



National Qualifications 2014 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

As in 2013, only two levels of NQ Computing were verified this year — Advanced Higher done by visiting and Higher carried out centrally. Following a significant improvement last year, there was no evidence of any further improvement in the understanding of standards or of more care being taken with marking and internal verification.

Centre staff should continue to read the internal assessment reports from previous years published on SQA's website to ensure that they address all issues that have been highlighted.

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

Centre staff delivering these Computing Courses should have read and understood the appropriate Course Arrangements and Unit specifications. Their teaching plans should ensure full coverage of topics at an appropriate level and depth.

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 **themselves** prior to introducing these to candidates. It is also advisable to discuss solutions to the tasks with colleagues in local areas to ensure a clear understanding of what is expected.

Evidence Requirements

Those responsible for submitting materials to SQA should 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, may 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 an increasing number now, 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 absolutely 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 continue to find instances of candidates' marks totalled wrongly on marking grids, converted to percentages 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 that have already developed rigorous practices in this area are to be commended and others are encouraged to do so.

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

Specific areas for improvement

In the Higher Computing Software Development Unit issues arose with candidates' abilities to write pseudocode; issues are also 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 some cases there was no evidence of formatted output to evidence particular tested inputs.

Annotated printouts are a necessity. The question must be asked — do candidates understand the meaning of ‘robust’ and what they should be looking for when stating that a program is robust?

In Higher Computing Computer Systems, some candidates recommended hardware without sufficient detail to explain its suitability for the task; some also failed to recognise the need for compatibility between recommended hardware and software. At Higher level there is an expectation that recommendations will be made on more than just price.

Only one centre was verified for Advanced Higher Computing. It was of a very high standard and so it is impossible to suggest improvements based on the 2014 cohort. Centres that intend to deliver AH Computing in 2015 should re-read reports from previous years and try to follow advice offered there.