

Our ref: History Update 2002

04 November 2002

To: SQA Co-ordinator
Secondary Schools and FE Colleges

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None – update/information only

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Dear Colleague

History – Update Newsletter, 2002

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for History

Reports of Principal Assessors and Senior Moderator

The full reports are on the SQA web-site (www.sqa.org.uk). The main points of feedback are summarised below. The National Rating (pre-appeal) compares results for candidates in one subject with results in all subjects they entered; the ideal is zero, indicating an appropriate range of awards. Ratings of + or – 0.50 or more may signal concern over the ease or difficulty respectively of the qualification.

Standard Grade (National Rating - 0.11)

Candidates must always be aware of which Unit Contexts they are to tackle.

Foundation

Candidates need to be made aware of the requirements of an ES1 (source evaluation) item and how to respond effectively to the new prompt.

General

Candidates must respond to an ES1 item in terms of authorship, contemporaneity, purpose, bias etc as well as content. Candidates should response to an ES2 (source comparison) item in terms of a developed comparison, eg:

The source agree that tanks were used against barbed wire (= a simple comparison) as Source C shows a tank about to come up to some wire and Source D says they were used against entanglements of barbed wire (= a development of the above simple comparison).

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Candidates must be fully aware of the requirements not to present evidence as a list or in bullet point or in the form of a table or chart unless in response to an ES5 (evidence selection and organisation) item.

Credit

Candidates must be aware of the requirements of an 8 mark extended response. Up to 2 process marks may be deducted for a failure to produce an introduction and/or a conclusion or the omission of structured paragraphs. This instruction will be made explicit in the 2004 paper. A 'describe' question will normally examine changes and require a conclusion.

Candidates need to be made aware of the requirements of an ES1 (source evaluation) item and how to respond effectively to the demands of this item through the effective and appropriate adaptation of any rehearsed formula. Candidates should be familiar with the reasons why a secondary source, such as the work of an eminent historian, is valuable historical evidence.

Candidates should be aware of the nature of a developed point of comparison.

Candidates should always write in properly constructed sentences and not through the use of lists, bullet points or tables, except in a response to an ES5 (selection and organisation of evidence) item.

Intermediate (NR Int 1 0.78, Int 2 0.09)

Intermediate 1

Source evaluation questions require reference to other features apart from the content of sources. Centres should encourage candidates to include at least one point of recall in their answers to the 'describe' and 'explain' questions.

Intermediate 2

Extended Response:

- ◆ Two main areas to emphasise are the desirability of Extended Responses being based on a question rather than a short statement, candidates should use the full 150 words in their plans.

Examination:

- ◆ Three points worthy of emphasis are when answering evaluation questions on the usefulness/reliability of sources, candidates should emphasise other factors apart from source content; candidates should be given as many opportunities as possible to improve recalled knowledge of key events; and candidates should be given as many opportunities as possible to practice answering the type of questions which appear in the examination.

However, points 1, 2 and 3 do not detract from an overall good level of performance.

Centres are reminded that the 2003 examination will be out of 50, unweighted, as intimated in the NQ Review letter of 18 June 2002.

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Higher (NR 0.10)

The key points to feed back are:

- ◆ In the Extended Essay, it is vital that candidates' choices of title are monitored carefully to ensure that they select an issue appropriate to their age and ability and that the question is phrased in a way that will guide research and encourage the writing of a discursive rather than a descriptive essay.
- ◆ There are instances where the Extended Essay was approached as a 'class essay'. This is against the spirit of the Essay and centres are advised to discontinue the practice and allow candidates their choice of topic. Where 'class essays' were submitted marks in such centres tended to be similar, perhaps to the disadvantage of able candidates. Moreover, 'class essays' may raise suspicions of malpractice.
- ◆ In Paper 1, there has been pleasing progress in developing essay skills and understanding of essay structure. Continued work on these aspects will help to improve standards further.
- ◆ In Paper 2, students should be encouraged to use the source and recalled evidence to focus on what the question asks them to *do*. They should be discouraged from repetitious formulae about source provenance, which distort answers and prevent candidates from answering the question asked.
- ◆ In source comparison questions, specific comparisons or contrasts between points made in each source and on the overall views of the authors are required, not summaries or paraphrases of sources followed by a statement alleging agreement or disagreement.

Advanced Higher (NR 0.15)

Points about Dissertations

The simple presentation of the dissertations in just the cellophane packet was appreciated by markers, who found them easier to handle.

With respect to the advance checking of the dissertation titles, centres should not submit titles that are on the list, those that are a close paraphrase of those on the list, or ones that are outside the chronological boundaries of the course descriptor.

One general recommendation is to steer the candidate away from titles that delve into the psychology of the historical personality concerned. There have been some truly dire attempts to explain Hitler's actions by his upbringing. Equally, Stalin's rise to power should largely be seen in terms of the 1920s; there is only so much mileage in his life in the seminary.

Pictures put in simply as illustrations have little value in earning marks at this level.

In the external examination, candidates do not need to spend time writing the essay title at the top of their page at the start of the essay; just writing the essay number will do.

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Presentations across several fields of study

There is still serious worry about centres with small entries presenting candidates across a variety of different fields. It may be that these are weaker candidates, who like the idea of picking whichever field they like, but it is felt the results of these centres could be improved by concentrating on the teaching and resourcing of one field for that particular year group.

Senior Moderator' Report

Generally the candidates were entered at an appropriate level. Indeed, many candidates displayed confidence and ability in their answers. In the majority of cases, candidate scripts were clearly marked and provided candidates with useful feedback as to where they had achieved PCs or where their performance was weak. This also helped with the moderation process. Where scripts were not marked, moderation took longer and there was an impression that candidates were not as confident in their answering techniques.

Essays for both Higher and Intermediate 2 were, in the vast majority of cases, well done and candidates demonstrated that they understood not only the course content but how to structure essays and to include an appropriate amount of content. Source based answers for Higher and Intermediate 2 tended to be less well managed. There were some very good candidates but there were a number who relied too heavily on using presented source material and who were weak on recall – especially in using evidence which was not referred to in the source

The following points should also be noted:

1 Using NABs to construct Prelims

Higher: There is no problem if centres use NABs to make up a Higher Prelim except candidates are allowed significantly less time for the Prelim than the Arrangements allow for an Internal Assessment. That may affect candidate performance although this did not appear to be the case in the moderation sample. The difference in times may cause problems if centres want to use NAB evidence for appeals.

Intermediate 2: There is a significant difference between the internal and external assessments which makes it difficult to combine NABs to make a Prelim. In particular, for Internal Assessment the eight mark essay requires evidence to be taken from the source *and* from recall. Internal Assessment requires candidates to evaluate a source *and* to undertake a source comparison. For that reason it is not acceptable to use a Prelim to conduct Internal Assessment. However, it is possible for candidates to complete the necessary work at a later date and for centres to submit those answers along with the Prelim paper. It is, however, necessary to bear in mind that questions must relate to a different part of the syllabus.

2 Past papers are not acceptable as Instruments of Assessment because they are in the public domain.

3 3 Source Comparison: Weaker candidates often summarised the content of one source in one paragraph and the content of the second course in a second paragraph and then wrote a concluding sentence indicating that the sources agreed/disagreed. They, however, had not undertaken any comparison in their answer and failed to achieve this Outcome. Candidates should identify points of comparison and use evidence from each source to substantiate each comparison. This is clearly indicated in the Marking Instructions for the External Exam.

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- 4 Eight Mark Essays for Intermediate 2: While candidates understood how to structure their answers there were a number of instances where the introduction was minimal and the conclusion was independent of any evidence the candidate used in the essay. A second area of concern was where candidates simply listed points in their answer and made no effort to develop the point and to use the evidence to answer the question. This produced very short answers which did not demonstrate that the candidate had achieved that Outcome.

National Assessment Bank

Further NABs are being revised for the Higher Special Topic, and will be issued as they come the process. These will contain prompts as in the revised items already issued. These prompts will also appear in the 2003 external examination. The revised NABs for the Higher Special Topic may hence be used as a part of a preliminary examination.

It is emphasised most strongly that NAB materials must be kept secure. Under no circumstances should they be used in commercial revision classes, or distributed to candidates/students outwith controlled assessment conditions.

Appeals

Advice on evidence for appeals was issued in last year's circular. In sum, while other evidence is considered in support of an appeal, the most robust evidence is an unseen assessment, mirroring the demands of the external examination. A preliminary examination fits this requirement admirably. Candidate evidence should be accompanied by the instrument(s) of assessment and the associated marking instructions and cut-off scores used.

Centres are reminded that appeal results are final.

Markers

There is widespread consensus that becoming a marker for SQA is amongst the best forms of in-service training there is, and provides a unique insight into the application of national standards. Entry figures are far from final, but some vacancies may exist at Standard Grade, and for both papers at Higher (though we aim to fill these with experienced Credit markers). Those interested, with three years' presentation experience in the subject, should contact Catherine Inglis in our Appointments Section (direct line: 0131 561 6865) for an application pack. These packs were also distributed to centres.

SQA is most grateful to its present markers and to its other appointees, especially examining teams, for their efforts in securing the success of the 2002 examination diet.

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Review of National Qualifications

As intimated in the NQ Review update in June 2002, all short- and medium- term recommendations have been implemented, apart from the Recommendation 8, which formed part of the recent consultation. Investigation has confirmed that no further reductions in internal assessment are possible in relation to duplicated outcomes at Higher and Intermediate.

Results of National Consultation

Thanks are due to those who responded. The returns are being analysed, and the outcomes will be considered later in the month by an augmented Assessment Panel. The findings, once validated in December, will be published in a separate NQ Review update.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Cheyne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'C'.

Larry Cheyne
Qualifications Manager