



National Qualifications 2013 Internal Assessment Report Computing

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified:

C206 12: Higher Computing
C206 13: Advanced Higher Computing

General comments

Only two levels of Computing were verified this year — Advanced Higher done by visiting, and Higher carried out centrally. Overall, there was evidence of a better understanding of standards and also more care being taken with marking and internal verification, all of which contributed to a vast improvement in the percentage of centres being Accepted.

Centre staff should, however, continue to read the previous year's Computing Internal Assessment Report published on SQA's website to ensure that they address all issues highlighted.

Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centre staff delivering specialist Computing Courses should ensure that they have access to, and have read and understood, the appropriate Course Arrangements and Unit specifications. Teaching plans should reflect the contents of these documents both in terms of the coverage of topics and in the level and depth of that coverage.

The Coursework tasks are published annually on 31 October on SQA's secure website. Centres should ensure that the relevant subject staff have access to these specifications and to any subsequent amendments that are published.

All teaching staff should ensure that they have worked through Coursework tasks prior to tackling these with candidates. It might also be advisable to discuss solutions to the tasks with colleagues in local areas to ensure a clear understanding of what is expected.

Evidence Requirements

Staff responsible for submitting materials to SQA should take care to ensure that all paperwork is carefully completed and, where specified, is included in the pack(s) of materials. Missing, incomplete, or wrongly completed, documentation significantly hampers the verification process and, in some cases, can cause a centre to be Not Accepted.

Centres should also note that:

- ◆ only responses to the specific year's Coursework tasks should be submitted for verification — not Unit or any other internal assessments

- ◆ only the Marking Scheme issued as part of the current year's Coursework should be used and should be well annotated to explain decisions made
- ◆ specifications should not be amended as doing so will invalidate the Coursework

Administration of assessments

Many centres do submit well prepared and very well marked Coursework.

Verifiers can see clearly that the work is that of individual candidates and that the work has been done under the expected 'controlled conditions'. Candidates have obviously been given clear advice and guidance but they have not been 'led' by the teacher or allowed to work with others.

Internal verification is an expectation of all centres and some clearly do ensure that Coursework is cross-marked. Such procedures are of particular importance where centres have more than one group of candidates undertaking the same Course. Consistent marking across all candidates in a centre is essential.

Where candidate numbers are small there may be opportunities for verification to be carried out between neighbouring schools.

Centres are advised to check all arithmetic and the transferring of marks to the required pro forma. Verifiers found instances of candidates' marks totalled wrongly on marking grids and also instances of marks being transferred wrongly to the SQA documents.

Areas of good practice

As already stated, improvements in internal verification were apparent. Verifiers could clearly see where cross-marking had been carried out and agreement had been reached on marks awarded. Centres which have already developed rigorous practices in this area are to be commended and others are encouraged to do so.

Several centres had also produced expanded marking schemes. These in no way deviated from the Marking Scheme supplied by the SQA, but allowed for more clarity in how marks were awarded. These efforts were greatly appreciated by Verifiers.

Specific areas for improvement

In the Higher Computing Software Development Unit, issues are still arising with candidates' lack of understanding of data flow and parameter passing. Centre staff would be advised to consider how this is taught and whether enough emphasis is placed on this area of the Course. Also in this Unit, candidates experience a range of standard algorithms and there is an expectation that the use of some of these will be demonstrated in the Coursework.

In Higher Computing — Computer Systems some candidates (and assessors) are failing to recognise the need for compatibility between recommended hardware and software.

Although all Advanced Higher Computing centres verified were Accepted, there was some evidence of candidates downloading solutions from the internet. Centres are advised to be alert to this possibility at as early a stage as possible. It is recognised that many AH courses run with a minimal (if any) teaching allocation, a situation that makes it very difficult for an assessor to keep regular track of candidate progress.