

BTEC National Standards Sampling 2009-2010

Centre briefing

BTEC

Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications including
Short Courses Levels 1-3

BTEC Mission Statement

We aim to reduce the bureaucratic burden of assessment and assessment-related processes on centres whilst maintaining the quality of provision. We will achieve this through effecting a change of focus from an Edexcel-driven model of 'Quality Control' to one of centre-driven 'Quality Assurance'.

Introduction to National Standards Sampling 2009-2010

National Standards Sampling (NSS) is the method by which Edexcel monitors the assessment against national standards for all units including Level 2-3 BTEC First and BTEC National programmes and BTEC Short Courses levels 1- 3 in every centre. Under the NSS process, centres will be asked to present different units, year on year.

BTEC Entry and Introductory programmes are also covered by the NSS process but have slightly different rules of sampling. (Please refer to the Quality Assurance Handbook)

The information gathered by the NSS activity is available to Edexcel and to regulatory bodies for the purpose of audit and to assess national trends.

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National Standards Sampling (NSS) for 2009-2010

Is organised into Programme Area Titles (PATs) and in the main, will be postal. NSS for Creative Arts subjects, Early Years (Professional Practice), and other sectors by exception, will be carried out by a visit.

Programme Area Title (PAT) relate to a specific programme area of learning (eg. Art & Design) which will have a group of programmes leading to a particular qualification (eg. NA, ND, NC, FD, FC and short courses at level 1-3).

Sampling of a PAT in 2009/10

The sample will come from all levels within a PAT up to a maximum of five units being seen.

Where levels 1,2 and 3 and short courses straddle the levels across the PAT then these may also be sampled but will not exceed the maximum sample size of five units.

For an NSS sample, one assignment brief and a sample of associated, assessed learners work should be presented for NSS for each selected unit. Please see page 11 for information about the number of samples of learner work to be submitted for each unit.

NSS of Selected Units from the identified PAT

Following NSS the PAT will either be blocked or released, which includes nested titles within it.

The learners' work chosen for each unit sampled should be representative of Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria grades where available.

Where a centre has 1-3 learners registered for a specific PAT, then the work of each learner will be sampled. Please see page 11 for exact sample size for each unit.

Ideally, centres should not select units for NSS that were sampled in a previous year. The EV will confirm with the centre which units were previously sampled.

Creative Arts programmes may select one or two FMP units as part of the NSS sample. The EV should ask centres to send FMP centre assignments, where these are being used prior to the NSS visit for preliminary feedback.

The centre and EV negotiate and agree the units to be sampled prior to the postal/visit sampling and the centre must only present assessed work for the units selected. Once unit selection has been agreed, this must be adhered to; any changes to the unit selection are exceptional and should be negotiated with the EV well before sampling takes place.

There is no requirement for centres to provide learners' work that demonstrates total achievement of a unit. Assessed learners' work can cover an assessment targeting a snapshot of at least 3 or 4 grading criteria.

Samples should be supplied from assignments which demonstrate that specific assessment and grading criteria have been set and assessed. The sample of learner work must be across a range of learner achievement and across different assessors.

The NSS activity samples the assignment briefs designed by the centre for the sampled units, as well as sampling the assessor's decisions on the completed assignment. Where possible, a centre should be encouraged to send copies of the assignment briefs that relate to the selected units prior to NSS taking place. This will allow the EV to ensure that assignment briefs are fit for purpose and to offer advice by telephone or email before carrying out the actual NSS. Formal written reporting on assignment briefs happens once only, which is at the time of the actual NSS activity.

Edexcel reserves the right to require centres to provide samples of learner work against other units (additional to the above). The decision to make these requests rests solely with BTEC Assessment and not the EV.

NSS - postal sampling

The role of the EV in the postal process:

- Samples assignment briefs in advance.
- Requests copies and not originals of learner work.
- NSS activity should be completed and reported online within 10 days of receiving the sample.
- If national standards have not been met, the EV must justify the decision on the report form with clear evidence, give feedback with an action plan and agree a re-sampling date.
- Arranges with the centre a time to give feedback by telephone. The copied learner work will not be returned. The written and verbal feedback should be the same; one should not contradict the other.

Note: It is also important that the EV tells the centre if there is any period when it would not be advisable to send a package. (eg. if they are away from home for several days and unable to receive a delivery).

Checking the package

The EV will check the package as soon as it is received to ensure that all items are present. If any item is missing, both the centre Quality Nominee (QN) and the programme manager should be contacted and a request made for the immediate supply of all missing items.

Security of NSS packages while in the EVs care

It is the EV's responsibility to take proper care of NSS packages. NSS material belonging to a centre should not be taken to the EV's place of work. NSS material should not be dealt with in public places such as cafes, trains or libraries.

If, in exceptional circumstances, the materials are originals then these should be securely packaged, clearly labelled and returned to the centre by courier as per the instructions issued by the BTEC Assessment team at Edexcel. If the EV encounters any difficulties with the courier, an email should be sent to BTECDelivery@edexcel.com

While most NSS sampling will take place by post, there are circumstances when a visit will be required:

- Early Years professional Practice.
- Performing Arts (Performance, Production, Dance).
- Media.
- Music.
- Art and Design.
- Other sectors by exception.

Submitting the sample for NSS by post

Documents required for the sample are:

- Centre cover sheet for the programme (template in appendix).
- Assignment brief for each unit submitted.
- Evidence of internal verification on the assignment briefs.
- Four learners' work for each assignment and unit submitted.
- Cover sheet attached to each learner's work (template in appendix).
- Grading criteria awarded clearly indicated on each learner's work, where appropriate.
- Evidence of feedback to learners and grading criteria awarded.
- Evidence of internal verification on at least 50% of the assessment decisions submitted.

Learner work which has been photocopied before sending will not be returned.

Please ensure that all work is securely packaged with all the relevant documents enclosed and sent to the EV by the date agreed.

An email will be sent to the centre when the EV has received the package from the centre to say that it has arrived safely.

In the exceptional circumstances that original learner work has been sent all original learner work and documents will be returned to the centre by courier.

The EV will inform the centre when the report is ready on Edexcel Online. If further action needs to be taken, the programme manager will be contacted directly and given full details and guidance on the action required to complete the NSS process.

What is the External Verifier(EV) looking for during NSS?

- The correct number of units and samples for the PAT being verified.
- Evidence that the assignment briefs are fit for purpose, written in appropriate language, at the right level and that they allow learners to achieve the targeted grading criteria.
- Evidence of internal verification of all assignment briefs prior to distribution to learners.
- A complete sample of learners' work for each unit selected (or all learners' work for cohorts of 1-3).
- Evidence that at least 50% (2 out of 4) of the assessed work for each unit sampled has been internally verified, through the provision of internal verification documents.
- That the samples provided have been accurately assessed through the correct application of the grading criteria.
- Appropriate written feedback has been given to the learner.

Common reasons why centres are given a BLOCK for NSS

- The assessment decisions of learners' work are inaccurate.
- An incorrect or incomplete sample e.g. either for the wrong units or for the wrong learners is provided.
- Whole unit grading for an assessment is applied when a whole unit is not being targeted.
- Additional criteria to those specified for a unit are used e.g. including Key Skills criteria within the assessment, or including criteria from predecessor qualifications.
- Draft or incomplete specifications are used for assessment.
- The assignment briefs are insufficiently matched to the grading criteria to enable learners to provide evidence to meet all the requirements e.g. centres setting assignments against learning outcomes rather than specifically against required grading criteria and unit content.
- Assessment is generous or harsh for Merit and Distinction criteria, particularly where learners provide work that is more detailed, but not of an overall higher quality.
- The assessment of work that is not the learner's own, but presented as if it were authentic e.g. accepting work inserted electronically as if learners were expressing their own ideas or conclusions.

Note: EVs should take into consideration any internal verification action taken by the centre when looking at issues relating to assessment decisions. If an inaccurate assessment decision has been noted by the internal verifier, the EV should look for evidence of the internal verifier's recommendation having been completed by the assessor. In this instance, the assessment would be judged to have met national standards providing the IV's decision is correct. However, the EV may recommend that the centre check all other assessment decisions for the assessor in question.

The NSS report form

- Assignment briefs not fit for purpose do not necessarily block NSS, but EV comments are crucial in improving their quality.
- The EV should see evidence of a robust internal verification system that has commentary directed to the assessor rather than discussing the learner work. A good internal verification system will identify shortcomings in assessment and set down an action plan and timeframe for re-assessment to take place. Amendments carried out in this way will result in accurate assessment decisions being recorded and certification will be released.
- An ineffective internal verification system is not sufficient reason to block NSS. The EVs feedback is important to help instigate a robust internal quality system. Instances where there is no internal verification at all will be reported to Edexcel.
- Standardisation should be evidenced if more than one assessor is assessing the unit or the programme is being delivered across different sites.
- All of the assessment decisions must be accurate in order to release the programme. A single incorrect assessment decision will result in a block at NSS. An action plan or requirements to redeem the block will be given.
- A single disagreement with the assessor decision results in a block.
- The EV should check to see that feedback is being given and that it is clear for the learner to understand. It should confirm achievement and accurately identify how the criteria have been met (or not). Actions within a suitable timeframe will assist the learning journey.
- The EV can comment on accurate decisions and the quality of feedback to the learner.
- Good practice should be commented on and reinforced in the overall summary of findings.
- All comments the EV makes must be pertinent and clear to understand, especially if a block is given. Comments should be depersonalised. All feedback and actions should be given using the 'SMART' principles.

Reporting NSS decisions and submitting forms

The centre will be able to access a copy of the NSS report through www.edexcelonline.com

The EV should provide verbal feedback and report within 10 days to the quality nominee or programme manager following the postal sample. If a visit, has taken place then feedback should be given to the programme manager and team (if required) at the time of the visit.

Re-sampling

If samples do not meet national standards, the EV will request a re-sample. During 2009/10 most sampling will take place by post. However, if then first sample was by visit, any re-sample will usually be postal.

The feedback provided on the initial NSS report will form the basis of an action plan. The EV will provide action points which will enable a successful re-sample. All feedback should be meaningful with clear comments using the SMART principles.

The EV will agree a re-sample date with the centre to send the re-sample or in exceptional circumstances to re-visit, this shall be as soon as possible after the action points outlined on the initial NSS report have been completed. The re-sample will take place according to standard NSS procedures. The same unit assignment(s) and the same learner work should be sent for the re-sample, so that the EV can see the remedial action taken.

Only the brief and/or work which did not meet national standards will be re-sampled.

If, after the re-sample, national standards still have not been met the relevant BTEC Regional Quality Manager will step in and negotiate an action plan with the centre. BTEC Regional Quality Managers will be alerted automatically by Edexcel. The EV may be contacted by the BTEC Regional Quality Manager to discuss the findings of the re-sample.

BY MAY 31ST 2010, THE NSS PROCESS FOR SAMPLED UNITS SHOULD BE COMPLETED. THIS INCLUDES ALL RE-SAMPLING ACTIVITY.

Timeline for NSS

1 st November 2009	Centres must register learners for programmes that started in September and October 2009. Failure to do so will mean the centre will incur a late registration fee
By December 2009	QNs are informed of their EVs for programmes where they have registered learners. EVs should contact QNs to negotiate selected units for NSS, and arrange for assignment briefs to be sent to them prior to sampling learner work.
January 2010 - 31 st May 2010	NSS takes place for all First Diplomas, National Awards, Certificates, Diplomas and BTEC Short Courses levels 1-3, including any re-sampling required.
End March 2010	QNs must check that NSS arrangements are in place for every programme to ensure that sampling has been or is taking place.
End April 2010	QNs must check that all sampling has taken place or is planned and that any remedial actions are being addressed.
By 31 st May 2010	QNs should check that all programmes have been sampled and that all remedial action is being undertaken promptly. By 31st May 2010, the NSS process for sampled units should be completed. This includes any re-sampling activities.
By 5 th July 2010	Where PATs have achieved a release to NSS on all units and assessment is complete, results should be submitted through Edexcel Online with grades for all units to reach Edexcel by 5th July.

Centre Type and BTEC quality assurance arrangements

Where a centre operates from multiple sites, or is the member of an Edexcel collaborative arrangement (formally called franchise arrangement) or consortium, there may need to be a variation of arrangements for NSS. The NSS sample may need to include all participating sites or centres; the sample may need to be larger. Any changes required will be negotiated between the EV and the centre QN at the time when the NSS is being arranged.

Single Site Centre

- Centre has a single centre number is based on one site and has single programme numbers. The EV will be allocated to a PAT. The NSS will be reported at PAT level.

Multi Site Centre

- The EV allocated to the PAT. The NSS will be reported at the PAT level.
- There is a presumption that standardised internal processes exist between sites and staff on different sites. The direct contact from the centre to Edexcel /BTEC will be via the QN.
- NSS is conducted at a single nominated site with an appropriate sample assembled from across the sites by the programme team(s), a single NSS report will be generated.

Collaborative Partnership (formerly referred to as Franchise arrangements)

- The NSS report will be at PAT level and it is the collaborator's responsibility to include learners of all collaborative centres in the sample.
- The report will be directed to the collaborator.
- All Edexcel communication will be to the collaborator.

Consortium

- Each participating centre will usually be responsible for registering its own learners using the common consortium BTEC programme title and number.
- The lead centre is responsible for the overall coordination of consortium quality, and thus is the focus for EV allocation and for NSS reporting. There will be a need for the consortium and the EV to arrive at an effective strategy for sampling assessed work across the consortium members.
- Each centre retains a specific responsibility for the quality standards of consortium programmes operating in their centre, with the lead centre coordinating to ensure cross-consortium processes and standards.
- Where a consortium centre deviates, the consortium's internal quality assurance process should bring them back into line.
- A blocked PAT title will block consortium learners on that programme in all consortium centres.

Where a centre wishes to operate a consortia, please contact the approvals team for advice prior to completion of approval documentation

The role of the EV

The EV is the representative of Edexcel and verifies the quality of the centre's assessment of BTEC PAT's at levels 2-3 and Short Courses at levels 1-3.

The EV:

- Verifies that national standards for the assessment of BTEC qualifications are maintained by the centre.
- Reports to Edexcel and centre managers on internal verification processes.
- Suggests remedial action where improvement is required and liaises with the centre and Edexcel to ensure that further sampling is undertaken.
- Cooperates with the lead verifier in acquiring learner work for use as exemplar materials for support and standardisation.
- Will not carry out sampling of any programmes or PAT's for which an allocation has not been made.
- Will not offer training to the centre or advice which could be seen as a conflict of interest.

The role of the EV is specifically focussed on standards of assessment. He/she is expected to provide a full and clear account of findings in relation to assessment and to provide support and guidance related to meeting national standards. The EV is able to provide support to the centre, by:

- Undertaking any NSS specific staff development activities that do not constitute a conflict of interest.
- Referring centres to an appropriate Edexcel contact.

NSS Sampling 2009-2010

During the NSS window (January to May 2010,) the EV will sample assignment briefs, assessment decisions and internal verification procedures across all levels and programmes within a Programme Area Title (PAT).

The number of units to be verified increases depending on the number of programmes and levels (within a PAT) that are being delivered at the centre.

Level	Number of Units for the Sample
E/I	Please see Quality Assurance page 14 onwards for full details of individual qualification requirements
1	1 Unit from across the programme
2	1 Unit from across the programme
3	NA = 1 Unit if only the NA is running NC/ND = 2 Units per year of the programme where learners are registered.

The number of samples per unit will also increase according to the total number of learners registered on *that* unit:

No of learners	Size of Sample from a unit
1 - 3	All learners sampled
4 - 100	4 sampled
101 - 250	8 sampled
251 plus	12 sampled

If the centre has live registrations for any programme in a PAT in a given year, they will undergo NSS.

Appendix: NSS Postal sampling forms

POSTAL NATIONAL STANDARDS SAMPLING (NSS)
NQF BTEC Levels 2 and 3 Programmes and Levels 1-3 Short Courses



Centre Name		Centre No	
Address			
Telephone No.		Email address	

NOTE: PLEASE SUBMIT SEPARATE COVER SHEETS FOR EACH UNIT BEING SAMPLED.

Programme No:		Programme Title:	
Unit No:		Unit Title:	
Completion date:		Programme Manager:	

Registration Number	Learner Name

PLEASE ENSURE THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THIS SAMPLING

Documents	Tick to confirm enclosed	Documents	Tick to confirm enclosed
Assignment Brief		Grading criteria awarded clearly annotated on learner work	
Internal verification record on assignment brief		Record of feedback to learner and grading criteria awarded	
Four learners' work against assignment brief		Internal verification record on at least 50% of the sample submitted	

Please tick to indicate that the sample comprises of COPIES of learner work	
If you are sending the original learner work please give reasons:	

Signature:		Date:	
Position:			

National Standards Sampling (NSS) COVER SHEET

Programme Title: _____

Unit no/Title: _____

Assignment Title: _____

Centre name _____ Centre no. _____

Learner name _____ Learner reg. no. _____

- Label all your work and use task and page numbers or references to identify all components.
- Sign the declaration of authenticity.

Learner's declaration		
I certify that the work submitted is my own.		
Signed:		Date:
Assessor's declaration		
I certify that the work submitted by the learner named above is original and has been completed independently.		
Name of Assessor:	Signed:	Date:

(RTF versions on the website)

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