

March 2005

To: SQA Coordinator (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
None — update/information only

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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 2004

The Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports for diet 2004 can now be found on SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). These include:

- ◆ PA report Intermediate 2 and Higher
- ◆ PA report Advanced Higher
- ◆ Senior Moderator report National Qualification 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* (A0992/2, February 2001).

NB Revised versions of both documents are due to be issued in March 2005. Copies of these documents can be downloaded from SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

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

- ◆ Evidence is partial and does not sufficiently represent the whole Course.
- ◆ Evidence has been marked inconsistently and does not match the national standard.
- ◆ Evidence has not been graded.

These issues were reported in the 2003 update letter, however, similar problems were replicated in 2004. In addition, Examiners were disappointed with the quality of the presentation of evidence from

some centres. This related to uncoordinated evidence such as several pieces of evidence for each candidate with no clear or direct link to the assessment instrument.

Centres should note that the above problems may disadvantage candidates.

National Qualifications Review

Work is progressing on the Review of Philosophy Courses with implementation planned for Session 2006/07. Arrangement documents will be published prior to the launch seminar which will take place in November 2005.

The Subject Advisory Group, which has a wide representation of staff who are teaching the Philosophy Courses, has been meeting to advise on the development. However, there appears to be no consensus on the way forward at present. The results of the Consultation did not show any clear direction on *how* the revised Courses should be structured and assessed. The key issues, at present are:

- ◆ The need to reduce content in each Unit at both Intermediate 2 and Higher.
- ◆ The alignment of structures at each level.
- ◆ The place of Logic at each level.
- ◆ The need for a variety of assessment instruments.
- ◆ The inequity and incompatibility of Logic and Moral Philosophy as alternative options.

A 'mini-consultation' in the form of a Focus Group comprising of subject specialists who have not already been involved in the Review was convened to discuss these issues and we now have a way forward.

The results of a questionnaire designed to ascertain the need for and the potential uptake of Units at Intermediate 1 has shown that such a development would be widely welcomed. There is however a clear difference between the specialists' desire for Intermediate 1 Units and the reality of introducing them into the curriculum in a number of schools. Further investigations into the viability of this development will be carried out later in 2005.

Reminder — Higher Philosophy

I take this opportunity to remind you that the duration of Higher Philosophy exam was extended to **2 hours 40 minutes** from Diet 2004. The structure and length of the question paper is not changing, the increase is to allow candidates more time to develop their answers.

In addition, **in Diet 2005**, the layout of the paper will change slightly. The Moral Philosophy questions will become Section C, with the Logic questions moving to Section D. This keeps the essay question sections together followed by the Logic section which uses a different type of assessment instrument.

Assessment Panel

The remit and make-up of the Social Sciences Assessment Panel has been reviewed with the result that there are now more representatives for each subject — Psychology; Sociology; Philosophy; Politics. The Social Sciences Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year to look at issues arising in the assessment of 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.

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 0141-242 2343 or e-mail tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Stannage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tom Stannage
Qualifications Manager
NQ Social Sciences