

General comment on modifying the LAPS

We note the section in the report on the previous recommendations not attended to. We wish to draw attention to the release dates of the reports in relation to the time needed to implement changes to the LAPS. The report on the 2011 LAPS reached the DBE sometime later in 2012; the 2012 report late in September 2013, and the 2013 report in December 2014.

While we recognise that the reports are a lot of work, we draw attention to the fact that revisions for the following year would always need to be completed by August in the preceding year. It would therefore have been unlikely that recommendations made in the 2011 report (arriving late in 2012) could have been addressed in the 2013 LAPS.

SAQA QUERY 1: We requested in our reports for 2011, 2012, and 2013 that the Learner Assessment Portfolios be revised. One cannot have an assessment instrument that has retained identical questions for six years. This revision/refreshment is hardly a difficult process in most cases *easily* made by changing a few details. Without these changes the assessment becomes suspect through its utter predictability. Yet no attempt has been made to implement this recommendation.

Certain changes have been made to the LAPS in particular certain comprehension questions were changed and the LAPS included a timed oral reading speed test for which tested word level reading speed based on the input of Dr Helen Abadzi and the work of other neurocognitive researchers. The training manual includes a lengthy explanation of how this is to be done and the training manual is the guide to the training that VEs should receive.

The assessments have largely remained the same for the following reasons:

Firstly it has helped to standardise the tests over space and time. This has helped the campaign to compare learners' results over the years and across languages. We do not believe that in a portfolio or "open book" test that predictability is a problem. The instrument is not a summative challenge examination.

Secondly with novice volunteers it is helpful for them to administer the same or similar activity types. Major changes in the LAPS such as the introduction of the speed reading required intensive training.

Thirdly, with the major changes made previously it was not possible to reuse left over stocks of LAPS. The Campaign was heavily criticised by National Treasury for not having utilised left over stock. It is not possible to have some learners using old LAPS and some on new LAPS in the same year. All stock needs to be utilised.

Notwithstanding the above, we agree that certain questions can be refreshed and versioned across the eleven languages and transcribed into braille in eleven languages. While this is not an insignificant task it is possible to make these revisions for 2017. In doing this, we will take our cue from the earlier "tests" administered at the SAQA site visits and incorporate some activities based on these.

SAQA QUERY 2: We further requested that specific educator training and support be targeted at lessening the incidences of unsatisfactory marking or the likelihood of the presentation of portfolios that are not authentic.

The following figure taken from the training manual provides guidance on what aspects of authenticity are required. These were versioned from the SAQA assessor training manual and put in a simpler form. The coordinators who are trained by SAQA at the verification workshops are required to cascade this training to the supervisors and volunteers. Training for LAP assessments should take place in the pre campaign training and also at the monthly workshops where LAPS are required to be controlled in the supervisor meetings.

LAP CHECKS

When we check your LAPS we look out for the following:

Administration	
☐	Did the educator fill in the learner's personal details correctly?
☐	Did the educator fill in the learner's UNIQUE number on the cover of the LAP?
☐	Did the educator transfer all the marks correctly onto the marksheet?
Validity and reliability	
☐	Is the mark accurate?
☐	Did the educator count the number of ticks correctly?
☐	Is the mark accurate or must it be changed upwards or downwards?
Appropriateness of learner corrections	
☐	Learners were allowed/encouraged to fix up their work at a later stage. Check to see if changes/corrections were made, that these were these genuinely the learner's work?
Growth and consistency	
☐	Does the portfolio show that the learner has continuously improved?
☐	Is the handwriting genuinely the learner's handwriting? (Or did someone else write for the learner?)
☐	Does it seem that learner copied answers off the board?
☐	If you suspect any irregularities you will need to send the LAPS back to the educator so that the learners can redo the activity under the supervision of the coordinator.

The training manual which was designed after SAQA's initial request for improved training is available. The training manual outlines all the relevant aspects highlighted in the SAQA training manual and is put in a more simplified and practical form for VEs. This manual and the guidelines for authenticity is used internationally.

SAQA QUERY 3: There are some details within the portfolios which should have been corrected several years ago, notably a major misprint whereby the results for two exercises appear on the wrong pages.

Can SAQA please provide specific information on the language and the pages so that these can be rectified. We are not able to locate these details in the reports.

SAQA QUERY 4: The unusual rigour of the moderation of the hearing disabled group has been drawn to the attention of Kha Ri Gude twice but still no report has been received.

Deaf learners are assessed using the same instruments as the mainstream learners, with the exception of the oral reading assessment activity. All deaf learners learn in English (with Sign Language as the medium of instruction). English medium is selected because English offers learners with no spoken language wider reading and hence work opportunities.

It is necessary that the LAP verification for the disabled are differentiated to take into account the different learning of deaf learners. While students with normal hearing usually acquire language naturally, students who are deaf have limited daily access to the speech and language in their social environments and may join KRG with little or very low language or communication skills. The classes begin with finger phonics and in many cases teaching the rudiments of sign language – noting the double disadvantage of illiterate deaf learners usually from circumstances of poverty. In moderating the LAPS it is necessary to take into account that learners who can't hear tend to use only nouns and verbs and tend not to use prepositions. This would affect all written answers and will also affect deaf learners' understandings of story sums. While learners who can hear come to the classes with a fully developed language and grammar because they have been exposed to hearing the language, the language growth of deaf learners is hampered because of the limited environment for language learning, discussing, using multiple meanings of words, and understanding how the context influences the interpretation of a word. Many of the deaf learners have been to school (without much learning happening) and while their answers show perfectly formed letters, their answers would be a string of verbs and nouns. The marker and moderator would need to take into account the meaning or sense of the answers of deaf learners.

SAQA QUERY 5: We also requested that the way the assessment scores are entered (currently for many of the assessment activities the marker has to transpose a raw score into a score on a scale according to certain criteria) be relooked at. [We suspected that some of the lack of correlation between these LAP scores and out site visit assessment instrument scores can be explained by problems with this scaling process by relatively unskilled markers.]

We were unable to find a specific request on what changes needed to be implemented with the coding scale. This rating scale is common to many of the “instructional rubrics” used internationally and many of the other literacy projects internationally have taken on this form of instructional rubric. The rubric in the LAPS describe 5 levels of quality but do not give them labels to avert being judgemental. Everyone should try to achieve a 5 and a 1 is something to avoid or to indicate that an activity is repeated.

The gradations of quality allow students to spot weaknesses in their writing and give them concrete ways to improve their shortcomings.

We do not agree that changing the rubric or the format of the LAP at this stage in the programme will add value. We agree that more training will be necessary especially with the new intake of coordinators and educators.

The VE training manual is very specific on the use of the rubric and the conversion of “tick scores”. See this activity from the training manual.

2 Assessing learners

Look at this marked LAP activity and discuss with your group why it is marked incorrectly.

Look at the following marked activity:

Activity 17

Assess the LAP activity and then award a mark. Discuss the mark with your group and see if they agree with your mark. Transfer the mark to the correct position on the mark sheet on the previous page.

Activity 13

NUMBERS AND COUNTING

Let learners do this activity after they have completed numeracy lesson.

When should the activity be done?

Is this marked correctly?

Count how many there are in each group and fill in the correct number.

3

✓

7

✓

6

✓

32

Section F

20

Kwa Ri Gate Assessment Portfolio

Arrange these numbers from smallest to biggest.

7 : 3 : 1 : 4 : 8 1 3 4 7 8 X

19 : 10 : 7 : 9 : 14 7 9 14 10 19 ✓

Fill in the missing numbers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	30	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	6	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	8	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00

What mark should the educator give the learner?

Mark: ☒ 5 Criteria: Date: 19/9/2011

☐ 4 Learner has given 4 - 13 correct answers.

☐ 3 Learner has given 3 - 12 correct answers.

☐ 2 Learner has given 2 - 11 correct answers.

☐ 1 Learner has given 1 - 10 correct answers.

☐ Learner was not ready to do this activity. Let learner redo this exercise at a later stage.

REMEMBER to count all the ticks on both pages.

Total number of ticks: 15

Why do we use this icon to remind you to count the ticks across two pages?

How many ticks are possible when marking the activity?

Kha Ri Gude Assessment Portfolio 21

Now look at the next LAP activity.

General response to the design of the LAPS

Instructional rubrics are becoming popular. The following taken from general literature:

Rubrics make assessing student work quick and efficient, and they help teachers justify to parents and others the grades that they assign to students.

Rubrics are also teaching tools that support student learning.

When used correctly, they serve the purposes of learning as well as of evaluation and accountability. They blur the distinction between instruction and assessment.

An instructional rubric describes varying levels of quality, from excellent to poor, for a specific assignment. Its purposes are to give students informative feedback about their works in progress and to give detailed evaluations of their final products.

Although the format of an instructional rubric can vary, all rubrics have two features in common: (1) a list of criteria, or "what counts" in a project or assignment; and (2) provide gradations of quality.

Rubrics have become very popular trend in education.

Instructional rubrics are easy to use and to explain. Rubrics make sense to people at a glance; they're concise and digestible.

Instructional rubrics make teachers' expectations very clear. Traditionally, educators did not articulate assessment criteria and standards. The answers to the test were secret, and teachers tended not to articulate what counted when they gave grades. The LAPS take a totally different approach. They *Instructional rubrics provide students with more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement than traditional forms of assessment do.* Imagine that your employer is about to evaluate you. You have a choice between receiving a letter grade or a rubric with statements circled that most closely describe your performance. Which kind of assessment would you choose? Most people choose the rubric, knowing that it will tell them a lot more about their performance. The same is true for students.

For example, if the criterion is "Briefly summarize the plot of the story," the four levels might be the following:

1. Level 4—"Yes, I briefly summarized the plot."
2. Level 3—"Yes, I summarized the plot, *but* I also included some unnecessary details or left out key information."
3. Level 2—"No, I didn't summarize the plot, *but* I did include some details from the story."
4. Level 1—"No, I didn't summarize the plot."

The following taken from McKay 2014 in process for the International Review of Education.

The LAPs are standardised across the languages. This means that learners perform the same tasks (in their own languages) and are assessed against the same criteria, and, as Hanemann (2010:6) points out, they are tested on tasks that are implemented in flexible and personalized ways, allowing each learner to proceed at his or her own pace, allowing learners opportunities to retry activities where they wish to improve their competence. The assessment activities are closely aligned with core literacy materials, and learners are required to demonstrate the competencies that have been worked on in class. This use of a standardised assessment model enables the campaign to compare the functioning of the campaign and the achievement outcomes across regions, districts and classes over a period of time.

Integrated assessments

The assessment approach was developed to be a regular, integrated, non-threatening assessment through which learners can demonstrate their growing competences in the learner assessment portfolio.

The structured standardised instrument assesses learners' competencies against outcomes aligned with specific unit standards. It was developed to be holistic and performance-based, is integrated into everyday classroom practice, and is administered at regular intervals, thus avoiding the artificial separation of assessment from teaching and learning. The LAP activities are administered in the same way as all other class activities and the classroom therefore constitutes a safe place for assessing. Some learners had previously been failed by the schooling system so it was necessary to overcome a certain negativity. The self-pacing and self-improvement built into the LAP model allows learners to develop a sense of autonomy and agency – this was especially important with learners who had been demotivated in the school system. Ecclestone et al (2010:175) in fact refers to the dilemma that adult educators have in needing to establish good relations with learners in relaxed classes without being directive. He refers to the dilemma of creating a relaxed learning environment that enabled learners to overcome barriers while at the same time recognising that teachers are subjected to accountability and must ensure that learners achieve personalised learning goals and outcomes aligned with the national curriculum.

Diagnostic and formative

In addition to assessing the achievements of individual learners, the LAP instrument is essentially diagnostic and “interventionist”, guiding improvements for teachers and for the learners themselves.

Transparency of assessment

Each LAP activity includes a rubric explaining the assessment criteria and scoring used for the specific test item. Because the assessments are administered to more than 600 000 learners at a time, it was necessary to clarify and simplify the standard scoring guides for scoring each activity. The simplified rubric enables the educator to interpret the meaning of the scores and, at a systemic level, it allows for the system to compare scores across learning items.

Negotiated criteria

Hanneman (2010) points out that the assessment tools and methods subscribe to the view that learning is a social activity. Learner assessment is carried on at different times throughout the instructional process, and the learner and teacher can determine when a learner is ready for a particular assessment. The simple rubrics also make it possible for learners to be full participants in the assessment process as the criteria and performance expectations are included with each assessment. They give the learners clear information about the nature of the learning task, and also enable them to determine when they are ready to attempt the test. Moreover, the negotiations between the learner, teacher and peers (and often family members) around the scores are useful in assisting the learner to develop the skill of self-assessment.

Because the assessments are finalised by educators in a group context in the monthly meetings, they build a shared understanding of assessment results and form the basis for improved practices.

The educator groups double up as communities of practice where the practice of knowing-in-action is encouraged. These groups are critical for developing the professional practice of the unqualified educators who through guided reflection (in monthly meetings) are required to focus on areas that require attention.

Measuring survivors

The LAPs and their completion are good indicators of the survival rates of learners at the end of their programme. The return rate of the completed LAPs is a significant indicator (especially when triangulated) for determining attrition/survival rates, curriculum coverage, and quality of teaching and learning. Similarly, an incomplete LAP draws attention to the stage at which the adult learner exited the system or was unable – for various reasons – to complete the assessment process.