

September 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 Psychology**

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

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Dear Colleague

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY

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

Diet 2005

Centres are advised to access the Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports for Psychology for Diet 2005. These reports contain essential advice and feedback for all teachers/lecturers delivering National Qualifications in Psychology.

The following reports can be found on the Psychology pages of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk):

- ◆ Principal Assessor Report for Intermediate 1/Intermediate 2 Psychology (old)
- ◆ Principal Assessor Report for Intermediate 1/Intermediate 2 Psychology (new)
- ◆ Principal Assessor Report for Higher/Advanced Higher Psychology (old and new)
- ◆ Senior Moderator Report for Psychology

Marking Instructions

The finalised marking instructions for both the old and the revised Course assessments at each level are posted on the Psychology web page.

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, April 2004)

NB Revised versions of both documents were issued in March 2004. 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
- ◆ Evidence submitted does not reflect centre estimate
- ◆ No marking instructions were submitted for the centre's prelim

These issues were reported in the last year's update letter and in the Principal Assessor's Report, however, similar problems were replicated in 2005. 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.

Further issues that related to the revised Courses:

- ◆ Marking instructions did not follow the example in the specimen question paper
- ◆ The balance of knowledge and understanding and analysis and evaluation (KU60% and AE 40%) as set out in the specimen question paper must be adhered to in the prelim
- ◆ NABs submitted as evidence did not take account of the difference in the KU/AE balance between question paper and NABs.

Centres should note that the above problems may disadvantage candidates.

Revised Psychology Courses

A number of centres decided to remain with the old Courses for Diet 2005 but all centres are reminded that only the revised Courses are available from Session 2005/06 (ie Diet 2006) onwards.

Higher Research Investigation

Four further briefs have been added to those listed for Session 2004 – 2005. Candidates **must** base their investigation on one of these briefs. This list covers the constraints/choices within the new Course Arrangements and can be found on the Psychology page of SQA website along with the Revised Higher Research Investigation Guidelines. Centres are reminded that all Higher and Advanced Higher Research Investigations must be submitted to SQA for external assessment. All Research Investigations will be uplifted from your centre on **Thursday, 27th April 2005**.

Research Investigation 2005

We have undertaken an interesting piece of research into the relative popularity of the four topics which were specified for the Research Investigation in session 2004 – 2005. We also analysed the marks gained by candidates in each of the topics.

We found that two centres offered all four topics, four centres offered three topics, ten centres offered two topics while the remaining centres specified the brief to be followed by all its students. Centres are, of course, free to choose which ever method they prefer.

The popularity and average marks gained were as follows:

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Percentage of Candidate presentations</i>	<i>Average mark gained(out of 50)</i>
Stress - A correlational study investigating the relationship between daily hassles/uplifts and health.	19.4%	25.8
Memory - A laboratory experiment on the use of chunking to improve STM recall.	43.0%	28.3
Intelligence - An investigation into the impact of gender on self-estimated intelligence.	22.6%	28.9
Atypical Behaviour - A field experiment investigating attitudes to atypical behaviour, using a social distance scale.	15.0%	30.1

Interestingly the topic with the lowest uptake resulted in the highest average mark.

Understanding Standards Workshop

A CPD Workshop is planned for Saturday 26 November. The day will concentrate on the 2005 Diet Course assessments and the Principal Assessors for Higher and Intermediate Courses will conduct workshops using candidate evidence to develop delegates' understanding of national standards. It will also provide an opportunity to focus on the points of action, to identify existing best practice and to clarify further issues. The cost per delegate is £150 and this includes a support pack, a CPD certificate, lunch and refreshments. Fuller information has been disseminated to centres and interested staff are asked to return the completed registration form to ensure a place at the event.

Free-standing Units

Some consideration is being given to retaining some of the component Units of the "old" Course (C071) as free standing units. Also we are currently analysing the Uptake of all free-standing Units in Psychology, including those that are still in the NC Module descriptor format. This is with a view to updating/revising popular Units and deleting those which have had little or no uptake over the past few years. We intend to carry out some consultation on this issue in the due course.

Being an SQA Marker

If you are interested in becoming a Psychology Marker, an application form can be downloaded from SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). Alternatively, please contact us on 0131-561 6825 and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you have taught the Course for at least three years, preferably within the past three years. We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer an appointment for this year. Psychology will continue to be Centrally Marked – this entails markers marking scripts over two separate weekend periods in the same venue. We have had a number of cases over the past few years where centre results have improved dramatically as a consequence of members of staff becoming involved in marking. This is an excellent opportunity for individual professional and personal development.

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 and 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