



**National Qualifications 2016
Internal Assessment Report
Scottish Studies**

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:

HY3P 43 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 3)

HY3P 44 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 4)

HY3P 45 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 5)

HY3P 46 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 6)

General comments

Verification visits were made to eight centres during March/April 2016. Verifiers are pleased to confirm that the majority of these centres had a clear understanding of the national standard. One centre was accepted after review; this centre reacted positively to advice given and undertook further work with candidates to bring them up to the required standard. Verification samples included candidate evidence from levels 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Dialogue with centre staff enhanced the verification process and allowed verifiers to more easily ascertain the reasons behind assessment decisions.

A variety of activities were presented to the verification team; centres were advised to ensure that the strengths of individual candidates were considered in choice of activity. Candidates were, in the main, presented at the correct level; centres were able to use verification visits to seek advice where there was debate.

The flexibility of the Scottish Studies Award should be seriously considered by senior leadership as a means of securing additional NQs for candidates with different ranges of ability and through a variety of pathways.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In general, centres were using a full range of appropriate SQA documentation to support candidates to reach the national standard.

Evidence requirements

Evidence requirements were clearly understood by most centres. Use of the candidate and assessor checklists is crucial to document assessment decisions. Comments added to assessor checklists proved to be particularly helpful to verifiers; these are not mandatory but significantly add to the verifier's understanding of the assessment of individual candidate evidence.

Administration of assessments

Centres had judged candidate evidence to the national standard effectively in most cases. Visiting verification appeared to be helpful in terms of confirming that

the correct decisions had been taken as well as allowing centre staff to adjust levels, in some cases, following discussion.

Evidence of internal verification varied; some centres simply provided a copy of a whole-school policy while others demonstrated evidence of robust quality assurance procedures specific to the Scotland in Focus Unit.

Areas of good practice

Based on evidence seen during visiting verification this year, verifiers are pleased to confirm that:

- ◆ most centres were using published, or amended, candidate and assessor checklists with detailed comments; this was enhanced by dialogue with staff during visits by adding clarity to reasons behind assessment decisions
- ◆ the logbook approach used by some centres often helped to confirm assessment judgements; visits gave the opportunity for suggested streamlining of these to improve their effectiveness
- ◆ use of a candidate brief which details what is expected of candidates is to be commended; this was often reported to be supplemented effectively by direct dialogue with candidates to tailor the activity to their specific skills
- ◆ where a general introductory unit is in place, this can very effectively broaden knowledge of Scotland prior to supporting individual candidate choice of topic and making suggestions about appropriate activities. For example, this might cover general study of Scottish Landscapes, Writers or Artists with class activities prior to candidates choosing the Scottish focus for their research and project
- ◆ centres are to be commended where candidates have been motivated through a focus on their personal interests/skills in terms of topic and activity
- ◆ evidence of a strong 'team approach' with effective leadership has proved invaluable in delivering the NQ; this is especially valid where staff invest collectively in the processes involved
- ◆ candidates can successfully work collaboratively with others although there needs to be awareness of how this can impact on individual assessment evidence; centres must take appropriate steps to ensure that all candidates provide evidence of their own learning
- ◆ use of a holistic approach to assessment means that candidates need not be adversely penalised for requiring some level of support during completion of the Scotland in Focus unit
- ◆ where internal verification procedures had been applied to candidate evidence, specific comments were particularly useful; again dialogue with staff concerned often revealed that detailed debate/discussion had helped in assessment judgements and also to ensure that national standards had been consistently adhered to
- ◆ the practice of interviewing/questioning candidates to encourage effective selection and analysis of information as well as demonstrate that knowledge of Scotland has been broadened is to be commended; although dialogue

allowed this to be ascertained by verifiers, it is also useful if centres include comment on assessor checklists

- ◆ centres are encouraged to continue to give advice to candidates to allow assessment at a higher level; candidates should undertake additional analysis, reflection or generation of further evidence on what has been learned about the Scottish Focus
- ◆ centres were able to use verification visits positively to ask advice and gain confidence in their assessment judgements

Specific areas for improvement

The verification team highlighted the following points for consideration:

- ◆ centres are advised to use candidate and assessor checklists; an indication of the level of support given to candidates should be clearly documented in assessor checklist wherever possible
- ◆ candidates should be encouraged to undertake different activities to match to their individual skills; whilst written reports are entirely acceptable, other forms of product, eg artwork, electronic presentation, talk to peers, interview, group debate, drama production are also valid to allow candidates to demonstrate that they have broadened their knowledge of Scotland
- ◆ aim(s) should always be clearly stated either in the activity or on the candidate checklist; candidates should be encouraged to revisit and amend aims as required in the light of their initial findings
- ◆ appropriate support could be offered to candidates at level 4 by requesting that they select aims from a list or by providing sample aims
- ◆ candidates need to demonstrate that they have broadened their knowledge of Scotland through research and analysis of findings; personal knowledge is not recognised as a source
- ◆ use of a variety of types of sources is preferred; candidates could be encouraged to use books, TV documentaries, interviews and surveys etc as well as internet sources
- ◆ candidates should be encouraged to ensure that specific sources are clearly identified either on the candidate checklist or in a detailed bibliography
- ◆ for levels 4 (and above) candidates must ensure that learning is identified in some detail; more basic information can only be assessed at level 3
- ◆ analysis in some form is essential for candidates to be able to achieve at level 5
- ◆ for level 6 it is important that candidates fulfil assessment standard 2.3; this must include reflection on the process and the effectiveness of their chosen activity
- ◆ at level 6 it is important that candidates fully analyse material in order to meet assessment standards; it is recommended that detailed analysis/evaluation is included throughout their method of communication
- ◆ where candidates have created an electronic presentation assessor notes on performance are advised to add weight to assessment judgements

- ◆ graphics and illustrative materials should be encouraged as methods of processing information; if integrated/used effectively within the product these can enhance candidate work in terms of analysis
- ◆ centres must clearly instruct candidates to express information in their own words and that material should not be lifted directly from source unless acknowledged; centres are advised to enact a stringent approach to avoid plagiarism
- ◆ evidence of the internal verification process should be clearly indicated to ensure that centres have a rigorous approach to the assessment process; this should be demonstrated through discussion at the verification visit as well as availability of policy