



**National Qualifications 2014
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) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

Political Theory	DV4R 12
Political Structures	DV4T 12
Political Representation	DV4V 12

General comments

Ten centres were verified and the evidence presented indicated that all centres had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards. All met the standard of validity and reliability, and were fair and consistent. All centres used the current, revised Version 2 NABs and this ensured that candidates' levels of attainment satisfied all relevant Outcomes and covered all relevant Performance Criteria.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

All National Assessment Bank instruments of assessment used were made up of both short-answer questions and extended-response items from across the relevant Units where candidates had to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and analysis/evaluation. This format helps to facilitate their use as end-of-Unit assessments.

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

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

Evidence Requirements apply to each Unit as a whole and therefore apply holistically to all Outcomes of each Unit. Verification covered three Units, and 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 relevant Unit. All centres verified demonstrated a clear understanding of these requirements.

The purpose of verification is to confirm that individual centres are interpreting standards correctly, and that they have in place an internal verification system

that is used consistently and is both robust and rigorous. Centres are reminded that there needs to be evidence submitted that the relevant Performance Criteria are being interpreted consistently, and that judgements are consistent between candidates — centres need to show that they are assessing their candidates in line with national standards and that all assessors of a Unit are assessing to the same standard.

This ensures that national standards are being applied by all centres and allows the verification team to further ensure that consistent and reliable assessment decisions are being made nationally in accordance with standards. It also allows the team to confirm that internal verification is working effectively, so that consistent and reliable assessment decisions are being applied within each centre.

Administration of assessments

All instruments of assessment used were at the appropriate SCQF level 6. 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. All centres also provided marks for each question. When marking holistically, the assessor must ensure that the candidate achieves the cut-off score of 50 per cent to achieve; there is no need to achieve 50 per cent in each Outcome.

All centres appear to be using the instruments of assessment as an end-of-Unit assessment as recommended.

Since verification was carried out centrally, it was accepted that individual assessor and centre professionalism ensured that the assessment was carried out under controlled conditions with evidence being obtained under supervision and administered as an unseen and closed-book assessment, with one hour being allocated for completion thus ensuring reliability and credibility.

Areas of good practice

All centres used 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.

Centres have clearly acted on previous advice given by the verification team as there is evidence of an increased number of centres using their own candidate feedback sheets providing detailed written comment on candidate work with areas of strength and next-step advice. Some centres' sheets had a section for both assessor and student comments.

Some centres included an internal verification sheet with their submitted material and one centre provided a grid for recording assessor comments with a breakdown of the question with marks. This is an area of particular creativity and is to be commended. There was also evidence of some local internal verification and cross-marking procedures.

These approaches to local internal verification and cross-marking procedures are helping to ensure that:

- ◆ assessment instruments being used are being used correctly and in line with the assessment specification
- ◆ assessors of a Unit are assessing to the same standard
- ◆ assessment decisions are reliable
- ◆ relevant Performance Criteria are being interpreted consistently, and judgements are consistent between candidates

Specific areas for improvement

National Assessment Bank packs contain instruments of assessment, marking guidelines and other useful information relating to internal assessment as 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 national standards are 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.

Centres are advised that when submitting material for verification, care is taken to ensure that on the Verification Sample Form FVS00 they should only complete the Unit Column and not the Course Column. In column A of the Unit Column they should insert the candidates result with P, F or W and not their mark. Column B should only be used if a candidate has changed level, this new level should be inserted in column B.

Centres should also complete the box at the bottom under 'Unit Verification Only' by indicating which NAB has been used to assess which candidates.

Note:

- ◆ Each Unit has 20 marks.
- ◆ In the Political Representation NAB, the Outcome 2 question, Analyse and Evaluate Electoral Data, is allocated 6 marks and the two Outcome 1 essay questions, Demonstrate Knowledge and Understanding of Representation and Electoral Systems, are allocated 7 marks each.
- ◆ In the Political Structures and Political Theory NABs, there are two questions each worth ten marks.
- ◆ Assessors may use a simple pass/fail system to record achievement. Alternatively, they may use marks and set cut-off scores. When using cut-off scores to determine whether a candidate has, or has not, achieved a Unit pass, a score of 50 per cent should be used — ie 10/20. Marking should be holistic, ie the candidate must simply achieve the cut-off score of 50 per cent to pass; they are not required to achieve 50 per cent in each Outcome. As the mark allocation is 20 marks, a score of 10 or above constitutes a pass.