

Geography



This update contains information relevant to your subject and details of the support available to you.

We also publish updates on the new National Courses in the 'Updates and Announcements' section of the relevant [subject pages](#). You may find it useful to make regular use of our subject pages, where you will find support documents, answers to common questions, and links to other areas of interest. You can also sign up for 'My Alerts', SQA's e-mail update service, that notifies you whenever content you are interested in is added or updated on our website. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/myalerts to register.

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Qualifications Manager

The Qualifications Team

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Key messages from Diet 2014-15

Course Reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual Course Reports for the subject(s) and levels you are teaching. These reports are produced following the annual diet of exams and are published by the end of October. The reports provide informed and valuable comment on the assessment for each component in the Course, and include a summary of:

- candidate performance in the Course assessment
- areas in which candidates performed well
- areas which candidates found demanding

The reports also contain advice on preparing future candidates, and statistical data relating to grade boundaries. Course Reports are available from the relevant [subject pages](#) of our website.

Verification Key Messages

Key messages from round 2 of verification in session 2014–15 were published over the summer. They are available from the relevant [subject pages](#), where you can access them from the 'Verification and Course Reports' heading in the 'Assessment Support' section.

Documents and assessment support materials

It is important that you read the full suite of documents for your Course, as well as those relating to assessment, and that you refer to the latest versions.

Information on documents and assessment support materials for National 1 to Advanced Higher can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/supportdocuments

National 3 to Higher documents

As communicated in our May 2015 and August 2015 subject updates, revisions were made to the Outcomes and Assessment Standards in National 3 to Higher **Unit Specifications**. These have been refined to:

- provide clarity on the minimum standard required
- ease the assessment load on candidates and centres

In addition, minor changes have been made to the mandatory information in the National 5 and Higher Course Assessment Specifications to provide clarity.

Updated **Unit Specifications** and **Course Assessment Specifications** are available now on our website for:

- Higher Geography Course Assessment Specification
- National 5 Geography Course Assessment Specification
- National 3 to Higher Unit Specifications (Geography: Global Issues)
- National 3 to Higher Unit Specifications (Geography: Physical Environments)
- National 3 to Higher Unit Specifications (Geography: Human Environments)

Centres are encouraged to make sure that they are using the current versions of these documents.

National 3 to Higher Unit assessment support

In August 2015, we updated some Unit assessment support materials for National 3 to Higher. This follows the revisions to Unit Specifications that were made in April 2015, and feedback gathered from centres during session 2014–15.

Please refer to the 'Notification of Changes' tables for your curricular area, as these provide a summary of the changes to each document and include details of the revised version numbers. These are available from www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges

The use of SQA-produced Unit assessments is not mandatory; however, if you are using them, we strongly encourage you to use the most up-to-date versions. Please note that you may continue to use existing versions of the Unit assessments until the end of session 2015-16 and both will be accepted for verification purposes.

The updated Unit assessment support materials are available from our secure website and you can arrange access to them through your SQA Co-ordinator.

Further information on the reasons for the changes to Unit assessment support, and guidance on the next steps to take, is provided below. This information was also communicated to centres in August 2015.

Subject	Reason for change to Unit assessment support	Next steps for centres
National 3–Higher Geography (All Unit assessment support packs except for the Added Value Unit at National 4)	These changes reflect amendments which have been made to the Unit Specifications. There were made to improve clarity and to reduce the amount of assessment evidence required.	Centres are advised to download new copies of the revised documents.

To find out more about using our Unit assessment support packs, visit www.sqa.org.uk/unitassessment

National 5 Coursework information

Centres should familiarise themselves with changes that have been made to the information on marking the National 5 Geography assignment within the **Course Assessment Task**. This document is available on our secure website. In particular, centres should note that in Section B of the Marking Instructions, a maximum of 4 marks is available for description.

These changes have been made to:

- provide clarity to markers, candidates and centres
- ensure fairness to all candidates
- allow adequate discrimination between candidates of different abilities

The General Assessment Information and the Instructions to Candidates documents have also been updated to reflect these changes.

Higher Coursework information

Advice relating to the Higher Coursework assignment has been updated to remind centres that candidates should not copy large chunks of information from their Processed Information. Changes have also been made to the information on marking the Higher Geography assignment within the Course Assessment Task. This document is available on our secure website. In particular, centres should note that mark allocations have been changed as follows:

- the marks available for drawing on knowledge and understanding of the geographical topic or issue (Section C) have been reduced to 6 marks
- the marks available for analysing information (Section D) have been increased to 8 marks

Advanced Higher documents

The following Unit Assessment Support packs have been produced:

Package 1

- Unit-by-Unit approach covering the *Geographical Skills* Unit
- Unit-by-Unit approach covering the *Geographical Issues* Unit

Package 2

- Unit-by-Unit approach covering the *Geographical Skills* Unit
- Unit-by-Unit approach covering the *Geographical Issues* Unit

Package 3

- Unit-by-Unit approach covering the *Geographical Skills* Unit
- Unit-by-Unit approach covering the *Geographical Issues* Unit

Advanced Higher Coursework

The information relating to the Advanced Higher project–folio was updated in September 2015. Advice relating to the Geographical Study and the Geographical Issues essay has been updated to inform centres that a penalty will be applied for exceeding the word count.

You can view the Notification of changes spreadsheets for National 3 to Higher, and Advanced Higher at www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges

Advanced Higher Exemplar Question Papers

In December 2015, we will publish Exemplar Question Papers for all new Advanced Higher Courses that include a question paper as part of the Course assessment.

Coming up in 2015–16

Understanding Standards 2015–16

From the end of October 2015, we will publish further Understanding Standards packs for National 1 to Higher. These packs contain candidate evidence and commentaries for Unit assessment and internally assessed components of Course assessment.

From November 2015 to January 2016, we will hold subject-specific Understanding Standards events for teachers and lecturers. The main focus of these events will be on Course assessment at Higher. Understanding Standards events for Higher Geography will take place on the following dates:

- 3 November (Glasgow)
 - 5 November (Perth)
 - 10 November (Edinburgh)
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Materials from the recent Nominee training events will also be published on our website.

For more information, visit www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards

Details of the Understanding Standards materials for each subject are available from the [subject pages](#)

National 4 Added Value Units

You now have the option of developing your own National 4 Added Value Unit assessments for use with candidates.

Please note that this is not a requirement and you can continue to use SQA-produced Added Value Unit assessments. Most SQA-produced Added Value Unit assessments already allow considerable flexibility in the choice of a context for the assessment, while some provide a context that you can change.

If you choose to develop your own Added Value Unit assessment, we strongly advise submitting it to us for prior verification before using it with candidates.

Further information can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/unitassessment

Marker recruitment opportunities for 2016

We are now accepting Marker applications from teaching professionals to contribute to the 2016 examination diet. If you are interested in joining us as a Marker please visit the [appointee opportunities](#) section of our website where you will find a marker advert for all subjects and levels, with details of the role.

Our current Markers will confirm to you that the experience of marking helps increase their awareness of the demands of Course assessment and that marking is excellent professional and personal development.

Please check www.sqa.org.uk/appointees regularly for other appointee opportunities which may be of interest to you.

Contact us

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