



National Qualifications 2015 Internal Assessment Report Geography

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

National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

- DF3C 11: Geography: Physical Environments (Intermediate 2)
- DF3C 12: Geography: Physical Environments (Higher)
- DF43 12: Geography: Human Environments (Higher)
- DF44 12: Geography: Environmental Interactions (Higher)
- DF4A 13: Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher)

General comments

Verifiers were pleased to confirm that centres have a very clear understanding of the national standard and apply these effectively when making assessment judgements. It was clearly evident that candidates are being presented at the correct level and that assessors are sharing the standard with candidates.

Only one centre, at Higher, was deemed to be 'Not Accepted'. This centre, after advice from the verification team, provided the necessary evidence for the centre to be deemed 'Accepted'.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All centres that were verified use the appropriate assessment item provided through the National Assessment Bank (NAB) to generate evidence to show a candidate has met the national standard.

When using NAB items, centres must ensure that resources such as maps, graphs and statistical information are current.

Evidence Requirements

Centres demonstrated a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for each of the Units verified.

Centres need to be careful that when they are assessing candidates' evidence they do not inflate the standard or apply the standard inconsistently.

To confirm the judgements of centres the verifier requires to see the full evidence for all candidates.

This should include:

- ◆ the assessment item including any maps or diagrams
- ◆ the detailed marking instructions which are the basis for any assessment judgement

- ◆ a fully marked candidate script clearly indicating where credit for a point has been given and in the view of the assessor whether the candidate has passed or failed the assessment

Administration of assessments

The vast majority of centres assessed candidates to the national standard and were consistent in their judgements across the verification sample.

Centres that followed advice in reports over the years, have adopted a definite approach to marking, suggesting a clear internal verification process is being developed.

It is pleasing to see the growth in the number of centres that have adopted and share their marking/internal verification policy.

Areas of good practice

Based on the evidence submitted to this year's verification event, Verifiers are pleased to confirm that centres:

- ◆ have a good grasp of the verification process
- ◆ are using appropriate assessment items and marking instructions
- ◆ are applying the national standard appropriately at each level
- ◆ mark candidate scripts with ticks allocated at the point of credit
- ◆ in the main, exemplify their assessment decisions with positive comments on candidates' answers — these comments not only assist the candidate in their future learning but provide insight for the verifier into the application of the national standard
- ◆ are increasingly using pupil feedback sheets
- ◆ are introducing a sampling regime to their internal verification process

Some centres are to be commended on a rigorous internal verification process. A robust internal verification process should pick up inaccuracies with marking. It is advisable to involve all staff in this process as this will assist in ensuring uniformity of standards within the centre. Where there was clear evidence of a robust internal verification process, the external verification was straightforward.

Most centres use cross-marking as part of their internal verification process. However, it is very rare to see, in the evidence provided, any comment or indication that the cross-marking has any outcome other than it is being done. Some indication by the two assessors of their final decision would be a useful conclusion to the process. This would be particularly relevant, as indicated in last year's report, where there is a very large discrepancy in the marks awarded or where one assessor places the candidate as a 'Fail' and the other as a 'Pass'. Some indication of how the assessors/centre resolved the variation in judgements would seem appropriate and would provide further insight for verifiers into the assessment decisions of the centre.

Specific areas for improvement

The verification team highlighted the following points for consideration:

Centres should refer to the internal assessment reports that can be found on the SQA's NQ Geography web pages under the heading Internal Assessment Report. These reports contain advice to centres from the past three years.

Centres must submit all the evidence on which a judgement has been made, eg assessment item, Ordnance Survey map, marking scheme and marked candidate response.

Centres are advised to produce and implement an internal verification policy, if they do not already have one in place. Guidance on internal verification can be found using:

http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/InternalVerificationGuideforSQAcentres.pdf

While centres are not directly requested to share this information with the verification team it would allow the verifier to gain insight into the processes, the thinking of the centre, and their decisions. As ever, the inclusion of such additional information is at the discretion of the centre.

Where cross-marking gives a significantly different mark from the original, even if both assessors agree a Pass or Fail, it would be good practice if the assessors/centre provided evidence of the resolution of the discrepancy.

Centres might consider amending/developing their own assessment items where original OS maps are no longer available, have been lost or are in poor condition. Changing the OS map used in a NAB is seen as a minor change as long as the format of the questions replicates the original questions. Such change does not require prior verification. SQA is not able to provide centres with OS maps. SQA purchases maps specifically for use in the examination (see update letters of 6 March 2013 and September 2010).

Centres might also consider amending/developing their own assessment items where there is a need to update and keep assessment items current. Examples include:

- ◆ subject-specific language, in line with changes made within the exams as from the 2010 diet, eg changing terms like ELDC to Developing Country and EMDC to Developed Country (see update letter 1 September 2009)
- ◆ statistical information
- ◆ maps
- ◆ graphs

Centres are reminded that SQA's free prior verification service is available if they are making significant amendments to NABs. It is not compulsory to use this service.