

22 November 2007

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools
and colleges of further education)
Directors of Education
SCIS
Customer Support Managers

Action by Recipient
Response required
✓ Note and pass on
Note — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications update — History

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

SQA's website

The subject page is the main source of information on National Qualifications in History. It contains the current and past reports of Principal Assessors and the Senior Verifier, Course specifications/Arrangements documents (including Access 3 Social Subjects) and specimen papers, previous National Qualifications updates and marking instructions for the 2007 and recent diets. The address of the website is **www.sqa.org.uk**. From the homepage select 'NQ', then 'History' from the drop-down menu, then select 'GO'.

Plans and flyleafs

Plans for the Extended Response and Extended Essay can only be downloaded from SQA's website. Flyleafs and notes for the submission of candidates' Extended Response, Extended Essay and Dissertation are now available only via SQA Co-ordinators.

Specimen question papers

Revised specimen question papers for all NQ levels (ie Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher), along with their associated Course assessment specifications, are now on our website. These define the parameters of the Course assessments. As these were based on the 2006 'live' papers, centres are reminded that neither the specimen question paper nor the 2006 papers should be used when compiling appeals evidence.

Course materials checklists

These summary guides to the location and purpose of essential Course documentation are due to be posted on the website. They are the first port of call for any subject queries.

Learning and teaching materials

Support materials are commissioned by LTScotland. All comments and queries regarding support materials should be addressed to Abi Robertson (0141-282 5128 or a.robertson@LTScotland.org.uk).

Update on the 2007 diet

Principal Assessors and their examining teams are warmly thanked for their efforts in delivering a successful diet. The full reports of the Principal Assessors are on our website. These are an invaluable source of advice and good practice. Centre staff are urged most strongly to avail themselves of the information contained there.

Centres are reminded that all areas of the syllabus may be sampled. Sampling ensures that candidates cover the content adequately. Hence there are no areas that will be examined every year. Centres should bear this in mind when preparing candidates.

Further points to bear in mind for each level are:

Advanced Higher

The expanded descriptors for each field are on the website under the heading 'Arrangements documents and specimen question papers'. Centres are reminded that essay questions can come from any part of the descriptor, but that the source questions will be drawn from the italicised areas.

The grids used in marking are available on our website.

A revised list of Dissertation titles (August 2007) is now on our website. Where centres wish confirmation of the validity of titles not on this list, such proposals must be submitted to the Scottish Qualifications Authority via the Dissertation mail-box (dissertation@sqa.org.uk) by 1 November. If you have any queries relating to Dissertation topic titles please contact Maureen McLeod on tel: 0131-271 6752, or e-mail: maureen.mcleod@sqa.org.uk.

Higher

Paper 1

Essays will be marked out of 20 each from 2008 onwards. Thus the paper 1 total will be 40, and the total for the Course assessment will be 100, rather than 110. (See also under 'Verification' for advice on cut-off scores.)

Direct 'Why...' questions will be phased out as previously intimated, with none appearing in paper 1 in 2008.

Paper 2

As intimated in the 2006 update letter, from 2008 the distribution of marks will be standardised at five marks each for the source evaluation and comparison items, six marks each for the contextualisation items, with the eight mark three-source item remaining as before.

Extended Essay

The marking grid introduced for the Extended Essay from 2007, similar to that used at Advanced Higher, had a beneficial effect on ensuring an appropriate distribution of marks. An annotated example showing the grid in use is on the website.

Previous Principal Assessor reports have referred to the importance of suitable titles. Titles which are evaluative questions lead naturally to debate, discussion and conclusion(s), which are the characteristics that lead to high attainment. Centres should also ensure that titles are within the syllabus. Material which lies outwith the Course can not receive credit.

The Plan should be no more than 200 words long, and should be a clean, final copy. Plans which contain scored out but legible words in excess of the limit will be liable to penalty.

Candidates should not use bibliographies when writing up the Essay, nor should they include them in their submission along with their Plan, as this constitutes part of the Plan and is liable to penalty.

Intermediate

Similar advice pertains to the Extended Response, particularly that on the choice of titles. The marking grid introduced for the Extended Response will be on the flyleaf for this year's diet.

Standard Grade

The multiple choice items in ES1 items introduced in the 2007 examination had a beneficial effect on candidates' attainment at Foundation. There was, however, little transference to unstructured ES 1 items. All ES 1 items from 2008 onwards will be in a multiple choice format.

The Napoleonic Wars option (Context 2A) has been discontinued and will not appear in the 2009 examination or thereafter.

Access 3

Two NABs are now available for each of the 14 contexts developed in the Cluster award at Access 3 in History. (See also under 'Verification' below.)

SQA will automatically award an Access 3 Course to candidates who have failed the external assessment of the corresponding Course at Intermediate 1 but have met the Unit requirements of the Intermediate 1 Course. This applies to History as the component Units at Intermediate 1 and Access 3 are hierarchical.

To be eligible for this award of an Access 3, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- ◆ passes in all the required internally-assessed Units at Intermediate 1
- ◆ a result of 8 or 9 for the Intermediate 1 external assessment

Verification (formerly moderation)

The report of the Senior Verifier is available from the subject page of our website. It gives clear and helpful advice on the verification process. Centres should indicate clearly which NAB is being used. It is also helpful if centres/candidates date the evidence when it is produced.

Centres should use the latest version of any NAB available at the time of assessment. New NABs are available for the *Scottish and British* and *European and World* Units at Higher, reflecting the new essay total of 20 marks. They also give advice on cut-off scores, which are 10, 12 and 14 for a C, B and A pass respectively.

For revised or new qualifications, centres should use complete fresh NABs for re-assessments, rather than allowing candidates to amend a previous effort. Hence, new assessments should be used at Access 3 and Higher. For other History Courses, best practice is to use a fresh NAB, but revisits will be accepted at Intermediate and Advanced Higher until such time as these Courses are reviewed.

Markers

SQA is again grateful to those who marked in the 2007 diet. It is generally recognised that marking for SQA is the best in-service there is, and it is a major factor in promoting improved performance in individual centres.

Invitations to mark for the 2008 diet are currently being issued. While reserves exist at all levels, it is impossible to predict acceptance rates by markers. Those wishing to become Markers should complete an application form, which is available from Evelyn Dorans in our Appointments section on 0131-561 6709 (or evelyn.dorans@sqa.org.uk).

The National Assessment Bank

New NABs are issued in electronic form only and can be downloaded only by SQA Co-ordinators. Further details are available from:

Customer Contact Centre
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow, G2 8DQ

Tel: 0845 279 1000, or Fax: 0845 213 5000

E-mail: customer@sqa.org.uk

Estimates and appeals

The updated *Guidance on Estimates, Absentees and Assessment* is now available on our website. Two hard copies of the document have been issued to every centre. This advice was reinforced in my letter to centres of 10 April 2007.

In particular, centres should heed the advice given where split prelims are administered. The difficulty level should be adjusted accordingly, the most straightforward method being by raising the cut-off scores. Centres must also indicate on each part of a candidate's evidence the exact date (dd/mm/yy) on which it was produced. Prelim papers should also carry a date.

When generating estimates and compiling evidence for absentee consideration and appeals, centres should also refer to the documents listed in the 2006 newsletter. All queries on appeals should be addressed to the Appeals Helpline at appeals@sqa.org.uk.

Review of Higher

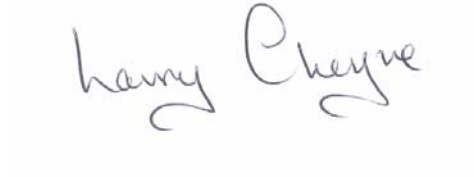
The main result of the recent national consultation was the support, by a majority of 2:1, both overall and in all categories of respondent, for a source-based paper 2 assessing Scottish History. The consultation also gave support for other present, non-Scottish paper 2 topics being moved to paper 1 and to be assessed by essay questions. There was overwhelming support for the retention of both two essay questions in paper 1 and of the Extended Essay. While there was some support for the inclusion of a non-Western society being studied for its own sake (with China in the 20th Century being the front runner), there was less commitment to taking up such an option. There was also considerable support for dropping less popular current options.

The full report of the Development Officer is on our website.

These findings will be taken forward by a Qualifications Development Team. The introduction of a revised Course is planned for session 2010/11 and further updates on progress will be given.

If you wish further clarification of any points in this letter, please contact either Duncan Cox (0845 213 5498; duncan.cox@sqa.org.uk) or myself at the above address.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Cheyne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'C'.

Larry Cheyne
Qualifications Manager