

22 October 2004

To: SQA Co-ordinator (Secondary Schools,
Special Schools and Further Education Colleges)
Scottish Executive
HMIE
Directors of Education
Science Assessment Panel members
Higher Education Institutions — Department of Education

**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
	None – update/information only

Contact Name: Noël Donoghue at Glasgow
Direct Line: 0141-242 2152
E-mail: noel.donoghue@sqa.org.uk

Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update — Science (Standard Grade)

This letter is the latest in the series of update letters from SQA, specifically designed to keep specialists in Science abreast of developments in the subject area. I place a very high importance on liaison between SQA and practitioners and these letters form one strand of this communication strategy. In addition I can be contacted in a number of ways, with my direct dial and e-mail address noted above.

1. Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator Reports

The Principal Assessor (PA) and Senior Moderator (SM) reports for the 2004 diet of examinations are available on the NQ Science subject-specific pages of SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk).

Please refer to the PA report for statistical information about the examinations and full and detailed comments on candidate performance. The PA report specifies areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well and areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty.

The SM report identifies specific issues arising from central moderation and includes general comments on the moderation activity and feedback to centres.

2. Appeals 2004

The number of Appeals against the 2004 exam results is down compared with last year.

Experience from the Appeals procedures this year indicates that some centres are not submitting sufficient evidence to support individual Appeals. For example, a candidate may be estimated at grade 2, and achieve a grade 4 in the SG Course. To allow for a partial upgrade, where a full upgrade can not be awarded, evidence submitted should cover both Credit and General levels.

3. Update on the development of National Courses in Science

The previous update letter stated that a consultant had been appointed to investigate the possibility of developing an NQ Course structure in Science from Access 3 to Higher level. The approach to be taken was to consult initially with key people in the scientific community through targeted questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Furthermore the update letter invited contributions from centres and individuals to the review and development process. I would like to take this opportunity

to thank everyone who contacted myself or Jayne Terzza (Qualifications Officer for Science) with comments and views regarding this development. All communications were passed on to and discussed with the consultant.

Since the last update letter the consultant appointed has submitted his report to SQA. Centre and individual contributions, the results of the questionnaires and information from interviews, together with the study of a number of relevant reference materials, formed the basis of the findings within the Consultant's report. The main recommendation of the report was a proposal to develop National Courses in Science.

A paper recommending the development of National Courses in Science was presented to SQA's National Qualifications Management Group (NQM) in April 2004. The recommendation was approved in principle by NQM. However NQM stipulated that SQA should work closely with all interested bodies and take note of the findings of the Scottish Executive's 3-18 Curriculum Review.

Papers relating to the development of National Courses in Science were discussed at the Science Assessment Panel meeting of 5 May 2004. The Panel endorsed the view of the consultant that the Courses should be modern and relevant, flexible, responsive to contemporary needs, include coverage of ethical, environmental and social issues, allow for skills development, create opportunities to use ICT, and support a learning approach which is investigative, problem-solving and interactive. The Panel further recommended that the development of National Courses in Science should take account of the reviews and developments for discrete science National Courses.

The Scottish Executive Ministerial response to the 3-18 Curriculum Review was published on 1 November 2004. The response stated:

‘A cycle of continuous updating and reform of the curriculum across all areas of learning will begin immediately, starting with the science curriculum 3-18’.

Furthermore, cognizance would be taken of the recommendations of earlier and current reviews of science education, and work will begin in November 2004.

I am pleased to report that a Science Subject Advisory Group (SAG) will be set up in the autumn of 2004 to take forward the development of National Courses in Science. Andrew Shield (Qualifications Manager for Physics), supported by Jayne Terzza will be leading the development.

If you have a particular view or comments about the development of National Courses in Science, please contact Jayne Terzza:

Phone: 0141-242 2203

E-mail: jayne.terzza@sqa.org.uk

Centres will be kept informed of progress of this development.

I hope you find the information in this letter helpful. If you require any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Noël Donoghue

Noël Donoghue
Qualifications Manager
Mathematics and Science