

18 September 2008

To: SQA Co-ordinator
Local Education Authorities
Directors of Education
Customer Accounts Managers
All centres

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the delivery of
National Qualifications in Computing and Information Systems**

Action by Recipient
Response required
✓ Note and pass on
Note — update/information only

Contact: Derek Middleton at Glasgow
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Dear Colleague

Computing and Information Systems — Update

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for Computing and Information Systems. This letter is intended to provide centres with information on developments in National Qualifications in Computing and Information Systems.

Prelims, estimates and appeals

Updated guidance on Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals (EAAAs) for the 2009 diet has been published. This guidance can be found on SQA's website using the following link:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/33052.html>

External and internal assessment reports

These reports will be available from SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk) from 31 October. Both reports contain very useful information and I would recommend that you download them and read them thoroughly.

Understanding Standards website

The Understanding Standards website (www.understandingstandards.org) now contains information and activities related to Higher Computing and Information Systems.

Professional Development Workshop — Information Systems

A Professional Development Workshop in Higher Information Systems is being organised for 1 November 2008 in Glasgow. More details can be obtained from SQA's website:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/7282.html>

Intermediate 1 and 2 eNABs

Since 2005, SQA has provided centres with electronic versions of National Assessment Bank items (eNABs) for all Units of the Intermediate 1 Computing Studies and Intermediate 2 Computing Courses. The eNABs were generated as the result of an earlier research project which demonstrated a significant interest in using e-assessments for SQA qualifications. Over the years several thousand learners have used eNABs in different subjects and at various levels for practice and formative assessment, and over a thousand of these learners have taken their summative assessments in this way.

Currently SQA is looking to expand the number of centres using the Computing eNABs. If you would like your centre to be involved in this innovative project which gives you an additional resource to use in your teaching, and lets your students have the opportunity of sitting their NABs electronically, contact Campbell White in the eAssessment and Learning Team at SQA, by e-mail at campbell.white@sqa.org.uk, or by telephone on 0131-271 6763.

Standard Grade Computing Studies

Coursework Tasks and Projects

The Tasks and Projects are unchanged from 2008 and are currently available from the secure area of SQA's website.

Intermediate 1 Computing Studies and Intermediate 2 / Higher Computing

Coursework Tasks

Tasks for candidates who will be sitting their examination in 2009 will be available from 31 October 2008. These are the only Tasks that can be used for the 2009 examination.

It should be noted that the Coursework Task forms part of the Course Assessment along with the question paper. Candidates must, therefore attempt the correct level of Task in relation to the question paper which they will later sit. The mark for a Higher Coursework Task cannot be combined with the mark for an Intermediate 2 question paper to get a Course award. Candidates will also perform better if they are set a Task which is suitable to their abilities.

Advanced Higher Computing

Revised Coursework Project marking guidance

Following feedback from Verifiers and subject practitioners, the marking guidance for the Advanced Higher Project has been revised. A copy of the new marking grid is provided in Appendix 1. Further guidance on suitable Project titles was provided in a previous update letter. A copy of this guidance is provided in Appendix 2. A revised Project pack containing guidance on suitable Project titles, the updated marking grid and detailed guidance on marking is now available from the secure area of SQA's website. An updated exemplar based on the revised marking guidance is also available from this site.

Intermediate 2 and Higher Information Systems

Coursework Tasks

As with the Computing/Computing Studies Courses, new Coursework Tasks will be issued every year. Tasks for candidates who will be sitting their examination in 2009 will be available from 31 October 2008. These are the only tasks that can be used for the 2009 examination.

The tasks will be distributed with archived database and other files which should also be downloaded from the secure area of SQA's website.

The Higher task includes special instructions on the order in which data files and other materials should be issued to candidates. Please read carefully. It is important that certain materials are only issued after candidates have completed and submitted certain parts of the task.

Advanced Higher Information Systems

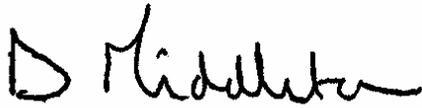
The Coursework Project Pack is currently available from the secure area of SQA's website.

The marking grid was updated for session 2007/08 to incorporate changes to mark allocations following feedback from verification. Centres should ensure that they have the updated version. The pack also includes detailed marking instructions to give further guidance to teachers.

An exemplar based on the revised marking guidance is now available from the secure area of SQA's website.

I hope that you have found the information in this letter helpful. If you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D Middleton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

Derek Middleton
Qualifications Manager
Computing and Technical Education

Appendix 1

Revised Marking Grid for Advanced Higher Computing

Name		Date	
Project title			
Criteria		Marks	Comment
Specification and Plan (15)	Project proposal	1	
	Specification — requirements	2	
	Specification — scope, boundaries	2	
	Project Plan — list of sub tasks, time schedule	4	
	Project Plan — resources required	2	
	Issues of feasibility	4	
Implemented Product (28)	Appropriate level of complexity	4	
	Use of advanced SD techniques	8	
	Solution complete	2	
	Appropriate user interface	6	
	Test plan and evidence of testing	6	
	Bugs and errors corrected	2	
Process Skills (11)	Management of project	6	
	Researching information	2	
	Use of computing technology	2	
	Clarity of report	1	
User Documentation	Description of features	2	

(6)	Description of user interface	2		
	Help and troubleshooting	2		
Technical Documentation (4)	Software requirements	2		
	Hardware requirements	2		
Evaluation Report (16)	Software — fitness for purpose	2		
	Software — user interface	2		
	Software — robustness	2		
	Software — reliability	2		
	Software — portability	2		
	Software — efficiency	2		
	Software — maintainability	2		
	Evaluate project plan	2		
Overall total		80		

Appendix 2

Additional Coursework Project Topics for Advanced Higher Computing

The Course Assessment Pack and the Coursework Project Pack already list suitable topics for projects. Further guidance on suitable topics is given below.

Under the new Advanced Higher Computing Arrangements, a suitable Coursework Project

- ◆ must build on some KU from the SD core unit
- ◆ must use a complex algorithm
- ◆ must be achievable in 40 hours

The following supplementary list of project topics exemplifies some tasks which meet the required criteria:

1. A lottery program — selects seven random numbers, sorts them into order, and displays them graphically
2. A multiple choice test, which records each user's score and saves them to a file
3. Any simple game, which generates a player's score, allows this to be saved to a file, and then displays a sorted high score table
4. A 'who wants to be a millionaire' game — uses Qs and As stored in data files, and a 2D array to store the amounts won after each question
5. A simple exemplification of ELIZA, using data files to store vocabulary
6. The candidate scores problem (old Higher HSDU material, task 11)

All of these tasks use file handling or sorting (AH SD concepts) and a non-trivial top level algorithm, and should be achievable within 40 hours by a competent candidate.