

14 February 2011

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools,
special schools and further education colleges)
Scottish Government
HMIE
Directors of Education
Mathematics Assessment Panel members
Higher Education Institutions — Department of Education

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the delivery of
National Qualifications in Mathematics**

Action by Recipient	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Response required
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Note and pass on
<input type="checkbox"/>	None — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications update – Mathematics

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for Mathematics.

The following items are included:

- 1 Objective test item bank
- 2 Current marking conventions and marks allocations
- 3 Online guidance documents – EAAA and EARs
- 4 Arrangements documents – publication dates
- 5 Quality Network Event – Saturday 19th March
- 6 Use of specimen question papers

Appendix: Progression statistics for diet 2010

1 Objective test item bank

The bank of objective test items currently on SQA's secure website will be moved to our open website after the diet 2011 examinations. No further objective test items will be added to our secure site. In future, centres will be allowed to select all twenty objective test items for their prelims from the range of questions available on our open website.

Centres are encouraged to use the objective test items as published. In particular, altering distracters may undermine the integrity of the question and may possibly render the question non-functional.

2 Current marking conventions and marks allocations

It is strongly recommended that all centre staff responsible for Mathematics ensure that they are familiar with the current SQA marking conventions with regards to multiple attempts at questions. This will aid both with the production of sound evidence for estimates and appeals within your centre and also in preparing your candidates for the external assessment.

If a candidate present more than one complete solution to a question and it is not clear which is intended as their final attempt, then each attempt should be marked and the **lowest** mark awarded.

The rationale for this is so that, where candidates may be unsure which approach to take for a question, they cannot gain full marks for completing the calculation for every possible approach on the basis that one of them will be correct – for example, carrying out the calculations for Sine, Cosine **and** Tangent because they do not know which one of these is appropriate to the question. It would be patently unfair for such a response to gain full marks for the question, as the candidate would not have demonstrated knowledge of which approach was the correct one.

If you would like to read more about this or any other of SQA's current marking conventions for Mathematics, please refer to the most recent examination marking instructions, downloadable from our website, or the marking guidelines in the current National Assessment Bank items.

Centres are also encouraged to review recent examination marking instructions to see how marks have been allocated for examination questions. This will again help when it comes to preparing candidates for assessment and producing prelims and other centre-devised assessments.

3 Online guidance documents – EAAA and EARs

SQA publishes a range of guidance annually on the generation of evidence within centres and external assessment performance.

The former is addressed in the document "Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals – session 2010/11", which can be downloaded from the following webpage:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/25628.html>

This document contains both generic information on the production of centre-devised assessment evidence and specific sections detailing each level of Mathematics.

Also of interest to centre staff will be the External Assessment Reports, which detail candidate performance in the examinations at each level, including areas of strength and weakness and advice for centres in preparing candidates for future external assessments.

The External Assessment Reports can be downloaded from the relevant subject page for each level of Mathematics on our website.

4 Arrangements documents – publication dates

Centre staff are reminded that it is essential to use the current edition of any Course arrangements documents, as previous editions will contain obsolete and potentially misleading information. The versions on SQA's website are always the most up-to-date editions available, but if you have printed copies it is important to check that these are of the current edition.

For your convenience, the edition numbers and publication dates of the current arrangements documents for Mathematics are listed below:

Standard Grade	1 st edition	April 2000
Access 2	5 th edition	November 2003
Access 3	2 nd edition	November 1999
Intermediate 1	4 th edition	March 2002
Intermediate 2	4 th edition	March 2002
Higher	6 th edition	May 2007
Advanced Higher	6 th edition	January 2010
Advanced Higher Applied	2 nd edition	May 2007

5 Quality Network event – Saturday 19th March

We are planning to run another Quality Network event for Mathematics on this date. The focus of this event will be on Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher Mathematics. Further details will be published on SQA's website over the coming weeks.

6 Use of specimen question papers

Centres are reminded that the specimen question papers for Mathematics are not considered a reliable source of questions when constructing instruments of assessment for the generation of evidence for estimates, absentees and appeals.

I hope that all of the information above and attached has been of help to you. If you have any enquiries about NQ Mathematics, please do not hesitate to contact me via the details provided at the head of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Elaine Riley

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Qualifications Manager
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