



**National Qualifications 2011
Internal Assessment Report
Politics**

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

National Qualifications (NQ) awards

Titles/levels of NQ awards verified

DV4R 12 Politics (Higher)

NAB DV4R 12 001

NAB DV4R 12 002

NAB DV4R 12 003

General comments

Five centres were centrally verified on the Political Theory Unit with all available NABs having been used between them. The evidence presented indicated that all centres had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standard. All met the standard of validity and reliability, and were fair and consistent. In all centres the NABs used were current and up to date, ensuring that candidate level of attainment satisfied all Outcomes and covered all Performance Criteria.

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

All instruments of assessment used were made up of both short-answer questions and extended-response items from across the entire Unit where candidates had to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and analysis/evaluation. This format helps to ensure that they are used as end-of-Unit assessments.

The candidate responses seen by the verification team indicated that in most cases there was adherence to the process. Where this was the case, the verification team accepted it as indicating awareness by the centre of the link between the instruments of assessment and the Unit specifications within the Course Arrangements document.

Since verification was carried out centrally, it is not possible to comment with any certainty on the extent to which assessors are familiar with the Course Arrangements documents, Unit specifications or instruments of assessment, or to determine the extent and familiarity of assessors with exemplification materials.

In all Unit assessments, Knowledge and Understanding are a major element of the tasks required of candidates. The skills of Analysis and Evaluation are assessed to a lesser extent than in the Course content and are applied to familiar contexts which have been dealt with in the learning and teaching process.

Evidence Requirements

Since verification was carried out centrally, it is not possible to comment with any certainty whether there is a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the Unit. Evidence Requirements apply to each Unit as a whole and therefore apply holistically to all Outcomes of each Unit. With central verification covering only one Unit, candidate written responses (there were no recorded oral responses) to a NAB were used to determine if the centre was robust in determining satisfactory candidate attainment of all Outcomes of the Unit.

It was accepted that individual assessor and centre professionalism ensured that the assessment took the form of a closed-book, supervised test, with a time limit of one hour.

One centre included prelim exam scripts along with NAB material. It should be noted that only NAB material requested is required by the verification team.

Administration of assessments

All instruments of assessment used were at the appropriate Higher level. They were relevant, current and covered the Outcomes and Performance Criteria as required.

All centres used cut-off scores, with assessors giving marks to determine whether candidates achieved the Unit pass.

All assessors marked holistically and correctly determined achievement by providing an overall cut-off score for the instrument of assessment and not for each Outcome. Most also provided marks for each question. When marking holistically, the assessor must ensure that the candidate achieves the cut-off score of 50% to achieve; there is no need to achieve 50% in each Outcome. Since the mark allocation is 30, assessors must ensure that an overall score of 15 is awarded a Pass.

Care must also be taken to ensure that marks allocated to a script reflect the marks in the original instrument of assessment. This situation arose in one centre but was not sufficient to alter the level of candidate achievement.

Most centres are using the instruments of assessment as an end-of-Unit assessment.

Some centres have their own feedback sheets with teacher comments. One centre's included a section for student comments.

There was evidence of some local internal verification and cross-marking procedures.

Areas of good practice/areas for improvement

Many centres are now using cross-marking as standard in their assessment process and this is leading to increased accuracy and consistency within centres and giving less experienced markers more confidence.

Some centres are also using candidate feedback sheets providing detailed written comment on candidate work with areas of strength and next-step advice. One centre's sheet had a section for student comments.

One centre included an internal verification sheet with their submitted material. This is an area of particular creativity and is to be commended.

Specific areas for improvement

Each National Assessment Bank pack contains an instrument of assessment, marking information and guidance for the assessor. These should be used in conjunction with the relevant Unit specifications and Arrangements document. It is advised that assessors should keep up to date with all support materials and Update Letters through SQA's website.

Marking schemes demonstrate good practice and should be fully utilised to ensure that the national standard is applied.

It is good practice for assessors to give marks for each individual question while still marking holistically. However, care must be taken to ensure that marks allocated to a script reflect the marks in the original instrument of assessment.

It is recommended that all centres adopt internal verification and cross-marking procedures. Where a centre has only one qualified assessor, consideration should be given to working with a colleague from a neighbouring centre.