

23 November 2006

To: SQA Co-coordinator (Secondary Schools
and Colleges of Further Education)
Directors of Education
SCIS
Customer Account Managers

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
√	Note and pass on
	None – update/information only

Contact Name – Larry Cheyne at Glasgow
Direct Line – 0845 213 5500
E-mail – larry.cheyne@sqa.org.uk

Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update – Modern Studies

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for Modern Studies.

SQA Website

The subject page is the main source of information on National Qualifications in Modern Studies. It contains the current and past reports of Principal Assessors and the Senior Verifier, Course Specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and Specimen Papers, previous National Qualifications Updates and marking instructions for all levels for the 2006 and recent diets. The address of the website is www.sqa.org.uk. On the homepage browser click “Modern Studies” on the drop-down menu and then click “GO”.

Modern Studies at Access 3

SQA has introduced a Cluster award at Access 3 in Modern Studies. Further information is on the subject page of the website. One NAB is available for each of the Study Themes. Centres are encouraged to submit re-assessment NABs they have devised to Carol McEvoy of our Verification Unit for prior verification (0845 213 5349 or carol.mcevoy@sqa.org.uk).

Support materials have been commissioned by LTScotland, giving priority to the higher uptake areas. All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed to Abi Robertson (0141 282 5128 or a.robertson@LTScotland.org.uk).

Access 3 Social Subjects

The Arrangements have been updated and simplified. Full details are on the Social Subjects page of the website. New NABs and worked exemplars can be accessed through SQA co-ordinators.

Review of National Qualifications

The first examinations under the new Arrangements at Higher and Intermediate will take place in summer 2007. Existing Units for all levels will remain current until 31 July 2007. In terms of Unit passes this means:

- candidates who have completed any Units of the existing Courses can contribute these to awards in the new Courses
- centres should give candidates who have passed the existing external examination the opportunity to pass any existing outstanding Unit(s) in session 2006/07

To assist centres in assessing candidates, annotated exemplars for all Study Themes in Paper 1 at Higher are available on the subject page of the website. Examples relating to the 2006 DMEs are also on the subject page. Centres are invited to submit to SQA samples of candidate responses to the Specimen Question Paper, with a view to their publication on the SQA website alongside examiner comment.

Support Materials

All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed to LTScotland as follows:

Access 3: a.robertson@LTScotland.org.uk

Intermediate and Higher: w.boyd@LTScotland.org.uk

Revision of Advanced Higher

The Arrangements for Advanced Higher are currently being revised and will be introduced in 2008 with the first examination in 2009. Changes are mainly concerned with the updating of content, particularly in the European Union Study Theme, and the dropping of the Germany option from Comparative Politics. There will be a reduction in the volume of internal assessment, but the format of the question paper will remain unchanged. The revised Arrangements will be published in summer 2007 along with a Specimen Question Paper. NABs will follow early in the 2007-8 session.

Comments on the need for learning and teaching materials for any area(s) are welcome. Please contact Veronica Curran (0845 213 5498; veronica.curran@sqa.org.uk) in the first instance.

Update on the 2006 diet

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are warmly thanked for their efforts in delivering a successful diet. The full reports of the Principal Assessors are on our website. These are an invaluable source of advice and good practice. Centre staff are urged most strongly to avail themselves of the information contained there.

Centres are reminded that all areas of the syllabus may be sampled. Likewise there are no areas that will be examined every year. Further points to bear in mind for each level are:

Standard Grade

Centres are reminded that both parts of Syllabus Area 4, 'Alliances and Security' and 'The Politics of Aid', will be integrated into all three papers from 2007. This will have the effect of evening out the relative degrees of difficulty in SA 4 across the three papers.

To ensure the Foundation paper is accessible, the setting team will continue to use sentence completion items, although the number of alternatives may be increased, a cartoon or pictorial evidence as a prompt to more open-ended writing knowledge and understanding questions. Candidates should be aware of these styles of questions.

In Enquiry Skills, it is strongly recommended that centres re-emphasise to candidates that an overall conclusion on the extent to which there has been selective use of facts is essential if full marks are to be achieved.

When setting grade boundaries for Standard Grade prelims, centres should note that these depend on the level of challenge of the particular instrument of assessment. The a priori scores of 70% and 50% at the upper and lower grades at each level may or may not be appropriate; in many instances it may be wise to err on the side of caution and revise these scores upwards.

Extremely few, if any, centres now study the Russian option in Syllabus Area 3: Ideologies. In addition, events have undermined its relevance. Consequently, centres are being consulted on its removal from the 2009 examination and thereafter.

Intermediate 1 and 2

Candidates should be made familiar with the format of the question papers. It is essential that candidates attempt all parts of each question they choose.

At Intermediate 1, candidates should be aware of the danger of rubric violations and they should also be aware of which Study Themes to answer. At Intermediate 2, centres should continue to stress the importance of time management. Candidates should be aware that there may be four questions in a Study Theme rather than only three. Centres should note this when producing preliminary examinations.

Centres should also ensure that the level of entry is appropriate for each candidate. The relatively high proportions of 'No Awards' at Intermediate 1 has been of concern, but the introduction of awards at Access 3 may ameliorate this.

Higher

Centres are commended on the good performance of candidates overall. Some concerns remain where centres use out of date exemplification, particularly in the themes relating to South Africa and the United States of America. Paper 1 continues to present candidates with challenges which some meet with prepared, but not always appropriate, answers. Candidates should answer the question set.

In Paper 2, candidate responses to "To what extent..." questions that lack balance can still be awarded up to half the available marks.

Advanced Higher

Last year's improvement in candidate performance was maintained. Few candidates lost marks for an over-long dissertation. Candidates sign up actively for the word count stated and for acceptance of any penalty incurred for words over the limit of 5000. Candidates should also reference quotes and statistics clearly and accurately. A list of dissertation titles is on the subject page on the website.

Fresh guidance to candidates on plagiarism and collusion in all subjects is in preparation. Dissertations should be the candidate's own work. Where sources are not acknowledged, or where there are strong similarities in the work of a number of candidates, centres may be contacted and, in extreme cases, awards may be cancelled.

Verification

The report of the Senior Verifier gives clear and helpful advice on the verification process. With the introduction of revised Courses at Intermediate and Higher, centres should use the latest version of each NAB. It is also helpful if centres/candidates date the evidence when it is produced. Centres should indicate clearly which NAB is being used.

SQA practice has evolved in respect of reassessment. For revised and new qualifications, centres should use complete fresh NABs, rather than allowing candidates to amend a previous effort. Hence, fresh assessments should be used for all Courses and Clusters in Modern Studies.

The National Assessment Bank

New NABs are issued in electronic form only and can be downloaded only by SQA co-ordinators. Further details are available from:

Customer Contact Centre
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow, G2 8DQ

Tel: 0845 279 1000 or Fax: 0845 213 5000

E-mail: customer@sqa.org.uk

Past papers

Past papers can be obtained via the Customer Contact Centre on the payment of a small fee.

Markers

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2006 diet. Invitations to mark for the 2007 diet recently been issued. While reserves exist at all levels, it is impossible to predict acceptance rates by markers. Those wishing to become markers should complete an application form, which is available on-line or from Trudy Thomson in our Appointments section on 0131 561 6712 or trudy.thomson@sqa.org.uk.

Estimates, Appeals and Prelims

All queries on appeals results should be addressed to the Appeals Helpline at appeals@sqa.org.uk.

We have recently updated the *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements* document and this is now available on our website. A hard-copy is being issued to every centre. In particular, the document clarifies subject specific requirement as well as guidance on the general principles for generating Estimates and submitting Appeals.

When generating Estimates and compiling evidence for Absentee consideration and Appeals, you should also refer to:

- Course Arrangements Documents, which include Course Grade Descriptions
- Course Assessment Specifications
- SQA Question Papers, including Specimen Question Papers
- SQA Marking Instructions
- Principal Assessor Reports, which include information on Grade Boundaries
- Exemplification materials
- any other relevant information (eg Course Reports, subject update letters).

These materials, and more, are also available on the subject pages of our website www.sqa.org.uk.

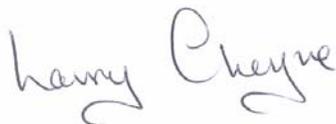
For the new Higher Course, the Specimen Question Paper, marking instructions and specimen answers are on the SQA website, and hence in the public domain. As the Specimen Question Paper should not be used to generate evidence for estimates and appeals, NABs may be used for most parts of a prelim.

The following advice is offered on constructing essay questions on Social Issues in Paper 1:

1. Use as templates the wordings in the Specimen Paper
2. Use the stems as suggested in the launch materials and in the subsequent update letter
3. Work from the general descriptors on the left hand side of the Unit Specification Appendix
4. Use fresh areas of content from the descriptors to insert into existing questions
5. Ensure that, as far as possible, each area being questioned straddles the Study Theme
6. Ensure the questions allow for the use of knowledge and a genuine analysis
7. Make the questions broad enough to allow candidate responses to feature a range of exemplified content drawn from the Study Theme.
8. Run the drafts past colleagues, where possible, for comment
9. Ensure a balance of coverage when the two questions are put together in a prelim
10. Devise marking instructions using the model in the Specimen Paper

If you wish further clarification of any points in this letter, please contact either Veronica Curran (0845 213 5498; veronica.curran@sqa.org.uk) or myself at the above address.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Cheyne". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Larry Cheyne
Qualifications Manager