

Initial Assignment

Background

The Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) is subordinate to the Norwegian Ministry of Education. The Directorate is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research within the higher education and higher vocational education sectors and is responsible for the national skills policy. HK-dir receives assignments from the Ministry of Employment and Inclusion (AID) in the field of integration.

HK-dir is, through law and regulations, given responsibility for ensuring that immigrants can document their knowledge of Norwegian society and their Norwegian language skills in a safe, fair, and sound manner. HK-dir is responsible for both the tests themselves, and the test system in which they are delivered and analysed.

Immigrants between the ages of 18 and 67 who have been granted a residence permit that forms the basis for a permanent residence permit are required to sit final tests in Norwegian language and social studies. Immigrants who are not covered by the Integration Act may also need to document Norwegian language skills, for example to apply for admission to higher education and to participate in working life. People applying for Norwegian Citizenship need to take the Citizenship test.

1. Objective

The objective of the procurement is to acquire a well-functioning digital solution for the administration, development, execution, and analysis of tests and examinations. The solution needs to be implemented and ready for use in the first quarter of 2025.

It is essential for HK-dir to enter a contract with a solid supplier offering a solution which ensures that the Norwegian language, social studies, and Citizenship tests can be delivered safely, efficiently and with high quality.

2. Overall Needs

Five overall needs have been identified for the new testing solution. Some additional detailing of needs is provided in Attachment 2: The listed needs are intended as an indication for applicants to the competitive dialogue. There may be further detailing and adjustments to the needs during the procurement process.

B01	The solution enables the Customer to produce and conduct tests that are fit for purpose , with valid and reliable test results. See section 5. <i>Description of the main processes in the current test system.</i>
B02	The solution adheres to public requirements and guidelines, for example regarding information security, privacy and universal design .
B03	The solution is user-friendly, reliable , supports the work processes of the users of the system and facilitates automated processes .

B04	The solution is flexible and can be easily and cost-effectively adapted to existing needs and any altered needs in the future.
B05	The solution facilitates the reuse of data , for example through integration with other public data systems.

3. About the tests

HK-dir is responsible for developing two language tests and two knowledge tests. The tests are carried out at test centres in the municipalities. In 2021, more than 100,000 tests/test parts were conducted, with the Norwegian test at levels A1-B2 constituting to the largest share.

The Norwegian test at levels A1 to B2 consists of four parts:

- test in listening comprehension
- test in reading comprehension
- test in written production
- test in oral communication

The first three parts constitutes the written section of the test and are all digital. The test in listening comprehension and the test in reading comprehension are partly adaptive: candidates will be lead through routing tests, the results of which will lead to one of three main tests at an appropriate level of difficulty. These tests are scored automatically. For the test in written production the candidates must register for one of three test levels, and the test is assessed by 2-3 raters.

The test in oral communication is done face to face with interlocutor and rater present and is a paired exam.

The results for each of the four parts are given as a CEFR level (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

The Norwegian test at levels A1 to B2 is carried out in four specified periods per year. The municipalities can decide which days within the specified periods the tests are carried out.

Tests in Norwegian sign language:

For the Norwegian test at levels A1-B2, HK-dir offers separate tests for sign language users:

- Test in Norwegian sign language comprehension
- Test in Norwegian sign language communication

The test in Norwegian sign language comprehension replaces the test in listening comprehension and contains video files of sign language communication instead of audio files. The test is scored automatically.

The test in Norwegian sign language communication replaces the test in oral communication. The test is done face to face with interlocutor and rater present and is a paired exam.

The results of both tests are given as a CEFR level, and the test certificate will specify Norwegian sign language as the documented language.

The Norwegian test at level C1 consists of two parts:

- test in listening comprehension and written production
- test in reading comprehension and oral communication

The test in listening comprehension and written production is wholly digital, while the test in reading comprehension and oral communication has a digital preparation part, and a face-to-face

examination part. The examiner makes an audio recording of the examination part and upload the audio file to the digital test system. Both test parts are assessed by 2-3 raters and the result is given as either C1 or Not passed.

The Norwegian test at level C1 is carried out in two specified periods per year. The municipalities can decide which days within the specified periods the tests are carried out.

The test in social studies concludes the tuition in social studies. The test is digital and is scored automatically, with the result given as Pass or Fail. The test has been translated into many languages and can be conducted in a language the participant understands well. The social studies test can be taken continuously.

The Citizenship test is a social studies test and is conducted in Norwegian. The test is digital and is scored automatically, with the result given as Pass or Fail. The Citizenship test can be taken continuously.

4. Stakeholders

Stakeholders that currently use the test system or the test results are the candidates, municipalities, governmental and other public bodies, employers, and HK-dir. HK-dir is responsible for administration and is also the developer of the tests. The municipalities are responsible for offering tests to their residents through the municipalities' test centres. The candidates, governmental and other public bodies and employers are users of the test results.

5. Description of main processes in the current system

In this section, "the system" refers to the digital solution for test administration and test execution and provides an overview of the main processes in the current test system. The section contains descriptions of the various process phases and associated sub-processes. The sub-processes for evaluation are not further elaborated.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the system comprises three process phases, as well as overall administration processes.

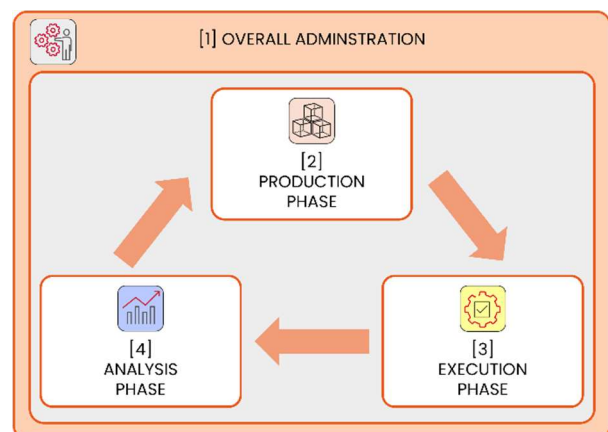


Figure 1: Process phases in the test system

Overall administration

Overall administration are processes that regulate the use of the system, as illustrated in Figure 2.

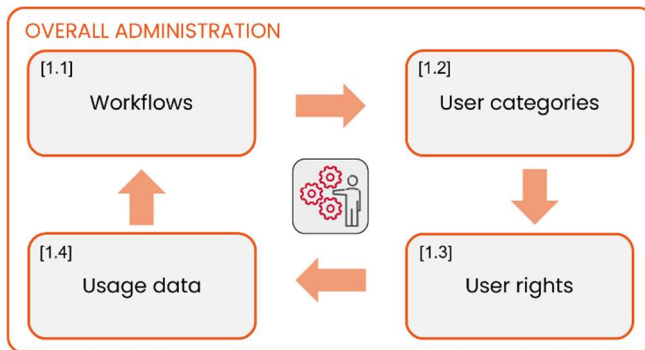


Figure 2: Sub-processes associated with overall administration.

HK-dir defines **workflows** in the system. User administration is currently structured hierarchically: Top administrators in HK-dir define **user categories** and assign roles and **user rights** internally, create test centres and give the test centres their top access. The test centres then create their own users according to defined roles with associated user rights to the system. All user roles use username and password. In the current system, the candidate user can be created by the candidates themselves or by administrators at the test centre.

HK-dir analyses **usage data** and initiates any improvement measures.

Production phase

The production phase consists of the **development** of task types and tasks, quality assurance and approval of these, and compilation of the tasks for tests (Figure 3).

Tasks for the tests are developed both internally in HK-dir and externally. The assignments are prepared in an authoring tool according to clear test specifications.

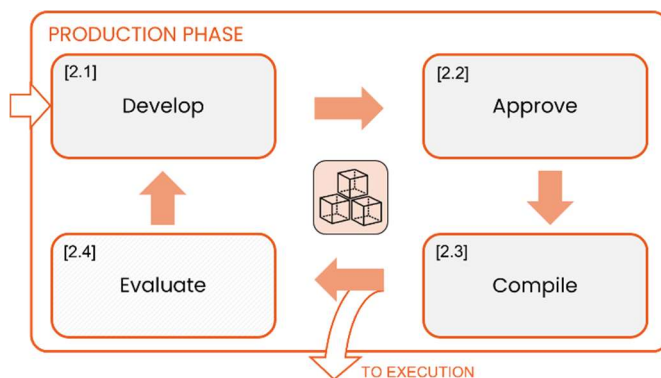


Figure 3: Sub-processes in the production phase

The tasks are revised several times before final **approval**. Metadata describing properties and analysis values is linked to the tasks. Automatically corrected tasks are piloted and analysed before selection.

HK-dir **compiles** the tasks for tests. The tests in reading comprehension and listening comprehension are partially adaptive and consist of routing tests which divide the candidates into an adapted level test.

Execution phase

The execution phase consists of the creation of test events, as well as registration for and execution of these (Figure 4).

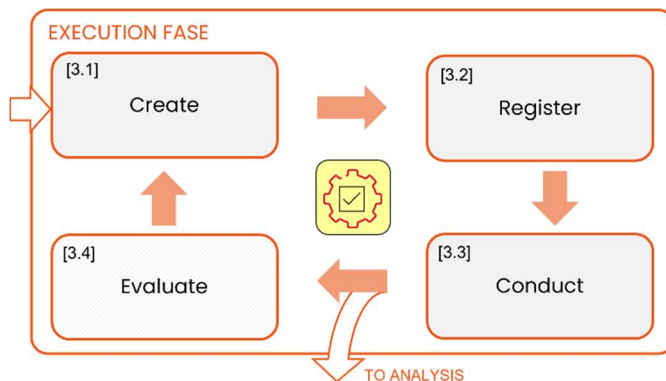


Figure 4: Sub-processes in the execution phase

Test events are **created** so that candidates can register for various tests. Norwegian language tests can be conducted in four periods throughout the year. The test periods are determined by HK-dir, which facilitates the test locations to create test events in the system within the given time periods. Knowledge tests can be held throughout the year and the test centre can create test events in the system when and as often as they want.

The system currently has two methods for **registration** for test events:

1. A private candidate registration where candidates can register themselves via a digital portal. The candidate registers for one or more of the test events that the test centres have created.
2. Test centres upload import files or register candidates manually for the tests.

The test centres coordinate the registrations and distribute candidates to the various tests in the system. Candidates receive a confirmation of registration with information about the test.

Candidates sitting a test must identify themselves before the test can be carried out. Tests in oral communication are conducted with the examiner and rater physically present. Several test parts can be completed on the same day, but a candidate cannot take the same test parts several times within the same test period. The test execution is monitored by the test centres and HK-dir.

Analysis phase

The analysis phase consists of assessment of test answers, analysis of tasks and others, as well as publication of the results (Figure 5).

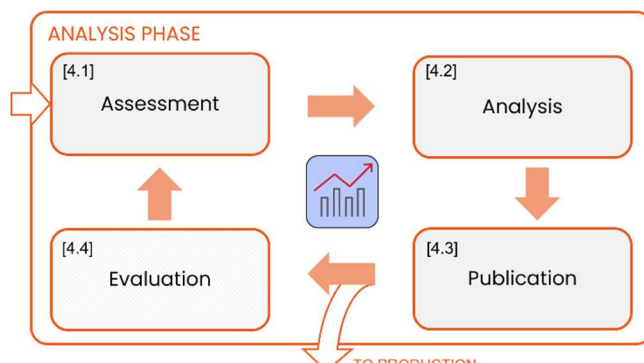


Figure 5: Sub-processes in the analysis phase

Assessment is carried out in two different ways:

1. Assessment carried out by the rater: Answers to the tests in oral or sign language communication are assessed by the rater and examiner under the supervision of the test centre. The results are manually registered by the test centres in the system. Tests in written production are assessed by a team of raters, who also register the results manually in the system.
2. Tests not assessed by raters are scored automatically. Automatically scored tasks register answers as right or wrong.

The degree of **analysis** of tasks, metadata and piloting tasks will vary for the different test types.

Results for the various test parts in the Norwegian language test are published by HK-dir approximately four weeks after the test has been carried out. Results for the social studies test and the Citizenship test are published continuously.

Candidates can access their results via Min side, the Vitnemålsportalen, as a transcript by e-mail, and by sending a physical test certificate. The test centres and HK-dir can extract results from the system as files for further processing and analysis. Some governmental bodies gain access to the results via integrations.

The candidate can appeal on the grounds of a procedural error on the day of the test or appeal the result. Appeals on the grounds of a procedural error are addressed to the test centre in the municipality and can apply to all tests. The appeal is registered locally by the test centre and not in the current system. Appeals about results is addressed to HK-dir and can be submitted in the system or via the website of HK-dir, and the appeal is registered in the system. Individual decisions are made externally, and final test results are recorded in the system.

6. Assignment

In the application to participate in the competitive dialogue, please respond with the following:

1. The information requested in the Tender Specification section 3.5 “Qualification Criteria”.

2. As requested in the Tender Specification, section 3.6 “Selection Criteria”:

No more than three (3) A4-pages providing an overview of the Applicant’s competence and capacity within:

- System development and IT-management
- Project implementation
- User support
- Incident management

The description may include personnel at the disposal of the Applicant, even if they are not employed in the enterprise. The Customer requires an overview, not individual CV’s.

3. As requested in the Tender Specification, section 3.6 “Selection Criteria”:

No more than five (5) A4-pages describing up to four (4) relevant reference assignments within the last three (3) years, and documenting:

- Which of the process phases/ areas in the Customer’s Initial Assignment document the reference is relevant for.
- How the reference supports the Objective and Overall Needs in the Customer’s Initial Assignment document.
- The volume of users in the reference assignment, including the maximum number of parallel users.

4. As requested in the Tender Specification, section 3.6 “Selection Criteria”:

No more than two (2) A4-pages describing how public sector requirements for digitalisation are met in the Applicant’s systems and solutions, including:

- Information security
- GDPR
- Universal design