

# Online standardisation



*'I completed the training abroad whilst on a college excursion and obviously this method gave me the flexibility to do this.'*

## ► Introducing online standardisation

Online standardisation, (also known as 'e-standardisation') aims to make use of current internet technology to allow examiners to undertake a programme of online learning and preparation for script marking. This provides the opportunity to examine without needing to take time away from your centre and students.

*'We are committed to the use of new technologies where they improve the quality of our assessments and the service we provide to centres and examiners. The reliability and validity of our assessments remain at the heart of all our work. To this end we are conducting research into this area which will inform the extent to which online standardising will play a part in AQA's commitment to using technology to ensure students get faster, more accurate results and an even better service.'*

**Dr Mike Cresswell**  
Director General AQA

Online standardisation has many benefits and offers, amongst other things, true flexibility. The system is accessible via the internet and allows standardisation to take place remotely, providing you with the option to work at a preferred location and a more convenient time and as frequently as you see fit (within the AQA timetable). There will be no need for early starts and overnight stays, no parking problems, no out-of-pocket expenses such as childcare; in all, a less stressful start to the marking period.

You can work, at your own pace, through sample scripts, question by question or script by script. Senior examiners are able to provide the support and guidance tailored to your needs quickly without the frustrating time delays caused by the postal interchange of paper scripts, thereby providing quicker clearance to begin marking.

The system was initially piloted during the summer 2007 examination series and replicates exactly the procedure currently followed in a face-to-face meeting. Following further enhancements, online standardisation is now ready to be piloted further, supporting a number of components offered in January 2008.

► **The examiner's view**

*Mike Murray, Chief Examiner for Sport and PE, took part in the summer 2007 pilot. Here Mike gives us his views on how it went:*

The June 2007 examination series for A2 Sport and Physical Education (PED 4) entered new territory for both the subject and for AQA with piloting the use of online standardisation.

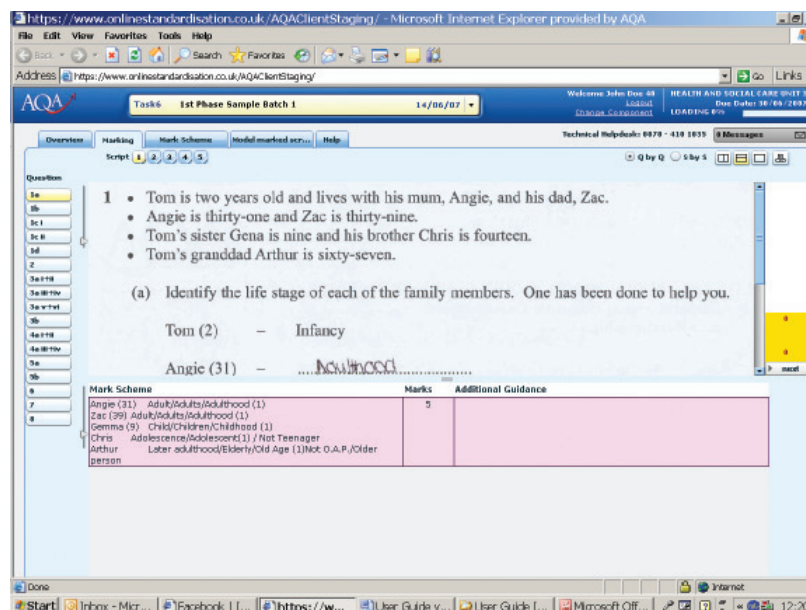
Online standardisation was a learning process for all those concerned, with the Senior Examiners involved in using the software making suggestions for improvements, and implementing adjustments as those improvements were presented to us. The whole procedure was both different and exciting. There were several initial sceptics amongst the examining team, but most fears were quickly allayed when we were shown the software working several weeks prior to the pre-standardisation meeting. The front page was windows-based with drop-down menus and quickly became intuitive once we were able to 'play' with the system.

The majority of our suggestions on how to improve the system were made available to us at pre-standardisation. This followed the normal pattern of making changes to the mark scheme, but while this was happening, sample scripts were being scanned into the system, so that when the Team Leaders came to look at first phase sample

scripts, this was done online, and the marks entered into the system with a commentary from the Principal Examiner on why marks were and were not awarded.

A few days later, the examining personnel had access to these scripts online. The Team Leaders were then able to send comments through to their examiners via telephone or e-mail and allow them to proceed to raw marking or recommend another sample of scripts depending on their performance. This process was so successful that it was decided to complete the second phase sampling online. As the whole examining team were by now familiar with the process, the second phase sampling proceeded very smoothly indeed. Each Team Leader had access to an online summary page showing each of their examiner's progress and the examiners were able to proceed at their own pace.

It wasn't complete plain-sailing for everybody. A few examiners (very few!) never came to grips with working in front of a computer and expressed negative comments in the post-examining feedback that every examiner completed. However, the majority of comments were positive and several comments were based on how to make the system work better next time. The system should now be much easier to use with all the recommendations from the pilot in place. That being the case, online standardisation is efficient, accurate and well-worth making the effort.



*'Sampling is no longer a drawn out process of posting scripts and waiting for feedback and clearance to mark.'*

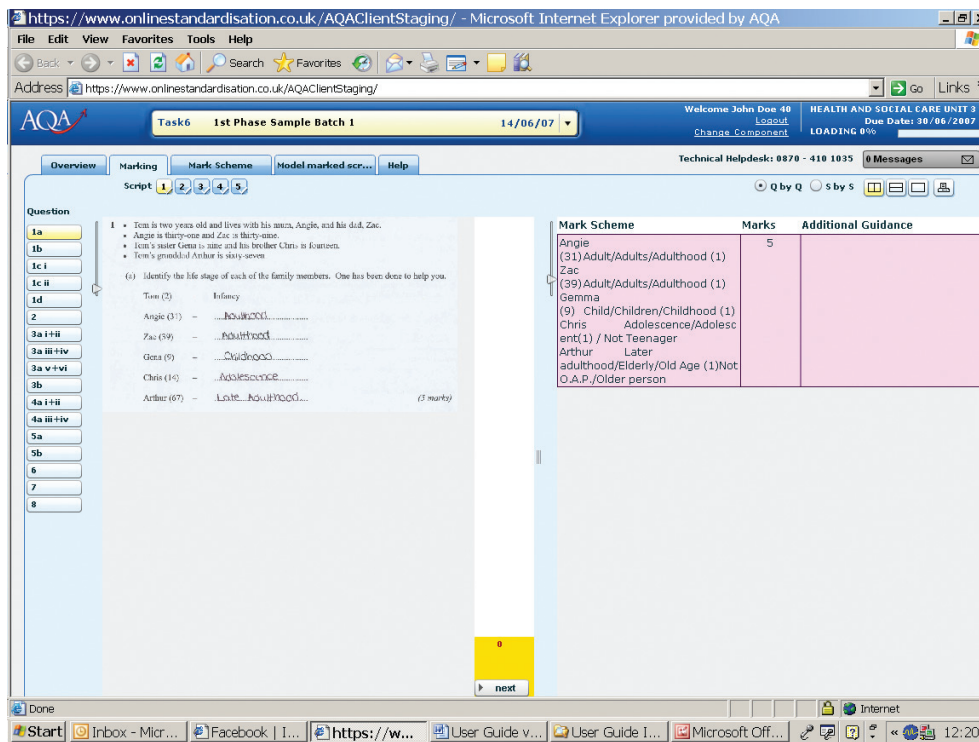
► **The online standardisation research programme**

AQA's research team has been closely involved in the online standardisation pilot study. The team's objectives were to evaluate examiners' perceptions of the system and analyse the reliability of first and second phase sample marking outcomes. These initial analyses are encouraging and have subsequently fed into the ongoing development of the resource.

The next stage in the online standardisation research programme is an experimental study which will allow us to measure and compare the impact of standardisation on examiners' marking performances. Using a traditional between-samples methodology, the project will randomly allocate a number of examiners to one of two groups (a conventional standardisation group and an online standardisation group), and compare

marking reliability pre- and post-standardisation. Participants will be experienced examiners with relevant subject and teaching expertise but will be unfamiliar with the question paper used in the study. This will ensure that the findings are not skewed by examiners' familiarity and experience with conventional standardisation, and will allow us to isolate and measure the true impact of standardisation.

The study has been designed to be as generalisable as possible across items, papers, specifications and examiners. The exercise represents a considerable investment in terms of funding and time, and will enable AQA to make useful contributions to the bodies of knowledge concerned with awarding body procedures, marking reliability and technological innovations. Once available, AQA intends to disseminate the findings of the study as widely as possible to reach both internal and external audiences.



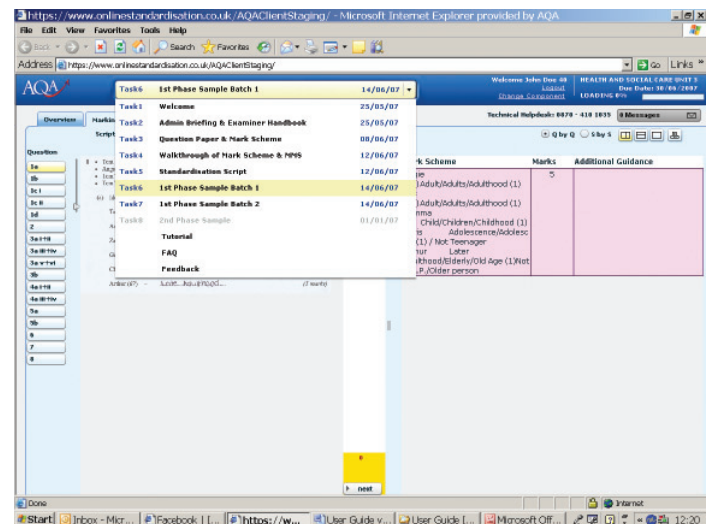
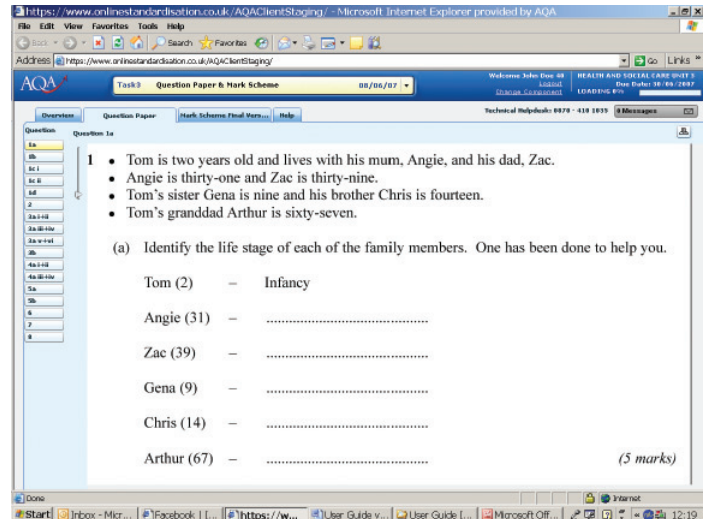
*'In face to face meetings, all examiners must work through the standardisation material at the pace determined by the Principal Examiner. The online system allows you to work at your own pace, revisiting those aspects you find most challenging.'*

► **Next steps...**

Six externally marked GCE and GCSE components will be standardised online in January 2008 with up to 50 components standardised in this way in preparation for marking in summer 2008. Those selected will include a number of the components moving to CMI+ marking as well as those with conventionally marked scripts. An implementation team is now in place whose priorities are training and support for examiners using the online tool. An operational AQA helpdesk is planned for the new year to support the transition to standardising. Your feedback and the issues raised with this support facility during 2008 will help inform ongoing enhancements to the software and how best to support you as users. The online standardisation system has been enhanced for the January 2008 pilot. These enhancements have further improved the look, feel and usability of the system and have been implemented as a direct result of feedback from examiners involved in the January 2007 pilot. Examiner feedback is very important and we always welcome any suggestions to help us improve our services further.

We are developing a set of frequently asked questions which will be updated over time: please visit:  
[http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/eassessment\\_faq.php](http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/eassessment_faq.php)

As the roll out of standardisation progresses, information will populate the user-friendly Ask AQA for Examiners online service. This enables you to find answers to questions. If you don't readily find the answers you need, you can send us questions via the web for a personal reply. Ask AQA for Examiners is available at:  
[http://aqa-examiners.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/aqa\\_examiners.cfg/php/enduser/std\\_alp.php](http://aqa-examiners.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/aqa_examiners.cfg/php/enduser/std_alp.php)



*'Instant feedback upon completion was a huge benefit and a quality addition to the process.'*



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