


Our ref: CP/MW/NQ

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Director of Education
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Dear Colleague,

National Qualifications Update: Physics

This letter is intended to provide centres with information on the developments within the National Qualifications Physics subject area.

1 SQA restructuring – changing roles and responsibilities



You may already be aware that Hugh McGill, erstwhile Qualifications Manager for Physics and Science, has been enjoying his retirement since 01 October 2003. In addition, on 06 October 2003 the Qualifications Assessment and Development Section of the SQA separated into 2 sections with responsibility for the maintenance and development of 2 different qualification blocks; one for National Qualifications, one for Higher National/Vocational Qualifications including PDAs and SPAs.

As of 05 January 2004, Andy Shield will replace Hugh McGill as Qualifications Manager within NQ Mathematics and Science with responsibility for Physics, Electronics and Electrical Engineering, amongst others. Pat Robb, formerly NQ QM for Engineering, has already taken up the responsibility for HN/SVQ Mathematics and Science, including developments in Pharmacy, Biotechnology and the HN Science Review. If you wish to contact Pat you may do so at pat.robb@sqa.org.uk.

2 Examination Diet 2003

The Physics papers, at all levels, were generally well received. Comments after the examination, the centre questionnaires on Standard Grade, Intermediate 1 and Advanced Higher and the National Ratings have all supported the opinion that the Physics papers were overall 'generally accessible' and 'reasonably fair and acceptable'. All comments were referred to the Physics Assessment Panel and the Principal Assessors.

The Principal Assessor, Senior Moderator reports and Marking Instructions for Physics courses 2003 are all available on the SQA web-site, www.sqa.org.uk, under NQ Physics. Please note that though reports for 2002 are still available on the same page we cannot guarantee that all historical reports will be archived indefinitely so please keep your own copy for reference if required.

3 Appeals

There was a welcome reduction in the number of appeals submitted this year and the success rate at each level will be issued in the near future. I would like to draw your attention to the occurrence of centres submitting evidence for candidates who had failed the centre's own grade criteria for the appealed grade. The candidate evidence submitted must be convincing and show that the candidate has been performing consistently to a standard above that which has been awarded in the external assessment. If the candidate has failed the centre criteria for the estimated grade it is impossible for that evidence to support an appeal and therefore the appeal is invalid. For further information, please refer to the document *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on generating evidence*.

3 National Qualifications Review

Moderation - Feedback on the reduction in assessment of O3 has been very positive but did result in a few queries. These queries centred on the lack of evidence provided for O3. You should note that if your centre is selected for moderation of any of the component units of any Physics course you must submit evidence for O3.

The Advanced Higher Investigation unit was centrally marked for the first time this year and in the majority of cases the marking scheme was interpreted well by both centre and candidate. If you have not already done so, it may be beneficial to refer your candidates to the SQA web-site where they can access and download *Physics Advanced Higher Investigation Report: Guidance on course assessment for candidates* as it may help with the structure and content of their report.

Please note that the Advanced Higher Investigation unit is now eligible for moderation so centres must be vigilant in retaining candidate evidence, where they were not previously required to.

5 National Assessment Bank

Physics Advanced Higher NAB D386 13/NAB001 – The correction notice for question 2(d) of this NAB stimulated a vigorous debate between centres representatives, PAs, Assessment Panel members and University lecturers some believing the original answer A to be correct and some believing the amended answer of B to be correct. As a result of this ambiguity, replacement pages for the question and marking scheme will be issued on paper directly to centres and on the web.

As you may be aware, the SQA has made available to authorised centres the full catalogue of National Assessment bank material. This can be accessed through a secure link and password which has been issued to your SQA co-ordinator.

NABs issued 2003

D378 09/NAB001	re-issue	D382 11/NAB005	new
D377 09/NAB001	re-issue	D379 11/NAB005	new
D376 09/NAB001	re-issue	D384 12/NAB005	new
D375 09/NAB001	re-issue		
D374 09/NAB001	re-issue		

6 Future Developments

For consistency, as a result of the decision to issue formulae sheets to Special Needs candidates, formulae sheets are being finalised for all levels Physics.

It is proposed that the data sheets will be produced in a booklet format and issued to centres with one set to be held as exam stationary, one set for class use and additional copies available for purchase through the SQA Customer Contact Centre.

A data sheet for Intermediate 1 candidates will be included in the examination booklet. Though there is rarely a reference to be made at this level it was determined that it would bring it in line with all other levels of Physics and would help familiarise candidates with its format.

Dosimetry terminology – Arrangements documents and NABs, at applicable levels, will be revised to include updated Dosimetry terminology to the national standard currently used in industry. These changes are relatively minor and focus on a change to terminology and symbols. Please note that there will be no change to the content statements or Performance Criteria as a result of the change in terminology.

Centres will be advised of the details of the above developments as soon as possible with appropriate implementation dates, if applicable.

I hope that you and your staff find this update helpful as you implement the NQMG decisions for Physics this session.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Weir
Qualifications Officer
NQ Mathematics and Science