 and a +2”.

Concerns about the levels being too broad also raised concerns about reporting the new levels to parents. Teachers were concerned that parents do not have enough understanding of the new levels and they would be worried if their child was not appearing to progress, e.g. remaining on the same level over a couple of years.

Teachers felt that professional judgement should be relied upon as part of moderation as some of the skills can be seen but not measured or measured accurately.

Another point raised was that CCEA need to be careful regarding the number of portfolios they are requesting from small schools. For example, in this school there are only four Year 7 pupils so if four portfolios were requested from this year group then this is 100% of their pupils compared to a larger school.

Finally, the teachers stated that there is a lot of work involved in the moderation process. They felt that all their school development days will be taken up with this process again next year. The teachers were very concerned about Using ICT also being brought in next year and felt this is far too much as their workload is already at its capacity.

Primary School E

School Organiser of Meeting: Principal

First IS Meeting of the Year:

This was the school's second IS meeting of the year.

Previous / Future Plans for IS Meetings:

This was the school's second Internal Standardisation meeting. They had held a full day meeting for Communication in the previous term.

The Principal discussed how during the last academic year the staff met to look at samples of work (although not for levelling purposes) so this meeting is not the first time teachers had viewed samples. Teachers prepared samples of work from all levels prior to today's meeting and had annotated them.

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

All staff members (Years 1-7) were in attendance including Principal and Vice Principal. Vice Principal led the meeting, and all staff had a high level of engagement. The meeting focused on Using Mathematics. The meeting was focused and the Vice Principal ensured that each sample of work was discussed in the time allocated.

The samples used in the meeting were samples at each level. After the meeting teachers planned to look at Pupil Portfolios and collectively agree overall assessment judgement using a full Pupil Portfolio.

The samples included pieces on measure and number. Teachers indicated that they had been concerned about carrying out the Internal Standardisation, especially the 'using' part of the process.

Each year group provided two samples so that there was choice available.

During discussion teachers felt they had provided too much information but commented that the process will evolve over time as people become more aware of what they need to produce. Teachers suggested picking samples in groups to ensure enough breadth is provided. They suggested handing samples to other year groups as this ensured that there was enough content and detail.

Teachers felt it was difficult to show Using Mathematics; they all felt processes dominated the discussions and would dictate the level. Knowledge and understanding was clearly evident but application was not easy to show and therefore processes were not clear. Teachers recommended building opportunities in the teaching and providing scaffolding to allow pupils to show what they can do. This was especially true in measures and in shape and space.

The school used self designed tasks to ensure that pupils could produce work that showed knowledge and use. 'Money Matters' tasks and some World Around Us topics were found useful.

In the mark sheets during the Internal Standardisation teachers used superscripts to differentiate between strength of levels.

Teachers felt that using tasks and writing tasks was essential to be able to provide evidence of pupils' work and ability. These tasks came from classroom work, but classroom work alone didn't provide evidence that would be suitable for moderation. The teachers believe that classroom teaching will be enhanced by using tasks. They suggested that using tasks should be recommended.

Processes versus Number caused the biggest challenge for the teachers. They focused on the processes rather than the use of number. Teachers found it difficult to level the sample when they were not aware of what had happened in the classroom. They needed to look at processes, knowledge and understanding together.

One group spent time discussing the difference between 'Organise' at Level 4 and 'Plan' at Level 5. These discussions proved very helpful in the process. All teachers felt they needed to look at the context of the knowledge and skill being asked for and used the Expansion document for this.

Group work needs to be carefully planned so that individual pupils can be assessed. Teachers discussed how to deal with extrovert pupils in a group and suggested ensuring various tasks are included in the activity so that all pupils have an opportunity to show their ability.

Teachers noted that the IS process is to assess a piece of work rather than a pupil; therefore picking appropriate pieces of evidence is critical to the process.

Support:

Teachers suggested that annotated work including the explanation of all discussions used in reaching agreement is beneficial for making overall judgements and will be essential for moderation. The Expansion document was essential for explaining certain terms in the Levels of Progression statements. Lines of Development and Progression should be used to aid teaching; Levels of Progression documents key characteristics for assessing.

Teachers in this school would prefer CCEA set tasks to use throughout the year and for assessment. They felt that this would allow developments and achievements to be easily shown for moderation but would also provide a

commonality for all schools. Teachers plan to create their own tasks and therefore providing uniform tasks would be supportive. Teachers accepted that there is a danger tasks will become like tests but believed that schools would be creating them anyway therefore it would be better to have CCEA produced tasks comparable for moderation.

Additional Comments:

Timescale

- Too early to assess pupils – the process will start before Christmas.
- Schools have a number of additional pressures in terms of implementation in Sept 2012
 - New Computer Based Assessment
 - New assessment arrangements
- When will the feedback be given to schools and how will the timescales allow for adjustments?
- The moderation process timescales are too tight.

Quality assurance

- If Key Stage data are used to measure school performance then there needs to be more rigorous monitoring than the current system.

Communication

Support is needed from CCEA / DENI when communicating with parents about the levels and the new arrangements. This is especially true for Shadow Year schools that are feeder schools to post-primary. The post-primary schools need to be aware of the differences between Levels of Attainment and Levels of

Progression for pupils that are joining the new school from a Shadow Year school in September 2012.

Levels

- Continuity – The developmental stages need to be part of the big picture of levels. It is divisive to have treated these separately.
- Need to look at knowledge / understanding for Working Towards Level 1 and correlate with current practice in Year 1.
- There should be more joined up thinking with the new assessment arrangements and curriculum – link the Early Years Strategy to Pre School.

Target setting

- Ludicrous to try to set targets on previous data during the Shadow Year and in the first implementation year – it will be meaningless.
- DE needs to allow the old system to stop and the new one to start fresh. DENI targets for raising standards need adjusted.

Assessment Tasks

- Need to be available at start of process and CCEA should produce tasks so that all schools can use them and add some uniformity to the assessments.

Special School F

School Organiser of Meeting: Assessment Coordinator

First IS Meeting of the Year:

No – the school facilitated an Internal Standardisation meeting with all staff in November 2011. During this meeting teachers levelled samples of pupil work. Feedback from the coordinator of this meeting reflected that teachers generally came to common consensus about the level of each sample.

The focus of the meeting attended by CCEA staff on 30th January 2012 was on Pupil Portfolios. Prior to the meeting the assessment coordinator compiled two portfolios of work, one for Communication and another for Using Mathematics. The portfolios contained samples of work to cover the core components of each skill:

- The Communication portfolio contained samples of work which covered Reading and Writing⁹.
- The Using Mathematics portfolio contained samples of work which covered knowledge & understanding and requirements.

The assessment coordinator reported that he lacked time to include a CCEA approved task within the portfolios.

⁹ The assessment coordinator assigned a level for the Talking and Listening component of the Communication portfolio and informed teachers of this level prior to the levelling exercise.

Planning and Preparation:

It was apparent that the meeting required a great deal of planning and preparation by the assessment coordinator, particularly to select samples of work for each portfolio.

The assessment coordinator had prepared a PowerPoint presentation explaining the rationale for and the importance of Internal Standardisation. Most of the content for the presentation was drawn from the Northern Ireland Curriculum web site.

The assessment coordinator had also created a cover template for each portfolio which included space for teachers to record the level awarded and provide justification for this level. Teachers were required to provide a level for each component (e.g. Reading / Writing) and then decide on the overall level.

Structure of the Meeting:

All staff (including Foundation Stage) were in attendance at the meeting. The group had a mixed composition of teachers from mainstream, special and outreach services.

Following a brief presentation by the Principal and assessment coordinator, teachers were divided into groups ranging between three and five teachers. Within groups, teachers discussed and allocated a level to each component of the Communication and Using Mathematics portfolios.

Towards the end of the meeting, all staff came together as a whole group to reach agreement on the levels allocated to the portfolios. Teachers firstly commented on the level allocated to each component and then agreed on the overall level. Teachers often referred to the level requirements, especially

whenever groups failed to come to agreement on a particular level. Overall there was a high level of agreement on the level to be awarded to each portfolio.

All teachers engaged in discussions. Teachers reported that they benefited from professional discussion with their colleagues.

Support:

Throughout the meeting teachers referred to the Levels of Progression grid and Expansion document (level descriptors and level requirements). Whilst levelling the portfolios, teachers commended the usefulness of these documents.

Additional Comments:

During the meeting, teachers highlighted a wide range of concerns in relation to the statutory assessment arrangements and the Levels of Progression, all of which are summarised in this section of results.

(1) The Importance of 'Context'

All teachers recognised the challenges in levelling a portfolio of work without reference to which pupil completed it. Teachers consistently reiterated that their knowledge and familiarity of the pupil is vital, particularly whenever pupils fail to demonstrate sufficient evidence to achieve a higher level, yet have the ability to do so. Teachers argued that it will be difficult for moderators to assess a piece of work without any knowledge of the pupil and the processes employed. Teachers also highlighted that they are fully aware of pupils' specific learning difficulties; however, moderators will not be familiar with any challenges encountered by pupils as a result of these difficulties.

(2) Breadth of Attainment within the Levels of Progression

Teachers commented that the levels are '*too broad*' and the gaps between levels '*too wide*'. The assessment coordinator reflected that many pupils with moderate learning difficulties will not progress beyond Level 1 by the end of Key Stage 2.

Following information cascaded at a primary Shadow Year event on the 17th January 2012, teachers were unclear whether pupils had to meet all or the majority of requirements to obtain a particular level. Teachers reflected that pupils can often demonstrate elements of a higher level, but do not meet all requirements and consequently are rewarded the lower level.

Teachers were also concerned that the levels are open to interpretation and commented that teachers vary when making judgements on a pupil's level. However, it must be reiterated that observation of the Internal Standardisation meeting showed that teachers were generally in agreement about the level of each portfolio.

(3) Capturing Evidence

Teachers highlighted the importance of clarity of the assessment question to ensure understanding and enable pupils to demonstrate the evidence required. Teachers also recognised that pupils were reluctant to demonstrate the 'working out' and consequently found it difficult to capture the required evidence.

(4) Preparing Portfolios

The assessment coordinator commented that the preparation of portfolios was time consuming. He reflected that it is particularly time consuming to prepare justification sheets and cover pages for each portfolio to be submitted for moderation.

(5) Range of Assessment Tasks

The assessment coordinator commented that there are a limited range of CCEA Assessed Tasks suitable for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

Appendix D: Post Primary Internal Standardisation Case Studies

Post-primary School A

School Organiser of Meeting: Head of Department

First IS Meeting of the Year:

This was the first IS meeting of the year.

Future Plans for IS Meetings:

The Head of Department had cascaded training to the English department on the new Levels of Progression. Staff collectively discussed the exemplification material. Having gone through the material, staff collectively believed that, “writing” was the key indicator to the overall Levels of Progression outcome. Throughout the training, staff expressed concerns regarding Level 7. Teachers felt the incoming Levels of Progression would result in a significant decrease in pupil outcomes.

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

Key Stage departments (7 staff) were in attendance. Although the Head of Department led the meeting, all staff had a high level of engagement. The meeting focused on two writing tasks in Communication. Prior to the meeting, pupil work was split into folders according to the level they achieved in an assessment activity.

All staff discussed “Gothic” and “A Day in the Life” writing tasks that all Year 10 pupils had completed. Pupils’ work was sorted into levels awarded (e.g. all Level 5 together, Level 6 etc). During the meeting teachers then quality assured the

levels each of them had assigned to their own pupils. The teachers worked individually and commenced with the Level 7 pieces of work and worked their way down to the Level 5 pieces. Each level was discussed on completion and borderline levels were identified (particularly Level 6 & 7). Teachers sought confirmation from their Head of Department that they had made accurate judgements.

Level 5, 6 and 7 were looked at. A couple of tasks per level from each Year 10 class were quality assured.

There was a high level of engagement and discussion from all teachers. There was an ongoing discussion throughout the meeting as pupils' tasks were read. Teachers provided positive and constructive feedback and recommendations to one another. They were confident in doing so and in raising any uncertainty they had. However, in general, teachers were able to arrive at an overall consensus about the level of each piece.

Actions were noted for follow up work after the meeting. One teacher had marked too highly and had to review the levels she had assigned. The group of teachers planned to assess Reading and Talking & Listening at their next Internal Standardisation meeting. The group discussed how outcomes of their meeting could be used to set class benchmarks and to broaden tasks to support pupils further and not limit their work.

Support:

Teachers often referred to the Levels of Progression grid and also the Expansion document for assurance on the correct level to award. However, there was uncertainty over Level 6 and 7 - teachers spent time looking at this to ascertain if they had marked too hard. Even after reading the documentation they were left feeling uncertain and recommended that the expansion document should be

more explicit, e.g. does a pupil have to have no spelling mistakes in their writing to achieve a Level 7, as required for an A* GCSE?

Additional Comments:

All teachers deemed the meeting to be useful. As previously noted, teachers realised that some of their tasks need to be broadened as they are currently quite limited. This may enable pupils to achieve a higher level in their pieces of work.

It was noted that Head of Departments have received substantial training for the Shadow Year pilot and as this was not provided to all teachers; some teachers may find the implementation difficult.

Teachers felt that Talking and Listening should be moderated through visiting moderators and that anything else would not be manageable.

Post-primary School B

School Organiser of Meeting: Head of Department

First IS Meeting of the Year:

This was the first IS meeting of the year.

Previous / Future Plans for IS Meetings:

This was the school's first Using Mathematics Internal Standardisation meeting. The Mathematics department planned to hold further Internal Standardisation meetings that term. They would be shorter meetings with a smaller number of staff present.

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

The entire Mathematics department was present at the Using Mathematics Internal Standardisation meeting (12 teachers in total). The school used a training day to carry out their Internal Standardisation meetings. (The Communication and Using Mathematics meetings were held on the same day and at the same time). Each Mathematics teacher of Year 10 brought along a couple of pieces of work (representing a 'high/ middle/low ability' piece of work). The pupil work was based on a task "New Car". Each piece of work had been marked and awarded a level prior to the Internal Standardisation meeting by the pupil's own teacher. Each piece was then marked by a further two Mathematics teachers during the meeting, ensuring each piece was marked a total of three times.

Teachers worked in pairs to discuss and mark each piece of work. After all pieces of work had been triple marked, the group collectively discussed the piece

of work. Each teacher who marked the piece being discussed detailed the level they had awarded it and explained why. Generally, teachers were in agreement about the level that should be awarded. In addition to this, teachers were confident to raise any uncertainties they had about levels they did not agree with. The group was able to discuss any disagreements or uncertainties and come to an agreement fairly quickly and in a manner that everyone was happy with. The Head of Mathematics led the meeting and ensured it remained focused. Teachers strongly agreed that Level 7 was easier identified than the other levels as it clearly stood out.

There was some discussion surrounding what constituted a small mistake and a grave mistake in the pieces of pupil work and the effect this would have on the level awarded.

Level 5, 6 and 7 were all covered during the meeting.

Support:

The school had created a marking grid using the Levels of Progression. When teachers selected a piece of work to level, they wrote the pupil's name on the top of the marking grid and ticked relevant statements which applied to the specific piece of work. They were then able to determine the level that should be awarded to that specific piece of work based on their own knowledge and the statements from the Levels of Progression. Teachers took a new marking grid for each piece of work. They then referred to this when discussing with other teachers the level they had awarded and why.

Additional Comments:

There were a couple of queries regarding the exact dates / process for the Shadow Year which were passed on to the CCEA Officer who relayed the answers to the school.

Concerns were voiced regarding the impact on pupil learning / achievement and pupil enjoyment. There was the concern about teacher workload and the timescales involved. It was also discussed how the additional days which were available for Shadow Year schools would not be available in the future. Further to this, it was felt staff do not like having to take them as this has an impact on pupil learning as it is time away from the pupils and away from teaching. It was discussed that the new levels have been, “a big shock for the Mathematics department”, in particular.

The Head of Mathematics felt that, currently, the timescales are too tight for the moderation process. She also discussed the issue of absenteeism and the effect / impact this has on the moderation process and the timescales involved.

One of the teachers in the group commented that this type of task involves a lot of writing and explanation. She stated mathematics teachers now have to mark spelling and comprehension as well as their mathematical ability.

Post-primary School C

School Organiser of Meeting: Head of English

First IS Meeting of the Year:

Yes - the aim of this meeting was to confirm that the correct levels were being assigned to samples of work. Teachers felt it would be most user-friendly to become familiar with the levels and ensure teachers were assessing accurately before reviewing portfolios at a second meeting.

Planning and Preparation:

All teachers compiled folders containing individual samples of work and brought these to be reviewed during the meeting. All samples had been allocated a level prior to the meeting. Each sample had a coversheet attachment which outlined the level of the piece, level descriptors and success criteria. Samples contained annotations both on the coversheet and throughout each piece of work.

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

Teachers allocated a full day to facilitate the Internal Standardisation meeting. All members of the English department (n=5) attended the meeting at the beginning of the day; however, due to time restrictions and lack of sub cover, a maximum of three teachers participated in the meeting from mid-morning onwards.

The meeting focused on both the Reading and Writing aspects of Communication. Teachers focused on Writing in the morning and reviewed Reading pieces in the afternoon. Teachers commented on the approach taken when reviewing samples of work for writing. Each sample was reviewed individually and teachers discussed whether they agreed with the level allocated.

Teachers indicated that they generally came to consensus on higher level samples; however, they recognised challenges in agreeing on a level for 'borderline pieces'.

Representatives from CCEA (the Programme Manager for post-primary assessment, a CCEA moderator and a member of the Research & Statistics Unit) attended the meeting from 12.00pm onwards. The approach taken to assess reading pieces was consistent with that for writing. Teachers commented on individual samples of work, explaining why they chose a particular activity and how pupils performed in this activity. There was a high level of discussion in relation to borderline pieces. Whenever teachers' judgement varied, they often shared and compared samples of work at a similar level. Through cross-examination, teachers generally came to agreement on borderline pieces.

However, it must be noted that teachers received a high level of support and sought confirmation from the CCEA Programme Manager and moderator when levelling borderline pieces. Teachers received guidance and were encouraged to review the level descriptors and requirements to ascertain whether pupils demonstrated adequate evidence to obtain a particular level.

Teachers sought and received clarity on the following:

- How to assign a level if a pupil receives conflicting scores in Reading, Writing and Talking & Listening (e.g. Level 5, Level 6, Level 7).
- Whether teachers are able to assign a + or – to a Level.
- Whether pupils have to meet all requirements to achieve a particular level.

Support:

Throughout the meeting teachers referred to the Levels of Progression grid and Expansion document (level descriptors and level requirements). Whilst

participating in the levelling exercise, teachers commended the usefulness of these documents. However, teachers felt it was time consuming to constantly review these resources when assessing samples of work.

Additional Comments:

During the meeting, teachers provided some additional comments in relation to the statutory assessment arrangements and the Levels of Progression:

(1) Robustness of the system

Teachers stressed that the system of moderation to support the assessment arrangements must be as robust as possible. Teachers were concerned that the system may be open to manipulation and that teachers may “draft and re-draft” Pupils’ Portfolios, rather than submit a “natural piece of pupils’ work”. Teachers were concerned that there will be inconsistencies in the level of support provided by teachers and commented that CCEA “*can moderate the evidence however they cannot assess the procedures.*”

Teachers were particularly concerned that primary schools may inflate their levels and felt that this would have a huge impact on the post-primary sector.

(2) Communication for Parents

Teachers requested a communication to parents to explain the transfer from the current Levels of Attainment to the new Levels of Progression. Teachers requested that such a communication is clear and comprehensible for parents.

(3) Teachers' Workload

Teachers voiced concerns about the heavy workload for teachers in creating tasks, assessing pupils, conducting Internal Standardisation and compiling Pupil Portfolios for moderation. However, teachers recognised that this academic year has been particularly time restrictive as the school did not begin to assess pupils until January 2012. Teachers accepted that the assessment and moderation process will not be as time consuming next year (2012 /2013), as teachers will be familiar with the Levels of Progression and the school will have experience of the moderation process.

(4) Pupils' Attitudes

Teachers reflected that pupils have responded positively to the assessment arrangements. Teachers commented that they have explained to pupils the purpose of the Shadow Year and have stressed how their feedback will inform the new assessment arrangements. Consequently, teachers noted an increase in the standard of pupils' work and have recognised a '*huge desire from pupils to do well*'.

Teachers commented that pupils have much pride in their portfolios. However teachers recognised that pupils have been reluctant to demonstrate the 'working out' and therefore teachers have struggled to capture the required evidence.

(5) The Importance of 'Context'

Teachers recognised the challenges in levelling a portfolio of work without reference to which pupil completed it. Teachers consistently reiterated that their knowledge and familiarity of the pupil is vital, particularly whenever pupils fail to demonstrate sufficient evidence to achieve a higher level, yet have the ability to do so. Teachers argued that it will be difficult for moderators to assess a piece of

work without any knowledge of the pupil and the processes employed, particularly if that pupil has a special educational need. However, teachers accepted that they can provide any information about specific pupils on the assessment coversheet.

(6) Making a Holistic Judgement

During the meeting, teachers received clarification that pupils cannot receive a plus or minus level. Teachers felt it would be difficult to provide a definitive level for a pupil without including a plus or minus, due to the breadth of attainment within a level. Teachers argued that the assessment requirements are complex, and therefore felt it would be difficult for pupils to achieve a high level. Teachers commented that pupils are able to achieve a higher level in reading than writing, as they deem pupils to have too much "*independence in writing*".

Post-primary School D

School Organiser of Meeting: Head of Department

First IS Meeting of the Year:

This was the first IS meeting of the year.

Previous / Future Plans for IS Meetings:

This was the school's first Internal Standardisation meeting for Communication. At this stage, the English department had no plans to hold another Internal Standardisation meeting.

Structure of Internal Standardisation Meeting:

Key Stage departments (five members of staff) were in attendance. The meeting focused on both the Reading and Writing aspects of Communication. Prior to the meeting, staff were told the focus of the meeting and they then selected pieces of work for consideration at the meeting. A CCEA Officer from the Curriculum team attended the meeting alongside the Research Officer. Although there primarily for observation purposes, she did clarify some queries teachers had regarding the levelling / moderation process.

Staff produced Pupil Portfolios which included four pieces of work; two Reading and two Writing. Each member of the English department brought along a selection of their Pupil Portfolios which included a range of Levels from Level 4 to Level 7. Prior to the Internal Standardisation meeting, each teacher had annotated the pieces of work and levelled them. During the meeting teachers then quality assured the levels each of them had assigned to their own pupils' pieces of work. The teachers worked individually although occasionally they

discussed aspects of the piece of work they were looking at with the teacher sitting beside them. Teachers sought some confirmation from the CCEA Officer that they had made accurate judgements.

Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 were looked at. A couple of tasks per level from each Year 10 class were quality assured.

Although there was some discussion throughout the meeting as pupils' tasks were read, the majority of the time teachers sat in silence reading the pieces of work. After doing so, they would let the teacher of the pupil know what level they felt the pupil was. Teachers provided positive and constructive feedback and recommendations to one another. They were confident in doing so and in raising any uncertainty they had. However, in general, teachers were able to arrive at an overall consensus about the level of each piece.

Support:

Teachers often referred to the Levels of Progression grid and also the Expansion document for assurance on the correct level to award. Teachers commented that they found these very useful and clear.

Additional Comments:

All teachers deemed the meeting to be useful. Teachers all agreed that they found the Levels of Progression very clear and were able to clearly differentiate between the levels. It was commented that they felt the Levels of Progression is a much better system and very straightforward.

During the Internal Standardisation meeting, the Principal joined the staff for a brief period of time. He commented that the Mathematics department found the Internal Standardisation more difficult and that they had commented this process

suits the English department better. He also commented that timescales are very tight for the moderation process. The English department agreed with this statement. It was stated that March was too soon and May would be more appropriate for Key Stage 3 to be moderated. It was felt that Key Stages 1 and 3 are made to fall in line with Key Stage 2, who need to be moderated in March time for transfer reasons.

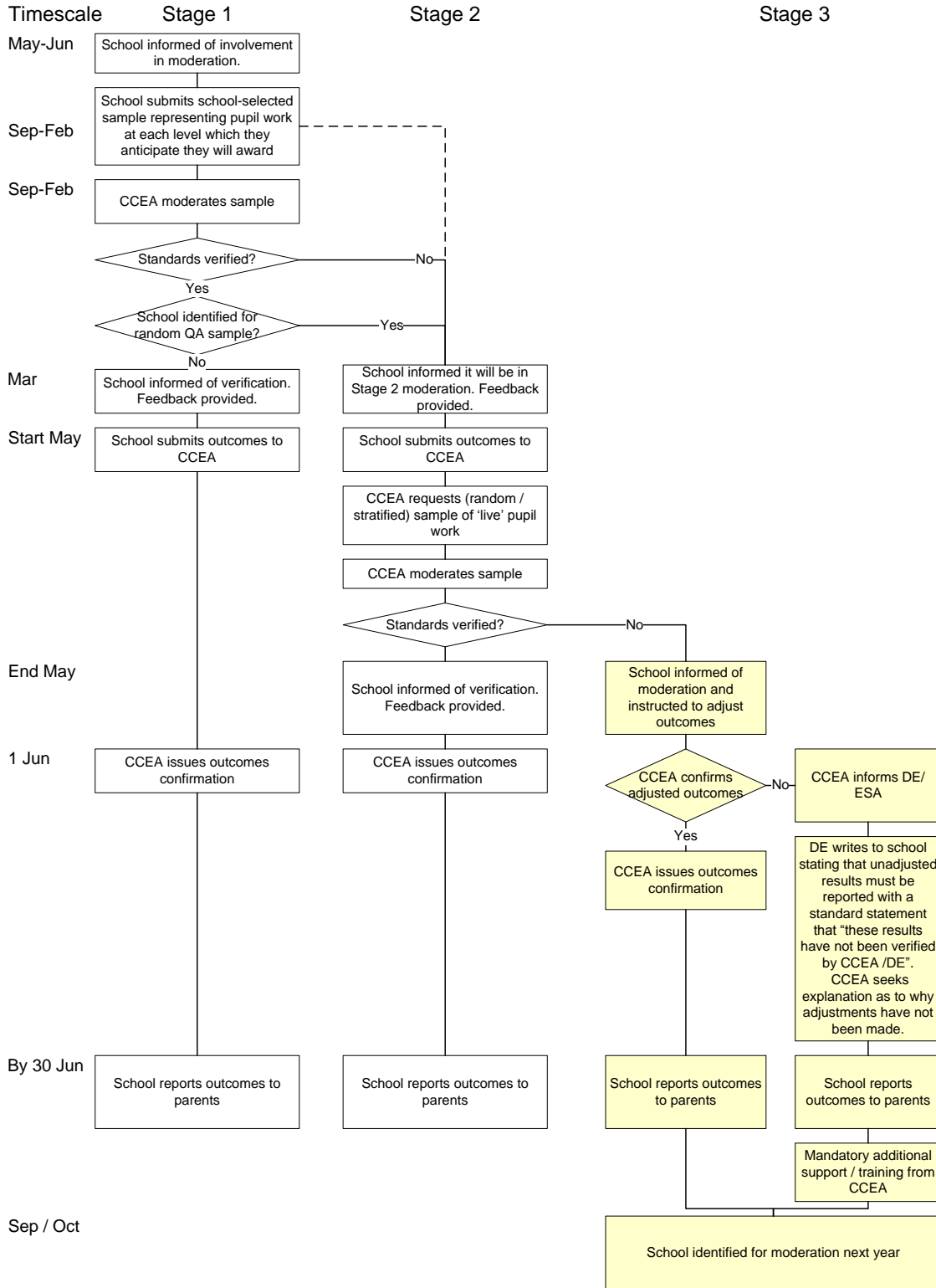
The Head of Department had some queries regarding the dates and processes for Moderation. The CCEA Officer agreed she would clarify this information with the Shadow Year team and respond accordingly. There was also a query regarding incomplete folders and what to do if a specific pupil whose folder was incomplete was requested for moderation. It was agreed that the CCEA Officer would clarify this as well.

One concern that was raised was the amount of annotation required for each piece of work. It was commented that if anymore would be required than they had provided, it would be very difficult to do. The CCEA Officer was able to inform the staff that the amount of annotation they had produced was more than sufficient. She was able to reassure them that they would definitely not have to provide any more than they already had.

Finally, the school noted it was beneficial to have the CCEA Officer in attendance at the meeting to reassure them that they were prepared and ready for the moderation process. It was also stated that it was good to have clarification on what to do when a pupil falls between levels (e.g. if a pupil has two level 6's, one level 5 and one level 4 – this would be a level 5).

Appendix E: Diagram of the Proposed Staged Moderation Approach

Moderation Process: Phase 1 (First Year of moderation for each Cross-Curricular Skill)



Moderation Process: Phase 2 (Subsequent Years)

