

29 November 2004

To: SQA Co-ordinator (Secondary Schools,  
Special Schools and Further Education Colleges)  
Scottish Executive  
HMIE  
Directors of Education  
Geology Assessment Panel members  
Higher Education Institutions – Department of Education

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

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

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Dear Colleague

**National Qualifications Update - Geology**

This letter is the latest in the series of annual update letters from SQA specifically designed to keep specialists in Geology abreast of developments in the subject area. I place a very high importance on liaison between SQA and practitioners and these letters form one strand of this communication strategy. In addition I can be contacted in a number of ways, with my direct dial and email address noted above.

**1. Principal Assessor Reports**

The Principal Assessor (PA) reports for the 2004 diet of examinations are available on the SQA website.

Please refer to the individual PA reports for statistical information about the examinations and full and detailed comments on candidate performance. Each PA report specifies areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well and areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty.

The fieldwork component of the external assessment for Higher and Intermediate 2 continues to be well done by candidates. The PA reports:

Higher:	“Fieldwork studies were generally of a very high standard.”
Intermediate 2:	“Most fieldwork studies more than satisfactory and many were of a high standard.”

## 2. Style of Examination Question Papers

In and after Diet 2003, the Geology Intermediate 1 examination papers were written without the use of a formal reference to figures, tables, graphs etc. For example:

Diet 2002	Q1. (a)	Figure Q1 shows the inside of the Earth.
Diet 2003	Q1.	Look at the diagram below. The diagram shows the inside of the Earth.
Diet 2004	Q2. (a)	Look at the three diagrams below showing the layers of the Earth.
Diet 2002	Q12. (c)	Table Q12(c) shows daily use per person.
Diet 2003	Q16.	The table below shows the production of shale oil and crude oil ....
Diet 2004	Q10. (b) (i)	The table below shows the scientist's results.

The change to a less formal reference to figures, tables and graphs etc, was introduced to improve accessibility to the paper for candidates and has been well-received. It is intended to introduce the new style into examination question papers in Diet 2005 for Intermediate 2, and Diet 2006 for Higher.

Specimen Question Papers reflecting the new style will be available shortly on the NQ Geology subject-specific page of the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

## 3. NABs in Geology

### Intermediate 2

**D8XK 11 Minerals and Rocks**

previously D246 11 *Earth Materials – Rocks and Minerals*

**D8XL 11 History of the Earth**

previously D248 11 *History of the Earth*

### Higher

**D8XK 12 Minerals and Rocks**

previously D249 12 *Minerals and Rocks*

The NABs D246 11, D248 11 and D249 12 are currently being amended to reflect the changes made to the role of the fieldwork component in the external assessment of the National Courses in Geology at Higher and Intermediate 2 levels. The number and name for the replacement NAB is listed above in bold. The only change is that outcome 3 has been removed from each of the NABs D246 11, D248 11 and D249 12.

As with the Specimen Question Papers all NABs are being amended to reflect the new style ie written without the use of a formal reference to figures, tables, graphs etc.

Older versions of the NABs (omitting references to outcome 3) may continue to be used until new versions are available on SQA's secure website.

## 4. Simulated Fieldwork Study

A simulated fieldwork study pack, designed to meet the needs of Geology Intermediate 2 candidates who are unable to carry out fieldwork in the normal way, has been written. It is intended that the pack will be available on LTS website ([www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk)), or on CD Rom (issued directly to centres) in the Spring of 2005.

The pack contains materials to meet the requirements of the fieldwork component for Geology Intermediate 2, but the materials may also be adapted to suit individual centre circumstances.

Additional guidance notes on the assessment process are provided for the teacher in Section 1, and there is a Student Guide in Section 2. The Appendix to the pack gives further guidance on the assessment of fieldwork at Intermediate 2 and Higher levels.

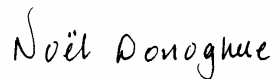
## 5. Appeals 2004

In Diet 2004, there were five appeals submitted at Higher level, three of which were successful. Statistics for Intermediate 1 and 2 levels are not currently available.

I would like to take the opportunity to direct you to the NQ Geology subject-specific page of the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) and the publication *Estimates, Absentees and external Assessment Appeals: guidance on evidence requirements* April 2004. The publication provides guidance (both generic and subject-specific) for centres which are delivering National Courses.

I hope you find the information in this letter helpful

Yours faithfully



Noël Donoghue  
Qualifications Manager  
Geology