

7 June 2006

To: Head of Centre

Cc: Directors of Education, SCIS, Scottish Executive
Key Stakeholders, Teaching Associations and
SQA Co-ordinators (all centres)

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

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Dear Colleague

Update on National Course developments

The purpose of this letter is to update you on current and planned developments in National Courses and related areas. It contains information about:

- 1 National Courses**
 - ◆ Skills for Work
 - ◆ English for Speakers of Other Languages
 - ◆ Urdu
 - ◆ Personal and Social Education
 - ◆ Access 3 Social Subjects
 - ◆ Intermediate 1 Graphic Communication

- 2 Chinese language provision**

- 3 Support for centres**
 - ◆ Understanding Standards
 - ◆ BBC Jam
 - ◆ Citizenship and Naturalisation

The National Qualifications update letter of 10 October 2005 from John Young, Director of Qualifications, gave details about revised National Courses which will be implemented in sessions 2006/07 and 2007/08. It also contained a summary of SQA's low uptake policy and details of the approach we are taking to low uptake Courses. The letter is available in the NQ section of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

1 National Courses

Skills for Work Courses

Phase 1 of the pilot of Skills for Work Courses is well underway. The Courses involved are shown in the table below. These Courses are being piloted by 45 partnerships centred around 28 colleges and a small number of other providers (including employers and private training providers), working with 145 schools and around 1,300 pupils of all abilities from 21 local authorities. A small number of schools are delivering the Courses independently. Early indications from feedback to SQA and HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) are that the pilot is progressing well.

Five Courses have been developed for piloting in session 2006/07 and these are shown in the table below.

We will be evaluating feedback from the pilot phases and making any necessary amendments to Courses and associated materials. We will also be making Skills for Work Courses available to all centres from session 2007/08. In planning to offer Skills for Work Courses, centres should bear in mind that the Courses from phases 1 and 2 of the pilot will be revised to take account of feedback from users. The timetable is shown below.

Phase 1 Skills for Work Courses		Available to centres in the pilot	Revised Courses available to all centres	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Construction Crafts</i> at Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4) ◆ <i>Early Education and Childcare</i> at Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF levels 4 and 5) ◆ <i>Financial Services</i> at Intermediate 2 (SCQF level 5) ◆ <i>Sport and Recreation</i> at Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4) 		Session 2006/07	From session 2007/08	
Phase 2 Skills for Work Courses		Available to centres in the pilot	Available to all centres	Revised Courses available to all centres
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Construction</i> at Intermediate 2 (SCQF level 5) ◆ <i>Hairdressing</i> at Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4) ◆ <i>Practical Experiences: Construction and Engineering</i> at Access 3 (SCQF level 3) ◆ <i>Rural Skills</i> at Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4) ◆ <i>Sport and Recreation 2</i> (SCQF level 5) 		Session 2006/07	Session 2007/08	From session 2008/09
<i>New Skills for Work Courses</i>				
Development of new Courses in <i>Engineering</i> at Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4), <i>Hospitality</i> at Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4) and <i>Health and Social Care</i> at Higher (SCQF level 6) will start in session 2006/07. They will be available to all centres from session 2007/08. For further information about Skills for Work Courses, contact Jonathan Gillies by e-mail at: jonathan.gillies@sqa.org.uk				

National Courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

SQA has led the development of National Courses in ESOL at Intermediate 2 and Higher levels (SCQF levels 5 and 6). Both National Courses have been validated and will be available from August 2006. Ann Morgan-Thomas has recently been appointed as SQA's ESOL Development Officer. We have developed these Courses partly as a result of our role as a partner in ATLAS (Action for Training and Learning for Asylum Seekers), a development partnership that includes partners from a broad range of statutory and non-statutory organisations. A comprehensive marketing strategy has been developed to raise the profile of the SQA qualification framework for ESOL locally, nationally and internationally. In addition to development visits which can be undertaken by Ann, there is a comprehensive set of National Assessment Bank items, learning support materials and exemplification materials available to support ESOL implementation. For more information relating to ESOL, you can contact Ann by e-mail at: **ann.morgan-thomas@sqa.org.uk**.

National Course in Urdu

SQA is developing a National Course in Urdu at Higher level (SCQF level 6). It will be available from session 2007/08 with first certification taking place in August 2008. SQA has recently appointed a Development Officer for Urdu, Ms Aziz Nizami. Aziz takes up her post on 15 May 2006. For more information relating to Urdu, you can contact Aziz by e-mail at: **aziz.nizami@sqa.org.uk**.

Review of National Courses in Personal and Social Education

The review of Personal and Social Education began at the start of 2005 and has involved consultation with stakeholders, the establishment of a Subject Advisory Group and consideration of the likely impact of *A Curriculum for Excellence* on this subject area.

We are developing revised National Courses at Access 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher (SCQF levels 3-6). At Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, and Higher, these will be made up of four Units. Three of these Units cover personal, social and vocational development. The fourth is broad based and flexible. It allows candidates to integrate and reflect on the progress they have made in their own personal development. They can draw from a wide range of experiences, including — but not limited to — those of the previous Units. The Courses will be internally-assessed and externally verified. There will be no external exam and the Courses will not have a grade. We are also investigating how to put in place a system of regional support to share good practice and allow the subject to develop and grow.

We plan to introduce the new provision at Access 3 and Intermediate 1 from session 2007/08. The existing Access 3 Cluster and Intermediate Course will be withdrawn in July 2007. The Intermediate 2 and Higher Courses are planned for implementation in session 2008/09, with the existing Courses being withdrawn after the examination diet in 2008. Further information about the structure, content and moderation of these Units and Courses will be provided in a subject update letter during the summer of 2006.

For more information, you can contact Keith Wright, Qualifications Manager, by e-mail at: **keith.wright@sqa.org.uk**.

Advanced Higher Administration

This Course has been revised to align with the Courses at Intermediate 1 to Higher which were implemented in 2005 as part of the NQ Review. The Advanced Higher will be implemented next session. The Arrangements documents will be published on the NQ Administration page of our website in May.

For more information, you can contact Alistair Wylie, Qualifications Manager, by e-mail at: **alistair.wylie@sqa.org.uk**.

Review of Advanced Higher Modern Studies

Following the review of Courses at Intermediate 1 – Higher, a review of Advanced Higher is underway. This will align Advanced Higher with the other levels, particularly in terms of content. Revised Arrangements will be published in May 2007 for implementation in session 2008/09.

For more information, you can contact Larry Cheyne, Qualifications Manager, by e-mail at: **larry.cheyne@sqa.org.uk**.

Access 3 Social Subjects

In response to feedback from users about the Access 3 Social Subjects Cluster, we have made some amendments to the Unit specifications to clarify requirements. We are also developing three qualifications at Access 3 (SCQF level 3) for the discrete Social Subjects — History, Geography and Modern Studies. These will be available next session. This development is being taken forward in partnership with East Renfrewshire Council.

For more information about History and Modern Studies, you can contact Larry Cheyne, Qualifications Manager, by e-mail at: **larry.cheyne@sqa.org.uk**. For Geography, you can contact Keith Wright, Qualifications Manager, by e-mail at: **keith.wright@sqa.org.uk**.

Graphic Communication

We are also developing a Course in Graphic Communication at Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 5). This Course is being developed by a small but experienced group of Appointees and will be available in session 2007/08.

For more information, you can contact Derek Middleton, Qualifications Manager, by e-mail at: **derek.middleton@sqa.org.uk**.

2 Chinese language provision

SQA has recently appointed a Chinese Language consultant to undertake a scoping exercise relating to Chinese language activity in Scottish centres. We have been gathering information about current Chinese language and culture provision in Scotland and about future needs. A report containing the main findings from this research, along with recommendations for the development of a Chinese language and culture strategy, will be published in due course. For more information, please e-mail SQA's Chinese Language consultant at: **linfan04@gmail.com**.

3 Support for Centres

Understanding Standards

SQA continues to develop and expand the range of support available as part of its Understanding Standards strategy. An update on the various strands of work that fall within the Understanding Standards project is given below:

- ◆ Continuing Professional Development Workshop programme
Another full programme of workshops will be available for autumn/winter 2006. Details of these will be included in our Professional Development Directory, which will be issued to centres and posted on our website (www.sqa.org.uk) in May 2006. It will include a registration form listing all subjects, locations and dates for forthcoming events. Workshops we have already offered in a range of subjects have been very successful with 97% of delegates rating them as good or very good.
- ◆ Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports
These annual reports are available on our website. The Principal Assessor reports provide information on:
 - particular areas of strength and weakness in candidate performance in this year's external assessment
 - the grade boundaries
 - the percentage of candidates achieving Course awards at each grade
 - feedback to centres on issues which need consideration

The Senior Moderator reports provide information on the strengths and weaknesses in achieving conformance to the national standard in Units and in those components/elements of the Course assessment which are subject to moderation.

After the 2006 examination diet, we intend to pilot a new style of report in some subjects. The new report will combine information from both internal and external assessment in a single report.

- ◆ Marking instructions
Marking instructions for the 2005 diet for all National Courses and for Standard Grade are available on our website. Those for the 2006 examination diet will be added in due course.

BBC Jam

SQA staff have been actively involved with the BBC Digital Curriculum project — now called BBC Jam — for the past eighteen months, by contributing to strategy meetings and curricular mapping exercises for all the main school based subjects.

This interactive multimedia resource has been developed to support key areas of the school curriculum across the UK. You can access this free service by first joining BBC Jam (www.bbc.co.uk/jam).

Current work at the BBC is now focused on vocational education and skills for work. SQA staff are again helping out with mapping out the provision, which looks likely to cover the 'world of work' and five vocational areas: tourism and leisure; engineering; care; hospitality and catering, and IT.

Citizenship and Naturalisation

In November 2005, the Home Office commissioned a set of learning materials to support its Naturalisation and Citizenship procedure. SQA has contextualised these and is working with five centres in Scotland to pilot them.

There will be a national conference in late June 2006 to disseminate learning materials produced by the pilot centres to meet the individual needs of local asylum seeker communities.

For more information relating to the Citizenship pilot, please e-mail Jean Wilson, SQA's Citizenship and Naturalisation Project Co-ordinator, at: **jean.wilson@forthvalley.ac.uk**.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this letter, please contact me at:
lesley.joyce@sqa.org.uk.

Yours faithfully

Gill Stewart
Depute Director, National Qualifications