

Our ref: MM/NQ/March 08

20 March 2008

To: Directors of Education
SQA Co-ordinators
Science Assessment Panel Members
Customer Account Manager

For the attention of all staff responsible for the delivery of National Qualifications in Science (Standard Grade)

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

Contact: Margot McKerrell
Direct line: 0845 213 5509
E-mail: margot.mckerrell@sqa.org.uk

Dear Colleague

National Qualifications update — Science (Standard Grade)

This letter is the latest in a series of update letters from SQA and should be passed on to the member of staff responsible for the delivery of Standard Grade Science.

Communication between SQA and practitioners is of high priority and I can be contacted through the e-mail address and the direct phone number noted above, and also via the e-mail link on the NQ Science page of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). The Qualifications Officer is Paula Greenwood and she can be contacted by e-mail (paula.greenwood@sqa.org.uk) or by telephone (0845 213 5512).

1. Principal Assessor report

Centres are reminded that the Principal Assessor report for the 2007 diet of examinations is available on the NQ Science page of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

The report contains information on candidate performance, areas in which candidates performed well, areas in which candidates found demanding, advice to centres for preparation for future candidates and statistical information including number of resulted entries, the marks set for each grade boundary and the number of candidates attaining each grade.

2. Senior Verifier report

The Senior Verifier reports include information on the verification events carried out in 2007 and specific issues are identified for the following area:

- ♦ Standard Grade Science Practical Abilities.

It is recommended that centres refer to this report as it contains information on issues relating to internal assessment.

3. 2007 question papers

SQA has launched a new service that allows candidates and centres to download NQ question papers from 2007 free of charge. The Foundation, General and Credit Standard Grade Science question papers can be accessed from the NQ Science page of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

In addition, 2007 adapted question papers in digital format for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs are also available to download. Digital question papers are available for Standard Grade Science (Foundation, General and Credit) and can be accessed from the assessment arrangements section of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

4. Marking instructions

Centres are reminded that the detailed marking instructions for Standard Grade Science (Foundation, General and Credit) are available to download from the NQ Science page of SQA's website.

5. Review of NQ Servicing Units

SQA is currently rationalising and modernising the NQ portfolio of Servicing Units. These are Units which are not component Units of NQ National Courses.

One Science Servicing Unit which is to be deleted from the NQ Catalogue as from August 2008 is *Experimental Investigations in Science* (ED6W 13). This Unit is being deleted as it has had no or little uptake in the past three years.

6. Guide to Assessment in the Sciences

This is a new SQA publication (February 2008) which draws together appropriate information on assessment from Arrangements documents, NAB materials and update letters for National Qualifications in the Sciences. The Guide provides assessment information on Access 3 through to Advanced Higher in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, Human Biology (Higher) and Biotechnology (Intermediate 2 and Higher). It also provides assessment information for Standard Grade Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Science.

It is intended to provide an easy access point for information on assessment and should be of use to all Science teachers, but especially for newly qualified teachers and Faculty Heads of Science. It should be used in addition to SQA Arrangements documents and NAB materials.

A paper copy of the guide has been issued to all centres presenting candidates in the Sciences. It is also available to download from the NQ Science page of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

7. Appeals

Centres are advised that the current version of the document *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals* (June 2007) is available to download from all subject-specific pages of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). The document provides both generic and subject-specific advice to centres when preparing evidence for estimates, appeals and absentee candidates.

Centres are advised that, for Standard Grade, additional information has been included in the *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals* (June 2007) document as an appendix. For Standard Grade Science, evidence submitted to support an absentee candidate or an appeal should cover all topics in the Course.

A new toolkit has been provided by SQA to support centres in generating evidence for estimates, absentees and assessment appeals. It can be accessed from the following website address:

- ♦ www.sqa.org.uk/eaaa

This is an interactive website and provides case studies for you to work through.

8. Course developments

The following Course developments are taking place and are included for information.

8.1 Proposed Skills for Work Course for the Health Sector (working title)

Skills for Work Courses focus on generic employability skills needed for success in the workplace. The Courses offer opportunities for learners to acquire these generic employability skills through a variety of practical experiences that are linked to particular vocational areas.

Skills for Work Courses are generally delivered through partnership between schools and colleges, employers or training providers. The Courses are internally-assessed, there is no final exam and the Courses are not graded.

SQA is currently developing a Skills for Work Course for candidates who are considering working in the health services or life sciences industry. The Course is levelled at Intermediate 1 and it is anticipated that it will be launched in November 2008 for uptake in session 2008-2009. The target group for this qualification is candidates in S3-S4, although it may be suitable for other stages.

8.2 Proposed National Certificates in Applied Sciences

SQA is currently developing two National Certificates in Applied Sciences, one at Intermediate 2 and the other at Higher. The qualifications consist of a combination of component Units from Intermediate 2/Higher Biology, Chemistry and Physics with a selection of Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Science Servicing Units. There is no requirement for candidates to sit external assessment to attain the qualifications. It is anticipated that these qualifications will be available to centres for the start of session 2008-2009. Successful attainment of these qualifications should allow progression onto the Higher National Certificate in Applied Sciences. If you require further information about these qualifications, please contact Pat Robb (pat.robb@sqa.org.uk), the Qualifications Manager who is responsible for the development of the qualifications.

I hope that the contents of this letter are helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further clarification.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margot McKerrell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Margot McKerrell
Qualifications Manager