

Moderation Feedback – Central - 2005

Qualification area

Access 3 Social Subjects

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
included in this report**

Access 3 Social Subjects

General comments on moderation activity

This first year of moderation of Access 3 Social Subjects has shown the vast majority of centres to be approaching the subject in the spirit that it was intended and to be applying the national guidelines appropriately. There were many encouraging examples of centres whose candidates had undertaken a considerable amount of work with what seemed to be enthusiasm and enjoyment. There was a wide range of forms of submission, including summative tests, wall posters, investigation booklets and videos. There was also plenty of evidence of groups and individual candidates who had been taught and supported well, but were disinclined to avail themselves of this.

Most of the issues arising at moderation concerned the presentation of evidence and are dealt within Section 2. There was, however, one area which was generally poorly done. Deciding, Outcome 2a/b was an area of clear difficulty for most candidates. Some centres did guide the candidates to quote 'pieces of information', whilst others referred to 'sources of information' which is the terminology used in the Arrangements document (marking guidelines for 2b, p24), but not in the NAB template (p20/21), which refers only to 'pieces' of information. The best answers referred to 'pieces' of information, rather than 'sources'. Whichever interpretation had been put on it, 'explaining why' (2a) proved beyond many candidates. Simply stating that the book 'gave lots of information about ...' is not accepted as evidence of satisfactory attainment. Candidates who pointed out that a video had allowed them to see the conditions 'with their own eyes' were felt to be making a valid point. It is felt that this is quite a demanding task for candidates at this level.

This Outcome has to be completed for a candidate to pass the Unit. It is an obvious area for the teacher/lecturer to target help, or at least double check before submission for moderation.

Specific issues identified

Possible ambiguities in the Arrangements document led to unexpected interpretations by centres. Allowances have been made for this in this year's moderating process. Centres should ensure that they are following the guidelines. Even centres which have been successfully moderated would be advised to check that they are applying the guidelines as intended by SQA.

1 Compatibility of other Courses with the assessment needs of Access 3

Problems have arisen in cases where centres may have diverted into Access 3 candidates from other existing Standard Grade or National Courses.

2 Difficulties in interpreting the NAB assessments

The flexibility built into Access 3 Social Subjects means that there is an almost infinite range of topics. For this reason, NABs cannot be provided in their normal form. This has given rise to problems of nomenclature. The assessment material is variously referred to in the documentation as 'the folio', sometimes the 'pro-forma' or even the 'checklist'. This in turn has given rise to problems of interpretation.

The NAB is provided in the form of a template, which provides a structure for presenting the necessary information. Some centres have interpreted the guidelines as meaning that this is the sole evidence that was required to be submitted. This was not what was intended, but it is easy to see how this interpretation was arrived at, and allowances have been made in the moderation on this occasion. It will not be accepted following clarification of the guidelines.

Some centres have expanded the template so that candidates provide the information through a series of short response answers. This is commended as good practice, consistent with the guidelines and the ability level of the candidates. It still falls short, however, of the original intention, which was that *a folio of pupils' work* would be submitted as evidence of attainment. (See for example, "Advice on recording and retention of evidence" in the Arrangements document).

3 The submission of identically-worded responses

Centres which interpreted the guidelines as just requiring the checklist to be completed in the template form as given, contributed to another problem for which allowances were made in the moderation. The checklist, in its raw template form, is not particularly pupil-friendly. The need for teacher guidance or assistance in dealing with the template in its raw form has led, in some cases, to the submission of sets of identically-worded responses, up to and including the Report. This negates the value of the assessment process and will not be accepted in future.

It is possible that a heavily structured response sheet, with candidates using the same source material, will produce results which are very similar in wording. Moderators are prepared to accept that this can be the result of legitimate teaching procedures at this level and will distinguish these from the identical responses referred to above.

4 Coverage of the Key Ideas

Reference has been made above to the acceptability, and even desirability, of fleshing out the NAB template provided (in order to match the context of the study with the key ideas). This should guarantee that it is clear to the Moderator which of the Key Ideas, (from the Arrangements document), have been studied. It is not always possible for the Moderator to infer which Key Ideas are being referred to, (in,

for example, a description of the Boxing Day tsunami), if they are not made *explicit* in the evidence submitted.

Pupils are not being expected to deal with the Key Ideas as abstractions. As the Arrangements document makes unambiguously clear, they should be taught “through concrete examples” and it is possible that the pupils may be unaware of the abstract concepts which *their* four key ideas have been exemplifying. Some centres clearly did try to address some of these complex concepts directly, with less than satisfactory results. Others viewed the process of working in a group as having exemplified ‘Participation’, where it might have been expected that the candidate would have dealt with the democratic process in some way.

5 Assessment

Some centres gave candidates a summative assessment and have measured pass/fail by a cut-off score. There is no objection to this in principle, but there are inherent dangers in dealing with the pass criteria on a holistic basis. The essential point to be alert to is that *each* of the four Key Ideas has been adequately addressed. A mark of 14/20 may be taken as a reasonable pass, but it may disguise a failure to reach success criteria in perhaps two areas.

6 Video evidence

If visual clues for the Moderator are not included in video presentations, there can be serious implications for candidates, even down to mis-identification. The name of the candidate, therefore, should always be displayed *at the start* of the Report. There is no reason why this should not be done by the simple expedient of the candidate holding up a card with his or her name clearly showing. An introduction by the teacher to identify clearly the purpose of the video and where it fits in with other evidence would also be useful.

7 Sources of information

One of the examples of unsatisfactory evidence given in the marking guidelines is that “the candidate was unable to identify four sources of information”. In some of the submissions moderated, candidates ticked or made reference to ‘Books’ and ‘Internet’. If this is the only indication of sources that is given, the Moderator has no evidence that more than two sources have been used. Moderators are aware that this may disguise the use of several books and several websites, but they can assess only what is placed before them.

Feedback to centres

1. Where Access 3 is being seen as a fallback for candidates who are failing to make the grade in other Courses, centres need to apply some pre-planning and ensure that the course being followed will allow for successful completion of the NABs, regardless of the degree of perceived overlap in the Course content.
2. Centres should submit both a checklist (the NAB template), along with a folio of the candidate's work as evidence of attainment.
3. The existing Arrangements give advice on marking. One example given of unsatisfactory evidence leading to a 'fail' is, "The Report contains no evidence of the individual candidate's work". Some may have preferred 'the individual work of the candidate', but the intention certainly was that the evidence should contain some work that was clearly the candidate's own.
4. The teacher/lecturer should make sure at the assessment stage or in the presentation of evidence for moderation, that the concrete examples of their Course are clearly identified with the Key Ideas listed in the Arrangements. Failure to do this will leave too much to be inferred by the Moderator and may mean that the evidence is found unsatisfactory. The points made above apply even more if two Outcomes are being combined in the one assessment, or as part of a group report.
5. Each of the key ideas should be addressed.
6. When video evidence is being used, if the report does not make explicit in the commentary which key idea is being referred to, again, a visual prompt should be inserted to guide the Moderator and reduce the need for inference. (Again, this need be no more technically demanding than showing a card indicating 'Key Idea 3' or whatever is appropriate).
7. Teachers/lecturers are asked to make sure that the candidates list each separate source by name viz, book titles, website addresses etc, ideally perhaps on the last page of the submission, under the heading 'Sources of Information'. If this information is not included, a 'Not Accepted' decision may have to be given.
8. In some instances, because of candidates' failure to finish the Unit, centres did not submit all the selected candidates' work for moderation. This can cause problems, the minimum sample number for moderation is twelve, unless there are less than twelve in the presentation group. In the first instance, the centre would be accorded a 'Not Accepted' decision. The procedure should be to submit whatever work is available for such candidates, marking them as 'Fail' on the pro-forma.