

SQA

am

The Newsletter for SQA Appointees



**In the spotlight —
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**Question Paper
Operations**

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Electronic Marks Capture





Welcome, and thank you

...for helping to make 2008–09 another very successful year for SQA examinations and qualifications!

Most of our appointees have supported our operations for years. Many have supported the development, assessment and quality assurance of SQA qualifications. But, more importantly, all have provided essential support to centres and candidates.

We would like to say 'thank you' for your commitment and enthusiasm by inviting you to join us at our first ever Appointee Recognition Reception on Tuesday 10 November in Glasgow from 5pm until 7pm.

To join us in this celebration, submit your application for an invitation at am@sqa.org.uk by Tuesday 27 October 2009. Places are limited so please apply soon to avoid disappointment. Places will be allocated on a first come basis.

Looking forward

We are aiming to totally 'refresh' our reserve Marker lists in time for the 2010 examinations diet.

In some subject areas we are continually challenged to recruit additional Markers while in other areas we have long lists of reserves — some of whom have been on the reserve list for many years.

As we move forward, our aim is to provide opportunities for appointees to develop their skills and progress through the appointee levels.

If you have any colleagues or friends who might be interested in an appointee role, please ask them to get in touch. More information on all appointment types can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/am.

Look out for our recruitment adverts in schools, colleges, professional journals and at various educational events throughout the country.

Your views count

We are keen to hear your views on the training and support we provide appointees — or on any other aspect of the activities you do for us. Please e-mail any comments to am@sqa.org.uk.

Thank you for your ongoing support. I hope to see you in November at the Appointee Recognition Reception.

Maidie Cahill
Director of HR

In the spotlight — Appointee Services



In our first edition of the SQA *am* newsletter we introduced the new Appointee Services team. In this edition, we thought it would be useful for you to get to know more about the role of the team and its members.

What does the team do?

The team is responsible for all the administrative duties associated with appointees. This involves: advertising vacancies; processing application forms; securing release from employer's time for appointees to undertake duties; issuing and processing appointee contracts; and processing Disclosure Scotland application forms.

The team is divided into three main process areas:

- Team 1 is responsible for Principal Assessors, Senior Examiners, Senior Verifiers, Setters, Verifiers, and Examiners
- Team 2 is responsible for Markers and Central Markers
- Team 3 is responsible for Chief Invigilators and Invigilators

The recruitment of appointees follows a cyclical pattern and the chart below shows the peak recruitment times.

Month	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3
September			█
October			█
November		█	█
December		█	█
January		█	█
February		█	█
March		█	█
April	█	█	█
May	█	█	
June	█	█	
July	█		
August	█		

Who is in the team?

The team consists of 18 staff, based across both our sites. The team is led by Robert Shiell, Appointee Services Manager, and is supported by Angela Russell, Appointee Services Officer. Between them they have over 40 years experience within SQA and predecessor organisations.

What is happening now?

We have just passed the peak recruitment period for the Principal Assessors, Senior Examiners, Senior External Verifiers, Setters, Verifiers, and Examiners who will be supporting SQA's qualifications portfolio for 2010 and 2011.

September sees the start of the recruitment process for Invigilators for the 2010 diet of examinations. Approximately 8,000 Invigilators are required. The appointment process starts at this time of the year because this appointee role requires an Enhanced Disclosure check as Invigilators will be working with candidates. Once the Disclosure process has been successfully completed, contracts will be issued to individuals.

In addition to the above, we are currently recruiting and advertising for reserve Markers for the 2010 examinations diet.

In the spotlight — Appointee Services

(continued)

What challenges do we face in the coming year?

The main challenges we face in the coming year will be: identifying and implementing changes to our current recruitment processes, improving the quality of service we provide our appointees, and creating more cost-efficient processes.

How can you assist us as we move forward?

During the coming year we will be introducing changes to our recruitment process to improve the quality of service we provide and to ensure efficient use of resources. Each year a significant amount of staff time and associated costs are incurred contacting appointees to request the return of outstanding contract documentation. Please assist us by returning documentation by the required date. This will also ensure that payments of fees and expenses are processed on time.

What changes are being planned for the future?

In the first edition of the SQA **am** newsletter we announced that we had established a project team to manage system developments for the creation of an Appointee Portal. We are pleased to report that we have made significant progress in this area and we aim to launch the Appointee Portal in April 2010. This Portal will provide appointees with access to relevant software applications and support materials through one secure log-in.

Watch out for an update on the Portal in the next edition of SQA **am**.

SQA Academy — our new approach to training

This year over 750 appointees have been using SQA Academy for training in:

- Electronic Marks Capture
- Scottish Survey of Achievement
— Assessment of Writing
- External Verifier training, support and monitoring

A central feature of the training is the SQA Academy website. This allows additional support through the use of online forums and engaging training material — for example: videos, screen capture, quizzes, questionnaires, and discussions. It also allows appointees to review the training material whenever they wish.

Recognition of CPD has been built into the courses. Training, together with experience of doing the job and reflections on its impact, can be used to apply for GTCS Professional Recognition and as part of a claim for Chartered Teacher status.

Over the past three years, the Scottish Survey of Achievement training has prepared over 500 teachers to administer and to complete assessments of school pupils through a variety of methods, including: face-to-face discussions, observation of group tasks, and assessment of written responses. Both feedback and formal evaluation of this work has been highly positive. (SSA Field Officer training 2007 — Evaluation of SQA Academy: SQA).

This year SQA Academy provided training for a new approach to marking and administration — Electronic Marks Capture. This is being used in a number of subject areas and involves more than 600 SQA appointees.

We have received very positive feedback from this training with, for example, 93% either agreeing (61%) or strongly agreeing (32%) with the following sentence:

The online training and guidance I received was a good preparation for carrying out my role before and during electronic marking.

This view was also supported by numerous verbal comments from participants. The majority of participants who commented used adjectives such as 'clear', 'impressive', 'informative' and 'straightforward' to describe the course.

Question Paper Operations — External Assessment Materials Project

Helen Probart explains new developments in question paper generation.

In the first issue of *SQA am* we told you that the Question Paper Operations team, along with colleagues in Qualifications Development, were at the early stages of developing a new way to produce question papers. This new process involves the generation of multiple items (discrete questions) which will be stored in a bank and used to construct question papers as required. We anticipate this process will release us from the annual cycle of development and thus reduce time pressures on appointees — writing and vetting activities may take place at any time throughout the year. In addition, it will give new writers an opportunity to become involved in the process of generating items. This should assist both appointees and SQA in meeting the increased demand for question papers as a result of 'dual-running' the current and new qualifications systems in 2014 and 2015.

The trial is now well underway with nine subject areas taking part, including: Art and Design, English, Mathematics, and Media Studies. We asked our Principal Assessors in these subjects to deconstruct the current question papers into unique parts (items) that could be written independently. We then commissioned subject specialists to write a number of items based on these specifications. The next stage is for each item to be checked (the vetting process) before it can be incorporated into the item bank and made available for use.

We are running the trial using our current QP Secure technology which has been upgraded to improve usability. It is important to understand that the aim of the trial is to test the process rather than the technology at this stage.

QP Secure is an interim solution whilst we wait for more appropriate technology to be delivered via the National Assessment Resource (NAR) in 2010. This development will provide the authoring software, workflow management and item repository upon which the full deployment of our new process depends.

Once we have generated sufficient materials, each examining team will be able to search the bank for appropriate items to construct the required question papers. Looking ahead, a further phase of the NAR development will give us the opportunity to automatically compile assessments from the item bank.



Media Studies team for Intermediate 2 and Higher

As we trial the new item-generation process, we expect we will identify some subject-specific issues and challenges, and welcome constructive comment from those involved. If you would like to comment on the new process or would like to find out more about any aspect of the project, please contact Muriel Walker (Qualifications Co-ordinator) muriel.walker@sqa.org.uk.

Advanced Higher — Modern Studies Appointees

Modern Studies teachers Gordon Rennet, Juliet Presly, Bill McGill, and Irene Morrison share their experiences, and the many benefits, of working as SQA appointees.

Gordon Rennet

Working as part of the Advanced Higher Modern Studies setting team has without doubt been the most directly useful and relevant CPD that I have undertaken.

The opportunity to analyse in detail the work produced by candidates across the country and, by inference, the teaching they have received has been of enormous benefit to me as a classroom teacher.

There is a real sense of teamwork within our group and it is good to feel part of a team where opinions are encouraged and valued. I have also been encouraged by the support we have received from SQA, who have never been less than highly appreciative of our efforts.

Juliet Presly

I am currently Principal Teacher of History and Modern Studies at Trinity Academy in Edinburgh.

Being involved in SQA procedures is one of the best forms of CPD you can undertake as a teacher. It offers you an invaluable insight into the 'end product' of your



efforts throughout the year with senior classes. There is no doubt that SQA now provides much greater openness and transparency in recent years, however, being involved directly also has huge benefits for learning and teaching.

I have been involved as a Marker at Standard Grade Modern Studies, a Marker at Higher and — for the past three years — an Examiner and Setter for Advanced Higher Modern Studies. It has been a fabulous personal and professional experience and a privilege to work with such an experienced and supportive team.

My colleagues in my department at Trinity Academy and in my authority have benefited from my insight and expertise into how procedures work and how to get procedures right! It goes without saying that the experience has helped me deliver a better quality Course for my own learners.

I also feel proud to be part of a hard working and forward thinking SQA team. I thoroughly enjoy this contact with colleagues from across Scotland and value the experience in shaping assessment in my subject area.

Bill McGill

I have been involved with SQA for the past 20 years as a Marker and Examiner at Higher level and for the past three years as a Setter and Examiner for the Advanced Higher team. This has been an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

As a teacher, it has been invaluable working alongside people from different parts of Scotland, all committed to Modern Studies. It has been a fascinating insight into examination procedures within SQA and has certainly helped me with the delivery of Courses at Buckhaven High School.

My Modern Studies colleagues, and indeed the whole school, have also benefited as I have passed on my expertise in how the various procedures work.



I look forward to the regular contact with 'Modern Studies' individuals from outside my school community, which leads to cross-fertilisation of ideas and valued friendships. I feel proud to be part of the Advanced Higher Modern Studies team and I feel I have played a part in moving the subject forward.

Irene Morrison

I have been involved with SQA, and its predecessor the Scottish Education Board (SEB), in a variety of ways for about 25 years. I have marked exam scripts for most of that time, albeit at different levels.

I started with Standard Grade marking and since then I have marked at all levels. I am currently the Principal Assessor (PA) for Advanced Higher Modern Studies.

I never tire of my involvement with SQA since, not only am I constantly learning, but I definitely believe that a quality teacher must be a learning teacher and, as such, I am always striving to improve my skills as a teacher.

There are many advantages for you, your centre and your students if you undertake appointee work. Some of these include:

- Being part of a large team, not just within your subject area, but within the organisation that is SQA! Support staff are fantastic and we would not be where we are in Modern Studies without the sound advice of our Qualifications Manager, Stan Da Prato and his right-hand man, Duncan Cox.

- Gaining a better understanding of the standard in your subject — this helps you when preparing candidates for assessment.
- Acquiring valuable professional development that can be used to help you progress in your career. You can pass on your knowledge and help your colleagues to apply the standards.
- You get paid!

As a Principal Assessor, I have the very important task, along with my committed team, of maintaining the standards in Advanced Higher Modern Studies.

As a team, we have in-depth subject knowledge and substantial expertise in all aspects of assessment for SQA. We also deliver professional learning for teachers of Advanced Higher Modern Studies both through face-to-face events and through SQA's website (eg Understanding Standards).

Overall, my involvement with SQA has kept me stimulated and enthusiastic throughout my teaching career. It is certainly one aspect of teaching where I definitely feel valued and this, in turn, has enhanced my overall contribution to the work of my centre/school.

Official SQA past papers turn Bright Red!



A familiar sight to any SQA appointee, the official past papers are turning Bright Red this year as an independent Scottish company takes over as SQA's chosen partner. Edinburgh-based Bright Red Publishing is the new official publisher of the 77 past paper volumes with SQA-approved answers.

The team at Bright Red is delighted to have been selected. 'We're a young business and are thrilled that SQA has chosen to back a new, independent Scottish company to deliver this high profile project,' says Alan Grierson from Bright Red. 'What feels great is that the whole project is now even more Scottish: we use Scottish proofreaders and printers to deliver the 270,000 past papers, and all proceeds will be ploughed back into the development of new materials for Scotland's students.'

He adds, 'We'd like to give a huge vote of thanks to all the PAs and other appointees, that have given us their precious time over the summer, to ensure the past papers publish on time and are even better than ever.'

Helen Probart, Head of Question Paper Operations, says: 'National Qualifications past papers continue to be an invaluable resource for today's students, providing them with real exam questions and approved answers. SQA is looking forward to working with Bright Red Publishing as we deliver the next generation of past papers to support the learning of our candidates.'

The full range of new Bright Red branded official past papers will be on sale in schools and bookshops throughout Scotland, or via the Bright Red website, from September. Bright Red Publishing — the brainchild of four Edinburgh publishers — was formed at the beginning of 2008 by the former management team from Leckie & Leckie, as a completely independent Scottish publishing company focusing on the secondary education sector.

The company has already published a range of revision titles for National Qualifications, critically acclaimed by students and teachers alike — see www.brightredpublishing.co.uk for more information. Expansion of the range to encompass more subjects, including Advanced Higher Sciences, will follow this autumn. And they're looking forward to developing exciting new materials for Curriculum for Excellence over the coming years.

If you're interested in ordering any books (postage and packing free), or in working with Bright Red Publishing as an author or reviewer, please contact Sarah Mitchell at sarah.mitchell@brightredpublishing.co.uk!



SQA Gaelic Language Plan consultation

SQA's *Draft Gaelic Language Plan* was available for public consultation from 23 July until 3 September 2009.

The Gaelic Language Act of 2005 and the National Plan for Gaelic are of fundamental importance in enabling SQA and its partner organisations to plan successfully for a sustainable future for the language, not just in Scotland but on the international stage.

When announcing the consultation, SQA Chief Executive, Dr Janet Brown said: 'SQA is ambitious for Gaelic in Scotland. We are determined to play a full and committed part in ensuring that the Scottish people and economy benefit from a qualifications and skills system that is all-embracing and delivers and meets Scotland's needs.'

SQA recognises the importance of supporting the aspirations and objectives included in the National Plan for Gaelic and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. Of particular importance, given the educational remit of SQA, is the development of its Gaelic Education Strategy.

SQA is working across the four national aims for Gaelic (Language Acquisition, Usage, Status and Corpus). As well as offering qualifications in Gaelic both for learners and native speakers, SQA currently offers four Standard Grade examinations in the medium of Gaelic: Geography, History, Mathematics and Modern Studies.

Please contact Marilyn Waters at marilyn.waters@sqa.org.uk should you wish to receive a copy of SQA's *Draft Gaelic Language plan* for comment.

MySQA update

This year a record number of candidates registered to receive their exam results by e-mail and text message. On Wednesday 5 August we sent 28,112 e-mails and 20,418 text messages containing exam results. The majority of e-mails and texts were with candidates by 8.30 am, making sure that they avoided the nervous wait for the post to arrive. Once again, we would like to thank all of you who took the time to promote MySQA to your students.

Remember, MySQA is for life, not just for exam results!

Registration for MySQA is open now and any candidate with a valid SCN can register. The great thing about MySQA is that it's not just about getting exam results — any candidate who has an account can see all of the qualification information we hold for them (including entries and results), all SQA qualifications certificated since 1995, and the address details we hold for them. Candidates who already have an account do not have to re-register every year, but they should make sure they keep their e-mail and mobile phone details up to date.

To find out more about MySQA go to: www.mysqa.info or e-mail Jacqui Murray at jacqui.murray@sqa.org.uk.

That figures — results for the year to August 2009

- **159,901** learners received examination certificates
- **737,000** traditional timetabled examinations took place
- **550** examination centres supported learners
- **462** learners sat their exams outwith Scotland — from Singapore to Slovenia
- **5,133** more entries at Higher were received
- **31,613** learners achieved SVQ certificates
- **2,265** learners achieved Professional Development Awards
- **12,057** learners received Higher National Certificates
- **8,316** learners received Higher National Diplomas
- **15,000** appointees (including Invigilators) continue to support the Scottish examination system

Are you qualified?

Read on to find out more about our HN/SVQ External Verifier qualification.

SQA has a worldwide reputation in the field of HN/SVQs for the quality of our service and our ability to respond to the needs of our customers. Much of our success has been due to the expertise of you — our dedicated team of External Verifiers. You are seen by our centres not just as 'auditors' but as critical friends, whose valuable sources of information, guidance and support are sought after.

In order to retain this level of expertise, SQA invests in newly appointed work-based HN and SVQ External Verifiers by offering you the opportunity to become qualified to National Standards by enrolling on the External Verifier award 'V2 — Conduct External Quality Control of the Assessment Process'.

Background

The External Verifier Unit (V2) was accredited and replaced D35 — 'Externally Verify the Assessment Process' on 15 August 2002. **All External Verifiers who externally verify SVQs and work-based HN Units in Scotland must attain this qualification in order to practise as an External Verifier.**

The Employment National Training Organisation (ENTO) developed the Unit of competence in External Verification in consultation with practitioners. This award now comes under the auspices of Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) as part of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Learning and Development.

The Unit covers reviewing internal quality assurance arrangements externally, including systems and how effective they are, based on the

requirements of SQA. This includes checking how Assessors are chosen, trained and the standardisation of assessment decisions, including checking evidence from different Assessors.

External Verifiers must show evidence of having provided information on national standards, SQA procedures and changes to them, as well as having given feedback on assessment

allows newly inducted HN/SVQ External Verifiers to attain the V2 award. The programme includes:

a) **V2 induction (1 day), scheduled by Reid Kerr College**

This one-day induction in the style of a workshop is designed to help EVCs become familiar with the national standards and evidence requirements of the V2 Unit. The workshop will



The V2 assessors and verification team at Reid Kerr College.

decisions and internal quality assurance procedures. The External Verifier must also show evidence of having audited equal opportunities, access and safety arrangements within centres.

On average since 2004, 40 External Verifiers have achieved the award each year.

What support can External Verifier Candidates expect?

Since 1 July 2007, External Verifier Candidates (EVCs) have been registered with Reid Kerr College for the qualification. SQA and Reid Kerr College have worked in partnership to deliver a training programme that

involve group-work with other EVCs and provide an opportunity for everyone to meet their assigned Primary or Independent Assessor.

b) **A monitoring visit agreed between the primary assessor, SQA, Quality Enhancement Manager, the External Verifier, Candidate and the centre being visited**

This visit allows SQA Quality Enhancement Managers to monitor how awarding body policies and procedures are being applied on visits. The SQA Quality Enhancement Manager will complete a report which will provide EVCs with the appropriate evidence for their portfolios.

Electronic Marks Capture 2009: Autumn update

c) A support session (1 day), scheduled by Reid Kerr College

The aim of the support session is to allow EVCs to come together to share their experiences, discuss queries and confirm where they are within the assessment/evidence gathering cycle. This session will be timetabled once EVCs have had enough meaningful experience of verification etc.

Comments from last session's V2 Candidates

Towards the end of the last academic session, SQA and Reid Kerr College carried out an evaluation of the programme. When asked to comment about their participation in the V2 programme EVCs said:

'The qualification raised my awareness of SQA policy and procedures.'

'It professionally developed me in the role as an External Verifier.'

'It increased my confidence as an External Verifier.'

When asked about what had been the most useful aspect of V2. EVCs said:

'The whole course. Although it was good to get feedback from your observation that you are continuing to do the job successfully and not getting set in your ways.'

Further information

If you would like to find out more about any aspect of V2 — Conduct External Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process please contact Mark Hood (SQA Training and Development Manager):
mark.hood@sqa.org.uk.

In the first edition of this newsletter, we let you know about the preparations taking place for new and existing marking teams who would be capturing marks electronically in 2009. In this edition we highlight the contribution these teams made to ensuring that candidates throughout Scotland received their results on time.

Marking from image

Some **502** Markers were involved in marking a total of **96,626** scripts from scanned images.

Thirty-two examination papers were marked in this way. These included subjects new to e-marking such as Intermediate 1 Music, and Standard Grade Computing Studies and Physics, as well as experienced subject areas such as Higher and Intermediate 2 ESOL, and Intermediate 1 Computing Studies and Mathematics.

Additionally, three marking teams were involved in piloting a new e-marking model. This was designed to allow smaller teams to access the additional quality assurance benefits of e-marking. The subject areas in this pilot were Intermediate 1 and 2 Mandarin (simplified) and Mandarin (traditional), Intermediate 1 Psychology, and Intermediate 2 Technological Studies.

Marking from paper

As well as those who marked from scanned image, eight experienced marking teams marked paper scripts and entered item level marks online. Three hundred Markers marked **32,734** scripts in this way. The subject areas involved were Higher Mathematics, Information Systems, Psychology, Computing, and Advanced Higher Physics.

The many benefits, particularly the enhanced quality assurance, support and training associated with the new system, were endorsed by many e-Markers. One MFI Music Marker said that if asked to return to traditional marking, they would probably refuse.

As can be the case with new technologies, some marking teams did not always have the smoothest of experiences when using the online system. Nevertheless, all teams remained focused throughout, maintaining a dedicated and professional attitude, and ensured that all scripts were marked on time.

We would like to extend a sincere 'thank you' to all Principal Assessors, Team Leaders and Markers who participated in Electronic Marks Capture this year. We would also like to thank the many participants who sent detailed and constructive feedback on their experiences.

Update from the Qualification Approval and Verification team

Last session was a busy time for us! Here, with the help of our External Verifiers, is a summary of last session's activity.

Statistics

Qualification approvals

We processed and granted 580 qualification approvals covering NQ Units/Courses, Skills for Work, HN qualifications, and SVQs.

Visiting verification

NQ Units/Courses — 665 visits
Skills for Work — 154 visits
SVQ and HN and HN Graded Units — over 1,900 visits.

Central and postal verification

We verified 1,290 centres' assessments covering NQ Units/Courses and Standard Grades and 88 centres' assessments of HN Graded Units.

Prior verification

We prior-verified 875 Units.

Development visits

We carried out 359 development visits/post-approval development visits.

confirm that you will undertake the visits allocated to you. Details of how to do this will be in your pack. Please make early contact with your allocated centres to arrange visit dates and notify us of the dates using the postcards no later than 17 December 2009.

NQ Visiting Verifiers

Our NQ visiting activity is planned to start later in the session. We will be in contact with you nearer the time. Again, we ask that you make early contact with your allocated centres to arrange visit dates and notify us of the dates using the postcards.

Central Verifiers

NQ central verification is planned for April and May 2010. We will contact you in December/January with dates.

HN Graded Unit central verification is planned to take place in early June 2010.

News

Senior EV meeting

Senior External Verifiers attended a Senior EV update event in SQA's Glasgow office on Saturday 22 August. The morning session was for NQ Seniors and in the afternoon HN and SVQ Seniors attended. Excellent feedback was received from both sessions.

HN and SVQ Verifiers

You may have noticed that you have not received an invitation to attend an annual update event this year. We are changing the way in which you receive updates. Invitations to attend a verification group meeting will be sent out in the near future.

We are currently working on HN/SVQ allocations. These will be despatched to you starting in late September. When you receive your allocation, please acknowledge receipt and

House keeping

Stationery

Please destroy any stationery you have. New report forms and updated stationery will be supplied.

Verification reports

Please e-mail your reports to qav@sqa.org.uk within five days of your visit — or direct to your officer.

Expense forms

Expenses claims (and TR2 form if applicable) **must be submitted within four weeks** of any activity you undertake for us.

Subject split

An updated list of officer contacts for each subject is available on SQA's website: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/4472.html>.

If you have any questions, or require guidance on verification or approval, contact us by e-mail: qav@sqa.org.uk, or telephone: **0845 213 5928**.



Customer Contact Centre

T: 0845 279 1000 E: customer@sqa.org.uk W: www.sqa.org.uk

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