



Internal Assessment Report: NQ Geography

Assessment Panel: Geography

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Units

Titles/levels of National Units verified

DF3C 09: Geography: Physical Environments (Access3)
DF3C 10: Geography: Physical Environments (Intermediate 1)
DF44 10: Geography: Environmental Interactions (Intermediate 1)
DF3C 11: Geography: Physical Environments (Intermediate 2)
DF44 11: Geography: Environmental Interactions (Intermediate 2)
DF43 12: Geography: Human Environments (Higher)
DF44 12: Geography: Environmental Interactions (Higher)
DF48 13: Geographical Study (AH)
DF49 13: Geographical Issues (AH)
DF4A 13: Geographical Methods and Techniques (AH)

Feedback to centres

General comments

The central verification event ran very smoothly. During the initial session the Senior Verifier provided the team with:

- ◆ a copy of the Senior Verifier Report for Session 2007–08
- ◆ exemplars of verifier report forms
- ◆ electronic templates of the two types of report ('Accepted' and 'Not Accepted')

The Senior Verifier Report for Session 2007–08 enabled the verifiers to see the final product of the verification process and the importance of their feedback comments in the production of the annual report.

The exemplar verifier report forms followed the feedback format the team has worked towards establishing over the last few years. These exemplars, as in previous years, supported the team in re-engaging with the verification process.

After consultation and agreement with the team, the electronic templates were loaded onto the laptops that were to be used to write the reports to centres.

The format used by the team meets the needs of the verification process, provides centres with support and advice, as required, and recognises the excellent level of work produced by centres and candidates. The team felt that these exemplars provided support for themselves when completing the verifier report forms. It was agreed that a reminder about the existence of Senior Verifier Reports and the advice included in them should be inserted into the feedback reports to centres.

As in previous years, the request by SQA for centres to include the NAB item(s) and marking scheme(s) greatly assisted the team in their duties.

Advice on good practice and areas for further improvement

Out of a total of 39 centres verified, only one was deemed to be 'Not Accepted'. The cause for concern in this centre related to '...precise, structured research questions' for the Advanced Higher Geographical Study. In feedback to the centre the verifiers included guidance on how this concern can be resolved. Subsequent to the central verification event, and after the re-assessment review, the centre was deemed as 'Accepted'.

Feedback from verifiers identified the following key strengths:

- ◆ Candidate performance ranged from Good to Excellent; few of those sampled had failed the Units. The team felt that the standard of candidates' responses and teacher marking and advice had continued to improve as in previous years.
- ◆ The quality of the candidates' responses suggests the very good quality of learning and teaching within centres.
- ◆ The team were able to report again that centres were applying marking schemes well and were clearly indicating where marks were being awarded on candidates' evidence.
- ◆ A growing number of centres include annotated comments when marking. These help the verifier to understand the marking of candidates' work by the centre.
- ◆ A few centres use (d) for description or (e) for explanation, etc which also aids the verification process.
- ◆ The number of centres using cross marking as part of their internal verification process grows with each year. Where evident, this process was commended in the verifier's report form that is sent back to centres. For centres where cross marking was not evident, the verifiers included a request for the centre to consider this approach in the future.
- ◆ At Advanced Higher the quality of evidence submitted was impressive. It is evident that centres have a clear understanding of what is required and are providing good support mechanisms for candidates.
- ◆ Some centres support their candidates well and have clear internal verification procedures.

However, some centres are still making elementary/minor errors as outlined below.

The completion of the Verification Sample Form for some centres still causes difficulty. A number of centres, though fewer each year, include marks and other information rather than the symbols P (Pass), F (Fail) or W (Withdrawn) as per instructions supplied by SQA.

A few centres are still using out of date NAB items, pre-October 2007, as evident from:

- ◆ the date of publication stamped on the NAB item submitted with the verification material
- ◆ the use of half marks on candidates' scripts in questions asking for the identification of features where previously candidates were awarded $\frac{1}{2}$ mark for each correct feature

With the move to full marks, the instructions for the allocation of marks has changed. For example, in mapping-type questions worth three marks, the following should be observed:

'Award 1 mark for every two correctly matched rivers. No marks for one correct match.

or

Four correct — 3 marks, two or three correct — 2 marks, one correct — 1 mark.'

In questions where candidates are asked to provide a named example, a few centres are still crediting candidates with a mark for the named example. This goes against the convention used both in the internal and external assessments.

Here are some examples that demonstrate the instruction for marking.

For a 12 mark question:

'Will depend on the city chosen. If no named city mark out of a maximum of 10'

For an 8 mark question:

'If no country is named mark out of a maximum of 6 marks'

Where candidates give specific named locations they are entitled to credit as shown in the instructions to markers below:

'Answers will depend on the choice of old industrial area, but must be authentic for the chosen area. Award up to 1 mark for specific named locations, eg Rhondda Valley, Cardiff Docks etc.'

In this case the candidate will get no marks for just naming South Wales.

Many centres submitted evidence that had been carefully marked and presented. Ticks on scripts showed exactly where marks were being awarded and this was very helpful to the verification team. Verifiers commented on the number of centres in which scripts were annotated by the markers and how this provided good feedback for candidates.

Centres which had obviously adopted a policy of cross marking/internal verification procedures are to be particularly commended. Such centres presented few, if any, problems for the verifiers as they had already identified and acted upon any inconsistencies or ambiguity, if there were any, in the marking of individual members of staff.

Centres that have single-person departments might consider linking up with a neighbouring centre to facilitate cross marking.

Centres should check the SQA secure website to ensure that they are using the current NAB items. Further to this, centres should ensure that all teaching staff are fully aware of the arrangements for using and marking NAB items as outlined in the introductory pages of the NAB packs.

Across all levels, Access 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher, the internal assessment seems to be well understood and used by centres appropriately. Overall, the quality of candidates' performance exemplifies the high standard of professional support from teachers/lecturers given to candidates in centres.

The following advice has been included to support centres. Verifiers are looking for a number of items to satisfy the requirements.

These items are as follows:

- 1 The candidate evidence matches with the list of names on the Verification Sample Form VS00 as supplied by SQA.
- 2 The centre has used an approved NAB item as supplied by SQA or similar item approved prior to the verification event.
- 3 There is a clear and definite approach to marking, suggesting a clear policy being followed by the centre and illustrated by the following:
 - ◆ Ticks on candidates' work are useful and help to identify where the teacher is giving credit, following the marking practice advocated by SQA.
 - ◆ Additional written comments on the candidates' work in support of the assessment is highly valued — both for candidates to see how they can improve their future performances and for verifiers to ensure that candidates/centres meet the requirements of the Unit.
 - ◆ Detailed and accurate comments avoiding the use of subjective terms which might lead to confusion. Clear and unambiguous comments allow the verification team to quickly identify where a centre is being too lenient, or too harsh, on the candidate.
 - ◆ Cross marking of candidates' work is valuable evidence of internal verification of the centre's work. Where staffing does not allow centres to cross mark internally then centres may think of pairing-up with a nearby centre for mutual support.
 - ◆ The more detailed the comments written by the teacher the more likely the teacher's judgement will be understood and accepted by the verifier.
 - ◆ Evidence that re-assessment has taken place where necessary.

Comments on verifier performance

All the verifiers showed a professional attitude to the work at hand during the event.

The verification team worked well together offering each other support and guidance and, where necessary, conferring and confirming with the Senior Verifier. The overall impression from verifiers was that they enjoyed the experience, felt highly valued by SQA, and that this year's event was well organised and professionally run.

The team are comfortable with the use of electronic reporting and acknowledged their preference for this approach. Verifiers also confirmed the positive aspects of central events as opposed to postal verification.

After a review of all verifiers' reports, it is evident that the level of feedback to centres produced by the verifiers is excellent. The agreed feedback style meets the needs of the verification process, provides centres with support and advice, as required, and recognises the excellent level of work produced by centres and candidates.