

23 November 2007

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

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications in Sociology

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

Diet 2007

Centres are advised to access the Principal Assessor reports for Sociology for diet 2007. These reports contain essential advice and feedback for all teachers/lecturers delivering National Qualifications in Sociology.

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

- ◆ Principal Assessor report Intermediate 2 Sociology
- ◆ Principal Assessor report Higher Sociology

This was the first year of the revised Higher and Intermediate 2 Sociology Course assessment and candidates responded well. In the Higher paper, marks were achieved across the range with a small number achieving over 90%. There was considerable evidence that the changes made to the paper enabled candidates to answer all questions. More candidates completed all sections of the paper than in previous years. A major change to the 2007 paper is that essay questions are more specific. Some candidates were unable to gain full marks because they did not relate their answer to the question asked.

The Intermediate 2 paper proved to be a more robust and exacting examination, which was a deliberate outcome of the review. Candidates responded well to section C which required an essay type answer. In some instances candidates are still using generalised, stereotypical answers and not using sociological explanations.

This was the final year of the Advanced Higher Sociology Course exam. Centres are reminded that the component Units at Advanced Higher and Intermediate 1 are still available for delivery and can be accessed through the Unit search facility on the Sociology pages of SQA's website.

Marking instructions

The question papers and finalised marking instructions for diet 2007 Course assessments at Higher and Intermediate 2 level are posted on the Sociology web page. It is hoped that these will be of benefit to staff when preparing a prelim paper or when submitting evidence for appeals.

Appeals

The procedures for stage 1 and 2 appeals were completed during September and October. There were still a number of problems found in evidence submitted for appeals. The most commonly found problems in evidence submitted for appeals this year were:

- ◆ evidence was partial and did not sufficiently represent the whole Course
- ◆ evidence submitted did not match the estimate made
- ◆ wrong or incomplete marking schemes
- ◆ prelim questions were drawn from too few sources
- ◆ security of prelim papers was compromised
- ◆ 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 may disadvantage candidates.

Colleagues are requested to follow the guidance set out in the following document prior to submitting appeals:

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

The document noted above — *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements* — has undergone revision and has been posted on SQA's website. The revised version clarifies what evidence is required when submitting an appeal for question paper based Courses and states:

The evidence for the question paper could include:

- ◆ a prelim which covers all Units and replicates the standard, format, duration and security of SQA's question paper. This could support an appeal for Grades A, B and C and would be the most convincing evidence for an appeal for Grade A.
- ◆ a prelim which covers all Units and is split into parts and the two parts have been separated by a period of time rather than being taken on one occasion. Centres should be aware that the level of demand is less than the Course assessment. The level of demand can be increased in a number of ways such

as by raising the cut-off scores or by increasing the level of challenge of the prelim. This could support an appeal for Grades A, B and C.

- ♦ a prelim which covers a minimum of two Units of the Course plus supporting evidence, such as a high scoring NAB, for the third Unit would support an appeal for a Grade C (and possibly Grade B), but not for a Grade A.

Marking for SQA

Each year the number of entries for the Sociology Courses is increasing and as a result we require more Markers. We would therefore welcome applications for diet 2008. If you are interested in becoming a Marker in Sociology, 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 or have been teaching it within the past three years.

Course papers 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.

Assessment Panel

The Social Sciences Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year to look at issues arising in Sociology as well as the other Social Sciences subjects. Colleagues are free to feed issues arising in their subject to the Panel either directly through Panel members or via SQA officers. The membership of this Assessment Panel has been revised and the first meeting took place during September 2007.

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 contact me either by telephone on 0845 213 5502, or e-mail: tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk.

Yours faithfully



Tom Stannage
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NQ Social Subjects