



SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

Question Paper Production 2011

The Professional Role of Veters

Veters consider and make recommendations in connection with draft external assessments set for National Qualifications.

Veters:

- ◆ Work through external assessments prior to vetting meeting by carrying out validity, reliability and accuracy checks in relation to individual questions and overall sampling and balance of the paper
- ◆ Review the overall standard of the draft question paper in comparison to the previous year's paper and performance of past questions and other benchmarks to ensure compliance with national standards
- ◆ Provide comment on the content, degree of difficulty and wording and layout of each question
- ◆ Comment on the appropriateness of the draft MIs
- ◆ Check the accuracy and clarity of the marking scheme
- ◆ Check the appropriateness of mark allocation
- ◆ Ensure that the external assessment(s) meet with SQA guidelines with regard to age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, race, religion and sexual orientation (see '*Checklist for Bias*').

Veters should focus on the standard of the paper overall as well as on individual questions. The Test Specification together with the Arrangements document will serve as the focus for vetting.

It should be noted that each year SQA has to issue a number of Correction Notices for the year's examinations. The number of Correction Notices issued for the 2009 examination was 9 and 5 of these were due to errors in the vetted drafts. Veters should be aware of this possible source of errors and do all they can to ensure that the approved vetted drafts for 2011 are accurate. In particular, where changes are made to source references, labels on diagrams or to units, Veters should ensure that the changes are made in all parts of the question, and also to the marking instructions.

Validity and *reliability* are both necessary and complementary aspects of any quality assessment system. Validity is concerned with what is assessed and reliability with the consistency of assessments.

The following checklists are supplied for each of these aspects, for use at the question paper vetting stage.

Validity Checklist

1. Does the examination paper conform to the course assessment specification as set out in the Arrangements?
2. Are there questions/tasks included which will elicit evidence of attainment measured against the Course Grade Descriptions/Grade Related Criteria? Are all outcomes from the component Units covered? Where appropriate, have opportunities for assessing integration of knowledge and skills been taken?
3. Does the weight given to a particular part of the syllabus in the question paper reflect its relative importance in the syllabus?
4. Is the sampling of the syllabus systematic but unpredictable? (To avoid question 'spotting'.) In particular, has duplication of recent past papers been avoided in terms of such aspects as themes and resource material?
5. Is the difficulty level of the individual questions appropriate? Does the mark available for each question match the demands of the task? In addition, is the difficulty level overall appropriate?
6. Are the questions gender-free where possible, and, overall, are the papers gender-balanced? Do the papers avoid gender-stereotyping?
7. Are the questions free of cultural, racial or religious bias and stereotyping?

Reliability Checklist

- 1 Where question choice exists, is the relative difficulty of the various options equivalent?
- 2 Are there any problems in relation to the interpretation of marking instructions?

Validity: Difficulty of Questions

- 1.1 Is there an appropriate balance of *types of question/task* (eg which assess knowledge, understanding, interpretation, evaluation, analysis or synthesis; and whether the candidate is asked to describe, explain, compare and contrast, interpolate, produce a strategy, etc)?
- 1.2 Is the use of concrete and/or abstract contexts appropriate for the subject matter of the questions?
- 1.3 Is there an appropriate breadth of focus in relation to the subject matter?
- 1.4 Is the density/level of subject-specific terminology appropriate?
- 1.5 Are the instructions to candidates clear?
- 1.6 Where a question assesses a variety of skills, is it broken down into discrete tasks?
- 1.7 Are successive questions independent ie do not rely on answers to previous questions?
- 1.8 Do the marks available for each question match the demands of the task (and the test specification)?
- 1.9 Is the mark allocation clear?

Readability of Question Paper

2 Accessibility of Language

- 2.1 Are sentences as short as possible/appropriate?
- 2.2 Are questions separate from any associated statements?
- 2.3 Is simple sentence structure and careful punctuation used to enhance readability?
- 2.4 Is information presented in its correct temporal sequence ie the sequence of events as they occur?
- 2.5 Is the active voice used where possible?
- 2.6 Has abstract, formal and metaphysical language been avoided?
- 2.7 Are (shorter) verb forms rather than equivalent (but longer) noun forms used?
- 2.8 Is the use of words with two possible meanings carefully considered?

3 Layout

- 3.1 Is the question layout/sequence appropriate?
- 3.2 Is the information necessary to answer the question clearly separate from the actual task?
- 3.3 Where the candidate has to consider several resources/sources, is there an early indication of the task given to help the candidate focus on the relevant information?
- 3.4 Is the expected number of responses clearly defined?
- 3.5 Are diagrams/resources/data provided essential?
- 3.6 Is the demand set by the complexity of the diagrams/resources/data appropriate?
- 3.7 Are the diagrams/resources/data free from unnecessary information?
- 3.8 Do questions begin and end on the same page or double page spread?
- 3.9 Is the need to turn pages to refer to graphs or diagrams required to answer a question avoided?
- 3.10 Are 'signposts' (headings, sub-headings, indentations, boxing of text, underlining, bold type, capitals, italics) used appropriately and consistently?
- 3.11 Is the over-use of 'signposts' avoided?
- 3.12 Is the appearance of the paper as attractive as possible?
- 3.13 Is the answer-structure support (in question/answer booklets) appropriate in relation to the use of clues or 'leaders' (first few words of response), tables, headings, units?

4 Relating to Marking Instructions

- 4.1 Does the question elicit the expected response?
- 4.1 Is the most appropriate action verb (state, identify, select, describe, explain, compare etc) used?
- 4.3 Is the match between the question and the marking instructions appropriate?