

Moderation Feedback— Central

Assessment Panel:

Computing and Information Systems

Qualification area:

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

Intermediate 1 Computing Studies
Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher
Computing

Central Moderation

General comments on central moderation activity

In addition to the Senior Moderator, 13 moderators were appointed to cover 153 centres, an average of 11.8 centres per moderator. The team work three three-hour sessions on each of days one and two, completing the moderation exercise during the second session of the third day. One moderator was unavailable to work on the third day, another was called back to school for one of the sessions on day two.

At the start of the procedures the team was instructed in aspects of report writing by Mark Hood, the SQA's Moderation Training & Development Manager. The need to provide detailed feedback to all centres, in particular those being categorised as 'Not Accepted', was emphasised.

Specific issues identified

A few centres had misunderstood instructions for substituting evidence in place of candidates who had withdrawn. Some centres failed to provide percentage marks on the Moderation Sample Form entering in some cases 'P' and in others raw scores. One or two centres submitted all assessments from all Units rather than just the coursework needed for moderation. On occasions material was submitted in electronic format rather than paper.

There were major problems with moderating across the three levels — Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher. There were instances of judgements having to be made when there were three or less in the sample at a particular level. According to current guidance this would have meant insufficient evidence to 'Not Accept' the centre at that particular level. This current guidance had to be overruled to ensure that problem centres at AH level could be picked up.

Intermediate 1 Computing Studies

Thirty-four centres were actually moderated for Intermediate 1 Computing Studies with all being accepted. Moderators were working to a tolerance of ± 4 out of a total of 50 marks. There were not major problems associated with the moderation of this material and all centres were 'Accepted'. However moderators are still generally concerned at how simple the required tasks are in relation to what is expected of a Standard Grade General pupil.

Intermediate 2 Computing

Apart from the continuing problem of the generic marking scheme which for some projects is wholly inappropriate there were no major issues arising from the Intermediate 2 moderation. Moderators worked to a tolerance of ± 3 out of a total mark of 42. One centre was asked to carry out a re-mark on all candidates where the work submitted did not reflect the marks awarded. Unfortunately this was a centre with a large number of candidates at this level. However, after some discussion, the teacher fully understood the areas of weakness and accepted the decision.

Higher

- ◆ One hundred and eighteen centres were selected for moderation at Intermediate 2/higher/Advanced Higher levels. Five were not accepted at Higher level. Materials from four of the 118 centres were not available during the moderation event. Moderators worked to a tolerance of ± 2 out of 20 for Higher.

- ◆ After discussion the moderation team agreed to use the same criteria applied during the 2002 moderation to determine the ‘additional’ marks for the Software Development coursework and the Investigation coursework. The final mark awarded was derived from the tables below.

Software Development		Investigation	
26–29	6	20–22	6
30–33	7	23–24	7
34–37	8	25–26	8
38–41	9	27–28	9
42–46	10	29–30–	10

- ◆ Again, the majority of problems arose from assessments with merely checklists, namely those associated with Computer Systems and Artificial Intelligence. It was often impossible to decide how centres had awarded marks out of ten. Since they are not in fact asked to show these marks, this created potential problems where it was necessary to place a ‘Not Accepted’ on the centre. The new NAB4 in Computer Systems has helped considerably in this area.
- ◆ One centre had devised a marking scheme of its own that had not been through prior moderation.
- ◆ Some centres had used the new NAB4 at Higher level but had not used the accompanying cut-offs.
- ◆ The process of moderation should be one of checking that centres have applied the national standards across all candidates. To allow this to happen centres must realise that the evidence they submit should be well documented to allow moderators to see clearly how and why they have allocated marks. The criteria on which decisions have been based must also be clearly stated.
- ◆ A few centres submitted exemplary materials — well prepared, well marked and well annotated. In such cases moderators were encouraged to commend the centre for their care and attention to detail in the feedback process.

Advanced Higher

- ◆ Many of the issues arising during the moderation period related to Advanced Higher. Four centres were ‘Not Accepted’ for AH only. Moderators worked to a tolerance of ± 7 out of a total score of 100.
- ◆ Moderators cannot be expected to have expertise in every area that a candidate is likely to choose for his/her project work. Candidates and centres must therefore ensure that the evidence submitted fully explains what has been done. (In the past many of the issue that arose could be resolved during the visit to the centre.)
- ◆ Too many centres are relying on the exemplars which were issued some years ago. These are well below the expected standard and are therefore misleading. Centres must ensure that candidates’ project work extends well beyond the scope of the Higher course.
- ◆ Several centres did not provide detailed marking schemes showing the breakdown of possible marks. This made the moderator’s task very difficult. In many cases there was also a lack of useful teacher comments which would have clarified questions moderators had as regards why marks were awarded/deducted.

Feedback to centres

Centres presenting candidates at Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 levels might find it useful to remember that these are equivalent to S Grade General and Credit levels (respectively) and that this should be reflected in the standard to work submitted by pupils.

Many of the current difficulties encountered in moderating the Higher level coursework in particular could be eliminated by centres

- ◆ stating clearly the individual marks out of ten awarded to the two pieces of coursework
- ◆ detailing how these marks have been derived especially with work assessed using a checklist.

These are not currently *stated* requirements but would greatly assist moderators in checking the materials submitted and, subsequently, would reduce the frequency of centres being not accepted.

Centres are reminded that they cannot use an amended assessment or marking scheme without prior moderation.

Centres using the new Higher NAB4 assessments **must** apply the cut-offs which accompany these to arrive at the coursework mark out of ten.

All pupil material submitted for moderation should be in paper format. It is inappropriate to submit disks or CDROMs.

It may also be useful for centres to know that moderators consider the following tables to be appropriate to the allocation of marks out of ten from assessment totals in Higher Software Development and Investigations:

Software Development		Investigation	
26–29	6	20–22	6
30–33	7	23–24	7
34–37	8	25–26	8
38–41	9	27–28	9
42–46	10	29–30–	10

Software Development and Computer Programming are areas of significant weakness particularly at Higher and Advanced Higher levels. In general, Analysis & Design lacks sufficient detail and testing could be greatly improved. Candidates must specify their test data along with the expected and actual results, discuss these in detail and provide sample output — obviously from the code submitted.

AH project reports must explain all aspects of what has been done. Candidates are expected to consider real alternative solutions in enough detail to make valued judgements. At present much of the work done in this area is too superficial — in fact it is obviously done as an afterthought — the decision as to how to tackle the project having been made well in advance of this.

Moderators do not re-mark pupils' work. The process of moderation is one of checking that centres have applied the national standards across all candidates. To allow this to happen centres must realise that the evidence they submit **at all levels** should be well documented to allow moderators to see clearly how and why they have allocated marks. The criteria on which decisions have been based must also be clearly stated. This is a particular issue at Advanced Higher level when it is very difficult to moderate where centres have not shown the breakdown of possible marks that they have used.