

17 November 2004

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

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the  
delivery of National Qualifications in Contemporary  
Social Studies**

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None — update/information only

Contact Name: Veronica Curran at Glasgow  
Direct Line: 0141-242 2332  
E-mail: [veronica.curran@sqa.org.uk](mailto:veronica.curran@sqa.org.uk)

Dear Colleague

### **National Qualifications Update — Contemporary Social Studies**

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

#### **Examination Diet 2004**

The continuing efforts of the Principal Assessor, Examining Team and Markers in delivering a successful diet are much appreciated. The full report of the Principal Assessor is now available from our website on [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk). Teachers are encouraged to read this report as it provides a wealth of information and advice to aid the successful delivery of CSS.

Entries are continuing to decrease, with a 9% drop in candidate entries for this year's examination. However, encouragingly, there was some uptake by new Centres.

The Examining Team believe this year's Foundation paper was much more accessible to candidates than in previous years; this was shown by the improvement in the number of candidates completing the paper. Evaluating questions were completed to a much higher standard than those in Knowledge and Understanding.

The Examining Team can not go much further in making the papers accessible, but the high difficulty level of the Knowledge and Understanding element remains. CSS is one of very few subjects where the internal grade submitted by the Centre is combined with the candidate's performance in the examination. Hence low Centre estimates can have a depressing effect on final awards.

When creating prelims Centres are encouraged to use the most up-to-date past papers as a model, as the language and layout will be more similar to that used in the external examination. Centres should note, however, that the last question in this year's General paper did not work as expected.

### **Investigating Element**

In CSS, Investigating has a high negative National Rating, indicating a relatively high degree of difficulty. When submitting estimates for the Investigating element, Centres may sometimes under estimate their candidates' achievement, which in turn has an impact on their overall award. This may be because their candidates experience some difficulties with the Investigation and teachers may be unsure as to how much guidance and support they can offer without adversely affecting awards. The enclosed document, *Advice on Investigating in CSS at Standard Grade* (which will also be posted on SQA's website), provides useful advice on delivering the Investigating element. It is hoped by following this advice Centres may be able to take a more positive view in their estimates of candidates in this element.

Centres are reminded that a specimen logbook is available to download from the website. The logbook guides candidates through the process of investigating in a series of straightforward steps. It deals in turn with planning, and with locating and presenting evidence, and also contains an Investigating diary sheet.

I hope you find the information contained in this update helpful. If you have any issues arising with the delivery of CSS, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



Veronica Curran  
Qualifications Officer

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