

19 December 2003

To: SQA Co-ordinator
Secondary Schools and FE Colleges

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

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Dear Colleague

Modern Languages Update

The contents of this letter should be passed on to the member of staff responsible for Modern Languages.

We wish to bring the following matters to your attention.

1 Revised Standard Grade Arrangements Document

You should be aware that six replacement pages for this document were issued to centres with a covering letter on 22 September 2003. The web version of the document has been duly updated and can be located at www.sqa.org.uk.

The amendments incorporated in these pages do not constitute significant changes to the previously published Arrangements, but are refinements to the assessment criteria arising from the first year of operation of the Arrangements. In the case of Writing, upper word limits have been specified in order to eliminate an anomaly which existed in the original Arrangements document, *viz* the apparent mismatch between the statement about word length on page 22 ('...normally be between 25 and 200 words in length') and references to length on page 31 ('...100 words or more at Credit level'). In this regard, it is important to note that length on its own does not determine the award for a piece of work — it is the **quality** of the work, measured against the GRC, which is the deciding factor. It is, therefore, entirely possible for a piece of work of approximately 100 words in length to be awarded grade 1 or grade 2, provided the language and content are of the appropriate standard. Similarly, a short piece of approximately 25 words which fulfils the criteria for Foundation level will be awarded grade 5 or grade 6.

Examples of headings that may be provided to support candidates for Writing can be found on page 37 of the Arrangements document. It is important to note that, if these are used, they must be **provided by the teacher**. ('Teachers may break the tasks into more manageable chunks...') Headings of this nature are permitted in the target language from 2004 onwards. If these are submitted with the final piece, they will not be included in the word count.

A document of guidance, including suggestions on helping candidates to generate work of the appropriate level for the folio and exemplification of the standards

required using work submitted and assessed for the 2003 examination, is currently in preparation. It is envisaged that this will be ready for issue to centres before the end of the year.

2 Intermediate 1 (Writing)

In the externally assessed Writing paper, it has become apparent that there is a lack of clarity about the intention of the instruction to candidates to 'Write three statements in French/German/Italian/Spanish/Russian under each of the following headings'. It has therefore been decided that, in and after 2004, candidates will be instructed to '...write **three sentences** under each of the four headings.' You would wish to advise candidates of this change in wording.

3 Intermediate 2 (Writing)

As you will be aware, the externally assessed Writing paper includes help for the candidate by providing the appropriate wording to use for the formal opening and finish to the letter of application. A comparability check across the languages has identified that the help provided in French, German and Russian was more comprehensive than in Italian and Spanish. This will be rectified in the 2004 Question Papers, where candidates will be provided with the following wordings:

Italian

FORMAL OPENING TO LETTER OF APPLICATION

*Spettabile Ditta,
Ho letto il Vostro annuncio e vorrei sottoporVi la mia candidatura per la
posizione di...*

FORMAL FINISH TO LETTER OF APPLICATION

*Attendo una Vostra cortese risposta.
Distinti saluti,*

Spanish

FORMAL OPENING TO LETTER OF APPLICATION

*Muy estimados señores:
Con esta carta yo quisiera solicitar el puesto de...*

FORMAL FINISH TO LETTER OF APPLICATION

Les saluda atentamente,

You would wish to advise candidates of this, and to prepare them to use the wording appropriately.

4 Extended Reading/Viewing Unit at Intermediate 2

This Unit is scheduled to be operational for session 2004/05. This will mean that, from 2004 onwards, candidates will be able to choose from any one of **three** optional Units at Intermediate 2. These will be as follows:

- ◆ Personal Communication
- ◆ Extended Reading/Viewing
- ◆ Language in Work

The Unit Specification for the new option will be posted on **www.sqa.org.uk** in the new year, and will also feature on the CD-ROM *National Qualifications – Session 2004/05* which is due for distribution around Easter 2004.

The NAB material relating to this Unit will be posted on the secure section of SQA's website (**www.sqa.org.uk**) in due course.

5 Advanced Higher (Folio)

You are reminded to advise candidates that marks will be deducted for failure to include a bibliography and for exceeding the set word limits (500 words for an essay; 1,000 words for a report). Reasonable quotation from a text should not be included when calculating word length. Where the only material studied is an original text, the bibliography should indicate the edition used.

Guidance on the Advanced Higher Folio, including examples of work submitted for the 2003 examination, is currently in preparation and will be issued in due course. This publication will supplement the initial document of guidance which was issued to centres in September 2002.

6 Exemplification of Speaking at Intermediate 2 in French

This has taken a little longer to process than we had anticipated. It is our intention, however, to issue an audio CD of candidates' performances with accompanying commentaries and marks awarded, early in 2004.

7 Marking Instructions on SQA's website

As part of an openness agenda and understanding standards strategy, SQA is committed to publishing, in phases, Marking Instructions for all the National Qualifications. For the most part, high uptake subjects are featured in 2003, and all remaining subjects should be included in 2004.

Marking Instructions for the 2003 French examinations at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher can now be accessed on SQA's website (**www.sqa.org.uk**). Those for Intermediate 1 and 2 include examples of the application of the 'extraneous material' rule. The principles exemplified here apply also to Standard Grade.

Marking Instructions for the 2003 German examinations will be posted on the website in the near future.

8 2003 examinations — Principal Assessors' reports

A report on the performance of candidates in the 2003 Modern Languages examinations is available on SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

9 Language in Work

As part of the Review of National Qualifications in Modern Languages in 2002, it was decided that SQA should clarify 'the progression between levels in this Unit, particularly at Higher and Advanced Higher...'

SQA is currently in the process of giving consideration to the existing Language in Work Units from Intermediate 1 to Advanced Higher with a view to not only looking at the issue of progression, but also that of parity of demand across the optional Units at all levels in Modern Languages.

10 Veronica Smith

On behalf of those who know her and have worked with her, we would like to wish Veronica Smith a happy and healthy retirement. Veronica worked as Examination Officer/Qualifications Manager in Modern Languages for some 19 years with the Scottish Examination Board and, more recently, with SQA.

Her wisdom, tact and unflappability will be sadly missed.

Yours faithfully



Phil Allan
Qualifications Manager