

24 November 2009

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools
and colleges of further education)
Directors of Education
SCIS
Customer Account Managers

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

Contact: Larry Cheyne at Glasgow
Direct line: 0845 213 5500
E-mail: larry.cheyne@sqa.org.uk

Dear Colleague

National Qualifications update — History

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

SQA's website

The subject page is the main source of information on National Qualifications in History. It contains the current and past External and Internal Assessment reports, Course Specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and specimen papers, previous National Qualifications updates and marking instructions for the 2009 and recent diets. The address of the website is **www.sqa.org.uk**. From the homepage, select 'Services for Centres', then 'History' from the NQ subject drop-down menu, then select 'GO'.

Extended Essay/Response

Plans for the Extended Response and Extended Essay can only be downloaded from SQA's website. Flyleafs and notes for the submission of candidates' Extended Response, Extended Essay and Dissertation are now available only via SQA Co-ordinators.

Centres should note that the 2009/10 version of the Notes of Guidance on Arrangements for the Writing of the Extended Essay and Response make explicit what help and support to candidates is permissible and what is not. Teachers/lecturers should read these notes carefully and make their candidates aware of these parameters. Teachers/lecturers should attest on the rear of the Flyleaf that they have done so.

Update on the 2009 diet

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are warmly thanked for their efforts in delivering a successful diet. The External Assessment reports are on our website and are invaluable sources of advice and good practice. Further points to bear in mind for each level are:

Advanced Higher

A revised list of Dissertation titles (August 2009) is now available on our website. It is strongly recommended that candidates work from this list. Where centres wish confirmation of the validity of titles not on this list, such proposals must be submitted via the Dissertation mail-box (**dissertation@sqa.org.uk**) by 1 November each year.

Higher

The style of marking essays was changed as detailed in last year's update letter. Specific marks were allocated to Knowledge (up to 6 marks), Argument (up to 10 marks) and Structure (up to 4 marks). The latter two are criterion-based. Full details can be downloaded from the NQ History subject page of our website. This system was introduced at a series of launch events in November for the new Higher. Centres should use this system when preparing Estimates and Appeals materials, and for Unit assessments.

The result of using this system was that marks near the top of the range became more accessible. A larger proportion of candidates received 'A' passes than in any previous diet.

Centres should also note the clarifications surrounding conditions for preparation for the Extended Essay mentioned above.

Standard Grade

The Foundation paper in 2010 will have some slightly revised question formats to make more explicit the demands of questions. Instead of using wordings like 'Give two reasons why war broke out in Europe in 1914', questions will be along the lines of 'Why did war break out in Europe in 1914? Give two reasons.' Similarly, 'describe' questions will be along the lines of 'How was life in the trenches unpleasant? Describe/give two ways.' This will not have any impact on Appeals evidence for 2009/10; assessments worded along the lines of the 2009 examination will be accepted as valid.

Verification

The Internal Assessment report is available from the NQ History subject page of our website. It gives clear and helpful advice on the verification process. When submitting evidence, centres should indicate clearly which NAB is being used. It is also helpful if centres/candidates date the evidence when it is produced. Centres should use the latest version of any NAB available at the time of assessment.

The new Higher

Arrangements

The Arrangements document was published in January, to give centres as much notice as possible of the impending changes. Since then, the process of vetting items for future question papers has shown the need for minor changes to ensure the utmost clarity, and ensure that candidates get the types of question they expect.

The most important changes are in some items which originally were assessments (typically asking how successful/effective a development was) and have now changed to evaluations (asking for causes, typically based on an isolated factor). These relate largely to the evaluation of obstacles, difficulties and threats. Issues affected are The Atlantic Slave Trade (5), Britain and Ireland (3 and 6), The American Revolution (1), The French Revolution (1 and 3), Germany (6), Italy (6) and the USA (2). These changes will be incorporated, along with minor clarifications of detail, when the Course is coded in July 2010. These changes reflect the questions that arise most naturally from the content of the contexts.

Sample scripts

Following the series of meetings launching the new Higher, finalised commentaries on the sample scripts used for both paper 1 and paper 2 will be posted on the NQ History subject page of our website. Centres will find these invaluable in understanding national standards in the new Course.

Specimen question paper

Along with the Course Assessment specification, the specimen question paper (SQP) was posted on the NQ History subject page of our website in July. Live question papers will follow the format of the SQP.

NABs

NABs have been issued in electronic form only and can be downloaded via SQA Co-ordinators. For paper 1 these are under the heading 'Historical Study' and are preview copies. These will go live when the new Course is coded in July. Paper 2 NABs currently await sign-off and should be available by the end of the year. Both groups of NABs follow the format of the SQP.

Appeals

The system of appeals using centre-generated evidence to modify the results of a national examination is peculiar to Scotland. Such evidence should be of equivalent demand to the Course assessment and is best generated through a formal preliminary examination reflecting the demands of the SQA examination in terms of duration, complexity, sampling and security. For National Qualifications, this is best achieved by using NABs, combined (and amended as recommended) to reflect the format of the examination. In History these are designed to have headroom above the demands of internal assessment. For this

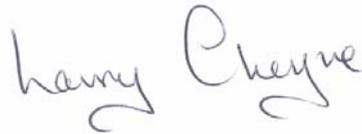
purpose, NABs at Intermediate should be marked in the same way as the external examination. Full guidance is contained in *Guidance on Estimates, Absentees and Appeals*, available via SQA Co-ordinators.

For Standard Grade, centres may generate their own assessment. These should indicate the provenance of items. Where past SQA items are used, these should come from a minimum of three past papers. Where commercial papers are bought in, it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure their validity. Only the current year's commercial papers are deemed secure.

The use of past papers or specimen question papers in their entirety is not allowed for Appeals purposes.

If you wish further clarification of any points in this letter, please contact either Duncan Cox (tel: 0845 213 5498; e-mail: duncan.cox@sqa.org.uk) or myself at the above address.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Cheyne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'C'.

Larry Cheyne
Qualifications Manager