

December 2012

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools, FE colleges)
Directors of Education
SCIS

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

| Action by Recipient | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Response required |
| ✓ | Note and pass on |
| | Note — update/information only |

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications in Psychology

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member(s) of staff responsible for the delivery of National Qualifications in Psychology at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and/or Higher levels.

External Marking 2012

There was a decrease in candidate numbers at all levels of presentation in 2012, more noticeably at Higher level. However, there was also an increase in newly approved centres. Candidate performance increased at all levels and it is assumed that this demonstrates good exam preparation and familiarity with the syllabus as well as the demands of the external assessment. This was particularly noticeable at Higher level, Section C, where fewer candidates only answered one topic, and generally made good attempts at responding to the question being asked.

A full synopsis of performance is captured in the External Assessment Reports for Psychology now available on the Psychology page of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk):

- ◆ External Assessment report for Intermediate 1 Psychology
- ◆ External Assessment report for Intermediate 2 Psychology
- ◆ External Assessment report for Higher Psychology
- ◆ Internal Assessment (verification) report for Psychology

Centres are advised to access the External Assessment and Internal Assessment reports for Psychology for diet 2012. These reports contain essential feedback on performance and advice to centres on preparation of candidates.

Marking instruction

The 2012 question papers and final marking instructions are now available on the Psychology page of SQA's website. These can be useful documents for teachers and lecturers when constructing prelims and when preparing candidates for external assessment.

Appeals

Stage 1 and Stage 2 Appeals were completed during September and October. There was a slight decrease in the number of candidates presented for Appeal. Centres are reminded that although candidates are required only to be assessed on one topic to achieve a Unit pass for the units *Psychology: Understanding the Individual* and *Psychology: the Individual in the Social Context*, appeals evidence must show the same breadth of Course coverage as the question paper component. This would require evidence of two topics from the aforementioned units. Guidance to centres has been revised in the document *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements* for 2012.

Events

Centre Support Event

SQA held two centre support events for teachers/lecturers in January 2012 and feedback from delegates was very positive. It is hoped that the information delivered and discussed at these events enhanced understanding of the requirements of Course delivery at Higher and Intermediate 2 levels and the marking process for the Question Paper component of the External Assessment.

On-line PDW

SQA also launched an on-line Professional Development Workshop course, using the SQA Academy site, for the Research Investigation component of the Higher Psychology Course. This on-line course was also very well received and it has been re-launched to run from 10 December 2012 until 15 February 2013. This on-line course is intended to support teachers/lecturers in understanding the national standard of the Research Investigation, and supporting teachers/lecturers when judging candidate performance. If you wish to express an interest in signing up to this course, details can be found on the SQA website, (www.sqaacademy.org.uk)

ATPS

The annual conference of the ATPS will be held on 2 February 2013 in Dunblane Community Halls. The aim of this event is to provide opportunities for pre-university Psychology teachers and lecturers to meet and discuss issues of common interest in relation to teaching Psychology in Scotland and the Psychology curriculum. Contact www.atps.org.uk for further information.

Higher Research Investigation

Eight Research Investigation briefs are now listed for session 2012/2013. Candidates **must** base their investigation on one of these briefs. This list can be found on the NQ Higher Psychology page of SQA's website, along with the Revised Higher Research Investigation Guidelines and Marker Checklist. This checklist demonstrates how SQAs appointed Markers mark the reports.

Centres are reminded that all Higher Research Investigations must be submitted to SQA for external marking. Research Investigations will be uplifted from your centre on **Tuesday 23 April 2013**.

There was a significant increase in the number of ethical breaches within Research Investigation submissions. It is important to remind centres of the guidelines issued by the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Association for the Teaching of Psychology in Scotland (ATPS) regarding the use of under-age children as participants in research and the safety of candidates when carrying out research with the general public. The guidelines laid down by these bodies are summarised in the document *Research Investigation Guidelines (revised August 2010)* issued by SQA and available on the NQ Higher Psychology page of SQA's website and the *Research Investigation Ethics Guidance*. Candidates have not been disadvantaged in any of these incidences, however, in cases of serious breach, marks may be affected in clarifying the procedure of investigation.

Curriculum for Excellence

Courses in Psychology will be available at National 5 and Higher levels in the new Curriculum implementation session 2013/2014. Developments at National 5 are in their final stages and most documents are now published on the SQA website Curriculum for Excellence section.

CfE Subject Implementation Events

Our Subject Implementation events have been running since October 2012 and you can view video recordings of the main presentations from each of the recent events. These are available to view online at www.sqa.org.uk/events2012.

Appointee Opportunities

Opportunities may arise for Item Writers, Item Checkers, Question Paper Reviewers, and Question Paper Validators for Psychology courses at National 5 and/or Higher levels. Vacancies are posted on the Appointee Management section with details of each post on the SQA website, and within the CfE section. Please check the website for current vacancies.

Being an SQA Marker

We welcome applications from teachers/lecturers to mark Question Papers for Intermediate 2 and Higher Psychology as well as the Research Investigations at Higher. Psychology Question Papers will continue to be centrally marked. This entails Markers marking scripts over one or possibly two separate weekend periods

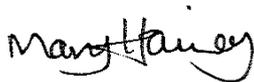
in the same venue. The Research Investigation is marked electronically in the Marker's own time, following on-line training and support throughout.

If you are interested in becoming a Marker in Psychology, information and application forms are available on our Appointee Management section of the SQA website. To become a Marker, our criteria states that you must be teaching Psychology courses for three years or in your third year of teaching.

In a number of subject areas we have had recent examples where the results in centres have improved dramatically after a member of staff joined the Marking Team. The experience of marking helps to increase the awareness of the demands of course assessment and is proven to be excellent professional and personal development.

I hope that you find the above information useful. If you would like to discuss any matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail **mary.hainey@sqa.org.uk**.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Hainey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

Mary Hainey
Qualifications Manager
NQ Social Sciences and Care