



NQ verification 2022–23 round 1

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	Biology
Verification activity:	Event
Date published:	April 2023

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
H207 73	National 3	Cell Biology
H208 73	National 3	Biology: Multicellular Organisms
H209 73	National 3	Biology: Life on Earth
H207 74	National 4	Cell Biology
H208 74	National 4	Biology: Multicellular Organisms
H209 74	National 4	Biology: Life on Earth

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Almost all centres used the SQA unit assessment support (UAS) packs, which meant that there were generally few problems with the approach to assessment.

A small number of centres used outdated versions of the UAS packs. Centres must use the most up-to-date UAS packs from SQA's secure website.

Assessment judgements

Candidates are no longer required to pass assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2 independently. With a unit-by-unit approach, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the total marks available in a **single** unit assessment to pass outcome 2 for that unit. With a portfolio approach, candidates must achieve 50% of the total marks available for assessment standard 2.1 in **each** unit and 50% of the total marks available for assessment standard 2.2 **across all three units**.

Centres can refer to the audio presentation in the Understanding Standards section of the [National 3](#) and [National 4](#) Biology subject pages for clarification about thresholds for each approach.

Most centres used the appropriate thresholds for the assessment approach they used. However, a small number of centres used a combination of the unit-by-unit and portfolio approaches. Centres must assess candidates using one approach.

Most centres' assessment judgements were in line with national standards. However, it was clear that some centres inconsistently applied marking guidance. Centres must apply the agreed marking guidance consistently and use internal verification to ensure that all candidates are assessed to national standards.

Marking guidance provided in the SQA UAS packs is not intended to be exhaustive and centres can modify it. Almost all centres demonstrated good practice by annotating their marking guidance and detailing acceptable alternative answers. A small number of centres accepted appropriate answers that were not included in their marking guidance. Recording additional acceptable answers ensures that assessments are fair and equitable for all candidates.

Some centres added incorrect answers to their marking guidance. If a centre amends SQA marking guidance to include additional answers for a question, they must ensure that these additional answers meet the national standards demonstrated in the current SQA UAS packs.

H207 74 Cell Biology unit-by-unit package 1 — question 8

A small number of centres incorrectly awarded a mark if candidates identified the procedure that was given in the stem of the question.

If a candidate provides the procedure given in the stem, they cannot gain the first mark. However, the candidate can still gain the mark for giving the explanation and the reason.

Some centres were lenient in applying the marking guidance for the explanation and awarded a mark to candidates who had not provided enough detail.

A small number of centres accepted answers that did not identify a procedure.

H207 74 Cell Biology outcome 2, assessment activity 2 — question 8 (a)

Some centres were lenient in applying the marking guidance for either the explanation or reason and awarded marks to candidates who had not provided enough detail.

A small number of centres awarded a mark for a procedure that was not an option in the stem of the question. In this question, candidates must select from the options provided.

Applying the marking guidance rigorously, accurately, and consistently is essential to ensure a fair, equitable, and robust process for all candidates.

Section 3: general comments

Centres offering SQA qualifications must have an effective internal quality assurance system that ensures all candidates are assessed accurately, fairly, and consistently to national standards. Centres selected for external verification must provide details of their quality assurance processes. Providing an internal verification policy to external verifiers gives them a better understanding of the processes implemented in the centre.

Some centres provided evidence of their internal verification processes, specifically internal verification records. Most centres showed good practice by including notes from the internal verifier and demonstrating how they made assessment judgements. However, this did not always lead to consistent, reliable assessment judgements, specifically if they applied the marking guidance leniently.

Some centres provided evidence of cross-marking. However, the final assessment judgement was not always clear if the marks awarded by the assessor and cross-marker were different. The assessor and the cross-marker must discuss any discrepancies between the marks they award. Centres must clearly indicate the final judgement on the candidate evidence.

Centres should record any discussions that take place during their internal verification process. They can use a candidate record sheet or an internal verification record sheet. Clearly annotating the candidate evidence, indicating where marks have or have not been awarded, is very helpful for candidates, other assessors, and verifiers.

Centres should review their internal verification processes to ensure they are effective. It is good practice to use the [Internal Verification Toolkit](#).