



NQ Verification 2014–15

Key Messages Round 1

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	History
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2015

National Courses/Units verified:

National 3 to new Higher: Historical Study: Scottish, British, European and World

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

There was good practice noted with respect to the following areas:

Some centres encouraged candidates to self-reflect on their responses to Unit assessment tasks, thus providing more evidence of meeting Assessment Standards.

There were some excellent examples of personalisation and choice offered to candidates in line with best practice for the new National Qualifications; the needs of the learner being key to how and when Outcomes are assessed. For example, an N4 candidate presented their evidence in the form of a storyboard and captions. This information was augmented by the assessor after oral assessment requiring the candidate to explain the storyboard.

For Higher, some centres had thoughtfully devised Column 4 possible responses to assessment tasks, adapted to their own context. As a result, their assessment judgements were consistent and reliable because they had taken great care in anticipating how their candidates might produce evidence to meet Assessment Standards.

The following comments are intended as a guide to centres on future practice:

Some centres were confused about the approach to assessment they were using. The confusion arose over whether a Unit-by-Unit or portfolio approach was being used. Centres are reminded that the portfolio approach allows assessors to gather candidate evidence directly from responses, during and deriving from classroom learning and teaching activities. However, the Unit-by-Unit approach uses specific Unit assessment tasks in addition to learning and teaching activities, accompanied by a judging evidence table that offers specific guidance to assessors on appropriate evidence which might meet Assessment Standards. There is no requirement for centres to assess all Assessment Standards in one assessment task. The 'breaking up' of assessment tasks does not mean that a portfolio approach is being used. Centres should clearly identify the approach most appropriate to their context and devise appropriate judging evidence tables and/or marking instructions. Advice for appropriate judging evidence tables can be found in Unit assessment support packs 1 and 3 at all levels.

Some centres used version 1.0 of the Unit assessment support packs when devising their assessments. They should ensure that in 2015–16, only version 1.1 is used.

Some centres submitted candidate evidence where the same assessment task was used for N4 and N5 candidates. Centres should devise different assessment tasks for N4 and N5, ensuring that under legislation for equality and inclusion, no artificial barriers are placed in way of candidates producing evidence to meet the Assessment Standards. This means ensuring that source information and assessment tasks are adapted appropriately for each level.

Some centres used source information and assessment tasks from Course assessment materials at one level for Unit assessment at another. For example, Higher past papers for N5 Unit assessment. It is possible for centres to use SQA materials as a resource in this way. Centres should ensure that if they do so, the source information and assessment tasks are suitably adapted to Unit Assessment Standards.

Centres should not use directive templates to guide candidate responses to Unit assessment. It is possible to use directive templates during learning and teaching activities to help candidates develop specific skills. However, when producing evidence to meet minimum competency at Unit assessment, candidates should demonstrate their skills independently. This advice does not preclude clarifying the task for candidates as per the guidance on appropriate assessment conditions contained in every Unit assessment support pack.

In some centres, there was inflation of Assessment Standards for AS2.3 at N5 — candidates are expected to write essays, include introductions and conclusions, give balance, and include certain topics in their answers. Centres should review their assessment tasks, judging evidence tables and marking instructions — adapting them where necessary to ensure that they are in line with Unit Assessment Standards.

Where centres have devised their own assessment tasks, they should ensure that the task will support the candidate in demonstrating the skill required. Centres should review their assessment tasks to ensure that assessment tasks are worded appropriately.

For Higher, some centres need to give more guidance beneath assessment prompts to candidates on what they are asking candidates to do. For example, AS B1.1 requires the candidates to put four pieces of historical information into their own words, but the task was often not made clear enough to candidates. Also, B2.1 at Higher requires candidates to give a point of background to the issue, not just any factual point. Clearer guidance to candidates would reduce the need for re-assessment.

For Higher, some centres had inflated the evidence required from candidates in their assessment tasks and judging evidence tables. Centres should review and adapt their assessment tasks and judging evidence tables in line with national standards. Possible exemplars can be found in Unit assessment support packs 1 and 2.

Assessment judgements

There was good practice noted with respect to the following areas:

Centres are complemented on the reliability and consistency of their assessment judgements across all levels, but especially for the new Higher.

The following comments are intended as a guide to centres on future practice:

Centres are recommended to annotate evidence of meeting Assessment Standards at the point of achievement. This supports reliable and consistent assessment judgements and internal verification.

Some centres used Course assessment marking notation for Unit assessment. Centres are advised not to do so as this may result in unreliable and inconsistent assessment judgements according to Unit Assessment Standards.

The allocation of marks, while acceptable, should be used only in line with national Assessment Standards for Unit skills to avoid inflating the task. For example, the N5 2.1 British requires three relevant factual points, therefore the maximum mark allocation would be three marks.

Some centres had clearly encouraged/required candidates to produce evidence that far exceeded Unit assessment requirements. At Higher, for example, some centres asked candidates to write a Course assessment extended response. Not only did this disadvantage some candidates by creating unnecessary barriers to positive achievement, but the workload for all candidates associated with Unit assessment was similarly inflated. Centres should review and adapt their assessment tasks and judging evidence tables in line with Unit Assessment Standards.

Section 3: General comments

Overall, the submission of candidate evidence was impressively well organised in most centres. The verification team was very grateful to centres for having taken such care and attention to detail. However, there were some instances where verification could not proceed because the assessment task, judging evidence tables and/or marking instructions did not correlate with candidate evidence. There were some issues with respect to the submission of candidate evidence for verification: centres presenting the new Higher must send evidence for these candidates. Also, centres should include evidence up to a maximum of three levels in their candidate submission.

For Higher, it was clear that the exemplars and format of judging evidence tables and/or marking instructions had successfully supported most centres in reaching appropriate assessment judgements. As part of their ongoing quality assurance and resource development, centres could benefit from reviewing and revisiting assessment tasks and judging evidence tables and/or marking instructions for N3 to N5 in the light of experience. Specifically, centres might review and revise Column 4 in the judging evidence table, using where possible, exemplars of minimum competency from their own centre. This will aid assessors in making reliable and consistent assessment judgements.

Internal verification

Most centres included a clear verification policy with documentation showing assessment conditions and minutes of verification meetings. It would be good practice for these to be signed and dated to demonstrate the timeline of activities.

Many centres made effective use of cross-marking/internal verification to confirm assessment judgements. Verifiers found that there was a direct relationship between focused, proportionate, quality assurance processes and reliable and consistent assessment judgements.

Many centres made effective use of detailed annotation eg '✓ 1.3 simple comparison' and/or colour coding of different Assessment Standards. This was very helpful to verifiers in confirming assessment judgements. It was also very helpful to verifiers in confirming assessment judgements when cross-marking took the form of a **second set of annotations** at point of achievement rather than just a second signature at the end of a question or script.

Many centres had made effective use of local area networks to devise Unit assessments and to quality assure the Unit assessment tasks and assessment judgements.

Centres may wish to consider using [SQA's Internal Verification Toolkit](#) which provides centres with templates that can be used to successfully support an effective internal verification process.