



National Qualifications 2007

Senior Verifier Report

Subject: Geography

Assessment Panel: Geography and Travel and Tourism

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification which has taken place within National Qualifications in this subject.

NATIONAL UNITS

TITLES/LEVELS OF NATIONAL UNITS VERIFIED

DF3C 09	Geography: Physical Environments (Access3)
DF43 09	Geography: Human Environments (Access 3)
DF44 09	Geography: Environmental Interactions (Access 3)
DF43 11	Geography: Human Environments (Intermediate2)
DF3C 12	Geography: Physical Environment (Higher)
DF44 12	Geography: Environmental Interactions (Higher)
DF48 13	Geographical Study (AH)
DF49 13	Geographical Issues (AH)
DF4A 13	Geographical Methods and Techniques (AH)

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

General comments:

Candidate performance was very satisfactory and few of those sampled had failed the units. The team felt that the standard of candidates' responses and teacher marking and advice had continued to improve as in previous years.

The central verification event ran very smoothly and the assistance received from SQA support staff was excellent. Verifiers commented positively on the use of electronic reporting.

As in previous years the verifiers felt that the central event provided many positive benefits over postal or visiting verification by:

- ◆ allowing cross referencing with colleagues.
- ◆ confirming and maintaining the standard for verification.
- ◆ providing immediate and supportive advice from the Senior Verifier.
- ◆ ensuring a speedy and accurate conclusion to the verification process.

The request by SQA, as in previous years, for centres to include the NAB item(s) and marking scheme(s) greatly assisted the team in their duties.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

The team was able to report that in this year's sample centres were applying marking schemes well and were clearly indicating where marks were being awarded on candidates' evidence.

Some centres included annotated comments on candidates' evidence which help the verifier to understand more clearly the marking of candidates' work.

Again some centres use (d) for description or (e) for explanation etc...which also aids the verification process.

There was increasing evidence of cross marking checks in centres and this was commended where identified. For centres where cross-marking was not evident the verifiers included a request for the centre to consider this approach in the future.

An increasing number of centres are taking ownership of the NAB items by adding their own departmental covers which provides candidates, parents, teachers and verifiers with very clear information about the candidate, source of the assessment item and marking. This indicates a centre that has planned and integrated

the NAB items into their teaching and learning programme. As with cross-marking this approach is to be encouraged and commended.

The completion of the Verification Sample Form for many centres still causes difficulty. A number of centres, though far fewer than last year, include marks and other information rather than the symbols P (pass), F (fail) or W (withdrawn) as per instructions supplied by SQA.

The new Access 3 Geography units were verified for the first time this year. While the sample was small it did indicate that centres entering candidates for this level are using the NAB items and marking guidelines well and are very professional in their judgments and use of alternative acceptable answers. It was very clear where centres had awarded candidates credit for answers and supported their judgements with cross-marking procedures.

Intermediate 2 evidence, like last year, caused little concern. All centres used the appropriate arrangements, NAB items and marking instructions. Cross marking and annotation of scripts to allow candidates to improve are becoming increasingly evident in centres across the country.

The quality of the candidate's responses suggests the good quality of learning and teaching at this level. **NB** Centres are reminded that for 2007/08 onwards there will only be full marks used in the NAB items.

At Higher level this year all centres were deemed 'accepted'.

Verifiers remarked positively on the following points:

- 1 Accurate and consistent marking and annotation of candidates' work.
- 2 The quality of the candidate evidence as supplied by centres.
- 3 The use of cross-marking to ensure the quality of internal assessments.

While the majority of centres verified at Higher are familiar with the requirements of the course/unit arrangements, a number are still leaving themselves exposed to possible difficulties with verification.

Two centres used 'out of date' NAB items that had been replaced in 2004 e.g. 'Physical Core' NAB item instead of a 'Physical Environment' item. While in both cases the changes between the 'old' and 'new' NABs were minimal and in these instances not critical the use of 'out of date' NAB items may not always be valid.

At Advanced Higher the quality of the work was generally very good with a number of centres/candidates presenting some outstanding work. It is evident that centres are providing good support mechanisms for candidates and have understood the arrangements. Cross marking and annotation of scripts to allow candidates to improve performance are increasingly evident in centres across the country.

Geographical Study — Some of the scripts were hard to gauge against the work scheme/performance criteria since candidates tended to write holistic essays. Where centres had encouraged candidates to use clear sub-headings, scripts were easier to follow. Some candidates misinterpreted the element of study 'Quality of Processing Techniques'. While the candidates had identified 'other processing techniques which might have been used more successfully' they did not reflect 'on whether the processing techniques used were adequate'. Care should be taken here (See page 17, Geographical Study DF48 13/NAB001). If candidates had chosen a more robust processing technique rather than a 'table' it would have allowed them more scope to answer this element.

Geographical Issues — The use of sub-headings is helpful in the assessment of candidates' work in the Unit. This may also be a useful approach to adopt where the NAB is used as part of the learning process. However it should be noted that the principal assessor report for AH indicates that high scoring geographical issue essays are expected to be fluid and avoid unnecessary and frequent use of sub-headings. The overall standard of candidate responses was very good. This indicates the clear teacher understanding of the requirements. Two centres indicated the performance criteria on candidates' scripts. It was therefore very easy for the verifiers to identify the supporting evidence for a pass to each PC.

Geographical Methods and Techniques – The verifiers remarked positively on the overall performance of candidates and the sound teacher judgements. It would be helpful for the verifiers if the centres submit a copy of the map interpretation question and marking scheme, where this technique is being assessed.

Feedback to centres

General comments:

Many centres submitted evidence that had been carefully marked and presented. Ticks on scripts showed exactly where marks were being awarded and this was very helpful to the verification team. Verifiers commented on the number of centres in which scripts were annotated by the markers and this provided good feedback for candidates.

Centres which had obviously adopted a policy of cross marking/internal verification procedures are to be particularly commended. Such centres presented few, if any problems, for the verifiers as they had already identified and acted upon any inconsistencies or ambiguity, if there were any, in the marking of individual members of staff.

Centres are advised to audit all NAB items used across National Units to ensure that only the most up to date items are being used. Furthermore, centres ought to ensure that all teaching staff are fully aware of the arrangements for using and marking NAB items as outlined in the introductory pages of the NAB packs.

Centres are advised to destroy all out of date NAB items to prevent any future confusion.

NB Centres are reminded that for 2008 onwards there will only be full marks used in marking the NAB items and the 2006/07 version of NABs have been updated to reflect this.

Across all levels Access3, Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher the internal assessment seem to be well understood and used by centres appropriately. Overall the quality of candidates' performance exemplifies the high standard of support from teachers/lecturers given to candidates in centres.

The following advice has been included in last few years' reports.

The verifiers are looking for a number of items to satisfy the requirements.

These items are as follows:

- 1 The candidate evidence matches with the list of names on the Verification Sample Form VS00 as supplied by SQA.
- 2 That the centre has used an approved NAB item as supplied by SQA or similar item approved prior to the verification event.
- 3 There is a clear and definite approach to marking suggesting a clear policy is being followed by the centre and this can be illustrated by the following:
 - a Ticks on candidates work are useful and help to identify where the teacher is giving credit.
 - b Additional written comments on the candidates work in support of the assessment is highly valued both for the candidate in how to improve their performance and for verifiers to ensure a candidate/centre meet the requirements of the unit.
 - c Detailed and accurate comments avoiding the use of subjective terms which might lead to confusion. Clear and unambiguous comments allow the verification team to quickly identify where a centre is being too lenient or too harsh on the candidate.
 - d Cross marking of candidates' work is valuable evidence of internal verification of the centre's work. Where staffing does not allow centres to cross mark internally then centres may think of pairing up with a nearby centre for mutual support.