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25 November 2002

To: SQA Co-ordinator
Secondary Schools and FE Colleges

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None – update/information only

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications – Update (Drama)

This briefing note is intended to offer practical advice and support on some issues which may be helpful to centre staff. Some of the points have been raised by teachers/lecturers with SQA, and some have come to light during our procedures.

1. Key examination/moderation dates 2003

- ◆ Visiting Examining dates are 10 February – 9 May.
- ◆ Standard Grade Visiting Moderation dates have not yet been fixed, but will take place in Late February and/or early March.
- ◆ Tues 27 May pm - Higher and Advanced Higher Question Papers.
- ◆ Thurs 29 May pm - Intermediate 1 & 2 and Standard Grade Question Papers (note – this is the first year that the Intermediate papers have been timetabled during the main exam diet).

2. Ground Plan

It has come to SQA's attention that some candidates are experiencing difficulty with questions on Ground Plan. We would therefore like to offer the following guidance in this area. The following notes relate to the Standard Grade paper. Further guidance for other levels will be issued in due course.

Six points should be clearly evident in any answers to questions on Ground Plan. These are:

- ◆ Delineation of stage area
- ◆ Dramatic viability
- ◆ Audience
- ◆ Key
- ◆ Entrances/exits
- ◆ Scale

Delineation of Stage Area

Delineation of the boundaries of the acting area must be shown to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the use of space. This can take the form of a conventional outline such as:



or it can outline the area used by the candidate in their own situation or centre.

Dramatic Viability

The overall set/staging must be dramatically viable in terms of sightlines (as indicated by audience positioning), perspective and theatrical conventions.

Audience

The relationship of the audience to the acting area must be shown, giving a context to any drama outline and also an indication of a particular form of presentation. It would not be advisable, due to time constraints, to draw representational chairs, heads or shading to indicate audience.

Key

In the absence of a requirement for mandatory stage symbols it is important that a key is employed to identify any items on set. Identifying the object by writing the name on the plan will be acceptable.

Entrances/Exits

Entrances/exits must be shown to indicate knowledge and understanding of staging and use of space in relation to the form and structure of the drama.

Scale

Some idea of scale is necessary to indicate relative proportions of items used on stage.

There is no differentiation among these answers. They will be either present or not and will each attract the same mark. The only exception is the outline of the stage area, the absence of which will render the entire answer invalid.

3. Standard Grade

Teachers are reminded that from 2002/3, SQA will be sampling knowledge which is detailed in the 'Body of Knowledge', published in November 2000. If you do not have this document, please get in touch as soon as possible to order a copy.

4. National Assessment Bank issues

As you will be aware, we re-issued nearly all NABs this year, following changes made for NQ Review. These changes were detailed in a letter which we sent to all centres in June. If you don't have a copy of this letter, you can find it on the Drama page of the SQA website (see item 7, below). We are planning to produce a pack of exemplification materials for all internal assessments, available for use in academic session 2003/4. There are, however, some pressing issues, which we'll attempt to clear up here:

Intermediate 2: Drama Skills

- ◆ We have not provided marking instructions for IA2 (restricted response questions) and IA3 (dramatic commentary). This is because the assessments themselves are prescriptive enough that the teacher/lecturer should be able to use their professional judgement to determine whether or not the candidate has met the requirements. Teachers may choose to ascribe nominal marks, but if the candidate answers the question, then they can be adjudged to have passed.

Higher: Investigative Drama

- ◆ The five questions for the evaluation may be given to candidates beforehand.
- ◆ Although we have specified a response of around 500 words, candidates should not be penalised for going over this word count. The time limit of one hour should act as a sufficient constraint.
- ◆ There is only 1 opportunity for reassessment, contrary to advice on pg 21 of the NAB.
- ◆ Groups might not have a 'theme, issue or message'. They may simply have a narrative, in which case, the candidate may very briefly state that they were telling the story of...

Higher: Contemporary Scottish Theatre

- ◆ Please ensure that you have received the new NAB. If you don't have it then get in touch and we'll arrange for one to be sent to your centre.
- ◆ Candidates may have access to texts for the internal assessment, although they do not in the CST external exam paper.

Higher: Study of a Text in its Theatrical Context

- ◆ This NAB has not been re-issued, because the assessment arrangements have not substantially changed this year. As candidates are now assessed on only one essay, they may choose one from either set of NAB questions.
- ◆ Candidates are still required to write around 1000 words in one hour.

5. VE applications

SQA is looking for new visiting examiners for all levels of NQ Drama. The VE system can only be sustained if we have a suitable pool of examiners. There are significant development opportunities for teachers/lecturers who become visiting examiners, and for their centres. Application forms can be obtained from Sylvia Laing in our Appointments section. Either e-mail sylvia.laing@sqa.org.uk, or 'phone 0131 561 6824.

6. Appeals

There were some common issues which came to light while considering appeals submissions which need to be addressed by centres. In general, teachers should always refer to the document 'Guidance on generating evidence for National Course Estimates and Assessment Appeals'. Your SQA co-ordinator should be able to provide you with a copy of this, which contains some subject specific guidance as well as general advice. Some specific issues which need to be highlighted follow:

- ◆ Centres must not use past papers in their entirety as prelim papers. Although centres will have to judiciously sample, any large sections of material which have been in the public domain (including published specimen papers) will be considered unreliable as appeals evidence.
- ◆ Centres must include, as part of all appeals submissions, the marked assessment instrument, the applicable marking scheme and the cut-off scores applied. If any of these three components are missing, the evidence cannot be considered.
- ◆ When making appeals for Standard Grade, centres' cut-off scores must include a '7' at, roughly, 0-20.
- ◆ Centres may include high quality internal (NAB) evidence where this supports performance evidence for the external component(s). However, without valid evidence for the external component(s), examiners cannot infer adequate potential. This was a particular problem at Intermediate level this year.
- ◆ Centres may appeal on the basis of performance evidence for the practical element. For candidates examined in acting, this evidence will necessarily take the form of a video. The evidence must be generated as close to the time of the exam as possible and under the same conditions as the acting exam. An audience must be present, and evidence must be shown of those performance aspects which the examiner would be marking. Evidence must be submitted on VHS cassettes.

7. SQA Website's Drama Page

- ◆ **Arrangements Documents**
- ◆ **Specimen Question Papers**
- ◆ **Principal Assessor Reports**

Drama teachers are strongly advised to familiarise themselves with our website (www.sqa.org.uk). The arrangements for all of SQA's National Courses, including all levels of Drama, can be downloaded here. Any future updates will require teachers to use the website. Each subject now has its own page. To find the Drama page, go to the SQA homepage and follow these steps:

- i. On the right of the screen, click on the large 'NQ' icon.
- ii. On the left of the screen you will see a box containing the words 'select a subject'. Click on this box and scroll down until you can click on 'Drama'.
- iii. The Drama page will appear, and you can choose what you want to view.

There are specimen question papers for all levels except Higher (we are negotiating with copyright owners for electronic copyright). There are also all of the Principal Assessors' reports, which contain extremely useful information on candidate performance in the external assessments (for example, areas where candidates performed well/badly; areas of common misunderstanding; general comments on the acting exam etc.)

On the left of the screen, there is also a section with 'top downloads', such as the exam timetable and the NQ catalogue. Please note that most of these are pdf files, as are all of our arrangements and descriptors, and you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader on your PC to view them.

8. Electronic support materials

We would like to highlight the existence of a CD which we issued last year entitled 'National Courses; Exemplification of Standards 2001'. This contains some useful materials for teachers in all subjects. Drama teachers will find specimen papers for all NQ levels, and marking instructions and candidates' responses for Advanced Higher and Intermediate 1. You should note that any arrangements documents on this CD will be out of date.

Learning and Teaching Scotland also distributed a CD which provides advice on external assessment. It is called, simply 'External Assessment', and was produced in 2001 by HSDU in association with SQA and Media Matters. Your SQA co-ordinator should be able to provide you with a copy of either or both CDs.

9. Dance Higher

Centres may be aware that there is a new project -based National Course available in Dance Practice. The course was offered successfully in two centres last session. It may be that centres with some dance teaching expertise may like to run this course through Drama and/or PE departments. The PA report is available on the Drama page of the

website, and the Practical Assignment specification, containing the course structure, can be found by clicking on 'Qualification Search' and then scrolling down to find the link for 'project-based National Courses'. It should be noted that the component units have 'list B approval' meaning that any centre will have to satisfy SQA that they are equipped and able to offer the course. We do not wish to discourage centres from applying, however, and if you have any questions, or are interested in running the course, please get in touch at the above number.

I hope you find this update useful. If you require any further clarification please contact Gareth Baynham (details given above).

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'M'.

John McDonald
Qualifications Manager