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Background to External Assessment and use of the Onscreen Sample Test Player

External assessment

With the introduction of external assessment in BTEC Firsts, I&CT has on-demand, on-screen external assessment for Unit 1 and Unit 2. Other Sectors also have on-demand on-screen tests.

External assessment on-demand onscreen Pros

It is very flexible in terms of when a centre can run the exam, it can be scheduled for the time that best suits the students and the call on resources in the centre. It can be taken multiple times by a candidate. A Centre can book an exam session and then as soon as 48 hours later the students could be sitting the exam. Exam results can be available very quickly, a maximum delay of 56 days is assured.

External assessment on-demand onscreen Cons

The flexibility in timing is offset by the lack of visibility into individual student performance. Candidate scripts cannot be provided, grade boundaries may not be available at the time of result and learners can receive different grades, but the same mark, for the same BTEC session. This is because there are several different live versions of a test at any one time, and these may have different grade boundaries. Also the candidate must use a non-standard test platform which may cause some difficulty, although the Sample test Player POP is available for mocks and practise.

What are the special considerations with on-demand external assessment?

The delivery of on-demand tests has evolved in such a way that there are particular issues related only to this mode of delivery. At any given time there may be 5 or 6 banks of tests that are written and available for candidates in a centre to sit. These tests are referred to as Versions. So when a cohort sit in a room to take the Unit 1 exam it is possible that there will be candidates sitting any one of the 'live' Versions of exam.

Only when a Version has had a significant number of entries, can Moderation and Standardisation be performed. During this process the mark scheme is finalised (informed by real student answers) and the Grade Boundaries are derived. Once this has been done the candidates that have sat this Version can be given their results, also candidates that continue to sit this Version of tests can be assessed and their results made available, results are released to a centre in one batch so no students get results earlier than others in any given centre.

The wait for the Moderation and Standardisation exercise is guaranteed not to exceed 56 days, and can be much shorter.

The Version is retired after a time and it then provides a past paper in the BTEC Firsts resources on the website. This bank of retired Versions are available with Mark Scheme and Lead Examiner's Report which is the material that can help teacher and candidate prepare for future tests and inform previous results.



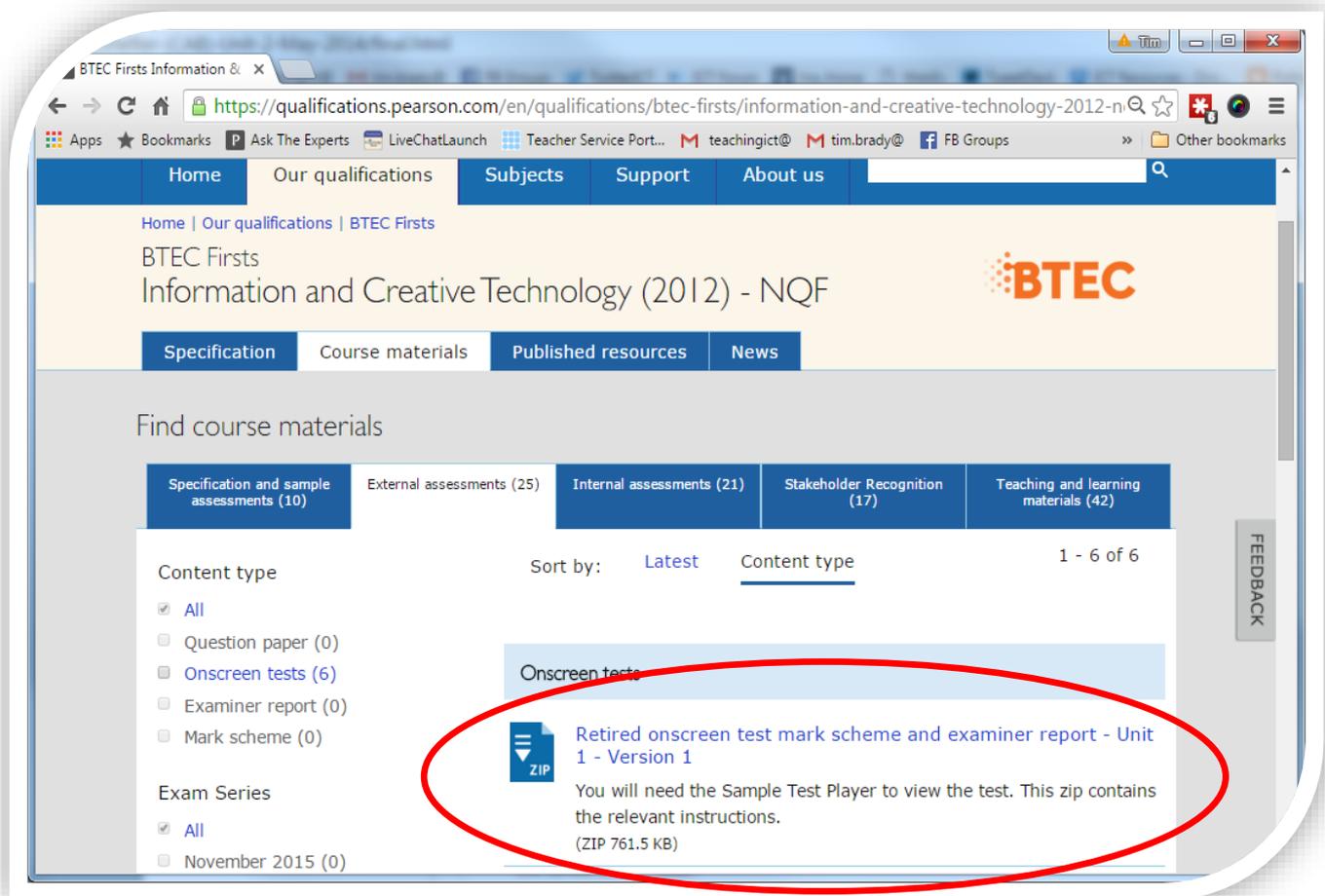
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How can I prepare my students for the External Assessment?

The BTEC student should be fully informed about the use and meaning of the command words that instruct the candidate what is required by every exam question. See appendix 1

Our colleagues who prepare students for exams in other subjects are well used to the support that students need in terms of exam technique, and command word interpretation.

The other aspect that deserves attention is exam practise; in the form of mock tests. The retired tests are available along with Mark Scheme and Lead Examiners report in a zip file download on the website they look like this:





Appendix 1

Definitions of the common operative verbs used in the grading criteria

Pass verbs	
Describe	Give a clear description that includes all the relevant features - think of it as 'painting a picture with words'
Define	Clearly explain what a particular term means and give an example, if appropriate, to show what you mean
Design	Create a plan, proposal or outline to illustrate a straightforward concept or idea
Explain	Set out in detail the meaning of something, with reasons. More difficult than describe or list, so it can help to give an example to show what you mean. Start by introducing the topic then give the 'how' or 'why'
Identify	Point out or choose the right one or give a list of the main features
Illustrate	Include examples or a diagram to show what you mean
Interpret	Define or explain the meaning of something
List	Provide the information in a list, rather than in continuous writing
Outline	Write a clear description but not a detailed one
Plan	Work out and plan how you would carry out a task or activity
State	Write a clear and full account
Summarise	Write down or articulate briefly the main points or essential features
Merit verbs	
Analyse	Identify separate factors, say how they are related and how each one contributes to the topic
Assess	Give careful consideration to all the factors or events that apply and identify which are the most important or relevant
Compare/ Contrast	Identify the main factors that apply in two or more situations and explain the similarities and differences or advantages and disadvantages
Demonstrate	Provide several relevant examples or related evidence which clearly support the arguments you are making. This may include showing practical skills
Design	Create a plan, proposal or outline to illustrate a relatively complex concept or idea
Explain in detail	Provide details and give reasons and/or evidence to clearly support the argument you are making
Justify How/ Why	Give reasons or evidence to support your opinion or view to show how you arrived at these conclusions
Distinction verbs	
Appraise	Consider the positive and negative points and give a reasoned judgement
Assess	Make a judgement on the importance of something – similar to evaluate
Comment critically	Give your view after you have considered all the evidence. In particular decide the importance of all the relevant positive and negative aspects
Criticise	Review a topic or issue objectively and weigh up both positive and negative points before making a decision
Draw conclusions	Use the evidence you have provided to reach a reasoned judgement
Evaluate	Review the information then bring it together to form a conclusion. Give evidence for each of your views or statements
Evaluate critically	Decide the degree to which a statement is true or the importance or value of something by reviewing the information. Include precise and detailed information and assess possible alternatives, bearing in mind their strengths and weaknesses if they were applied instead