



Common questions about National 3, National 4, National 5 Biology, Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology

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General questions

Which documents were updated in 2015?

As previously communicated to centres in the [May 2015 Subject Update](#), documents containing mandatory information on National 3 to Higher Biology Courses and the Higher Human Biology Course were updated in April 2015 (*Course Assessment Specifications, Course Specifications and Unit Specifications*). *Course and Unit Support Notes* were updated in May 2015. The purpose of these updates is to provide further clarification based on feedback received from practitioners and to reduce the assessment burden at National 5.

Unit assessment support packs for National 3 to Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology will be updated and published on SQA's secure site by the end of August 2015. In line with our standard practice, all documents and Unit assessment support packs contain version information. Centres should use the most up-to-date versions when planning their assessments. Any candidates that have already been assessed using previous versions of the Unit assessment support packs will not be disadvantaged at Verification events during session 2015–16, and these candidates do not need to be re-assessed using the updated versions.

Further information is available on the [Biology](#) and [Human Biology](#) subject pages.

Notification of changes tables for the sciences are available on SQA's website: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges>

What exemplification material has been produced for the new National Qualifications?

Presentations and materials used to deliver Understanding Standards events for both internal and external assessment in the new National Qualifications have been published.

Internal assessment — National 3 to Higher

Training materials used for workshops and presentations from the Nominee events for National 3 to Higher have been published on the Understanding Standards Events Materials page on SQA's website: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/71902.html>

These materials may be useful for Nominees to help them cascade information to colleagues in their centre, local authority or sector. Equally, anyone delivering the new National Qualifications may find the materials helpful in developing their understanding of the standards required.

Understanding Standards packs have been published on SQA's secure website for Biology National 4 to Higher, and Higher Human Biology: www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure. These packs are intended to provide teachers, lecturers and assessors with a clear understanding of why specific examples of candidate evidence have or have not met the national standard for a named Unit(s). Contact your SQA Co-ordinator for access to SQA's secure website.

Course assessment — National 5

Some candidate material and commentaries for the National 5 Biology Question Paper and Assignment have been published on SQA's Understanding Standards website:

www.understandingstandards.org.uk

The material provides teachers with an opportunity to mark exemplar candidate responses and compare the marks they give with those given by the marking team. A commentary from a senior marker is supplied with each example.

Presentations and workshop materials from the National 5 Biology Course events have been published on the Understanding Standards Events Materials page on SQA's website:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/71902.html>. Anyone delivering the new National Qualifications may find these materials helpful in developing their understanding of the standards required.

Will SQA continue to produce exemplification material for the new National Qualifications?

Understanding Standards events for Nominees

Nominee training events for Biology, Human Biology, and Science are scheduled to take place on Wednesday 23 September 2015.

A Nominee training event for Advanced Higher Biology is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 19 January 2016.

Understanding Standards events for Higher Course assessment

Understanding Standards events for Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology will take place towards the end of 2015.

Please refer to the [Events](#) page on SQA's website for up-to-date information on all Understanding Standards events.

Units and Assessment Standards

Can you clarify the requirements for a Unit pass?

In order for candidates to achieve a Unit pass, they need to complete all of the Assessment Standards within Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 at that level.

If a candidate fails to achieve any of the Assessment Standards then they will not have sufficient evidence to pass the Unit(s) at that level.

Are Unit passes transferrable between levels?

As the National 3, 4 and 5 Biology Units are in a hierarchy; for example if a candidate passes the **complete** Unit(s) at National 5 (ie all Outcomes and Assessment Standards) there would be no requirement for them to be presented for the same Unit(s) at National 4. The candidate could therefore achieve a National 4 Course award with a combination of Units at National 5 and National 4 plus the Added Value Unit, provided that they were entered for the National 4 Course and resulted as appropriate. The candidate's certificate would show the Unit(s) achieved at National 5 and/or National 4 and the Course award at National 4.

The Higher Units are not in a hierarchy.

Are Assessment Standards transferrable between levels?

Candidates do not require to be assessed on Assessment Standards at the lower level if they have achieved one or more of the Assessment Standards at the higher level; however candidates would still require to be assessed for Assessment Standard 2.1 at the lower level, as the Key Areas are different.

Can the traditional Higher Units count towards achievement of the new Higher Course?

The traditional Higher Units are included in the equivalent new Higher Course Frameworks with a finish date of 31 July 2016. This means that, until this date candidates who have passed all of the Units in an existing Higher Course, but not achieved the Course assessment, may have their Unit passes carried across to the equivalent new Higher Course. The traditional Higher Biology Units therefore can be used for the new Higher Biology Course, and the traditional Higher Human Biology Units can be used for the new Higher Human Biology Course.

SQA advice is that, in order to maximise their chances of success, candidates should complete the new Higher Course in full; including all Units and the Course assessment. However, it is for schools to decide whether or not to use this arrangement, based on the best interests of the candidate. Schools should consider the circumstances of the candidate as well as the differences between the new and existing Higher Courses.

Further information on [SQA's arrangements](#) for Higher Courses in session 2015–16 is available on SQA's website.

Can traditional Higher Biology Units count towards achievement of the new Higher Human Biology Course?

No. The traditional Higher Biology Units cannot be used for the new Higher Human Biology Course **as** they are two separate Courses.

Outcome 1 — National 3, 4, 5 and Higher

Can we assess Assessment Standards 1.1–1.6 over a number of experiments/practical investigations rather than having a one-off set investigation?

Yes. Evidence for Outcome 1 may be gathered from a series of experiments/practical investigations from individual Units or across the Course. The Assessment Standards can be achieved via a number of pieces of evidence covering work done on different occasions.

At National 4, there are five separate Evidence Requirements for Assessment Standard 1.1:

- ◆ an aim
- ◆ a variable to be kept constant
- ◆ measurements/observations to be made
- ◆ the resources
- ◆ the method, including safety considerations

In order to achieve Assessment Standard 1.1, all five of these Evidence Requirements should be described in one experimental/investigation plan.

At National 5 there are six separate Evidence Requirements for Assessment Standard 1.1:

- ◆ an aim
- ◆ a dependent and independent variable
- ◆ key variables to be kept constant
- ◆ measurements/observations to be made
- ◆ the resources
- ◆ the method, including safety considerations

In order to achieve Assessment Standard 1.1, all six of these Evidence Requirements should be described in one experimental/investigation plan.

At Higher there are seven separate Evidence Requirements for Assessment Standard 1.1:

- ◆ a clear statement of the aim
- ◆ a hypothesis
- ◆ a dependent and independent variable
- ◆ variables to be kept constant
- ◆ measurements/observations to be made
- ◆ the equipment/materials
- ◆ a clear and detailed description of how the experiment/practical investigation should be carried out, including safety considerations

In order to achieve Assessment Standard 1.1, all seven of these Evidence Requirements should be described in one experimental/investigation plan.

Can candidates achieve Assessment Standard 1.1 by following a protocol provided by their assessor?

The [Key Messages](#), which were published after each round of verification, explain that centres are expected to ensure that contexts that allow active planning by all candidates are chosen for investigations as this is clearly the spirit of what is intended by 1.1 Planning an experiment /practical investigation.

These messages remain the same regardless of level, except at National 3 where Assessment Standard 1.1 is 'following given procedures safely'.

If a protocol for a method is used as a starting point, for example to demonstrate an unfamiliar method, candidates could go on to produce different aims and alter variables while using the same method and similar materials. This would allow them to be actively involved in the planning of the experiment/practical investigation and meet this Assessment Standard.

Where a report suggests that all candidates from a class have been provided with both the protocol and materials to carry out an experiment/practical investigation and there is no evidence to suggest that they have individually been involved in the planning of the investigation then they cannot meet Assessment Standard 1.1.

In a situation where all candidates carry out the same experiment/practical investigation and pool the results, the evidence generated could be used to meet Assessment Standards 1.2–1.6. An additional investigation, where each candidate is involved in the planning, would be required to meet Assessment Standard 1.1. It may be that the investigation they plan is simply for the purpose of generating evidence for this Assessment Standard and is not actually carried out.

Is it acceptable for a candidate to express the dependent variable as an indirect method of measurement only?

This depends upon the level. At National 5 this is acceptable but not at Higher. If a candidate identifies an indirect measure they must link this specifically to the dependent variable at some stage of the report to be credited with identifying the dependent variable at Higher level. At Higher it is important that the candidate shows an understanding of the overall output of the experiment, eg a candidate could be measuring enzyme activity (the dependent variable) by measuring the time taken for paper discs soaked in potato extract to rise to the top of a test tube, while altering concentration of hydrogen peroxide (the independent variable). If they state that the dependent variable is 'the time taken for the paper discs to float to the top of the hydrogen peroxide' and make it clear in their hypothesis that they understand that, in measuring the time taken for discs to rise, they are actually measuring enzyme activity then they should be credited with identifying the dependent variable. They have correctly identified an indirect measure (eg time for discs to rise) and linked this specifically to the dependent variable (eg. enzyme activity) in another stage of their report.

What level of guidance can candidates get before and during the write-ups of Outcome 1?

Assessors can clarify with candidates how to produce evidence for their write-up. They can advise candidates how to approach an activity or assessment and guide them in producing their response. Assessors may also prompt candidates, where appropriate, to clarify that they have met the requirements of the assessment; however they should not direct them to any specific response. For example, assessors should not provide specific advice on how to improve responses or provide model answers. Candidates, or groups of candidates, are expected to work with minimal teacher support other than in selecting and gathering of evidence.

Are candidates allowed to re-draft their Outcome 1 report?

Candidates should be given the opportunity to re-draft their report in order to meet the Assessment Standard(s) that they have not achieved. Guidance on re-assessment arrangements is provided in the Unit assessment support packs.

Can you confirm that replicates are not a requirement in the write-up?

Replicates are not a requirement but they are good practice and where possible should be encouraged. Observations/measurements taken should be appropriate. At Higher level, where appropriate, these should be repeated.

Can you confirm that in Assessment Standards 1.1–1.6 we need to write how variables are controlled?

Yes. Review the updated *Course and Unit Support Notes* as they now contain exemplification of standards.

Is it acceptable to give candidates a rough method, which they plan around?

Yes, this is appropriate support to give them; however at National 3, candidates follow given procedures.

Outcome 2 — National 3, 4, 5 and Higher

For National 3 and 4, Outcome 2 has the following Assessment Standards:

- 2.1 Making accurate statements
- 2.2 Describing an application
- 2.3 Describing a biological issue in terms of the effect on the environment/society
- 2.4 Solving problems

For National 5 and Higher, Outcome 2 has the following Assessment Standards:

- 2.1 Making accurate statements
- 2.2 Solving problems.

Assessment Standard 2.1 — National 3, 4, 5 and Higher

Can you please clarify the assessment of 2.1 Knowledge and Understanding?

Candidates are given opportunities to make accurate statements; the number of opportunities to make accurate statements should be appropriate to the size of the key area. At least 50% of the Knowledge and Understanding (KU) statements made by candidates must be correct in the Unit assessment; not 50% of each individual key area.

If a candidate scores less than 50% in a Unit assessment do they need to sit another holistic assessment?

It is at a centre's discretion as to how they re-assess their candidates. Candidates may be re-assessed only in the key areas of a Unit that they have failed or they could sit a new test covering all of the key areas.

Regardless of whether candidates are re-assessed on the key areas of the Unit that they have failed, or given a new test covering all of the key areas for that Unit, they must achieve 50% of this new assessment. Each assessment and re-assessment should be treated as a separate entity.

Can tests be comprised of fewer key areas than the entire Unit (or a greater number across Units) providing each key area is tested and recorded under the correct Unit heading?

Yes. This should be treated as a portfolio approach. In order to decide whether candidates have achieved Assessment Standard 2.1 at least half of all the KU statements made by candidates must be correct for each Unit.

We're following the portfolio approach, assessing key area by key area. Do candidates have to achieve 50% (or more) in each key area?

No, this is not the case. Candidates need to achieve 50% or more across the key areas. If following the portfolio approach, evidence will be collected as candidates progress through the Course and when a Unit is complete, centres will decide whether each candidate has 50% or more of all of the 2.1 questions assessed for each Unit.

If we have adapted the questions and/or answers in a Unit assessment support pack, or produced our own assessment materials, do we need to have them prior verified?

Centres should note that the questions provided in the Unit assessment support packs are a sample set of questions and centres may use these unaltered or adapt them to suit their individual needs. Centres may also replace them with suitable alternatives of a similar standard. The answers provided are there for marking guidance and can also be adapted as long as the standard is maintained. If small changes are made to either the questions or the marking guidance these should be noted and provided with any materials sent in for verification purposes. If large changes are made or new assessment materials produced, centres are advised to have these prior verified by SQA before use.

Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 — National 3 and National 4

Are Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 being removed from the National 3 and National 4 Biology Courses?

No. Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 are not being removed from the National 3 and National 4 Biology Courses.

Are Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 being removed from the National 5 Biology Course?

Yes. Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 have been removed from the National 5 Units in Biology. All relevant National 5 Biology documents will be updated to reflect this change.

Can Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 be assessed with one piece of work?

Yes. There is no reason why candidates can't be assessed with one piece of work, assuming that the piece of work covers both Assessment Standards.

Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 are independent of one another, and can therefore be assessed separately by the production of two separate reports, or can be assessed together in the production of one report.

In a report produced to meet Assessment Standard 2.3, the biological issue described need not be related to the application described in a separate report produced to meet Assessment Standard 2.2.

Can we give candidates a pro-forma/template?

No. Pro-formas/templates should not be used.

What information should we include in the write-up? How will we know if candidates have 'passed' or met the standard?

Each Assessment Standard must be met. The appropriate science should be used to describe the application and impact. The word count is only a guide. The *Course and Unit Support Notes* contain exemplification of standards.

Will there be penalties for going over the word count?

No. The word count is only a guide.

Can candidates do the same investigation?

Yes. However, assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

Can you clarify the extent to which assessment activity 2 in the Unit-by-Unit approach Unit assessment support pack is intended to overlap with the Added Value Unit?

A candidate may choose to research an issue for Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 and then research it further to a greater depth for the Added Value Unit, therefore Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 can be assessed within the Added Value Unit; however this is only appropriate if the candidate is being presented for the National 4 Course. If candidates choose to do this, they would need to research a topic that has an application of biology in order to meet Assessment Standard 2.2.

Assessment Standard 2.4 — National 3 and 4

Assessment Standard 2.2 — National 5 and Higher

Can you clarify the assessment of problem solving?

At least one correct response for each problem solving skill is required; they do not all need to be from the same Unit. If a candidate is given more than one opportunity in a Unit assessment to provide a response for a problem solving skill, then they must answer at least 50% correctly.

Once a candidate has achieved a problem solving skill then this is effectively banked; further questions which may be given of that problem solving skill throughout the Course would not count towards assessment.

If a candidate has achieved a particular problem solving skill in test one but further questions are included in tests two and three, can they score out those questions in these tests as this problem solving skill has already been achieved?

Yes, but given that the candidate has already achieved the problem solving skill (and it can't be taken away) you could give them the additional opportunities in test two and three to further develop them.

If a candidate fails to achieve a problem solving skill in test one they could be re-assessed via test two and/or three.

National 4 Added Value Unit

Can we develop our own assessments for the National 4 Added Value Unit?

Yes, centres can develop their own assessments for the National 4 Added Value Unit or use the SQA-developed assignment on the secure site to assess the National 4 Added Value Unit.

Can candidates research the same topic for Assessment Standards 2.2, 2.3 and their Added Value Unit?

Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 should be viewed as preparation for the National 4 Added Value Unit, so the topic could be extended and further research carried out.

Are candidates allowed to re-draft their report after teachers have marked it?

Yes, candidates are allowed to re-draft their report but this would count as a re-assessment opportunity.

What can candidates have access to during the write-up?

During Stage 2: the communication stage, candidates should have access to the material that they have generated in Stage 1: the research stage. During this stage the candidate selects, processes and presents their information/data which is generated in Stage 1: the research stage. Prepared drafts should not be used.

Can candidates choose any topic to research for the Added Value Unit as long as it is relevant to the National 4 Course?

Candidates will select and investigate a topical issue from a Unit of the National 4 Biology Course.

The resource packs in the *Course and Unit Support Notes* for National 4 are only intended to exemplify material that might be given to candidates as a starting point for their research. It is not mandatory to use any of the topical issues, for example Commercial Fishing in the North Sea; centres are free to select other appropriate investigations.

Can Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 be assessed as part of the Added Value Unit?

Yes. However if Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 are being assessed as part of the Added Value Unit, candidates would need to research a topic that has an application of biology in order to meet Assessment Standard 2.2.

Can the research work and report that candidates have completed for the National 5 assignment be submitted as a National 4 Added Value piece of work?

If the candidate has written an assignment for National 5, then presumably this has been done to meet the marking criteria. Without tweaking, it would not necessarily meet all of the Assessment Standards for the National 4 Added Value Unit. However, with some careful planning it is possible to create a framework which covers both the National 5 marking criteria and the National 4 Assessment Standards. This would give the candidate and the assessor more work; however it could provide a situation where the report could be used for fallback from National 5 to National 4, assuming, of course, that the report meets the Assessment Standards for National 4.

If a report produced for a National 5 Assignment is being used as evidence for the National 4 Added Value Unit it must be internally assessed.

The assessor must judge this evidence using the Judging Evidence Table (JET) for the Added Value Unit which is available on SQA's secure site: www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure. The assessor must ensure that each Assessment Standard (1.1–1.5) has been met. If an Assessment Standard has not been met, the candidate can be re-assessed by re-drafting the evidence for that particular Assessment Standard. The SQA's guidance on re-assessment should be applied, ie normally there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities.

For example, if a candidate chose an inappropriate format to present their data they would lose marks in their National 5 Assignment but in the Added Value Unit they would not meet Assessment Standard 1.3. The assessor could ask the candidate to re-draft this section to allow the candidate to meet the Assessment Standard; however if the candidate did not do this then they would not have met all of the Assessment Standards to achieve the Added Value Unit.

National 5 Assignment

Can you clarify what is meant by an application of biology?

An application of biology must be a deliberate act of humans in which biology is used to effect change in the world or the environment. For example, eutrophication, in its normal sense, is not an application of biology. The process of eutrophication may be a consequence of a deliberate act of humans, eg the use of fertilisers to improve crop yield; however, unless a candidate describes a deliberate attempt to raise the nutrient status of an ecosystem, this would not be a suitable topic for Assessment Standard 2.2. Similarly, desertification would not be considered a suitable topic.

Can candidates use a log book for their National 5 Biology assignment?

The idea of using a logbook for the research stage is acceptable, providing that it does not give the candidate more information than that included in the Instructions for candidates in the *National 5 Biology: assignment assessment task document*, it would then be appropriate to use this logbook during the communication stage. However, as drafts are **not** allowed during the communication stage it is the assessor's responsibility to ensure that the logbook contains notes and **not** a draft copy of any section of the assignment.

A logbook that allows candidates to draft out a section(s) would **not** be acceptable as this would provide too much help. It would also allow candidates to complete the processing and presenting of data/information before the communication stage, which is **not** appropriate.

Can candidates use notes when completing the communication stage?

During the communication stage of the assignment, candidates should have access to the following resources:

- ◆ material collected by the candidate during the research stage — this may include, for example, statistical, graphical, numerical or experimental data; data/information from the internet; published articles or extracts; notes taken from a visit or talk; notes taken from a written or audio-visual source

The assessor should check that the material used by the candidate in this communication stage conforms to the criteria above. It must not include a prepared report.

Are candidates allowed to re-draft their National 5 assignment?

No, there should be no re-drafting. Reasonable assistance does not include: providing model answers/providing feedback on drafts.

Is it possible to provide clarification regarding a potential National 5 assignment task?

SQA does not approve investigation topics for the assignment; centres are free to develop their own investigations that are related to a Unit of the Course.

Can candidates choose any topic to research for the assignment as long as it is relevant to the National 5 Course?

Candidates are free to select appropriate investigation topics that are related to a Unit of the Course.

Is there a support pack in terms of specific research topics?

The *Course and Unit Support Notes* contain suggested investigation topics and two resource packs. The resource packs contain background information on two topics, as well as links and suggestions to other sources of information. It exemplifies one approach to Stage 1 (research stage) of the investigation. Candidates may practice producing their report/communication using these resource packs as their sources of information/data for Stage 1 (research stage) of the investigation.

Is it acceptable to give candidates a list of sources to choose from?

Centres can provide a bank of data which candidates can then use to select appropriate information/data for their reports. Resources could be provided by a teacher; this could include books/articles/web links, etc.

During the research stage, can candidates gather evidence as a group and share it before writing the report?

Yes.

Is it mandatory to include practical work in the National 5 assignment?

No. An appropriate experiment/practical activity may be used as one of the data sources — however this is not mandatory.

Where a candidate uses experimental data from their Outcome 1 report they should have access to the raw data **only** and not to any processed data from the report.

Can candidates use any material that they have found by doing independent research outwith class?

Yes, candidates can do some independent research outwith class. However, assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that any materials used by a candidate are the candidate's own work, and that plagiarism has not taken place.

Can candidates write up their reports at home?

No. The write-up must be carried out under supervised conditions.

Can the research work and report that candidates have completed for the National 5 assignment be submitted as a National 4 Added Value piece of work?

If the candidate has written an assignment for National 5, then presumably this has been done to meet the marking criteria. Without tweaking, it would not necessarily meet all of the Assessment Standards for the National 4 Added Value Unit. However, with some careful planning it is possible to create a framework which covers both the National 5 marking criteria and the National 4 Assessment Standards. This would give the candidate and the assessor more work; however it could provide a situation where the report could be used for fallback from National 5 to National 4, assuming, of course, that the report meets the Assessment Standards for National 4.

If a report produced for a National 5 Assignment is being used as evidence for the National 4 Added Value Unit it must be internally assessed.

The assessor must judge this evidence using the Judging Evidence Table (JET) for the Added Value Unit which is available on SQA's secure site: www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure. The assessor must ensure that each Assessment Standard (1.1–1.5) has been met. If an Assessment Standard has not been met, the candidate can be re-assessed by re-drafting the evidence for that particular Assessment Standard. SQA's guidance on re-assessment should be applied, ie normally there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities.

For example, if a candidate chose an inappropriate format to present their data they would lose marks in their National 5 Assignment but in the Added Value Unit they would not meet Assessment Standard 1.3. The assessor could ask the candidate to re-draft this section to allow the candidate to meet the Assessment Standard; however if the candidate did not do this then they would not have met all of the Assessment Standards to achieve the Added Value Unit.

Will there be penalties for going over the word count in the National 5 assignment?

The word count of 500–800 words is an indication as to the level of detail required for the assignment. Candidates will not be penalised for going over this limit but centres should make candidates aware that by exceeding this limit they may be self-penalising. Appendices should be kept to a minimum.

Does the one hour for the National 5 assignment need to be completed in one session or can it be split over a few periods?

The rule on the time allocated to the communication stage of the assignment at National 5 has been relaxed. It is recommended that no longer than eight hours is spent on the whole assignment. Candidates may produce their report over a period of time. If the report is completed over a number of sessions, then the assessor must retain the candidate's work between sessions. Following completion of the report there should be no re-drafting.

Is there a mandatory template for candidates to use for the National 5 Biology assignment?

There is no mandatory template for candidates to use for completion of their National 5 Biology assignment. Centres will however be sent a flyleaf and marking grid in February for each candidate in order for these to be submitted along with their National 5 Biology assignment.

Is there a candidate guide for the National 5 Biology assignment?

Yes. The assessment instructions for candidates are provided in Appendix 1 of the *National 5 Biology: assignment — assessment task* document, on SQA's secure website. The Instructions for candidates must be detached and given to the candidate.

Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology assignment

Can candidates use a logbook for their Higher assignment?

The idea of using a logbook for the research stage is acceptable. Providing that it does not give the candidate more information than that included in the Instructions for candidates in the *Higher Biology/Higher Human Biology: assignment assessment task document* it would then be appropriate to use this logbook during the communication stage. However, as drafts are **not** allowed during the communication stage it is the assessor's responsibility to ensure that the logbook contains notes and **not** a draft copy of any section of the assignment.

A logbook that allows candidates to draft out a section(s) would **not** be acceptable as this would provide too much help. It would also allow candidates to complete the processing and presenting of data/information before the communication stage, which is **not** appropriate.

Can candidates use notes when completing the communication stage?

During the communication stage of the assignment, candidates should have access to the following resources:

- ◆ material collected by the candidate during the research stage — this may include, for example, statistical, graphical, numerical or experimental data; data/information from the internet; published articles or extracts; notes taken from a visit or talk; notes taken from a written or audio-visual source

The assessor should check that the material used by the candidate in this communication stage conforms to the criteria above. It must not include a prepared report.

Are candidates allowed to re-draft their Higher assignment?

No, there should be no re-drafting. Reasonable assistance does not include: providing model answers/providing feedback on drafts.

Does the topic chosen for the Higher assignment task need to have an application of biology/human biology associated with it?

No. The assignment assessment task at Higher asks candidates to 'investigate a relevant topic in biology/human biology' and states that it 'must relate to a key area of the Course'. This means that, unlike National 5 biology, the topic does not need to have an application associated with it.

Is it possible to provide clarification regarding a potential Higher assignment task?

SQA does not approve investigation topics for the assignment; centres are free to develop their own investigations that are related to one or more of the key areas of the Course.

Is there a support pack in terms of specific research topics?

At Higher, there are no suggested investigation topics or resource packs included in the Course and Unit Support Notes; the assessor has responsibility for ensuring that the topic to be investigated by the candidate is sufficiently demanding. Assessors and candidates should choose relevant topical contexts appropriate to the learning and teaching; however it is the assessor's responsibility to ensure that the topic will allow the candidate to provide evidence of an appropriate standard to achieve the full range of marks available.

SSERC have produced resource packs for the Higher Assignment. They have, to date, produced one resource for Higher Biology and two resources for Higher Human Biology. These are available via the following links:

[Higher Biology assignment — Resource pack: The production of microorganisms](#)
[Higher Human Biology assignment - Resource pack: The global rise in obesity and type 2 diabetes](#)

[Higher Human Biology assignment — Resource pack: Ebola](#)

Is it acceptable to give candidates a list of sources to choose from?

Centres can provide a bank of data which candidates can then use to select appropriate information/data for their reports. Resources could be provided by a teacher; this could include books/articles/web links, etc.

During the research stage, can candidates gather evidence as a group and share it before writing the report?

Yes.

Is it mandatory to include practical work in the Higher assignment?

No. An appropriate experiment/practical activity may be used as one of the data sources, however this is not mandatory.

Where a candidate uses experimental data from their Outcome 1 report they should have access to the raw data **only** and not to any processed data from the report.

Can candidates use any material that they have found by doing independent research outwith class?

Yes, candidates can do some independent research outwith class. However, assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that any materials used by a candidate are the candidate's own work, and that plagiarism has not taken place.

Can candidates write up their reports at home?

No. The write-up must be carried out under supervised conditions.

Will there be penalties for going over the word count in the Higher assignment?

The word count of 800-1,500 words is an indication as to the level of detail required for the assignment. Candidates will not be penalised for going over this limit but centres should make candidates aware that by exceeding this limit they may be self-penalising. Appendices should be kept to a minimum.

Does the Higher assignment need to be completed in one session or can it be split over a few periods?

It is recommended that no longer than eight hours is spent on the whole assignment. Candidates may produce their report over a period of time. If the report is completed over a number of sessions, then the assessor must retain the candidate's work between sessions. Following completion of the report there should be no re-drafting.

Is there a mandatory template for candidates to use for the Higher assignment?

There is no mandatory template for candidates to use for completion of their Higher Biology assignment. Centres will however be sent a flyleaf and marking grid in February for each candidate in order for these to be submitted along with their Higher Biology assignment.

Is there a candidate guide for the Higher assignment?

Yes. The assessment instructions for candidates are provided in Appendix 1 of the *Higher Biology/Human Biology: assignment — assessment task* document, on SQA's secure website. The Instructions for candidates must be detached and given to the candidate.

General Curriculum for Excellence questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.