

Our ref: CP/LL

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Head of Centre
SQA Coordinator
Person responsible for Standard Grade Science

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update – Standard Grade Science

This letter is the first in the series of biannual update letters from SQA specifically designed to keep specialists in Standard Grade Science abreast of developments in the subject area. I place a very high importance on liaison between SQA and practitioners and these letters form one strand of this communication strategy. In addition I can be contacted in a number of ways, with my direct dial and email address noted above.

What follows is an update of development in Standard Grade Science.

Senior Moderator and Principal Assessor Reports 2002

The Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports for diet 2002 can now be found on the SQA Web-site – www.sqa.org.uk. Please access these for a full and accurate account of this year's papers.

Principal Assessor Report

There are a number of points made in these reports which we wish to draw to your attention, in particular:

- Problem solving continues to be well done. Centres are preparing candidates more appropriately and this better performance can be noted in the Problem Solving elements
- There continues to be a year-on-year improvement in candidate performance at all levels

General comments on candidate performance:

Foundation Level

There was a general improvement in candidate performance with very few candidates achieving very low scores and most candidates attempting all of the questions in the paper. The candidates' performance in the Knowledge and Understanding element was better than in previous years and in some cases the marks were comparable with Problem Solving marks.

General Level

Candidates continued to perform better in Problem Solving than in Knowledge and Understanding. Most candidates made a good attempt at this paper and the answers from the General Level candidates were of high quality.

Credit Level

The performance of candidates was generally better than in previous years.

The PA has indicated in the report some specific areas of difficulty and areas of common misunderstanding in relation to the 2002 question papers, you may wish to make use of this information in preparing candidates for the 2003 examination.

Senior Moderator Report

The Senior Moderator's report concluded that:

- Central moderation went well and the general standard was very high. The Discrepancy score for the majority of centres was zero.
- Virtually all schools are following the guidelines well apart from a few arithmetic errors.
- There is increasing evidence of good practice with a number of schools clearly carrying out internal moderation.

The Senior Moderator's report on the central moderation of the internal assessment of practical abilities, together with the Principal Assessors' reports for Standard Grade Science are available on SQAs website. I hope that these reports will be of interest and assistance in preparing for the 2003 examination diet.

Future of Standard Grade Science and Multi-disciplinary Science Courses

We are aware that Standard Grade Science is an important and valuable area and can be an important contribution to education for life. SQA fully recognises the importance of Standard Grade Science and the rationale for retaining and developing further multi-disciplinary science courses, to that end SQA are taking forward two developments:

1. Revision of Standard Grade Science
2. Investigating the possibility of developing an NQ course structure in Multi-disciplinary Science from Access 3 through to Higher level

Two groups have been established to take forward these developments and an initial meeting has taken place on 30th October 2002 to outline and scope the developments. SQA realise that there is a great deal of work taking place in the area of Science across the country and that councils are conducting reviews of Science provision, in particular in relation to the role of Intermediate 1 in discrete subjects. It is our intention to take account of developments and trends in Science education when conducting the review and investigation into the need for NQ Science courses. Can I take this opportunity to re-state SQA's commitment to Standard Grade Science as a valuable and necessary part of Science education. SQA would welcome contributions to the review and development process. Please contact Louise Lilly at the address given.

Smartgroups

SQA has established an electronic online forum for Standard Grade Science and we would welcome your input to this. If you are interested in adding any comments to our discussions, please contact Louise Lilly by email and you will be invited to join the membership list.

Assessment Panel – Science

The Assessment Panel for Science meets twice yearly. The next meeting is scheduled for May 2003. If you wish to make contact with your representatives on this panel, please contact christine.nicol@sqa.org.uk. Alternatively, I will be happy to take forward any issues to the next meeting.

I hope you find the information in this letter helpful. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Louise Lilly in the first instance on 0141 242 2078.

Yours faithfully



Charlie Penman
Qualifications Manager