



**National Qualifications 2014  
Internal Assessment Report  
Access 3 Social Subjects**

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

# National Courses

Access 3 Social Subjects

## General comments

In the small sample verified this year, the general standard of work was entirely appropriate to Access 3 and there were several excellent examples of candidates working independently and providing a very satisfactory standard of response. National standards had been applied appropriately and the results were Accepted.

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

Submissions reflected familiarity with the Arrangements, with Courses appropriately constructed. There were no instances this year of centres using key ideas that were not current. The requirement to use at least four different sources seemed to be well understood, with a variety of texts, DVDs, booklets or primary sources by way of survey, visit or interview.

There were no submissions that were 'Not Accepted' at initial verification because of a failure to submit sufficient evidence of Course completion: because of invalid assessment instruments; because of a failure by schools to meet Unit specifications; or because of candidates failing to demonstrate sufficient attainment. This is a welcome improvement on last year, when the figure for failure to submit sufficient evidence was 20%.

## Evidence Requirements

Albeit that it is based on a small sample, the above suggests that the problem, evident for some years now, of confusion over the Unit Evidence Requirements, has receded. It may be that the following advice, issued in 2012, was contributory:

*Centres should ensure that they are using the current Arrangements (Fourth edition, published March 2006). Centres should note that the 'Candidate folio' (see p.21 of the Arrangements) refers to the work undertaken by the candidate during the Course and is distinct from the assessment end-product. There should be evidence of coursework submitted for each candidate. In order to minimise 'Not Accepted' decisions, centres should consult last year's Internal Assessment Report (available on the Access 3 Social Subjects page of the SQA website) for further guidance prior to submitting pupils' work.*

Most presenting centres submit jotter or booklet work as the Course evidence. Where the work leading up to a presentation is in the form of rough work — mind maps, outline plans, teacher feedback, etc, centres should be encouraged to submit this rough work as it is precisely this kind of evidence that tracks the

process and progress of the exercise. This was exemplified in this year's submissions, where teacher comment on class discussion and other activities complemented the written pupil work.

It is perhaps worth repeating that there should be evidence in the coursework that the four stated sources of information have been used.

### **Administration of assessments**

The use of the assessment template provided by SQA is not mandatory, but it is recommended. These templates were revised in 2006 with the intention of obviating some of the more frequent reasons for submissions being 'Not Accepted'. It should ensure that it is clear to the verifier which four sources of information are being used, which decisions are being made, which contrasts are being given, etc.

All submissions this year made use of these assessment templates. Centres are advised to use the revised template. There were no problems this year in accepting the given sources as valid.

Candidates should be encouraged to write full answers, eg to state a conclusion and give the reasoning for that in more than just a line or two of writing.

Although Access 3 is pitched at a very basic level, there is still a need for rigour in marking the responses. If a contrast is being made, it cannot be made by describing just one of the entities being compared. A decision should not just be a repetition of the main thing the candidate learned about a given key idea. This year's submissions showed no evidence of incorrect marking of the assessment or of the acceptance of work that was sub-standard. It was also clear that cross-marking had taken place prior to forwarding for verification. This is good practice and is to be commended.

The question of identical responses from candidates did not arise this year. In all cases, it was clear that responses had been formulated by the candidates, even when they were dealing with very similar territory. As indicated above, the more background or comment given by the teacher in charge, the easier it is to confirm the centre's judgement, especially in cases where submissions are very similar. Background information, supplied by the teacher, can help, as the verifier will be looking for evidence of some kind of independent working from the candidate. It may be that the teacher in charge has had to tightly structure a decision-making exercise, perhaps with multiple choice options, which may have led to identical responses. A commentary on this and perhaps the inclusion of the exercise which produced the identical responses would be advantageous and would obviate any suspicion that the candidates were simply copying out conclusions given by the teacher — a circumstance which would have to result in a 'Not Accepted' verdict. In the best submissions, it is clear that candidates have been encouraged to formulate their submissions in their own words, as far as possible, avoiding wholesale lifts from sources. (See also comments on identically-worded submissions in reports from 2005 to 2012.)

## Areas of good practice

Background comment from the presenting centres on aspects of the assessment has been commended above. Sometimes it is not easy for the verifier to identify from the coursework exactly where the coverage of the required concepts lies, or perhaps where the 'Contrasts' are being made. Some centres include a Course outline identifying this for the verifier. Others include an outline of the Unit, detailing key ideas, sources and answers that candidates might be expected to give. This is helpful and commended. The more information that presenting centres provide about the Course, the circumstances of the NAB, the materials provided for the pupils, the reasons for candidates failing to gain a pass etc, the easier it is for the verifier to accept the centre's results. The inclusion from some centres of an assessment feedback sheet provided for the candidates was helpful and is commended. Increasingly, centres are including additional information such as that exemplified above and this is greatly appreciated.

Many centres are meticulous in the detail they provide and this is welcomed and commended. Centres which provide inadequate information can find that their final results are delayed and that they have to provide the additional information before verification can proceed. This can affect some candidates' chances of passing (see below — 'Delayed verification').

Verifiers have commented positively on the variety of presentational techniques in evidence in submissions — graphs of various forms, posters, maps, PowerPoints (both in printed-off form and on memory stick) etc, as well as evidence of cross-curricular links being embedded in the Units. Likewise, they recognised the considerable effort that was evidently put into designing many of the Courses, the attempts to make the Course materials appropriate to the level, and the inclusion of outside visits or visiting speakers in several instances.

It would be gratifying if the following feedback, sent to one presenting centre this year, became a template for every verification outcome.

*The information provided by the presenting centre was exemplary and made verification a very straightforward procedure. An outline of the Course structure was provided, indicating the key ideas used and how these related to the tasks set. Sources were listed and explained (including clarification as to why the teacher was listed as a source); the degree of teacher help was indicated; tasks, such as discussion, which would not show up in the written evidence, were mentioned; PowerPoint presentations were printed off for inclusion and assessment was cross-checked prior to submission. The manner in which this was set out for the verifier cannot be commended highly enough.*

*The tasks set and the standard of work was appropriate to Access 3 and there was a pleasing variation in candidate response even though the study was tightly structured.*

## **Specific areas for improvement**

### **Delayed verification**

This has not been an issue this year, but it seems sensible to retain the following advice from last year's report. Any delay in the verification process, as in a 'Not Accepted' decision being issued at initial verification, can result in failure for some candidates, even if the majority eventually passes subsequent to re-submission of the evidence. This can occur where the candidates themselves are required to make amendments to the submission. As the exam season approaches, or gets underway, many Access 3 candidates can be elusive. If the Access 3 presentation group is small, as is often the case, a handful of absent candidates in a resubmitted bundle, left as a 'Pass' by the presenting centre, could provoke an unacceptable degree of discrepancy between the centre results and the verifier, resulting in a 'Not Accepted' decision for the whole group. In these circumstances, the wisest course is to withdraw the absent candidates prior to re-submission.

Verification is timetabled to allow for a return of materials to presenting centres for amendment and re-submission where necessary whilst pupils are still in schools (this year's central verification was scheduled for 1 April). Late submissions which miss central verification will inevitably be subject to delay, which may make it very difficult for centres to gather additional evidence or make amendments. This emphasises the need for the teacher in charge to ensure that he/she is familiar with the demands of the Course and that all the necessary evidence is supplied for verification at the first time of asking (likewise, this applies to the inclusion of pro formas and staff signatures).

### **Retention of evidence**

It is absolutely essential that coursework accumulated during the Course is retained by the teacher in charge and safely held against the possibility of being called in for verification. It is not possible to accord an 'Accepted' verdict in the absence of coursework, regardless of the apparent standards evidenced by the assessments (see 'Evidence Requirements', above).

### **PowerPoint submissions**

It has been made clear in previous reports that submissions are welcomed in a wide variety of formats. We are happy to work from disks or memory sticks, but most centres tend to print off the material and this is probably easier to handle. Teachers should ensure that maps and pictures which are integral to the submission are actually displayed in the print-off.