

SQA

am

The Newsletter for SQA Appointees

am
appointee
management



**Appointee Management 'One Stop Shop'
Innovations in Marking
Question Paper Operations
Approval and Verification Team News**



Welcome to SQA am The newsletter for SQA Appointees

Each year, around 15,000 appointees work with SQA to deliver the assessment, quality assurance and certification functions that support Scotland's education and training system. There are many different appointee roles, but they all have one common goal — to deliver for Scotland's learners.

We recognise and value the huge contribution you make to the work we do; we also recognise that the support and service we offer to you needs to be continuously reviewed and improved.

Last year we restructured SQA to align our resources to be ready for the future challenges we face. As part of this, we established a new Appointee Management Department. The new department is led by Jacqui Faulds, an experienced SQA manager. Jacqui and her team are committed to engaging with all SQA appointees in their work — and to improving and developing SQA.

A central part of our plans is to improve communication with you. We have introduced SQA am, our newsletter for appointees, to keep you informed about the exciting and innovative work SQA will be driving forward in the years ahead. Inside each edition you will find updates on a range of developments, including our plans for electronic marks capture. I hope that you will find SQA am useful. Future editions will be issued electronically in order to reduce the time to publication.

Please use SQA am as a vehicle for letting us know your views and comments on our plans and work. Jacqui and her team will value your views and suggestions.

Janet Brown
Chief Executive SQA



Bob picking up his trophy at the awards ceremony

SQA Appointee of the Year 2008 — Bob Robertson

The front cover shows Bob receiving his award from Janet Brown, SQA Chief Executive. Bob was commended for his commitment and outstanding work in his role as Senior Verifier for HN and SVQ Management Awards, and also in his contribution to the development of the police service awards. His support for SQA staff, centres and candidates can only be described as exceptional.



SQA Star Awards 2009 Appointee of the Year Award

The Star awards are a unique way to celebrate the Success, Triumph, Achievement and Recognition of the best in Scottish education and training. Nominations for the 2009 Star Awards open on Monday 20 April.

You can nominate an appointee or a team of appointees. It's a quick and easy process. Just go to www.sqa.org.uk/star and follow the instructions.

Who will be your nominee this year?

The closing date for nominations is Tuesday 30 June 2009.

Appointee Management is the new 'one-stop shop' to support SQA Appointees

SQA recruits and manages thousands of teaching professionals and industry specialists annually to support our operations. Formed just over six months ago, Appointee Management is the new business department responsible for this large and complex operation. It consists of two dedicated teams: Appointee Services and Appointee Training.

Appointee Services

Appointee Services is responsible for advertising vacancies, recruitment and communication with appointees. You will have most contact with Appointee Services during the appointment process. The team are experienced staff and will be able to answer any queries you may have regarding contract opportunities, contract terms and conditions, disclosure requirements, release etc. You can contact Appointee Services by e-mailing am@sqa.org.uk.

Appointee Training

Appointee Training's focus is to develop and deliver training programmes for appointees. This will include programmes to provide opportunities for appointees to develop their skills with a view to applying for future vacancies at a more senior appointee level. Training will be delivered in the most appropriate way and will use electronic means such as SQA Academy whenever possible (www.sqaacademy.org.uk)

If you have any suggestions for training and development, we would like to hear from you. You can e-mail Anne Andrew, Appointee Services Project Manager, at anne.andrew@sqa.org.uk.

Appointee Portal

We have also established a Project Team to manage systems development and to support new processes. One of the team's first projects is the Appointee Portal which will give appointees access to all relevant applications through one secure log-in — the 'one-stop shop'. It will also enable appointees to manage their personal details online which will, in turn, ensure documents are sent to the correct address!

Look out for more information on the Appointee Portal in the next edition of SQA **am**.



Appointee Management Department's Anne Andrew and Jacqui Faulds

Appointee Management Identity

You will see from the front cover that we have created an Appointee Management identity.

In future, you will see this identity on letterheads from Appointee Services, on the Appointee Management pages of the website, on materials at training events, and on promotional campaigns.

We want to explain the benefits of being an SQA appointee and to attract new appointees, so look out for the new identity at events, conferences and in the media.

For further information on Appointee Management, please contact Jacqui Faulds, Head of Service, directly at jacqui.faulds@sqa.org.uk.



Innovations in Marking: Capturing Marks Electronically

SQA has been investigating the benefits of using technology to support the work of its Marking Teams. A major innovation in this area has been the introduction of a system to capture marks electronically, supported by robust quality assurance processes. Introduced as a pilot in 2006, the system has been expanded so that this year will see marks captured electronically for a total of 40 papers.



Members of the Higher Psychology Team in discussion at the Stirling Management Centre on 21 March 2009

About Electronic Marks Capture

Two forms of electronic marks capture are currently used by Marking Teams:

- Marking from Image, and
- Marking from Paper

Marking from Image lets you view and mark scanned script images online using your home computer. With Marking from Paper, you mark paper scripts at home in the usual way then access Appointees Online to enter your marks into the system.

Before you mark your own scripts at home, we ask you to first mark Practice Scripts followed by Qualification Scripts that have already been definitively marked by members of the Examining Team. The Practice Scripts allow you to assess yourself and to develop and refine your ability to mark to standard. The Qualification Scripts allow Principal Assessors and Team Leaders to identify and resolve any marking issues at the beginning of the marking process.

What training is available for Marking Teams?

For 2009, we have developed a comprehensive online training course for teams who will be marking electronically. It is available at www.sqaacademy.org.uk. The training takes Principal Assessors, Team Leaders and Markers through the quality assurance processes they will follow and contains animated demonstrations of all the features of the system they will use.

In addition, all Principal Assessors and Team Leaders attended face-to-face training events in March 2009. At these events everyone had the opportunity to discuss and clarify issues and to prepare for the marking period with their team members.

What are SQA's plans for the future use of this electronic marking system?

Going forward, SQA will seek to ensure that as many of its Marking Teams as possible can experience the many benefits of electronic marks capture. SQA Qualification Managers, in consultation with Principal Assessors, will be identifying external assessments which would benefit from its quality assurance processes. We will keep you up-to-date with planned developments and progress in 2009 in the next edition of this newsletter and through information and training events.

What do the teams who are using the system think about it?

We asked members of the teams involved in 2008 to send us comments on their experiences. Here is what some of them had to say.



Anna Connor, Intermediate 2 and Higher ESOL Marker

'I was very anxious about MFI as I like to have a piece of paper in front of me, but I got used to it very quickly. The most challenging thing for a subject like ESOL is the extended writing; you feel you want to compare responses sometimes. However, MFI makes you focus entirely on one response at a time and so you have to think much more carefully about the assessment criteria; this leads to more effective marking. Quality and standards are also assured through the Practice, Qualification and Seeded scripts — much more so than waiting for Marker Check. Markers are helped every step of the way by their Team Leader, Principal Assessor and via the Helpline. The whole experience leads to better and fairer marking.'



Wendy Reith, Principal Assessor for Intermediate 1 Computing Studies

‘As a Principal Assessor (PA) the final results from this are excellent — knowing how candidates have performed on each question has made my job a lot easier at the Grade Boundary meeting. I can report with evidence on individual questions

because I have information on how each question was answered. This information also helps me write a very full PA report without relying on the individual Marker reports alone.

Throughout the marking period I can also monitor all my markers and ensure the consistency of marking. Any problems can be resolved during the marking period rather than once marking is completed. I can communicate with markers during the marking process electronically and they can communicate with me.

The only major change that I have experienced as a PA is you are constantly monitoring so this has time implications for the PA over the entire marking period — you have to plan for this. You also have to ensure you have a good working relationship with your Team Leaders — we have, and this makes the whole marking process a lot smoother.’



Charlie Cowie, Higher Mathematics Team Leader

‘In my own case, working with the Practice and Qualification Scripts meant that I had a much clearer idea of the Marking Instructions when I got down to my own batch of scripts. Meeting with the Markers in my group meant that I could put faces to names and it was no longer an anonymous exercise. Personal contact

was good in that the Marking Team was free to discuss any points regarding the marking. Evidence of success came at the Appeals where it was found that the quality of marking was very high.’

Further information

If you would like to find out more about any aspect of electronic marks capture please contact Pauline Rodger (SQA Project Manager) pauline.rodger@sqa.org.uk.

Às d’ aonais cha bhitheamaid comasach air an ìre a ruighinn — Without you we just wouldn’t make the grade

Did you know SQA currently makes a number of Standard Grade examinations available in the medium of Gaelic? The subjects available are Geography, History, Mathematics and Modern Studies.

This service, provided by SQA on request for nearly twenty years, is under review as part of our Gaelic Language Planning activities. SQA is required under the Gaelic Language Act 2005 to develop a Gaelic Language Plan, so naturally its Gaelic-medium provision forms an important aspect of this plan.

We are currently examining ways to expand existing Gaelic-medium provision into a wider range of subjects and levels. Part of this process involves updating our Appointee database to include information on your Gaelic language skills, so we need to ask you, our valued appointees, a few questions!

Information we require for the Gaelic-medium appointments:

- Your name
- Appointee role
- Subject/s
- Do you have any Gaelic?
- Do you hold any qualifications in Gaelic?
- Would you be interested in getting involved with SQA’s Gaelic-medium provision?

Send your information to:

Marilyn Waters
Qualifications Coordinator – Gaelic in SQA
Tel: 0845 213 5520
E-mail: marilyn.waters@sqa.org.uk.

Don't wait to help your candidates!

MySQA is SQA's online service designed especially for candidates. The service ensures that candidates sitting NQ exams can get their results sent to them by e-mail and/or text message on exam results day — Wednesday 5 August 2009 — between 8 am and 9 am.

This means that candidates can choose where and when they get their results — and who they are with. However, MySQA is not just about exam results. When a candidate registers, they will be able to see all the information regarding their qualifications, which means they can:

- track their progress towards qualifications they are currently doing
- have a permanent online record of all their SQA qualifications (1995 onwards)
- check the personal details we hold for them are correct to ensure their certificate is sent to the correct address

Any candidate with a valid SCN (Scottish Candidate Number) can register for MySQA. Candidates who want to get their exam results by e-mail and/or text message on Wednesday 5 August 2009 must sign up for an account by Thursday 16 July and activate their account by Friday 24 July.

When asked what prompted them to register for MySQA, 64% of candidates who completed our 2008 evaluation said it was a teacher or lecturer. We would like to thank you for the efforts you have made to promote MySQA. Our aim is to get as many candidates as possible to sign up for MySQA and your ongoing support will be appreciated.

For more information about MySQA please go to www.mysqa.info or e-mail Jacqui Murray, MySQA Manager at jacqui.murray@sqa.org.uk.

Question Paper Operations

This team has changed its name a few times over the years, but the current one reflects very clearly what we do! We work with the materials you develop for us to produce NQ examination question papers and associated materials (such as audio and video recordings) for our candidates, ensuring secure print, packing and distribution to over 500 recipients by the required deadline.



SQA staff monitoring the question paper distribution

We are heavily dependent upon you completing your tasks on time to allow us to progress all of the 540 or so different question papers for the following year through the setting and vetting stages, whilst at the same time completing the question papers for the current year — so there's never a quiet moment!

I would like to thank you all in particular for your attention to progressing the 2009 examination question papers: we committed the final papers to print in the second week of February, which is a full week ahead of previous years — a week is a long time in question paper printing! This ensured that all our papers were printed and ready for the main distribution activity in early March, so reducing the number of cartons needing to be packed, and making the deliveries easier for the recipients to check off. It also saves cost, which I'm sure you will agree is something we should all be trying to do in the current financial climate.

It is an exciting time for the team just now, as we develop new ways of working to help us meet the requirements of the qualifications being delivered through Curriculum for Excellence. Our aim later this year is to pilot a new way of generating material for our question papers, and some of you will be involved in that. We look forward to your input and feedback to help us develop a process that is both efficient and effective.

Helen Probart
Head of Question Paper Operations

WHY WAIT TILL YOU GET HOME?

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Don't Wait – register now to receive your exam results by text or e-mail.

www.mysqa.info MySQA

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Qualification Approval and Verification Team news

Update of current activity for this session...

Visiting Verification

- SVQ and HN verification of qualifications is well under way, allocations have been distributed to External Verifiers and activity is on track.
- HN Graded Unit — project-based visits allocated in March are now with External Verifiers.
- NQ visiting for Standard Grade, Units and Courses started in November 2008 and are due to be completed in May this year.
- Skills for Work visits were allocated in January. All activity is on track and due to be completed in May.

Central Verification of National Qualifications

Central Verification of NQ Units, NQ Courses and Standard Grade subjects started on 6 April. Fifty Central Verification events are scheduled to take place in April and May in SQA's Glasgow office. During these events we will verify over 1,200 centres' assessments, covering Units, Courses and Standard Grades.



Verification of Centres in China

Verification of our China centres offering HN qualifications was carried out in February and March.

International Centres (other than China)

Activity is currently being planned to verify our international centres.

Central Verification Event: NQ Administration

Donnie Carthew, Senior Verifier, NQ Administration, explained:

'Any Central Verification event allows the Verification Team to standardise assessment decisions. The event allows us to identify good practice and highlight this to the centre. It also allows us to share this good practice with other centres.

If the team identifies an issue with a centre which may or may not result in a "Not Accepted" decision, then this issue is fed back to the centre in the Report Form.

The Central Verification event may also identify issues with the actual NAB material. We have the opportunity to feed this back to the Qualifications Manager.

The final part of the process is the production of the Senior Verifier Report on the event — members of the team contribute comments for inclusion in this published document — in this way all centres benefit from the process.'

Central Verification of HN Graded Units — Exams

Twenty Central Verification events are scheduled to take place in our Glasgow office from 8–13 June to verify exam-based Graded Units. Invitations to participate in this activity will be sent out shortly.

Co-ordinated Verification Events (COVE)

Three Co-ordinated Verification Events were requested by colleges. The events took place in March this year.

This model of verification was used in order to:

- respond to a request from centres
- directly target priority verification groups
- provide effective feedback to the centre
- promote internal verification
- encourage staff development
- deploy External Verifiers more effectively

External verification at a Co-ordinated Verification Event is essentially the same as routine verification except that the Qualification Approval & Verification Officer and the Quality Enhancement Manager are available throughout the event.

The timing of the events allows verifiers and staff to explore development opportunities where this is appropriate. Following each COVE, a final report is prepared for the centre, detailing all activity.

If you have any questions or require guidance on verification or approval, please contact us at: assessment.standards@sqa.org.uk or contact your SQA officer directly.

And finally...

SQA and Fairtrade

SQA is committed to supporting Fairtrade and ethical working. This year you may notice a difference in the tea and coffee supplied in our offices — from January 2009 all coffee/tea used in vending machines and for meeting rooms changed to Fairtrade products. We also encourage external venues used for SQA meetings to make use of Fairtrade products.

SQA also provides free Fairtrade products to staff and visitors once a month, so if you are visiting our offices on a Friday you may be lucky enough to receive a free Fairtrade snack or soft drink.

Our longer term aims include embedding Fairtrade and ethical practices into our qualifications so look out for further details here in the future.



Existing qualifications and Curriculum for Excellence

Please follow the link below to the Curriculum for Excellence pages of the SQA website for information on how existing SQA qualifications can be used to support Curriculum for Excellence aims, values and principles.

www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/34708.html

Higher National and Professional Development Award Annual Report

The Higher National (HN) and Professional Development Award (PDA) Annual Report for session 2009–10 is now available.

The report covers development work in HNs and PDAs, and is aimed at SQA Co-ordinators and practitioners in Scotland's colleges. It should help those delivering these awards with their planning for the next academic session.

www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/34025.html

Next generation of National Qualifications in Scotland

The independent report prepared by Ipsos MORI on responses to the Scottish Government's Consultation on the next generation of National Qualifications has been published and is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/02/23/130007/0.

We expect a Government announcement on their response to this report in the next few months.

What's in a number?

15,009

15,009 people were appointed by SQA to assist with the development, assessment and quality assurance of our 2009 qualifications.

21,006

21,006 appointments were made by SQA to assist with the development, assessment and quality assurance of our 2009 qualifications.

1,500,000

1,500,000 is the approximate number of scripts SQA receives each year.

SQA am— what next?

We hope that you have enjoyed the articles in this your first edition of SQA am— the newsletter for SQA appointees. This edition has been produced in hard copy and is also available online at www.sqa.org.uk/am. In line with our commitment to the environment, all future editions of SQA am will only be available at www.sqa.org.uk/am.



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