

National Qualifications 2006

Senior Moderator Report

Subject: Access 3 Social Subjects

Assessment Panel: Steering Group for Access 3 Social Subjects

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on moderation which has taken place within National Qualifications in this subject.

NATIONAL UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS MODERATED

Access 3 - Social Subjects

Deciding

Central Moderation

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

- (i) There was a greater awareness of the need to submit evidence of coursework along with NAB evidence
- (ii) The general standard of coursework was appropriate to Access 3 and there were many examples of excellent responses from candidates
- (iii) In most cases, centres had applied national standards appropriately and the results were accepted
- (iv) There was more clarity than last year in providing clear statements of the candidates' sources of information

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

Some of the areas of difficulty identified in last year's report surfaced again. Because of this, some of last year's observations are repeated.

- (i) Evidence to be submitted
There was still a lack of awareness in some centres of the need to submit a formal assessment (NAB) along with the coursework or, conversely, to submit coursework evidence along with the NAB.
- (ii) Use of the NAB template
Most centres chose to employ the NAB template in the form given, but some had used them as the basis for constructing a summative assessment. Both approaches are acceptable, as long as the latter contains all the information that would be elicited through the NAB template provided.
- (iii) Choice of Key Ideas
A significant number of the centres whose results could not be accepted had not observed the requirements of the Arrangements in choosing the Key Ideas for constructing a course of study. Again, centres are advised to check the SQA website for updates.
- (iv) Submission of identically-worded responses
The Arrangements make it clear that there must be "evidence of the individual candidate's work". Last year's report highlighted the "Deciding" NAB as a difficult one for pupils to navigate on their own and therefore an area requiring considerable teacher guidance. It also made it clear, however, that identically-worded responses were unacceptable. The advice offered

still holds good, viz. “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.”

(v) Provision of Adequate Information

In general terms, the more information centres provide about the course, the circumstances of the NAB, the materials provided for the pupils and the reasons for failing pupils, the easier it is for the verifier to accept the centre’s results. Many centres were meticulous in the detail they provided and this is welcomed and commended. Centres which provided inadequate information may have found that their results had to be delayed or that they ended up with requests for the additional information that the verifiers needed before the results could be confirmed.

(vi) Deciding : evidence for reaching the conclusion

The NAB asked candidates to indicate the information that had helped them to make their decision. This part of the assessment is definitely looking for pieces of evidence that led to a conclusion. Some candidates quoted the *processes* that they had been involved in, such as “writing letters”, “debating the issue”. Whilst this probably reflected good class teaching, it was not an appropriate response.

The following points are ones which did not surface as issues this year, but which are pertinent on a continuing basis.

(a) Summative tests

Some centres gave candidates a summative test and have measured pass/fail by a cut-off score. 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. The use of a pass mark may disguise a failure to reach success criteria in perhaps two areas.

(b) Video evidence

If visual clues for the verifier 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.

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 verifier 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.

(c) 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 verifier has no evidence that more than two sources have been used. Verifiers are aware that this may disguise the use of several books and several websites, but they can assess only what is placed before them. To obviate this problem, centres 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.

(d) Candidate withdrawal

In some instances, because of candidates' failure to finish the unit, presenting centres did not submit all of the all the selected candidates' work for moderation. This can cause problems, as 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' grade. The procedure should be to submit whatever work is available for such candidates, marking them as 'Fail' on the proforma.

Changes to Cluster and Unit Specifications

Partly as a result of the findings of the Verification diet of 2005, the Cluster and Unit Specifications for Social Subjects at Access 3 have been revised and simplified. Full details can be found on the subject page of the SQA website.

Candidates undertaking the Cluster over sessions 2005/6 to 2006/7 retain any unit passes they already possess; they do not need to sit a revised NAB if they have already achieved a pass in a unit. Existing passes in units can contribute towards an award in the revised Cluster.