



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN مملكة البحرين

National Examinations Code of Practice Handbook

**Education and Training
Quality Authority
2025**





Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Section 1: Scope and Definitions	3
1.1 Scope	3
1.2 Definitions	3
Section 2: General Principles	5
2.1 Support of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain	5
2.2 Quality of Assessment and Sustainability	5
2.3 Equity	6
2.4 Transparency in Assessment	6
2.5 Integrity of Examinations	7
2.6 Confidentiality of Data and Examinations Papers	7
2.7 Capacity-building to Enhance Performance	7
Section 3: Test Specifications	8
Section 4: Setting of Question Papers and Mark Schemes	8
4.1 Question Papers	9
4.2 Mark Schemes	11
4.3 Personnel Involved in Preparing Question Papers and Mark Schemes	12
4.4 Question Paper Evaluation Committee	12
4.5 Tests Compiled from Item Banks	13
Section 5: Marking	13
Section 6: Reporting of Results	14
6.1 Process of Results Analysis	14
6.2 Maintaining Standards	14
6.3 Quality Checks	14
6.4 Appeals on Results	15

Introduction

The Education and Training Quality Authority (BQA) has developed the Code of Practice Handbook. This Handbook sets out the BQA approach to assessment of Grade 9 & Grade 12 students on an annual basis, with the aim of transparency in its dealings with stakeholders. It represents a set of standards adopted by the BQA in its various processes. It is subject to revision when necessary.

The Code is supported by a number of procedures and guidelines issued by the BQA that contain more detailed operational and administrative information.

The BQA is mandated to prepare and conduct national examinations to test the levels of performance in the stages of pre-university education, and its main objectives are as follows:

- Independently assess students' performance in the Kingdom of Bahrain at the end of basic and secondary education.
- Develop test specifications according to the national curriculum and in line with international standards.
- Develop examinations that are valid, reliable and fit for purpose.
- Administer and conduct national examinations effectively and efficiently.
- Publish national examinations results and reports and make them available to all concerned stakeholders.
- Communicate with all concerned stakeholders in an effective and a sustainable manner, to contribute towards improving and developing the education system in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

1 Section 1: Scope and Definitions

1.1 Scope

This Code applies to all the Directorate of National Examinations (DNE) activities in its role of designing, developing and administering the national examinations for students in the Kingdom of Bahrain at the end of the basic and secondary stages of education and in accordance with international standards.

The BQA constantly liaises with the Ministry of Education in order to develop and implement its assessments process. The national examinations are aligned to the National Curriculum and international standards.

1.2 Definitions

The following terms are defined for the purposes of this Code:

BQA	Education and Training Quality Authority.
Curriculum	The broad scheme of learning for each subject at each grade that normally includes aims and objectives, academic content, specific learning outcomes or competencies, assessment methodology, teaching plans and teaching and learning resources.
Test Specifications	The detailed plan showing the construction of a test that covers the methods of assessment to be used along with the description of aims and competencies, number of question papers, test timing, and marks allocated for each question paper; considering the weight allocated for each question paper in each examination. The test specifications also include the requirements for sitting the examinations.

Mark Scheme	The document produced along with each question paper to give instructions to markers with regard to awarding of marks for each item of the question paper.
Special Arrangements	Special arrangements limit the impact on the performance of students with special educational needs. Special arrangements include extra time allowance, the provision of specially adapted papers, the provision of 'Braille' scripts adaptation of question papers, enlarged fonts, enlarged paper, papers in different colours and assistance with reading or writing.
Special Considerations	The BQA will grant special considerations for the fact that the student sat the examination in emergency conditions, taking place before or during sitting the examination, e.g. sudden illness, accident, bereavement or other acceptable circumstances that prevented the student from sitting the exam or affected their performance.
Suspected Malpractice and Maladministration	Malpractice and maladministration are those actions that may threaten the integrity of BQA examinations, e.g. collusion, failure of invigilators to monitor students during the exam, introducing unauthorised material, etc.
Item Bank	Storage of test items that are constructed based on specifications and standard criteria as well as based on scientific and objective approaches. In addition, they are classified in a manner that allows knowledge of all the information related to items.

2 Section 2: General Principles

The BQA shall do the following:

2.1 Support of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain

- (a) assesses students' performance at the end of basic and secondary education in accordance with the competencies and skills of the national curriculum and international standards
- (b) works effectively with the concerned local stakeholders to promote good international practices in education and assessment
- (c) establishes and strengthens relationships with other relevant regional and international bodies to achieve the highest standards of education and assessment
- (d) issues reports and provide them to the concerned stakeholders to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning.

2.2 Quality of Assessment and Sustainability

- (a) follows all relevant procedures in accordance with the Code of Practice Handbook to ensure that assessment standards are maintained
- (b) implements the latest assessment techniques to measure students' skills, knowledge and understanding
- (c) encourages the appropriate and constructive use of the assessment results by the concerned stakeholders
- (d) uses professional judgements and statistical evidence and maintain them in line with best international practices
- (e) ensures the conduct of continuous review for each process of the BQA assessment cycle supported by evidence for decisions taken in this regard
- (f) employs continuous self-assessment in its various forms and use its results to work towards continuous improvement of processes has its assessment standards reviewed by international organisations whenever it is necessary.

2.3 Equity

- (a) designs national examinations that take consideration of all students regardless of their backgrounds
- (b) assesses all students for what they demonstrate to know, understand and do, not for what they might have achieved had circumstances been different
- (c) makes special arrangements to allow students with special educational needs to sit the examinations to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and understanding, in the most appropriate conditions, without any amendments to the competencies being measured, nor changes in the demands of the assessment
- (d) implements special arrangements or special considerations while ensuring that these do not give the concerned student an advantage over other students and does not interfere with the integrity of the assessment
- (e) assesses all students according to the same marking criteria.

2.4 Transparency in Assessment

- (a) uses an assessment system that is transparent, in that the evidence on which decisions are based will be clear.
- (b) provides clear documentation, procedures and guidance to support schools in meeting their responsibilities to conduct and administrate the national examinations
- (c) coordinates with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to communicate with the school principal or their designated representative regarding national examinations. Students and their parents have the right to communicate with the BQA through the school administration
- (d) provides opportunities for stakeholders to comment on question papers
- (e) review the stakeholder's remarks and suggestions on the national examinations or on the level of services
- (f) publishes Marking Reports for each subject and grade after each session to help teachers prepare students for future examinations and to improve the learning process as a whole
- (g) submits the students' results to all stakeholders

(h) provides the appeal service on the Grade 9 and Grade 12 results.

2.5 Integrity of Examinations

- (a) inspects cases of malpractice by students such as cheating or using unauthorised tools or materials, or maladministration by schools such as inaccuracies in invigilation or in adhering to national examinations policies, and deals with all cases as soon as they occur
- (b) makes schools liable to rigorous audits during the examination session which includes adhering to national examinations rules and policies such as maintaining papers confidentiality and mechanisms for distribution and gathering of papers.

2.6 Confidentiality of Data and Examinations Papers

- (a) maintains the confidentiality of students' personal information
- (b) uses students' CPR on the students' answer papers only, without any other details that may indicate their identity such as name or school
- (c) maintains the confidentiality of all national examinations question papers and mark schemes as well as other supplemental materials until the date of examination
- (d) implements an emergency plan for any leakage of the national examinations papers, if it occurs, before the examination takes place
- (e) keeps all examination papers and mark schemes in a safe place during draft phases, transportation, printing and delivery of both printed and electronic versions.

2.7 Capacity-building to Enhance Performance

- (a) works with local and international organisations for further development and maintenance of capacity-building
- (b) develops staff technical, administrative and research skills within a supporting working environment
- (c) raises the stakeholders' competencies to improve performance and spread experiences.

3 Section 3: Test Specifications

The BQA:

- (a) develops test specifications to assess the learning of Grades 9 and 12 students, or other grades if deemed necessary by national interest, in accordance with the competencies and skills of the national curriculum approved by the MoE, and international standards while considering the learning outcomes for each grade
- (b) involves concerned stakeholders from relevant areas of expertise in the subject and assessment to develop and review test specifications
periodically publishes all test specifications on the BQA website <https://www.bqa.gov.bh/> and make them available to schools before the national examinations session.

4 Section 4: Setting of Question Papers and Mark Schemes

The BQA will ensure that its question papers and mark schemes are valid and aimed towards producing a practical and positive educational impact for all concerned. Question papers and mark schemes will be developed alongside each other and will be written in sufficient detail to allow for a full evaluation of the question paper, ensuring confidentiality.

4.1 Question Papers

(a) Validity and Conformity

1. Question papers will be aligned with competencies and skills of the curriculum, the approved test specifications, assessment objectives, skills, and learning outcomes.
2. The wording of question papers will be at a suitable level of linguistic demand.
3. Items used in the national examinations will be within the level of students' grade and aligned to competencies and skills of the national curriculum.



4. Question papers will be compatible with any published specimen papers.

(b) Validity and Avoiding Irrelevant Effects

1. The assurance that question papers will not be affected by unrelated factors (e.g. gender, language, socio-economic background).
2. The wording of question papers will be as brief, intelligible and unambiguous as possible.
3. Sufficient time will be allocated to students for reading questions, listening to recordings and answering questions.
4. Materials accompanying question papers will be relevant to the examination being sit.
5. Questions will not be so predictable, to avoid assessing knowledge that may be familiar to student.
6. Questions submitted by the item writers to the BQA will be authentic, exclusively prepared for the examination, not previously used, and designed to measure competencies and skills specified in the curriculum.
7. Question papers will avoid repetition of identical questions from one year to another, except that limited re-use of multiple-choice questions may occur.
8. Arrangements will be made to avoid conflicts of interest for those involved in the setting of question papers.

(c) Discrimination and Coverage:

1. Question papers will be able to reflect individual differences amongst students being assessed.
2. Each question or sub question will contribute to achieving the assessment objectives. Question papers will not unnecessarily repeat assessing the same objective and will avoid overlap between questions across papers within a subject in the same year.
3. Grade 9 question papers within a subject will cover the whole curriculum, over the years, with each year covering a significant sample.



(d) Accuracy of Content and Level:

1. Question papers will be free of content and typographical errors.
2. The question paper will maintain the intellectual challenge and level of demand of the same question paper in previous years.
3. The question paper will not include any offensive or insensitive content, taking into consideration differences of students' genders, ethnicity, and religious backgrounds.
4. Exam papers will reflect students' reality and environment in order to support the validity of the assessment.
5. Question papers will be consistent with BQA agreed house style, which in itself is in line with international good practice in such matters as scientific units, the presentation of diagrams, and tables.
6. All diagrams, or illustrations, will be clear, accurate and correctly labelled.
7. Translation of questions from one language to another will not result in any errors, nor ambiguity, nor inconsistency between language levels and student levels.
8. The source of materials used in the examination will be documented whenever feasible, and in a way that will not distract attention nor compromise the security of the papers.

(e) Rubrics and Layout of Question Papers:

1. The rubrics and the layout of question papers will be clear, consistent in style and accessible to students.
2. If special equipment or materials are required, it will be clearly stated.

(f) Practicability:

The allocated time for the question papers will be relatively appropriate in terms of administrative, technical and academic aspects, and will take place within suitable timeframe, without having an impact on most schools and students.

(g) Impact:

1. The national examinations and the material used in them will contribute to improving teaching and assessment methods.



2. Previous national examinations papers will be available for teachers' use.
3. The national examinations will reflect students' knowledge of the competencies and skills of the curriculum and the learning outcomes of the basic and secondary education in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

4.2 Mark Schemes

(a) Conformity of Mark Schemes with Curriculum and Assessment

Objectives

Mark schemes will:

1. reflect the assessment objectives of the curriculum content, and in the correct proportions
2. be correct in terms of the subject matter
3. be consistent with the national examinations question papers
4. reflect the marks distribution properly
5. maintain intellectual challenge from one examination session to another
6. award marks positively, avoiding the deduction of marks for lack of attainment
7. not disproportionately penalise a student for a single error
8. use 'levels of response' or analytic approaches where appropriate
9. allow full marks for correct answers within the scope of the curriculum's competencies and skills, and will allow marks to be achieved for answers that go beyond the scope of the curriculum's competencies and skills.

(b) Reliability of Marking

Mark scheme will:

1. provide enough details to ensure reliability of the marking process
2. include an indication of the nature and range of likely responses and will provide rationales to allow markers to mark the different approaches that students might take. Mark schemes will not seek to list every possible response unless there is a closed set of acceptable responses

3. state the intended correct answers to objective questions.

(c) Accuracy of Mark Schemes

Mark schemes will:

1. allocate marks that are appropriate with the demands of questions
2. encourage a fair spread of marks.

(d) Development and Format of Mark Schemes

The mark scheme will be developed alongside the question paper in sufficient detail to serve its purpose at each stage, and there will be only a single definitive version of it at each stage.

4.3 Personnel Involved in Preparing Question Papers and Mark Schemes

1. For each question paper and mark scheme there will be a group of item writers and revisers. They will be selected and trained by the Subject Specialist.
2. The BQA will liaise with stakeholders or experts in national or international assessments when producing national examinations question papers or mark schemes.
3. Item writers and others involved in the drafting and revision of question papers will be experts both in the subject and in assessment (or at least in the teaching and learning of the subject and grade).

4.4 Question Paper Evaluation Committee

A Question Paper Evaluation Committee (QPEC) will evaluate each question paper and draft mark scheme for each paper and ensure that they are in line with BQA policies and procedures. Item writers and revisers responsible for the papers under consideration will attend meetings. Other experts may also attend to ensure that the technical and the objectives aspects of the paper are met, provided that these experts are not the item writers nor the revisers, or the Subject Specialist.

4.5 Tests Compiled from Item Banks

1. Ensure that the bank always contains suitable items for the purpose of the national examinations test construction.
2. Each item will be classified by content and by skill or assessment objective, and in any other way that may be appropriate in order to facilitate the compilation of a balanced paper that satisfies the requirements of the curriculum.
3. The items in the item bank are used to produce a question paper of similar difficulty, in case there are different versions of the same examination, or for the same examination in different sessions.
Multiple-choice question papers in new live examinations will not include more than three items from the same previous question paper.

5 Section 5: Marking

- A. The marking process will take place after choosing the markers as per the BQA standards, and after receiving the necessary training.
- B. The markers in an examination session will be structurally distributed in teams with team leaders under the supervision of the Subject Specialist.
- C. Markers will mark examination papers either manually or electronically as per the marking process standards and procedures.
- D. A report is written about the overall performance of the students for each exam paper. All answer papers received or found late will be marked, and in the case of an irretrievably lost paper, a clear and fair mechanism is applied for calculating the mark for such cases.
- E. Review of markings undertaken in response to an appeal will not be done by the original Marker.
- F. The BQA will ensure that students' original answer papers are available for reference until results are issued to allow for any potential enquiries about results. According to BQA archiving policy, some answer papers may also be retained for other purposes in a secure and confidential manner, while the remaining answer papers will be disposed.

6 Section 6: Reporting of Results

The BQA is committed to analysing the marks, issuing reporting of results, publishing them, and making them available to concerned stakeholders including: students, schools and the MoE . In the case of any changes in the results, concerned stakeholders will be notified.

6.1 Process of Results Analysis

The amount of time allowed for the process of analysis and reporting must be sufficient for BQA to provide the required evidence and to ensure the quality of the judgements made.

6.2 Maintaining Standards

1. Statistical methods will be used to maintain standards from one year to another.
2. Professional judgement may be used to supplement the statistical evidence in some subjects.
3. The panel of experts providing their professional judgement for the maintenance of standards should be of sufficient experience, training, and familiarity with criteria to reach a professional judgement.
4. The statistical analysis of marks and the meetings of panels of experts will occur after the marking process is completed.

6.3 Quality Checks

1. Checks will be run on samples of malpractice cases to ensure proper procedures were followed.
2. The BQA specialised committees will carry out reviews on the processes and approval of results .
3. The results are approved by the BQA Board of Directors and endorsed by the Cabinet in accordance with BQA procedures before being published.

6.4 Appeal on Results

Students have the right to appeal against results through BQA website, which will redirect them to the National Portal, in accordance with BQA regulations and procedures.