

Moderators' report

GCSE

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in
Physical Education**

J587

For first teaching in 2016

J587/04 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by the moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements, identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation, and comment on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. The report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

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We have created online courses to build your confidence in delivering, marking and administering internal assessment for our qualifications. Courses are available for Cambridge Nationals, GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016).

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General Overview

The non-examined assessment (NEA) is a compulsory component of the GCSE Physical Education qualification. It is worth 60 marks and counts as 30% of the total GCSE. The practical element of the course consists of three activities, including at least one 'team' and at least one 'individual' sport from the approved activity lists in competitive situations.

The 2025 series proved to be another successful year. Candidates overall were enthusiastic and committed. Moderators continue to be made welcome on moderation days by all centres involved. Host centres are thanked for their high levels of organisation and hospitality. It is important to remember, that this element of the course is an official exam, therefore participation from candidates is mandatory if selected by the moderator.

Submission Deadlines and Reminders

The 2025 series saw the introduction of My Cambridge with centres using a new electronic Visit Arrangement Form (VAF), marks submission form and the uploading of all filmed evidence to Submit for Assessment (SFA).

Generally, centres adapted well to the new systems and are thanked for their efforts in making the first stage of the moderation process run smoothly. It is important that centres upload all filmed evidence to SFA by the deadline, to prevent any delays in the moderation process.

Please note, while moderators appreciate the complexity (especially for host centres) of organising a date for the practical moderation, it is important that centres are as flexible as possible. This year saw an increase in dates that centres couldn't attend. This causes significant difficulties when organising a date in a small window.

Submission Dates – Centre actions and dates

21 February – submit your visit arrangements using My Cambridge – including if you wish to act as a host centre.

15 March – submit marks via My Cambridge, and Practical Performance evidence with accompanied logbooks to OCR via Submit for Assessment

15 March to 15 May – live Moderation, centres attend moderation. All performances included in the moderation sample must be filmed. Centres should make sure that logbooks for candidates being sampled are available for the moderator throughout the visit.

Candidates who did well generally:	Candidates who did less well generally:
- demonstrated both core and advanced skills in isolation and competition - showed game understanding: decision making, tactics, and physical attributes - were able to demonstrate consistency, confidence and fluency in their performance - had a clear understanding of the specification - produced detailed, annotated footage for off-site activities, demonstrating the required skills and competitive scenarios of a length that was sufficient to support the mark given. - produced detailed logbooks to support their performance, which showed a clear level of competition and commitment to the activity - experienced mock moderations and fully understood the moderation process before final assessment - participated regularly in activities both in and out of centre.	- lacked understanding of the requirements of the activity. For example, what skills they needed to show or even what those skills were - demonstrated a lack of fluency and consistency during their performance - had a limited knowledge of the activity in terms of rules and regulations - were not physically prepared. Showed a lack of understanding of the moderation process or, did not possess the correct equipment such no shin-pads or footwear - produced filmed evidence that did not show: - a range of core and advanced skills - consistent performance - full competitive scenarios. - had no logbook or had minimal evidence in their logbook, especially for off-site activities.

Guidance for Practical Performance

Please note, attendance is compulsory if selected for practical moderation. All candidates should be fully informed by their teachers regarding the process of the day. Equally, all candidates should be fully prepared with the correct equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We saw an increase this year in the number of candidates who did not have the correct footwear in numerous activities and candidates not wearing shin-pads in Association Football.

Candidates should be taught the necessary knowledge to participate in each activity. This will include applicable rules and regulations, tactics and strategies, and team formations where appropriate.

Candidates should be marked on their overall performance against the criteria using a best fit approach. It is important that candidates can demonstrate the core and advanced skills during competitive gameplay as well as in isolation. This allows the moderator to also assess the candidate's level of decision making. Please refer to the Guide to Non-Exam Assessment (NEA), section 2b.2 for further information.

Centres may apply to amend the assessment criteria of approved activities via the activity adjustment process. If a centre wishes to apply for an activity adjustment (AAR), please refer to section 1e in the guide to NEA.

All off-site activities must be filmed and uploaded to Submit For Assessment. The list of activities that require filmed evidence, can be found in the guide to NEA in section 2f.

Moderation Day

Moderators had effective and meaningful conversations on the day. Please note, the process is not only to try and support the marks submitted by the centre, but also to act as a form of continued professional development (CPD) for all staff involved. All staff should be involved in open conversations with the moderator and feel happy to ask a question if they need clarification at any point during the day. In addition, it is important that the staff involved, assess the candidates on what they see, live on the day rather than the mark they have previously submitted.

It was pleasing to see so many passionate and enthusiastic candidates performing in a range of different activities. For most, they were well prepared and equipped.

Staff are encouraged to plan sessions for their activity, to allow candidates to fully show all required elements of the course; range of skills, quality of skills, physical attributes and decision making. Candidates should be marked on their overall performance against the criteria using a best fit approach. Each activity should include candidates demonstrating isolated skills, performing in conditioned, competitive situations and in full performance conditions.

On-site activities

Generally, the most accurately assessed activities were Rugby Union, Dance (individual), Netball and Association Football, although, there was some slight generosity seen in the top levels of candidates in Association Football. Centres tended to award higher marks to their candidates based on a rank order within their own centre, rather than assessing candidates in accordance with the specification.

For the above activities, staff understood the specification clearly and could identify levels of performance accurately. Generally candidates were enthusiastic, confident and equally understood the skills required. It was evident that candidates participate regularly, in these activities.

Assessment for learning



For all activities, the level of representation is irrelevant when it comes to assessment. For example, an academy footballer does not automatically receive a higher mark based on the team they play for outside of the centre. However, their range and quality of skills, as well as their physical attributes and decision making is often higher because of the amount of time they participate.

Activities that were generally seen to be overmarked were Badminton, Table Tennis, Athletics and Handball.

Badminton was frequently seen to be overmarked because candidates did not demonstrate the required level of advanced skills during both isolated drills and competitive situations.

Assessment for learning



For candidates to access Level 2 they must demonstrate many core and few advanced skills.

For candidates to access Level 3 they must demonstrate most core and some advanced skills.

For candidates to access Level 4 they must demonstrate all core and many advanced skills.

For candidates to access Level 5 they must demonstrate all core and nearly all advanced skills.

Moderators observed candidates not performing enough of the advanced skills or candidates not performing the required advanced skills with the correct level of consistency. It is important that centres complete internal standardisation and compare marks across activities. For example, a mark 12 in Netball should be the same as a 12 in Badminton.

Table Tennis was also frequently overmarked by centres because candidates did not show both offensive and defensive shots in the core and advanced skills, or a strong enough level of understanding regarding rules and regulations. Moderators reported that candidates performed illegal serves during competitive game play, as well as not being able to ascertain when to play a particular shot.

Athletics, like previous years was also an activity seen to be marked generously, especially in field events. The candidates who underperformed most were not fully prepared for the moderation day and had not received any input on their activities since the summer of Year 10. Moderators reported that shot putt and javelin were key events that were generally overmarked. Furthermore, suggesting that candidates did not have the same level of understanding like they may have for activities they frequently participate in.

This year saw an increase in the number of candidates being assessed in Handball. This was another activity that was seen to be marked too generously by centres across the country. As stated previously, candidates are assessed on their decision making and range of skills within competitive situations. Usually, the more candidates participate in an activity, the higher their level of decision making. Hence why we seem to see higher average marks in Association Football, because many candidates perform this in and out of the centre on a regular basis. While many candidates can perform the required core skills in Handball, moderators reported that centres had marked candidates too highly because they couldn't execute the advanced skills, such as screening and tackling. It is imperative that centres use the guide to NEA when assessing all candidates. Most candidates who were moderated in Handball, did not apply any form of contact in the game scenario and did not have a strong enough understanding of the rules and regulations.

Off-site activities

Generally, the most accurately assessed activities were Swimming and Equestrian. Both activities were usually accompanied with good video evidence, detailed logbooks, and clear competitive evidence. It was clear to see that the majority of candidates participated frequently in these activities. Taking pride and time, to collate their evidence. The best examples saw candidates film core and advanced skills in isolation, then submit competitive evidence in accordance with the guide to NEA.

Assessment for learning



When filming off-site activities, candidates should submit evidence that is an appropriate length, demonstrating all the core and advanced skills and sufficient competitive footage. While there is no set time that candidates should record for, it is important to remember that a short clip, does not help support the mark submitted by the centre.

Activities that were generally seen to be overmarked were Cross Country, Rock Climbing, Skiing and Amateur Boxing.

Cross Country was frequently seen to be overmarked, because of the quality and length of the footage. Often, logbooks attempted to support the mark submitted by the centre, however, in many cases, centres submitted footage that did not allow the moderator to identify who the candidate was at the start of the race, because of a large group of runners. In addition, centres submitted short clips of candidates running, but it didn't allow the moderator to see physical attributes or decision making. Furthermore, it is important that centres follow the guide to NEA when submitting filmed evidence. Many centres did not submit a course map, meet the requirements for the course length, or submitted evidence where candidates were running round their centre football pitches, which is not permitted.

Rock Climbing and Skiing were also activities that were frequently seen to be too generous. While candidates can access the specification for these two activities, it is important to remember that the mark submitted by the centre must support the candidate's ability and evidence. Many centres submitted Level 4 and Level 5 marks but did not support this mark with any competitive footage.

Amateur Boxing often saw a similar outcome. Candidates were seen performing a range of core and advanced skills in isolation but were not seen meeting the required levels within a competitive situation, these did not meet the time requirements and appeared conditioned, rather than fully competitive.

Misconception



If a candidate participates in an off-site activity, this doesn't automatically mean they meet the requirements in Level 4 or Level 5.

Most common causes of centres not passing

The main activities that were over assessed were due to the assessment criteria not being met and candidates not able to demonstrate a range of skills and the required level of decision making. If candidates don't compete in a competitive environment regularly, the likelihood is that their decision making and quality of skills won't be as good as someone who does, and so it is within these sections that they may not meet the criteria to reach a high level.

Inadequate filmed evidence, with a lack of footage of core and advanced skills in isolation or limited competitive evidence. Assuming that candidates who participate in activities outside of the centre, automatically meet the criteria and should be placed in Level 4 or 5.

Logbooks that were either too vague or missing from the sample. Logbooks help support the mark issued by the centre. They are an essential element to the course and should be submitted by all candidates.

A lack of understanding by candidates regarding the moderation day. Candidates must understand that their moderation is an official exam. They should be well prepared with the correct equipment and kit. There was evidence of lethargy across some centres where candidates were not focused or prepared for their moderation.

A lack of preparation/standardisation by centres. This resulted in a poor standard of some sessions, limiting the range and quality of skills on display. Drills need to be adapted and delivered to support the candidates' marks.

Common misconceptions

Filmed evidence is essential for all off-site activities. It is the only way a moderator can assess the performance of a candidate and must therefore support the mark submitted by the centre. Therefore, it needs to be of a good quality and should be compiled over the period of study. Please refer to Appendix B in the guide to NEA.

It is recommended that candidates provide evidence of core and advanced skills in isolation, with best practice identifying the skill which is being shown by the candidate. Candidates should also show evidence of performing in suitable and realistic competitive situations. Logbooks must be provided as supporting evidence. Evidence of skills can be seen through the full competitive situation, but this relies on the footage showing this clearly. In Swimming and Cross Country especially, it is hard to see the performance clearly enough due to the long range or shortness of clips. It is helpful if the video footage is submitted as one continuous film for ease of moderation. Better pieces of filmed evidence have annotations of the footage to highlight skills from the specification and to identify candidates in competitive scenarios.

The marks for candidates must always be based on the criteria in the specification. Moderators report that some centres attempt to justify marks at moderation based on the level of representation of a candidate, or that they participate regularly outside of the centre. While candidates may benefit from regular play outside of the centre, marks submitted should be based on their level of core and advanced skills and their application of these in a fully competitive situation.

Simply participating in a sport that is on the list of off-site activities does not justify a mark in the higher mark bands. Candidates must demonstrate the required number and quality of skills for the guide to NEA to justify the mark given. It is vital that off-site activities are cross moderated against all other activities that are assessed by a centre to make sure consistency of marking.

Avoiding potential malpractice

All off-site activities for each candidate must be recorded, capturing both the performance of individual core and advanced skills, in isolation and their application in competitive situations. In addition, a detailed logbook must accompany each video, clearly outlining the competitive scenarios involved.

Helpful resources

[Teach Cambridge | Resources to prepare learners for assessment](#)

[OCR GCSE \(9-1\) Physical Education J587 Guide to Non-exam Assessment \(NEA\) - Version 4.8 \(January 2025\)](#)

Additional comments

Next steps moving forward and recommendations

Centres should familiarise themselves with the guide to NEA, especially with activities that are not as frequently moderated, for example, Cross Country. It is important to fully meet the activity criteria, before submitting a mark.

Increase length and improve quality of filmed evidence. As stated previously, there is no set time for off-site filmed evidence, however it should be viewed the same as an on-site activity. Candidates should be seen performing the core and advanced skills, decision making in a competitive scenario and their physical attributes. Best practice regarding filmed evidence would be all footage on one continuous video, not short individual clips. Furthermore, the candidate should start with demonstrating core skills, then move onto the advanced skills, finishing with competitive evidence.

Mock moderations and standardisations are encouraged. While we appreciate that clusters may change year to year, it is still important and encouraged to perform mock moderations. It enables candidates to get used to performing under pressure and allows staff the benefit of seeing other candidates from different centres. Furthermore, it may give staff the opportunity to discuss possible drills and practices that could be used on the day of moderation. Those centres who had carried out a mock moderation were most accurate with their marks and provided a range of activities in sessions to make sure the marks submitted were justified.

Finally, it is imperative that candidates understand the importance of attendance if selected for moderation. It is an official exam, and it must be treated this way, failure to attend could jeopardise the marks of other candidates within the centre.

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- gain a deeper understanding of the marking criteria and how to apply them consistently and accurately
- see examples of student work with commentary and feedback from OCR moderators
- have the opportunity to practise marking and compare your judgements with those of OCR moderators
- receive instant feedback and guidance on your marking and standardisation skills
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Access the courses **anytime, anywhere and at your own pace**. You can also revisit the courses as many times as you need.

Which courses are available?

We recommend all teachers complete the module on Online courses – NEA for their subject. These courses provide subject-specific information about course content; how to prepare for planning, marking and submitting; and support with understanding the marking criteria.

The subject-specific courses are tailored for each qualification that has non-exam assessment (NEA) units, except for AS Level and Entry Level. They cover the following topics:

- the structure and content of the NEA units
- the assessment objectives and marking criteria for the NEA units
- examples of student work with commentary and feedback for the NEA units
- interactive marking practice and feedback for the NEA units.

We are also developing courses for some of the examined units, which will be available soon.

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