Qualification Verification Summary Report

NQ Verification 2018–19

01 ► **Section 1: Verification group information**

Verification group name:	Modern Studies
Verification event/visiting information:	Events: Round 1 and Round 2
Date published:	June 2019

National Units verified:

H23C 73	National 3	Democracy in Scotland and the UK
H23F 73	National 3	Social Issues in the UK
H23G 73	National 3	International Issues
H23C 74	National 4	Democracy in Scotland and the UK
H23F 74	National 4	Social Issues in the UK
H23G 74	National 4	International Issues
H23R 74	National 4	Modern Studies Assignment — added value unit
H23C 75	SCQF level 5	Democracy in Scotland and the UK
H23F 75	SCQF level 5	Social Issues in the UK
H23G 75	SCQF level 5	International Issues
H23C 76	SCQF level 6	Democracy in Scotland and the UK
H23F 76	SCQF level 6	Social Issues in the UK
H23G 76	SCQF level 6	International Issues
H7X5 77	Advanced Higher	Researching Contemporary Issues

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The most common assessment approach used by centres was SQA-generated unit assessment support packs. Some centres did submit adapted or centre-generated assessments which corresponded to the appropriate assessment standards for the specific level being assessed.

For the National 4 Modern Studies Assignment — added value unit, almost all centres used the SQA-devised unit assessment support pack which allowed candidates to access all assessment standards. There was evidence of individual personalisation and choice in terms of the topics chosen by candidates. Some centres provided an additional guide for the candidate which was directly linked to each assessment standard. This can be effective provided it doesn't provide too much scaffold for the candidate and act as a response template with the candidate merely filling in the blanks. Most of the evidence submitted was in the form of written responses to assessment questions, however, some centres allowed candidates to create posters, PowerPoint presentations and information leaflets which were used to allow candidates to access and achieve the specific assessment standards and the overall outcome. All of these were considered to be acceptable ways of allowing the candidates to achieve each of the assessment standards.

Some centres produced very effective support booklets, particularly at National 3 and National 4 level, which clearly outline the tasks undertaken and the level of candidate performance needed to achieve the specific assessment standards.

Some centres still continue to over-inflate the assessment standards for some of the outcomes. The impact of this is that centres apply their own standards and incorrectly judge the candidate to have not achieved an outcome/assessment standard when they may have actually achieved the national standard. Some centres are assessing at a standard comparable to National 5 and not National 4, particularly for the knowledge based questions which require straightforward and not detailed descriptions or explanations. Centres are reminded that they should follow the specific assessment standards and apply the relevant judging the evidence table when assessing candidate performance, and that it is these standards that the candidate should be judged against in terms of outcomes.

Some centres continue to use prelim evidence in their submissions. Centres should ensure that submissions of candidate evidence align directly with the specific assessment standard and overall outcome being judged.

If centres are amending SQA unit assessment support pack they should state which specific unit assessment support pack is being amended.

Overall, the vast majority of evidence submitted in terms of approaches to assessment were valid and in line with the national standards. Centres are reminded that if they are devising their own approaches to assessment, then they can use the SQA's prior verification service to validate their centre submissions.

Assessment judgements

Centres are continuing to make appropriate and valid assessment judgements of candidates' evidence for each of the specific assessment standards and outcomes. These judgements are also being correctly verified as part of the centre's internal verification procedures.

There was evidence from centres that the SQA documentation (assessment and judging the evidence table) was being applied effectively. In some cases centres were successfully adapting the judging the evidence table to meet the specific demands of the centre's assessment tasks. This personalisation should ensure consistent assessment judgements are being made candidates in centres.

Centres used the judging the evidence table very effectively in articulating the assessment standard to markers and verifiers. The judging the evidence table should be used by centres to ensure the consistency of assessment judgements. Centres should try not to over-inflate the national standard, particularly when assessing candidate responses at National 4. They should follow the specific assessment standards for the level that the candidate is attempting.

For the National 4 added value unit there continues to be some issues around assessment standard 1.2, particularly with reference to the 'internet' being cited and accepted by centres as a source. Candidates need to be more specific and detailed in their response. They should cite the website journal source accessed via the internet and not simply state the "internet" as a source. However, the majority of candidates and centres were specific enough to be awarded this assessment standard. Centres should also note that this assessment standard requires evidence from two sources.

There was evidence of centres continuing to use annotation effectively on scripts at the section of candidate submission where they have achieved the relevant assessment standard. This is considered to be good practice as it can facilitate consistent judgements between colleagues and across candidates. There was also evidence of cross-marking and random sampling of candidate evidence tied to robust and consistent internal verification policies and procedures. These measures ensure assessment judgement consistency across all candidates, as well as between the marker and the centre's assessment judgement verifier. Where candidates submissions were in the form of a poster or booklet, centres were effectively annotating on the submission at the specific point where it was judged that the candidate had achieved the outcome. This judgement was then countersigned by the centre verifier.

There was strong evidence of continuing professional dialogue taking place within centres in relation to the judging of assessment standards in line with a robust internal verification process and procedure. Some centres produced and made good use of workbooks/logbooks in effectively supporting candidates to achieve the assessment standards. These approaches highlighted the high level of dialogue and discussion occurring between colleagues and candidates, particularly where remediation was necessary to allow specific candidates to achieve assessment standards and overall outcomes.

There was strong evidence of the Candidate Assessment Record being used very effectively when recording candidate progress and achievements. There was evidence of very detailed candidate feedback being given within some centres. The Candidate Assessment Record was used very well when recording verbal follow-ups of candidates who just fell short of the assessment standard. However, some centres should consider using the Candidate Assessment Record more thoroughly and effectively, particularly where the candidate may have narrowly failed to achieve the specific assessment standard(s).

Centres appear to be more familiar and confident in using verbal remediation when re-assessing candidates. Centres should note that when this is the case, they should still follow their own internal verification processes and ensure that the candidate's verbal response is noted, assessed and the assessment judgement is agreed by the centre's verifier. If a positive outcome is agreed during this two-stage process, this should be recorded and the relevant paperwork amended.

Centres are encouraged to annotate candidate evidence at the specific point in the candidate submission where it was deemed that they have achieved each specific assessment standard. This will assist the external verification process. Centres should also be reminded to submit original candidate evidence and not photocopies. It is best practice to ensure cross-marking has taken place using different coloured pens in order to be clear to the external verification team.

With Advanced Higher submissions, candidates mixed up validity with reliability. Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of the difference.

Centres are reminded that the threshold approach for re-assessing candidates, which was introduced for session 2016/17, remains valid and should be applied where relevant.

03 ▶ Section 3: General comments

Overall, the standard and quality of centre submissions was high. There appeared to be greater understanding of the requirements of the verification processes, including strong internal verification processes and range of evidence to be submitted. There was good evidence of national standards being applied consistently across candidates and centres with pupils being presented at the appropriate level. There was evidence of a partner-based approach between colleagues and centres in sharing and maintaining assessment standards.

There was evidence of thorough and effective internal assessment and verification procedures. These procedures were robust with evidence of cross-marking and annotation of candidate scripts by both the marker and the internal verifier. Centres appear to be having detailed discussions regarding candidate performance and the consistent application of assessment standards. Centres are effectively recording candidate performance and progress through detailed and specific candidate assessment records.

Generally, there is evidence of robust and effective verification procedures being undertaken across most centres, with exemplary professional dialogue and discussions being minuted and recorded via departmental, faculty and verification/moderation meetings. In single teacher departments, there was also evidence of collegiate activity taking place with colleagues in other centres acting as internal verifiers or first stage markers.

There was evidence of consistent best practice in most centres, particularly around script annotation, internal verification, professional dialogue and verbal remediation for candidates. Centres also made very good use of naturally occurring candidate evidence to show where individual assessment standards had been met. This portfolio approach also allows for candidates to take ownership of their own assessment journey and make them more aware of what they have to do to achieve each assessment standard and overall outcome.