

17 December 2003

To: Principal Teachers and Teachers of Physical Education
Directors of Education, SCIS
Scottish Executive Key Stakeholders
Teaching Associations, SQA Co-ordinators (all centres)
SQA Customer Account Managers.

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

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications — Physical Education Update

This newsletter updates centres on issues that have arisen during period 2002/2003 and highlights important information for this current session 2003/04 for National Qualifications in Physical Education. The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for Physical Education.

I am pleased to advise you that John Anton will be joining the team in January to manage National Qualifications in Physical Education for diet 2004 and prepare for the revised courses to be implemented from August 2004. He will be working with Alison Maguire and Pauline Muir.

Contents of this letter:

	Page
1. Standard Grade	2
2. Intermediate 1 and 2	4
3. Higher	5
4. Advanced Higher	7
5. Appeals	7
6. Moderation	7
7. The Assessment Panel	8
8. National Qualifications Review	8
9. SQA Website and Other Information	9

1. Standard Grade

Improvements for 2004

(i) Layout of Question Papers

In response to feedback from centres over a number of years regarding the layout of the Evaluating and Knowledge and Understanding Question Papers at Foundation, General and Credit levels, we are taking the opportunity to improve this for papers at all levels from 2004 onwards.

Please note that the content of the papers will not change and that the overall running time for each paper will remain the same. The format for the Evaluating section remains the same. The changes outlined below will enable candidates to focus on each element separately and make more effective use of the time available.

I acknowledge that the timing of sharing this information is not ideal as you may already have set prelim papers on the existing model. However, we felt that we should not delay for another year before introducing this improvement. We will also take care to ensure that no candidates are disadvantaged.

The paper will be split into two sections:

Section 1 — Evaluating

This section will contain five questions numbered 1–5 (each with Parts A and B). Both parts of each question must be answered. The video which accompanies this section will lead candidates through the questions indicating how much time they have to answer each question. At the end of this section candidates will be given **five** minutes to check their answers.

Section 2 — Knowledge and Understanding

This section will contain five questions numbered 6–10 (each with Parts A and B). Both parts of each question must be answered. An introduction to this section will be provided at the end of the video. Candidates will then have 25 minutes (F/G) or 30 minutes (G/C) to complete the section. Candidates should be reminded to allocate some of this time to checking their answers for questions 6–10.

Specimen Paper

A specimen paper reworked in the new format is available on the Physical Education subject page on SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). This will provide the opportunity for candidates to familiarise themselves with the revised layout. We have taken the General Paper from diet 2002 to form the content of the specimen paper.

Action: please complete the enclosed blue reply form to indicate that you have seen the specimen paper.

(ii) Video Tapes — for those granted additional time

We have also taken this opportunity to produce video tapes with extra time built in (+25%) to assist with invigilation and administration arrangements where candidates have been granted additional time (agreed by the Special Assessment Arrangements team). Tapes with extra time (+25%) should be requested, where applicable, from our Assessment Materials team along with the general request for video tapes. Where candidates have been granted additional time (+50%), please make the additional arrangements necessary, based on use of the video tape with additional time (+25%).

Diet 2003

The number of Standard Grade Physical Education entries (pre-Appeal) for diet 2003 was 18,332.

The Principal Assessor's Report is available on our website and provides information about candidate performance in this year's examinations. This report also contains details of grade boundaries for each level.

Overall markers commented favourably on the quality of the video footage in this year's Evaluation section. They also commented that questions that referred to generic team improvements did not sit comfortably with the approved mark scheme as it referred to specific players/positions/roles/number. This proved difficult for markers. Over all three levels it was evident that fewer candidates were responding to questions with negative answers and that more candidates were making attempts at all questions. The following highlights feedback from markers.

Foundation level

Overall candidates responded better in the Knowledge and Understanding section than in the Evaluating section. Markers reported that candidates responded better in questions where limited responses were required. Candidates performed well in all Evaluating questions with the exception of question 3, part A — where they were asked to view a sequence of Tennis shots. In Knowledge and Understanding, with the exception of question 5, parts C and D — where candidates were asked to respond with Safety and Equipment rules — they performed well. Overall, the number of candidates gaining an upper award increased.

General level

The paper clearly differentiated between F/G and G/C candidates. Overall, students performed better in the Knowledge and Understanding section where a full range of marks were gained with the expected spread in good evidence. Scores in this element proved to be better than in previous years. Markers commented that many candidates answered Evaluating part B questions in a general manner with a lack of detail in responses. They reported that the question on Similarity and Differences was poorly answered and that candidates need more practice in this area. Candidates also require further work in the area of being creative with particular reference to team games. It was noted that some candidates did not recognise that in question 2, part D they were required to respond with a 'playing' role.

Credit level

Some questions were clearly challenging and markers reported that the G/C candidates had been stretched. Candidates performed marginally better in the Evaluating section where an even spread of marks and achievement were evident. In both elements a greater number of candidates achieved the upper level. The topics of Feedback and Aerobic and Anaerobic training again proved to be difficult areas for candidates as did Progression as a principle of training. These areas, with appropriately styled questions, require further practice within centres. Markers commented on the need for the topic of Levers to be clarified.

Clarification of Course content and assessment

We plan to look at Course content in relation to the content of the revised National Courses, identifying where we need to clarify content within Standard Grade and provide exemplification for assessment purposes.

You should note that whilst Marking Instructions are available for a number of subjects/levels they are not currently available for Standard grade Physical Education.

2. Intermediate 1 and 2

The number of entries (pre-Appeal) for Intermediate 1 Physical Education in diet 2003 was 369. The number of entries (pre-Appeal) for Intermediate 2 Physical Education in diet 2003 was 1,690.

Candidate uptake is slightly down from 2002 which saw an increase of 40%. There is no indication at this time that centres are opting for National Courses at Intermediate to replace Standard Grade.

The Principal Assessor's Report is available on SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk) and provides information about candidate performance in this year's examinations. This report also contains details of grade boundaries. It is important that this information is used to help with decisions about estimates.

All Intermediate 1 Logbooks sent to SQA must have been assessed against the Unit and have achieved a pass internally. They must be completed and signed by a member of staff. Many are sent in to be marked for a Course award and have outcomes unsigned and many of the sections of the logbook are incomplete.

At Intermediate 2 no logbooks should be sent to SQA — only the Report for external assessment should be submitted.

Candidates who have not studied Performance Appreciation in their Course should be advised not to answer this section in the external assessment.

There is a general concern that Investigations are devised to a very prescriptive formula which makes it difficult to see the candidates' own work. Explanations in many cases are not clear. Candidates must demonstrate an ability to interpret hand-outs by describing and explaining information they have reviewed. Centres are encouraged to

provide adequate time for candidates to collect and interpret data.

At Intermediate 1 level some candidates answered all sections of the question paper. Centres are asked to remind candidates to follow the instructions when answering the questions in the external assessment. A number of candidates did answer Performance Appreciation although they had not covered this work in the Course.

3. Higher

The number of entries (pre-Appeal) for Higher Physical Education in diet 2003 was 3,970.

The high 'Performance' marks of previous years were again maintained with the mean score being 75.6. Particular concern still exists about the relatively modest achievements of candidates in Investigation of Performance and Analysis of Performance.

Overall, the performance of candidates this year has shifted down slightly when compared against last year's cohort and this is reflected in the fall in the number of candidates achieving awards at 'B' and 'C' grades. However, there were a higher percentage of very able candidates who were able to achieve an award at 'A'. Both the statistical evidence and the feedback available from markers indicated that these changes were due to the relative abilities of the candidate group rather than any increase or decrease in the difficulty of the assessments.

The 'Investigation of Performance' mean mark is a useful benchmark of candidate ability in any particular year in that the demands of the task and the mark scheme applied have been the same for a number of years. The Investigation of Performance mean score has shifted down by 0.7 of a mark to a total of 13.8, which is below half the available marks. Markers reported that although there were a significant number of candidates who scored well in this assessment there seemed to be an even greater number who achieved a very low mark.

Comments from markers about the 'Analysis of Performance' examination indicated it had been a fair and reasonable paper. There was an increase in the number of candidates doing well and achieving marks in the 30/50 range. Again concern was expressed about the still significant number of candidates achieving only a very low score in the examination. The mean for Analysis of performance this year has increased to 24.5, an increase of 1.2 marks compared to last year's mean.

Recommendations

Investigation of Performance

Candidates' reports are generally strong when describing and explaining the series of steps followed during the investigation process. Many candidates gain good marks for identifying and justifying an appropriate topic, gathering some relevant data, and then outlining a course of action.

The quality of the data gathered by the candidate in relation to the specific aspect of performance being investigated is crucial. Unless it has a level of depth, detail and significance, candidates find it difficult to draw interpretations that will progress the

enquiry and inform the needs of a training programme. This is a limiting factor for many candidates at present.

Centres should ensure that their candidates' work retains a performance and activity focus at all times. Some candidates can get so involved in particular conditioning or technique development programmes that they forget that they must explain how this work is benefiting their whole performance in the chosen activity.

The discussion of emerging issues gives the candidate the opportunity to make reference to the significance of the primary data gathered and the relevance of secondary sources reviewed.

Being able to show clarity of thought and a level of critical thinking in this discussion is a key indicator of Higher level work. At present the work of many candidates tends to focus too much on descriptions of stages of the investigation and contains only a limited amount of substantive discussion. This is a limiting factor for many candidates at present.

Candidates should take care to explain the specific effects of the Investigation process on their Performance when evaluating its effectiveness. Conclusions drawn should be based on what can validly be claimed from an evaluation of the work undertaken rather than on what the candidate would have wished.

Analysis of Performance

Centres should ensure that candidates are able to offer the level of depth and breadth of knowledge of key concepts that is appropriate at Higher level. The work of some candidates presented is considered to be well below that of the standards illustrated in the national exemplification of standards.

Candidates are generally strong when answering the parts of questions that draw mainly on their knowledge of the analysis processes taught and that ask them to describe and explain what they have been able to find out about their performance. Specifically:

- ◆ the methods used during class for collecting information
- ◆ the detail and significance of the data gathered
- ◆ the detail and effectiveness of a development programme undertaken

Candidates tend to have difficulty when they are asked to show detailed knowledge and understanding of key concepts. This is particularly the case when they are asked to show how they could apply relevant concepts and knowledge to the development of their performance. They need to be able to critically discuss relevant concepts and suggest courses of action for the development of their performance. This is a limiting factor for many candidates at present.

Candidates should be encouraged to take time to read, and to try to understand fully, all that is being asked in examination questions.

Candidates should be encouraged to relate their responses closely to what is asked in the question. Frequently candidates write down everything they know about a particular area, some of which is not relevant to the question asked. Although

candidates often display knowledge they fail to apply their knowledge to the key points of the question.

4. Advanced Higher

There were 31 centres presenting 60 candidates for Advanced Higher. Overall performance in this second year of presentation was slightly disappointing. While there was a pattern of high performance marks this was not so with the dissertation.

Some candidates presented a dissertation, which was very similar to a Higher Investigation. This showed a lack of understanding of the issues involved and areas to be addressed. Inevitably, this meant that candidates were unable to access the marks in some sections of the marking scheme. Almost all candidates had difficulty staying within the 3,500 word allocation. All final dissertations submitted should be signed by an appropriate member of staff in the presenting centre — the flyleaf has been changed to permit signing on the front of the sheet.

There was a seminar held on 8 November in Glasgow aimed at providing support for staff in centres to deal with internal and external assessment.

5. Appeals

Standard Grade — Centres are reminded not to use evidence from papers before 1998 as prelim papers. More than one piece of evidence should be submitted for the level centres are appealing for.

Centres are also reminded that an appeal cannot be made for the level above presentation, eg if the estimate is for a 2 (Credit) some candidates were presented for Foundation/General level. From markers reports it is apparent that candidates are not demonstrating the depth of knowledge/response at General/Credit level.

6. Moderation

Written moderation

Moderation was based on a selection of 20% of centres this year. The number of centres chosen for Analysis of Performance and Investigation of Performance was roughly equal. Of the centres moderated a total of 87% were judged to be accurately applying National Standards which was encouraging. Although some of the work seen at each level was of a good standard, the majority tended to be only at or around relevant minimum competency levels. The internal assessment results of 13% of centres were not accepted and they were asked to complete an assessment review. For the first time some centres were allowed to submit incomplete evidence for moderator comment.

Centres should ensure that NABs are followed carefully and that all pages required for assessment are included. Centres should ensure that the data which candidates have gathered and discussed in the assessment of Outcome 1 is included as part of the submission of Analysis of Performance assignments. Staff comments on/at the end of the work or on a completed proforma should indicate the member of staff's judgement about the level of competence displayed by the candidates.

When responses to prelim questions are submitted as part of the evidence of a candidate's achievement, details of the questions asked and the relevant marking schemes should also be submitted.

When submitting Investigation of Performance logbooks comments and assessment decisions should be included. These comments can be made at the end of each outcome section of the logbook, at the end of the logbook or on a pro forma that accompanies the logbook. This information is important to moderators as it indicates centre's ability to judge candidate evidence appropriately.

In order to support centres with the quality assurance demands of the Course it is recommended that centres enter the Investigation or the Analysis Unit with a completion date of March. Many centres choose the Performance Unit for this completion date, but given this Unit has visiting moderation the other Units would be more appropriate.

Moderation of Performance

A small number of centres still have difficulty in applying the full range of marks available at Advanced Higher level although there is an improvement from the previous year.

The change to the procedures to reduce the amount and complexity of the paperwork for centres and moderators has proved to be very successful. Some confusion still exists, however, as to the purpose of, and information required on, the PE MOD 1 form. This form is used **only** for the moderation exercise and then by SQA for final comparison and quality checks — it is **not** used to return the final performance marks that contribute to the Course assessment.

Some staff in centres have not used or are not aware of the range of support materials available to assist in assessing Performance, eg the set of videos and case studies exemplifying Performance at all levels. Where a centre is selected for moderation, staff should view the appropriate video case studies before the moderation visit.

7. The Assessment Panel

The Physical Education Assessment Panel met twice during the year, in March where the main agenda item was the National Qualifications Review of Physical Education and in September where the Principal Assessor and Moderator Reports for diet 2003 were discussed.

8. National Qualifications Review

The National Qualifications Review of Physical Education is in its final phase of validation. A great deal of work has gone into responding to concerns raised by stakeholders about the burden of assessment within the subject. The overwhelming response to the consultation within the profession was for PE to retain the performance based rationale. In the main teachers and candidates were working well with Course content but some aspects of the course demanded an excessive amount of time and effort.

In addressing such concerns the National Qualifications Steering Group, the National Qualifications Management Group, Assessment Panel and Subject Advisory Group

have endorsed the recommendations of the PE Report. These recommendations received the approval of the Minister for Education. These recommendations have been met and will be implemented in the academic year 2004/05. From August 2004 onwards there will be a new course structure at all levels:

- ◆ Performance Unit — 1.5 credits
- ◆ Analysis and Development of Performance Unit — 1.5 credits

This means that there will no longer be a requirement for a Report/Investigation as part of the Course assessment.

New Unit Specifications, National Assessment Bank materials and Courses Arrangements documents will be produced.

Further simplifications for the submission of performance marks will be introduced. Centres will be asked to submit a mark based on two activities (each activity will be equally weighted).

9. SQA Website and other information

You are reminded that the Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator Reports have been placed on SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

Centres should also refer to the CD-ROM entitled 'Exemplification of Standards' which includes examples of work to assist with understanding the national standards for Physical Education.

I would like to thank all Principal Assessors, Examining Teams, Markers and Moderators for Physical Education for their hard work undertaken to make diet 2003 a big success. Particular thanks to Andrew Fairnie, who returned to his centre following the completion of a very successful secondment to us as a full-time moderator.

Yours faithfully



Margaret Brownlie-Marshall
Business Manager
National Qualifications
Creative and Aesthetic Team