

National Qualifications 2006

Senior Moderator Report

Subject: Geography

Assessment Panel: Geography

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

DF43 10	Geography: Human Environments (Intermediate1)
DF43 11	Geography: Human Environments (Intermediate2)
DF44 10	Geography: Environmental Interactions (Intermediate 1)
DF44 11	Geography: Environmental Interactions (Intermediate 2)
DF3C 12	Geography: Physical Environment (Higher)
DF48 13	Geographical Study (AH)
DF49 13	Geographical Issues (AH)

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

Candidate performance was very satisfactory and few of those sampled had failed the units. Moderators felt that the standard of candidates' responses and teachers' marking and advice had improved over the years.

The Moderators were able to report that in most cases centres were applying marking schemes well and were clearly indicating where marks were being awarded.

Some centres when marking include annotated comments which help the Moderator to understand more clearly the marking of candidates work.

Again some centres use (d) for description or (e) for explanation etc...which also aids the moderation process.

There was an increasing evidence of cross marking in centres and this was commended where identified.

An increasing number of centres are taking ownership of the NAB items by adding their own departmental covers which provides for all, candidates, parents, teachers and moderators very clear information about the candidate, source of the assessment item and marking. This clearly indicates a centre that has planned and integrated the NAB items into their teaching and learning programme.

The completion of the Moderation Sample Form causes difficulty for many centres. A significant number of centres include marks and other information rather than the symbols P (pass), F (fail) or W (withdrawn) as per instructions supplied by SQA. This is not necessary.

Out of a total of 43 centres moderated 4 centres were deemed 'not accepted'. The reasons are outlined below.

Intermediate 1 and 2 evidence, like last year, caused little concern. All centres used the new course arrangements and used the new NAB items and marking instructions removing the perennial problem for moderators of centres confusing half and full marks when assessing candidates work. Cross marking and annotation of scripts to allow candidates to improve are increasingly evident in centres across the country.

Three out of the four centres deemed 'Not Accepted' were at Higher level. While the majority of centres moderated at Higher are familiar with the requirements of the course arrangements, a number are still making basic mistakes. The use of full marks instead of half marks or vice versa still persists though the numbers making this basic error get lower and lower each year. These centres are not following the guidance for markers in the NAB packs.

Two centres deemed 'Not Accepted' used NAB items that had been replaced in 2004. These included tasks related to aspects of biosphere that are no longer part of the Higher course.

The other 'Not Accepted' centre offered their candidates the whole of NAB001 and allowed them to select the parts to answer.

In all three cases the misunderstandings were not down to candidate error but the centre's staff not being fully familiar with the requirements of the course and the use of NAB items. Subsequent to the central moderation event and after assessment review all 3 centres were deemed as accepted.

All other centres moderated at Higher used the appropriate NAB items and marking instructions. Cross marking and annotation of scripts are becoming more common allowing candidates to improve their performance.

At Advanced Higher the quality of the work was generally very good with a number of centres/candidates presenting some outstanding work. It is evident that centres are providing good support mechanisms for candidates and have understood the new arrangements. Cross marking and annotation of scripts to allow candidates to improve are increasingly evident in centres across the country.

Some centres had clearly encouraged candidates to write holistic essays for the Geography Study and Issues NABs. This is good practice for candidates but it can sometimes make it more difficult to identify where performance criteria are being achieved. This can make marking more complex. For the Unit assessment it is acceptable to structure responses into clear sub sections.

Two centres moderated ignored the 50 word limit for the outline.

One centre was deemed 'Not Accepted' at the central moderation event for the Geographical Study. Candidates were being deemed to have passed even though they had clearly failed elements of the assessment. Further candidates were using gathering techniques that were below the standard expected at Advanced Higher. Subsequent to the central moderation event and after assessment review the centre was accepted.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

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 moderating team. Moderators commented on the number of centres in which scripts were annotated by the markers and this provided good feedback for candidates.

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

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

Centres should ensure that all NAB items used across National Units are the most up to date items. Furthermore 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.

Centres might consider destroying all old NAB items at every level to prevent any future confusion.

Centres may like to follow the growing number in which they include a departmental front cover which includes information on internal moderation.

Intermediate 1 and 2:

Internal assessment at this level seems to be well understood and the move to the new Course process seems to have gone well.

Higher:

At Higher level only NABs published since May 2004 should now be used. While there is a choice of topics within NABs 1, 2 and 3 for the Physical and the Human Environments these NABs should not be mixed together. This repeats advice previously issued by SQA.

Advanced Higher:

In general the quality of candidate performance exemplifies the high standard of support from teachers/lecturers given to candidates in centres.

The following advice was included in last years report. It is repeated to support centres presenting candidates at Advanced Higher for the first time.

Candidates should be exposed to completed examples of critical evaluations and Geographical Studies as a guide for their own personal development.

To be successful in the Units candidates have to be given a range of support mechanisms to ensure they develop the necessary skills required to complete the critical evaluation. The support will range from class/group/individual teaching or discussion, identification of a suitable format/style, verbal and non verbal comments on how to improve and the exemplification of the required standard.

While it is not the intention to recommend one style over another it is important that candidates appreciate that the critical evaluation and Geographical Study includes key aspects as outlined in the instrument of assessment.

The moderators are looking for a number of items

1. The candidate has completed:
 - a. An Outline for an Interim Report based on one aspect of a Geographical Study plus an Interim Report on the chosen aspect of a Geographical Study.
 - and/or
 - b. That the centre has used an approved NAB item as supplied by SQA or similar item approved prior to moderation for the Geographical Issue.
2. A completed internal assessment marking grid for the candidate.
3. Use of the 'exemplification of standards' to generate comments or similar descriptions of the candidate's performance in line with their responses.
4. Candidates are assessed element by element or PC by PC and not in a holistic fashion.
5. There is a clear and definite approach to marking suggesting a clear policy being followed by the centre and illustrated by the following:
 - a. Ticks on candidates work are useful and help to identify where the marker is giving credit.
 - b. Additional written comments on the candidates work in support of the assessment given on the internal assessment marking grid is highly valued both for the candidate in how to improve their performance and for moderators to ensure a candidate/centre meets the requirements of the unit.
 - c. Detailed and accurate comments avoiding the use of subjective terms which might lead to confusion e.g. Does the word 'Basic' refer to a borderline candidate (2/3) or someone who has no understanding at all (1).
 - d. Clear and unambiguous comments allow the moderation team to quickly identify where a centre is being too lenient or too harsh on the candidate.

- e. Cross marking of candidates work is valuable evidence of internal moderation 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.
- f. The more detailed the comments written by the marker both on the candidate work and the internal assessment marking grid, the more likely it is that the marker's judgment will be understood and accepted by the moderator.