

12 January 2005

To: SQA Co-ordinator
Directors of Education
Biology Panel Members
Customer Accounts Managers

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the delivery of
National Qualifications in Managing Environmental Resources**

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

Contact Name: Tracey Hope at Glasgow
Direct Line: 0141-242 2148
E-mail: tracey.hope@sqa.org.uk

Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update – Managing Environmental Resources

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

1 Principal Assessor Reports for 2004

Principal Assessor Reports for all NQ courses in Managing Environmental Resources are available on the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk).

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

When developing assessments used to provide estimates of candidate performance and evidence for appeals, centres should use this information on grade boundaries with caution together with the information on derived grades and on the success of previous appeals to help inform the determination of their own grade boundaries.

2 Marking Instructions

The marking instructions for the Managing Environmental Resources (Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher) 2004 examinations are available on the SQA website.

3 Appeals

Centres are referred to the SQA publication “**Estimates, Absentees and External Assessment Appeals: guidance on evidence requirements April 2004**”, which contains clear guidance on generating evidence.

This document indicates that when compiling a prelim a minimum of three sources of past papers should be used and that questions should preferably be adapted. This applies to SQA past papers as well as past commercially produced papers. Centres should note that use of questions which are in the specimen paper will affect the reliability of assessment.

It has been noted that some centres use the same prelim every year and it must be recognised that this entails a security risk and therefore affects the reliability of the evidence generated.

In selecting questions from past papers, some centres do not include a sufficient number of A-type questions.

Centres should note that sets of questions or a complete section of questions (eg all of Section A or all of Section B) should not be lifted from any one source of past paper.

It is important that when submitting appeals, the evidence demonstrates candidate attainment across the whole course. Centres are reminded that for an appeal for a grade C a **high scoring** NAB may be submitted as additional evidence, but this is not valid evidence to support an appeal at A or B where additional evidence assessing the course A grade description is required.

In setting cut-off scores for prelims, some centres do not take account of the fact that the prelim only covers part of the course and may include some questions which the candidates may have seen before. It is advisable that cut-off scores which are higher than those used in the national examination are applied.

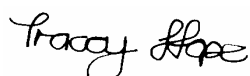
Centres should also take care in the selection of questions in the additional evidence ie that assessment which focuses on those aspects of the course not covered by the prelim. In some cases, there was unacceptable overlap in aspects assessed in the additional test and in the prelim. Some centres offer a second prelim later in the year which covers all three units. While this has the laudable aim of demonstrating performance across the course, it can result in insufficient evidence of performance in the third unit across the package of evidence presented for appeal.

Some centres do not re-evaluate candidates' estimates after the assessment of the later part of the course. Centres should aggregate performance across the prelim and the additional evidence to determine the standard demonstrated. Centres should apply a realistic weighting to the different components; this will vary depending on the model used to generate the additional evidence.

Centres should carefully consider the appropriateness of appeals for candidates who perform close to grade boundaries. Such borderline performance is unlikely to result in a successful appeal.

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

Yours faithfully



Tracey Hope
Qualifications Officer
NQ Maths, Science and Language team