

Biology, Human Biology and Science



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](#). I would encourage you 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.

I hope you find the following update helpful, and please contact me if you have any questions.

Jonathan Gillies
Qualifications Manager

The Qualifications Team

Jonathan Gillies
Qualifications Manager

Aneta Morrison
Qualifications Officer

Lynn Wallwork
Qualifications Co-ordinator

Jackie Breakenridge
Subject Implementation Manager

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.

Finalised 2015 Marking Instructions

The finalised 2015 Marking Instructions for Biology and Human Biology have been published on the [past papers](#) section 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 3 to Advanced Higher can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/supportdocuments

National 3 to Higher documents

As we communicated in our May 2015 subject update, we updated some documents for National 4, National 5 and Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology for use in session 2015–16. These updates were made in April and May 2015.

You can find details of these revisions in the [May 2015 subject update](#)

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.

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 the [August 2015 subject update](#)

| Subject | Reason for change | Next steps for centres |
|--|--|--|
| National 4 Science | The Unit assessment support pack for Science National 4 Added Value Unit has been updated in order to clarify wording, assessment conditions and marking guidance. | Centres are advised to download new copies of the revised document. |
| National 3 to Higher Biology, and Higher Human Biology | The Unit assessment support packs for Biology and Human Biology have been updated in order to clarify wording, assessment conditions and marking guidance. | Centres are advised to download new copies of the revised documents. |

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

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

National 5 and Higher Coursework information

The National 5 and Higher Biology, and Higher Human Biology Assignment Marking Instructions were updated during main Diet 2015 to provide further clarity to assist Markers. The National 5 and Higher Biology, and Higher Human Biology Coursework Assessment Task and General Assessment Information documents have been updated to reflect these revisions, and they have also been updated to clarify assessment conditions.

Advanced Higher

In April and May 2015, we updated mandatory documents, Course and Unit Support Notes and Unit assessment support for Advanced Higher Biology. Further updates to some of these documents were made in September 2015. The following revisions were made:

| Document | Date of change | Change |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Course Specification | April 2015 | Minor changes to Aims, Skills and Unit Outcomes. |
| Unit Specifications: <i>Biology: Cells and Proteins</i> (H7W5 77) <i>Biology: Organisms and Evolution</i> (H7W6 77) | April 2015 | Significant changes to Outcomes and Assessment Standards. Significant changes to Evidence Requirements. |
| Unit Specification: <i>Investigative Biology</i> (H7W7 77) | April 2015 | Outcome numbering changed and changes to Evidence Requirements (Transfer of evidence). |
| Course Assessment Specification | April 2015; September 2015 | Significant change(s) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course assessment structure • structure and coverage of the Course assessment • clarify mandatory knowledge Minor typographical change. |
| Unit assessment support: Unit-by-Unit, Package 1: <i>Biology: Investigative Biology</i> (H7W7 77) | May 2015; September 2015 | Minor changes to provide clarification; Significant changes to Outcome 2 questions and Marking Instructions to improve quality and validity of assessment. Clarification in assessment grid and marking guidance; minor typographical change. |
| Unit assessment support: Unit-by-Unit, Package 1: <i>Biology: Cells and Proteins</i> (H7W5 77) | September 2015 | Minor changes to provide clarification. |
| Unit assessment support: Unit-by-Unit, Package 2: All Units | May 2015; September 2015 | Minor changes to provide clarification. |
| Unit assessment support: Biology: portfolio approach | September 2015 | Minor change to provide clarification. |
| Specimen Question Paper | September 2015 | Section 1, Question 8: Minor change to stem; Minor amendments to Marking Instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1 — answer changed for Question 7 and Question 8 • Section 2 — Question 11B |

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

Advanced Higher Specimen Question Paper

In September 2015, minor amendments were made to the Advanced Higher Specimen Question Paper which can be accessed from the Biology [subject pages](#)

Advanced Higher Exemplar Question Paper

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

Advice and guidance

Understanding Standards – Audio Presentations

SQA has recently developed audio presentations which give a detailed overview of the standards and assessment for both Unit and Course assessment in Biology and Human Biology. To view the presentations please visit: [Audio Presentations](#)

SQA's Life Sciences blog

A blog for SQA's Life Sciences team was established in May 2015. The blog will update you on all of the latest news and information relating to the work that we do, and the content will cover NQ Biology, Human Biology, Science and HN/SVQ Science.

To view the blog please visit: <http://blogs.sqa.org.uk/lifesciences/>

Coming up in 2015–16

Understanding Standards 2015–16

From the end of October 2015, we will publish further Understanding Standards packs for National 3 to Higher. These packs contain candidate evidence and commentaries for Unit assessment.

From November 2015 to January 2016, we will hold subject-specific Understanding Standards events for teachers and lecturers. Understanding Standards events on Course assessment for Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology will take place on the following dates:

- Friday 6 November 2015 Glasgow
 - Saturday 7 November 2015 Glasgow
 - Friday 20 November 2015 Edinburgh
-

A Nominee training event for Advanced Higher Biology will take place on Tuesday 19 January 2016. Materials from the recent Nominee training events for National 3 to Higher 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](#) of our website.

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.

We are also accepting Senior Team Leader and Team Leader applications in Biology (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) and Human Biology (Higher).

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

We would like to express our gratitude and extend our thanks to all those who have undertaken duties in session 2014–15. We appreciate the work that all the teams carry out and look forward to continuing to work with them during session 2015–16. We extend a special thanks to those who are no longer continuing and wish them well for the future.

Question Paper Briefs

In November 2015, we will publish Question Paper Briefs for the National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Biology Question Papers, and the Higher Human Biology Question Paper.

The Question Paper Briefs will provide information on the structure and make-up of the question papers.

National Qualification Support Teams (NQSTs)

National Qualification Support Teams (NQSTs) are subject-specific stakeholder consultation groups that provide us with feedback on the internal and external assessment of National Qualifications.

These groups communicate through secure online discussion forums and via an annual meeting. The Biology and Science NQSTs were launched in 2014 and we are looking to increase their membership with teachers and lecturers who wish to engage with us on National Qualifications.

For more information and to apply to join the Biology or Science NQST, please visit www.sqa.org.uk/nqst

Contact us

For centre enquiries, please contact our Customer Support Team:

Tel: 0303 333 0330

Fax: 0345 213 5000

E-mail: mycentre@sqa.org.uk

Follow us online

Twitter: [@sganews](https://twitter.com/sganews)

Facebook: [ScottishQualificationsAuthority](https://www.facebook.com/ScottishQualificationsAuthority)

Subscribe to our **YouTube** channel, [SQAonline](https://www.youtube.com/SQAonline)

Subscribe to our **Blog**,

<http://blogs.sqa.org.uk/lifesciences/>