

Our ref: TS/Philosophy/10/08

19 December 2008

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools, FE colleges)  
Directors of Education  
SCIS  
Customer Account Managers

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the delivery of National Qualifications in Philosophy**

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

Contact: Tom Stannage  
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Dear Colleague

**National Qualifications in Philosophy**

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for National Qualifications in Philosophy.

**Diet 2008**

The External Assessment and Internal Assessment reports for diet 2008 can now be found on SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)). These include:

- ◆ External Assessment report Intermediate 2 and Higher
- ◆ Internal Assessment report National Qualifications Units

**Appeals**

The procedures for stage 1 and 2 appeals were completed during September and October. Colleagues are requested to follow the guidance set out in the following documents prior to submitting appeals:

- ◆ *The Appeals Process: a guide for centres* (AA0690/3, June 2002)
- ◆ *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Generating Evidence* (BA0992, June 2007)

Please note that the document *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence* referred to above specifies clearly what evidence is required when submitting an appeal for question paper-based Courses.

When generating estimates and compiling evidence for absentee consideration and appeals, you should also refer to:

- ◆ Course Arrangements documents, which include Course grade descriptions
- ◆ Course Assessment specifications

- ◆ SQA question papers, including specimen question papers
- ◆ SQA marking instructions
- ◆ External Assessment reports (formerly known as Principal Assessor reports), which include information on grade boundaries
- ◆ any other relevant information (eg Course reports, subject update letters).

All of these documents can be downloaded from SQA's website.

The most commonly found problems in evidence submitted for appeals this year were:

- ◆ Wrong or incomplete marking schemes.
- ◆ Evidence did not cover the complete Course.
- ◆ Prelim questions were drawn from too few sources.
- ◆ The use of a commercially produced question paper without checking the validity of the paper.
- ◆ Where NABs were used the KU/AE balance was not adjusted or questions were not adapted.
- ◆ The KU/AE balance clearly laid out in the Course Assessment specifications and the specimen question paper was not adhered to.

Centres should note that the above problems will disadvantage candidates and staff are encouraged to read the External Assessment reports.

### **Marking instructions**

The question papers and finalised marking instructions for diet 2008 Course assessments at each level are posted on the NQ Philosophy pages of SQA's website.

### **National Qualifications Courses**

Results for the revised Courses showed excellent improvement in diet 2008. In some ways this was to be expected as teachers and lecturers become more familiar with the new content. It was extremely pleasing to see the number of centres that had a 75% pass rate and even more pleasing was the number that had a 100% pass rate.

Despite this improvement in results there are one or two sections of the Courses that give a slight cause for concern. These are:

- ◆ a need to 'firm up' the *Critical Thinking in Philosophy* Unit and a further look at the Agnosticism section in the *Metaphysics* Unit
- ◆ at Intermediate 2 it is felt that Kant is too difficult for candidates operating at this level

In view of this we have set up a small review group of representative teachers/lecturers to consider if some amendments require to be made in the short term. The first meeting of this group was held earlier this month. Any amendments made would be implemented in August 2010.

A further issue to consider is whether the KU/AE requirements shown on the NABs and exam papers are helpful. These were inserted to assist teachers and lecturers in explaining what was required in an answer and to assist candidates in

the exam to know what kind of answer was required. However if this is thought not to be helpful we can discontinue this practice. We would appreciate your views on this issue.

### **Electronic marks capture**

The Intermediate 2 Philosophy 2010 question paper will be included in the growing number of papers that use some form of electronic marking. Electronic marking from paper combines the advantages of central marking and traditional marking at home. Markers must complete practice papers and qualifications papers before going on to mark their actual allocation. The Principal Assessor is able to track the progress of Markers and is available online at specified times to assist markers with queries.

### **Assessment Panel**

The Social Sciences Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year to look at issues arising in Philosophy as well as the other social science subjects. Colleagues are free to feed issues arising in their subject to the Panel either directly through panel members or via SQA officers.

### **Marking for SQA**

Each year the number of entries for the Philosophy Courses is increasing. If you are interested in becoming a Marker in Philosophy, please e-mail **markers@sqa.org.uk** or call our Marker Helpline (0131-561 6825) and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you are in your third year of teaching the Course. We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer an appointment for this year. The Philosophy Courses are centrally marked — this entails the Marker marking scripts over one extended period in the same venue. In a number of subject areas we have had recent examples where the results in centres have improved dramatically after a member of staff joined the marking team. The experience of marking helps to increase the awareness of the demands of Course assessment and is proven to be excellent professional and personal development.

I hope that you find the above information useful. If you would like to discuss any matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to telephone me on 0845 213 5502 or e-mail **tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk**

Yours faithfully,



Tom Stannage  
Qualifications Manager  
NQ Social Sciences and Care