

# **National Qualifications Review**

## **Geography**

### **Investigation Report Executive summary**

The report is the outcome of an investigation into how to implement the agreed actions, which were detailed in the Geography Subject Review Report, published in 2002. The report recommended that SQA should investigate the following issues:

- progression from Intermediate 2 to Higher
- the structure of the Higher Course
- the structure of external assessment at Advanced Higher.

A consultation took place between January and March 2003. Presenting centres were consulted, and a representative Subject Advisory Group set up. Other key stakeholders were also consulted. The report details the findings of that investigation.

#### **Intermediate 2 / Higher progression**

The consultation feedback provided a very mixed response. There was a substantial majority in favour of focusing change on the Intermediate 2 Course. Responses indicated that the element of choice currently in the Intermediate 2 Course should remain and that the role of extended writing in the Course should be increased.

The main proposals are that:

- Intermediate 1, 2 and Higher Units should be retitled to more clearly show progression
- the choice of topics at Intermediate 2 should be revised to reflect that currently available at Higher
- one Unit at Intermediate 2 should allow scope for assessment of extended responses
- internal assessments for all Intermediate 2 Units should be redesigned as holistic assessments with cut-off scores of 50% to improve consistency with Higher
- the time for the external examination at Intermediate 2 should be increased from 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours
- any changes at Intermediate 2 should be reflected in revisions to Intermediate 1.

#### **Structure of Higher**

Feedback showed very strong approval of the interim arrangements for internal assessment. There was a demand for some degree of choice in the external exam. There were mixed views about the need to adjust content to improve the structure of the Course to improve progression from Intermediate 2.

The main proposals are that:

- the interim arrangements for internal assessment should be continued
- the balance between the Units in the external assessment should be retained but an element of choice should be introduced to the first paper
- some alterations should be made to the content of the Higher Course.

## Assessment rationale at Advanced Higher

Feedback from consultation provided very strong support for the current model used to assess the Units and Course. The opportunity to develop many transferable skills such as independent learning and critical thinking together with its focus on report writing was regarded as a major strength of the Advanced Higher Geography Course. There was some criticism of the relative weighting of the three components of the external assessment. Some duplication of assessment was identified. Internal assessment arrangements for *Geographical Study* and *Geographical Issues* are not popular and are not working as intended.

The main proposals are that:

- the external assessment for Advanced Higher Geography should consist of two components of external assessment – a written examination and a folio consisting of a geographical study and a critical evaluation
- the weighting of these external components should be 30:70 (examination:folio)
- the duplication of tasks for external assessment should be removed – candidates should submit one critical evaluation
- the marks for questions in the examination paper should be increased to allow for sufficient scope in the judgement of candidate performance
- the list of skills and techniques with which candidates are required to be familiar should be reviewed in light of current methods of geographical research.

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**The full version of the investigation report is available on the appropriate NQ subject page of the Scottish Qualifications Authority website - [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)**