

Our ref: CHEMISTRY-6

27 November 2002

To:
The Person Responsible for Chemistry
SQA Co-ordinators
Directors of Education
Chemistry Assessment Panel Members
Schools Accounts Managers

Action by Recipient
<input type="checkbox"/> Response required
<input type="checkbox"/> Note and pass on
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None – update/information only

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update – Chemistry

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for Chemistry.

This letter is intended to provide Centres with an update on National Qualifications.

1 Principal Assessor Reports and Senior Moderator Reports for 2002

Principal Assessor Reports and Senior Moderator Reports for all NQ courses in Chemistry are available on the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk).

The Principal Assessor Reports include details of statistical information on entries; grade boundaries at C, B and A; comments on candidate performance including areas where candidates performed well in the external assessment, where candidates had difficulty with the external assessment and areas of common misunderstanding; and feedback to centres.

Grade boundaries have been made public for the first time this year. Although there is a notional score for a grade boundary, the grade boundaries for each paper are determined on the basis of data collected from the examination. These include:

- the performance of the candidates
- the demands of the examination paper
- the statistical data available
- the judgement of the Principal Assessor based on the scrutiny of examination scripts by the Examination Team in addition to the detailed comments of the marking team.

Setting cut-off scores for grade boundaries is used to help maintain standards from one year to another.

Particular care is taken in the determination of the cut-off score for grade 3 at Standard Grade. Decisions on cut-off scores for this grade are made to ensure that grade 3 is not more difficult to achieve than grade 2. This is done by an analysis of the distribution of candidate scores in the Credit and General papers.

When developing assessments used to provide estimates of candidate performance, Centres should use this information on grade boundaries with caution together with the information provided on concordancy and on the success of appeals to help inform the determination of their own grade boundaries.

The Senior Moderator Reports include general comments on central moderation and specific issues identified.

2 Appeals Feedback

As with last year, SQA has provided Centres with feedback on unsuccessful appeals for 2002. The feedback form contained more information this year and SQA will continue to develop the approach to feedback to hopefully make it more constructive and helpful to Centres. Providing feedback to Centres adds considerable time to processing the appeals and SQA is very grateful for the continuing support of the practising teachers/lecturers who make up the Examination Teams.

Chemistry: Appeals Feedback to Centres 2002 gives common reasons for unsuccessful appeals and is given as an appendix to this letter.

3 Update on NQ Review

(a) Arrangements Documents

The revised Arrangements documents for Chemistry were posted on the website by the end of June 2002. Hard copies of the documents have also now been sent to Centres.

(b) NABs

Revised information relating to Access 3, Int. 1, Int. 2 and Higher Chemistry NABs was produced and distributed to Centres over the summer break. This updated guidance should be used in conjunction with the original NAB tests as tests at these levels were not amended and therefore not reissued. AH Chemistry NABs were reissued with revised information and revised cut offs although the tests themselves were unchanged. All previous versions of the AH NABs can be destroyed.

(c) Advanced Higher Chemistry Investigation

A couple of minor errors appeared in the Teacher/Lecturer Information distributed with the previous NQ update letter circulated in June 2002. These were:

- The date on the footer of the front page read June 2003 instead of 2002

- On page 6 the marks for Results read as 6 instead of 5.

A corrected version is given as an appendix to the letter. The Candidate Information did not contain any errors.

The submission date for the Investigation Report is 30 April 2003.

Some centres have asked if an appeal can be put in for the mark given for the Investigation Report. An appeal should be made for any candidate that the Centre has strong evidence for a change in the grade awarded. The Investigation Report will be marked by external markers and the mark given for this component will be subject to SQA's marker check and finalisation procedures. If a candidate is appealed for, the report is made available to the appeals team of examiners and the marking will be reviewed.

We have also been asked to clarify the nature of evidence required for the internally assessed component of the Investigation unit. It is expected that the lab notebook/record of the Investigation will be a live work-book with annotations, records of discussions, rough working, raw data etc recorded in an on-going basis throughout the Investigation. This will be internally assessed against the PCs for the two outcomes for the unit as detailed in the NAB which was revised and reissued August 2002.

(d) Moderation

Moderation Guidance for Centres is given in an appendix of this letter.

4 Data booklet for Chemistry Access 3 and Int.1

The revised Int. 1/Access 3 data booklet for use in and after the 2003 examination will be distributed to Centres by Dec. 2002. A summary of the changes made are given as an appendix to this letter.

5 Guidance on Grid Questions for Standard Grade

Guidance on Grid questions was appended to the Standard Grade Chemistry PA Report available on the website. A copy is given as an appendix to this letter.

6 Appointments

SQA continually relies on the support of practising teachers/lectures to undertake a range of work. Since release of staff from teaching duties can sometimes be difficult we need to have a pool of reserves who would be willing to become markers and moderators. If you are interested in applying, application forms for markers and moderators are available on the SQA website.

Anyone who is interested in becoming a setter or examiner for the National examinations or being involved in writing NAB tests or multiple choice items in Chemistry should express their interest by contacting me at mary.hoey@sqa.org.uk.

I hope the contents of this letter are helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further clarification.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Hoey". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large loop at the end of the "y".

Mary Hoey
Qualifications Manager

Encs: Chemistry: Appeals Feedback to Centres
 Advanced Higher Chemistry Investigation: Teacher/Lecturer Information
 Access 3 and Intermediate 1 Chemistry Data Booklet
 Standard Grade Chemistry: Setting of Grid Items
 Chemistry: Moderation Guidance for Centres