

23 November 2006

To: SQA Co-coordinator (Secondary Schools
and Colleges of Further Education)
Directors of Education
SCIS
Customer Account Managers

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

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update – History

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

SQA Website

The subject page is the main source of information on National Qualifications in History. It contains the current and past reports of Principal Assessors and the Senior Verifier, Course Specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and Specimen Papers, previous National Qualifications Updates and marking instructions for all levels for the 2006 and recent diets. The address of the website is www.sqa.org.uk. On the homepage browser click “History” on the drop-down menu and then click “GO”.

History at Access 3

SQA has introduced a Cluster award at Access 3 in History. Further information is on the subject page of the website. One NAB is available for each of the 14 Contexts developed. Centres are encouraged to submit reassessment NABs they have devised to Carol McEvoy of our Verification Unit for prior verification (0845 213 5349 or carol.mcevoy@sqa.org.uk).

Support materials have been commissioned by LTScotland for the higher uptake areas. All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed to Abi Robertson (0141 282 5128 or a.robertson@LTScotland.org.uk).

Access 3 Social Subjects

The Arrangements have been updated and simplified. Full details are on the Social Subjects page of the website. New NABs and worked exemplars can be accessed through SQA co-ordinators.

Plans for the Extended Response and Extended Essay

As for the 2006 diet, plans for these components can only be downloaded from the SQA website. Flyleaves for the submission of candidates’ Extended Response and Extended Essay will be sent in February, as normal (see also below).

Plagiarism and collusion

Fresh guidance to candidates on plagiarism and collusion in all subjects is in preparation. Dissertations, Extended Essays and Responses should be the candidate's own work. Where there are strong similarities in the work of a number of candidates, or where Dissertation sources are not acknowledged, centres may be contacted and, in extreme cases, awards may be cancelled.

Update on the 2006 diet

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are warmly thanked for their efforts in delivering a successful diet. The full reports of the Principal Assessors are on our website. These are an invaluable source of advice and good practice. Centre staff are urged most strongly to avail themselves of the information contained there.

Centres are reminded that all areas of the syllabus may be sampled. Sampling ensures that candidates cover the content adequately. Hence there are no areas that will be examined every year. Centres should bear this in mind when preparing candidates.

Further points to bear in mind for each level are:

Advanced Higher

The expanded descriptors for each Field are on the website under the heading 'Arrangements documents and Specimen Question Papers'. Centres are reminded that essay questions can come from any part of the descriptor, but that the source questions will be drawn from the italicised areas.

Also on the subject page is 'Advanced Higher History – advice to Centres'. This is a digest of the recent PA reports (2003-05) and invaluable in the preparation of candidates.

Higher

Centres should note the following points:

Paper 1

While direct "Why..." questions may help weaker candidates by omitting an obvious evaluative element, they may similarly disadvantage abler candidates by not making it explicit that an evaluation of relative importance of causes is required. Accordingly they will be phased out after the 2007 diet.

Where terminal dates appear in an essay question, they refer to the end of that year eg a question such as "How democratic was Britain by 1867?" would include the effects of the act of that year.

In order to lessen the effects of the demands of the unseen discursive essay, these will be marked out of 20 each from 2008 onwards. Thus the Paper 1 total will be 40, and the total for the Course Assessment will be 100, rather than 110.

SQA will also produce detailed marking instructions for Paper 1 for 2008 and thereafter. These will be similar in format to those at other levels.

Paper 2

In order to equalise demand across the nine Special Topics, from 2008 the distribution of marks will be standardised at 5 marks each for the source evaluation and comparison items, six marks each for the contextualisation items, with the eight mark three-source item remaining as before.

Extended Essay

Previous PA reports have referred to the importance of suitable titles. Titles which are evaluative questions lead naturally to debate, discussion and conclusion(s), which are the characteristics that lead to high attainment. Centres should also ensure that titles are within the syllabus. Material which lies outwith the Course can not receive credit. For example, broad questions on the attainment of equal rights by women, which were once part of the Revised Higher syllabus, are no longer appropriate, as the current syllabus refers specifically and only to the extension of the franchise.

There are still a small number of centres where all candidates, or significant numbers of them, answer on the same title, with similar or identical introductions, evidence, quotes and conclusions. Teachers/lecturers responsible for the entry of a centre cohort should ensure that this practice does not occur (See also advice under 'Plagiarism and collusion').

The Plan should be no more than 200 words long, and should be a clean, final copy. Plans which contain scored out but legible words in excess of the limit will be liable to penalty.

Candidates should not use bibliographies when writing up the Essay, nor should they include them in their submission along with their Plan, as this constitutes part of the Plan and is liable to penalty.

SQA will introduce a marking grid for the Extended Essay from 2007, similar to that used successfully at Advanced Higher. It will be placed on the Flyleaf distributed in spring. To accommodate this, the markers' meeting will last a full day.

Intermediate

Similar advice pertains to the Extended Response, particularly that on the choice of titles. SQA will also introduce a marking grid for the Extended Response.

A number of candidates continue to omit 'Describe' items at Intermediate 2. Centres should remind candidates that it is in their own best interests that they answer such items.

Standard Grade

Candidates at Foundation level in particular continue to experience difficulty with ES1 items. To support candidates at Foundation, a number of multiple choice items will be introduced in the 2007 examination. The format will be similar to this type of item at Access 3. Centres may wish to adapt such items for inclusion in future preliminary examinations and other assessments. Preliminary examinations without such items will still be acceptable as appeals evidence for the 2007 diet.

ES1 items ask the candidate to evaluate usefulness for a specific purpose and the response must be firmly directed at that purpose. To gain a mark for contemporaneity at Credit level, the candidate must state something like:

"This source is useful as it is a primary source written at the time when the Nazis were trying to come to power in Germany."

Examples of correct responses gaining 1 mark for limitation would be:

"The source however is only the view of one woman and obviously a Suffragette who would be in favour of using violence", or

"The source is very pro-Suffragette and thus does not mention other methods women used to try to get the vote, such as going on peaceful protest marches."

As regards ES5 items, while the majority of candidates present neat, tidy, lucid responses, a minority presented a simple table, in some instances quoting only the first two or three words of a relevant quotation from the presented evidence. Markers were encouraged to penalise this practice – usually by not awarding full marks.

Extremely few, if any, centres have ever studied the Napoleonic Wars option (Context 2A). Consequently, centres are being consulted on its removal from the 2009 examination and thereafter.

Verification

The report of the Senior Verifier is available from the subject page of the website. It gives clear and helpful advice on the verification process. Centres should indicate clearly which NAB is being used. It is also helpful if centres/candidates date the evidence when it is produced.

Centres should use the latest version of any NAB available at the time of assessment. This applies particularly at Intermediate, where the latest versions of NABs date from 2003-4.

SQA practice has evolved in respect of reassessment. For revised or new qualifications, centres should use complete fresh NABs, rather than allowing candidates to amend a previous effort. Hence, new assessments should be used at Access 3. For other History Courses, best practice is to use a fresh NAB, but revisits will be accepted at Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher until and as these Courses are reviewed.

The National Assessment Bank

New NABs are issued in electronic form only and can be downloaded only by SQA co-ordinators. Further details are available from:

Customer Contact Centre
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow, G2 8DQ

Tel: 0845 279 1000 or Fax: 0845 213 5000

E-mail: customer@sqa.org.uk

Past Papers

Past papers can be obtained via the Customer Contact Centre on the payment of a small fee.

Review of Higher

SQA is undertaking a review of Higher, to take account of representation on the Eurocentric nature of the syllabus, the place of Scottish History within it and the structure of its assessment. The review is part of a routine maintenance of the qualification. The focus will be on defining the role of Scottish History, particularly in the later modern period, and reflecting the multicultural nature of History, particularly in the study of non-European societies for their own sake, rather than from a perspective of their contact with the West. The introduction of a revised Course is planned for the 2009-10 session.

Markers

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2006 diet. Invitations to mark for the 2007 diet have recently been issued. While reserves exist at all levels, it is impossible to predict acceptance rates by markers. Those wishing to become markers should complete an application form, which is available to download from our website or from Trudy Thomson in our Appointments Section on 0131 561 6712 (or trudy.thomson@sqa.org.uk).

Estimates and Appeals

All queries on appeals results should be addressed to the Appeals Helpline at appeals@sqa.org.uk.

We have recently updated the *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements* document and this is now available on our website. A hard-copy is being issued to every centre. In particular, the document clarifies subject specific requirement as well as guidance on the general principles for generating Estimates and submitting Appeals.

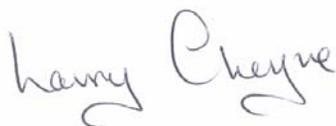
When generating Estimates and compiling evidence for Absentee consideration and Appeals, you should also refer to:

- Course Arrangements Documents, which include Course Grade Descriptions
- Course Assessment Specifications
- SQA Question Papers, including Specimen Question Papers
- SQA Marking Instructions
- Principal Assessor Reports, which include information on Grade Boundaries
- Exemplification materials
- any other relevant information (eg Course Reports, subject update letters).

These materials, and more, are also available on the subject pages of our website www.sqa.org.uk.

If you wish further clarification of any points in this letter, please contact either Veronica Curran (0845 213 5498; veronica.curran@sqa.org.uk) or myself at the above address.

Yours faithfully



Larry Cheyne
Qualifications Manager