

18 November 2005

To: SQA Co-ordinator
LEA
Directors of Education
Customer Accounts Managers
All Centres

**For the attention of all staff
responsible for the delivery of
National Qualifications in
Computing and Information Systems**

Action by Recipient
Response required
Note and pass on
✓ None – update/information only

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Dear Colleague

Computing and Information Systems — Update

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for Computing and Information Systems.

This letter is intended to provide centres with information on developments in National Qualifications in Computing and Information Systems.

Prelims, Estimates and Appeals

Many centres use prelims as a way of estimating candidate performance and also as the main source of evidence for appeals. It should be remembered that such prelims should mirror the actual SQA examination in time allocation, number of marks, balance of marks between topics and level of demand. Centres should consider the effect that any deviation from the final examination format may have on level of demand and adjust their estimates accordingly.

Centres must also ensure that prelims are unseen. Because of this specimen papers and complete past papers are not suitable for this purpose. Centres may create prelims by selecting questions from a minimum of three past papers but must not lift questions “en bloc”. Ideally past paper questions should also be altered.

Centres may use commercially produced papers but must ensure that they are valid, reliable, set at the correct level of demand and are unseen. For this reason centres must

use the current year's paper. If old commercial papers are used then the same rules as apply to past SQA papers will apply.

More details are contained in the Course Assessment Specifications for each Course.

Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator Reports

These reports will be available from the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk) from November. The Principal Assessor reports highlight issues relating to candidate performance in external assessment and the Senior Moderator reports highlight issues relating to the moderation of internal assessment. Both reports contain very useful information and I would recommend that you download these reports and read them thoroughly.

Standard Grade Computing Studies

Core Skills

After investigating this matter I can confirm that IT Core Skills are embedded in the Course and are automatically awarded on the basis of the Practical Abilities grade. There is, therefore, no need to retain any additional evidence for Core Skills certification.

Projects

Candidates for the 2006 examination should be using the project specifications which are available from the secure site. Projects from previous years should no longer be used. The system for calculating the grade for Practical Abilities using a Project and four Coursework Tasks is the same as previous years and is detailed in the Arrangements document.

Intermediate 1 Computing Studies and Intermediate 2 / Higher Computing

Coursework Tasks

Tasks for candidates who will be sitting their examination in 2006 are now available. These are the only tasks that can be used for the 2006 examination. I would draw your attention to the Senior Moderator's report which highlights a number of issues which arose during the moderation of the Computing Coursework Tasks.

Corrections to Coursework Tasks

Some typing errors were present in the Tasks when they were first issued. These were as follows:

Higher Computing Coursework Task - Corrections

The line numbers for the algorithm for this task were not aligned properly.

The algorithm should read:

- 1 For each drive
- 2 Store the name and transfer rate of each drive
- 3 Calculate and store the transfer time
- 4 Display the name, transfer rate, size of the directory being transferred and transfer time
- 5 Next drive
- 6 Identify the fastest drive

7 Display the name, transfer rate, size of the directory being transferred and the transfer time of the fastest drive.

Intermediate 2 Coursework Task – Corrections

At the top of page 9 the task had the words “ Step 6 has been refined”. This should have read “Step 7 has been refined”. Also the name given to Step 7 should be “Display Guest Details” in both cases.

Please check that these errors have been corrected in the tasks that you are using.

Professional Development Workshop for Higher Computing

A Professional Development Workshop is being organised for 21 January 2006 in Glasgow. More details and a registration form are available from the SQA website.

Advanced Higher Computing

May I remind you that there will be no dual running of Advanced Higher Computing. All candidates should now be following the new Course C206 13. Arrangements and Course Assessment Specification documents are on the SQA website and NABs for all Units are available from the secure site. A Coursework Project pack is available on the secure site and you should by now have received a letter outlining alternative project topics.

Intermediate 2 and Higher Information Systems

There will be no dual running of Intermediate 2 and Higher Information Systems Courses. All candidates should now be following the new Courses C216 11 and C216 12. I refer you to my previous updates for Course structures and Unit titles/codes.

Coursework Tasks

As with the Computing/Computing Studies Courses, new Coursework Tasks will be issued every year. Tasks for candidates who will be sitting their examination in 2006 are now available. These are the only tasks that can be used for the 2006 examination.

The tasks have been distributed with archived database and other files which should also be downloaded from the secure site.

The Higher task includes special instructions on the order in which data files and other materials should be issued to candidates. Please read carefully. It is important that certain materials are only issued after candidates have completed and submitted certain parts of the task.

Transition Arrangements

If a candidate has achieved an appropriate combination of three old Units, ie two mandatory and one optional, these can contribute to the new Course as an entity. This will allow candidates who have sat the old examination to upgrade their award by sitting the new examination. It should be noted, however, that there have been changes to Course content. Candidates will need to learn new Course content before attempting the new examination. All new candidates should be entered for the new Units.

Higher Information Systems Exemplification

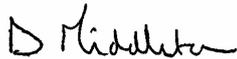
A pack has been produced which exemplifies the marking of 3NF questions. It is based on responses to Question 1 of the 2004 Advanced Higher Information Systems Question Paper and is available from the secure site.

Advanced Higher Information Systems

Arrangements documents for the revised Course will be available on the SQA website soon. The new Course will have two mandatory Units, called Database Analysis and Design and Database Implementation and Testing, and two optional Units called On-line Databases and Information Systems Interfaces. Course assessment will consist of a Coursework Project worth 80 marks and a Question Paper lasting 2 hours 30 minutes which will be worth 120 marks.

I hope that you have found the information in this letter helpful. If you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Derek Middleton
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Computing and Technical Education