

6 December 2006

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools,  
special schools and further education colleges)  
Scottish Executive  
HMIE  
Directors of Education  
Biology Assessment Panel members  
Higher Education Institutions — Department of Education  
Customer Account Managers

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the delivery of  
National Qualifications in Geology**

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

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Dear Colleague

**National Qualifications update — Geology**

This letter is intended to provide centres with an update on National Qualifications and should be passed to the member of staff responsible for Geology.

**1. Principal Assessor reports for 2006**

The Principal Assessor (PA) reports for all NQ Courses in Geology are available on SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

The Principal Assessor reports include details of statistical information on entries; grade boundaries at C, B and A; and comments on candidate performance — including areas where candidates performed well in the external assessment, areas where candidates had difficulty with the external assessment and areas of common misunderstanding.

**2. Marking instructions**

The marking instructions for the Geology (Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher) 2006 examinations are available on SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

**3. Style of examination question papers**

Examination question papers at all levels, Intermediate 1 and 2 and Higher, are now written without the use of formal reference to figures, tables, graphs etc, and non subject-specific language has been simplified. This change was introduced to improve accessibility to the papers for candidates and has been well received.

Specimen question papers reflecting the new style are available on the NQ Geology subject-specific page of SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

#### 4. Simulated fieldwork study

A simulated fieldwork study pack, designed to meet the needs of Geology Intermediate 2 candidates who are unable to carry out fieldwork in the routine manner, is available on the LTS website ([www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk)).

The pack contains materials to meet the requirements of the fieldwork component for Geology Intermediate 2, but can be adapted for use at other levels. These materials can also be adapted for use to suit individual centre and candidate circumstances.

Additional guidance notes on the assessment process are provided for the teacher in section 1, and there is a student guide in section 2. The Appendix to the pack gives further guidance on the assessment of fieldwork at Intermediate 2 and Higher levels.

#### 5. Exemplar fieldwork reports

Exemplification materials have been produced to illustrate the standards required for the Intermediate 2 and Higher Geology fieldwork reports. The exemplification material also highlights areas of good practice. These materials are available on the secure area of SQA's website, which each centre's Co-ordinator will have access to.

Fieldwork reports contribute to the Course assessment at Intermediate 2 and Higher Geology levels. Information on the requirements for the fieldwork reports is contained in the Units:

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| D250 12 | <i>Earth Physics, Structural Geology and Plate Tectonics</i> (Higher) |
| D241 11 | <i>Earth Physics and Earth Movements</i> (Intermediate 2)             |

#### 6. Appeals

I should like to take this opportunity to remind you of publications which centres will find helpful to refer to when preparing and collating evidence for appeals purposes.

I would direct you to the NQ Managing Environmental Resources subject-specific page of SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) and the publication *Estimates, Absentees and External Assessment Appeals* (BA0992, October 2006). These documents replace *Estimates, Absentees and External Assessment Appeals: guidance on evidence requirements* (April 2004). They provide guidance for subject specialists in centres which are delivering National Courses. A hard copy of the documents will be sent to all centres in due course.

I hope the contents of this letter are helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further clarification.

Yours faithfully

*Noël Donoghue*

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