

Special edition  
Update June 2014

# New Qualifications New Opportunities



As the first year of implementing the new qualifications comes to an end, we wanted to reflect on what support is already available to you as well as look forward to what's coming in session 2014-15. We will continue to listen to teachers' feedback, identify where additional support is needed — and offer extra help where necessary. In August this year we are introducing the new Higher Courses and we will continue to update you on a monthly basis through our e-update which you can now subscribe to directly, visit <http://mailer.sqa.org.uk>

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## Updates to specifications, guidance and advice documents

We are making updates to documents containing mandatory information on National 3 to National 5 Courses. This includes Course Specifications, Unit Specifications and Course Assessment Specifications. The purpose of these updates is to provide further clarification based on feedback we have received and in certain cases to reduce the assessment burden or prevent duplication of assessment. These updated documents will be available by the end of June and there are no further planned changes to mandatory documents in this session.

We are also updating some Unit assessment support packs for National 3 to National 5 to ensure that there is consistency between the Unit assessment support packs and the revised mandatory documents. The updated Unit assessment support packs will be published in July and August.

Updated documents for new Higher Courses are already available. Please visit your subject page [www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects)

In line with our standard practice, all documents and Unit assessment support packs contain version information. While we would encourage teachers and lecturers to use the most up-to-date versions when planning their assessments, they are free to use the existing versions and both will be accepted for verification purposes.

### National 5 Course Assessment reports

From the end of October 2014, we will publish Course Assessment Reports on our website for the subjects at National 5 taken by candidates in the 2013–14 session.

The reports will provide information about how candidates have performed in each Course assessment. Teachers and lecturers will be able to use this information to help them prepare candidates for Course assessment in future years. The reports are intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the requirements of each Course assessment. Each report will cover all the Components of Course assessment (normally two), including any internally assessed Components, when relevant to the subject.

### Course comparison tables

In early 2014, we published a document for each subject at National 3 to National 5, which outlines some of the changes and the areas of stability across the new National Qualifications, in relation to both Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2. We have now published similar documents for the new Higher.

### Use of past papers to support Course assessment

Last year we published tables showing how questions or items in past Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2 papers, may be used to support learning and teaching, or to help learners prepare for exams. We have now provided tables for using past Higher papers. Assessors should make careful reference to the published Specimen Question Paper and note the information contained in both General Marking Principles and detailed Marking Instructions.

### Looking ahead to session 2014–15

We will be publishing an additional example question paper for each relevant new Higher. This will show centres how these questions or items selected have been amended and adapted for use as support for Course assessment preparation.

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## Looking ahead at Understanding Standards

Throughout session 2014–15, we will be publishing a range of Understanding Standards materials for both Unit and Course assessment. These materials will include candidate evidence with commentaries and can be used by centres for training and bench-marking purposes. We will also run Understanding Standards events on Unit assessment, for teachers or lecturers who have been nominated by their Local Authority, College or SCIS. This will help these teachers or lecturers to share knowledge of Unit assessment with their colleagues. In addition, we will run Understanding Standards events on Course assessment for National 5 which will be open to all subject specialists. Further information will follow in our monthly and weekly centre updates.

## Programme of Advanced Higher Subject Implementation Events

We have recently confirmed a programme of 76 Advanced Higher Subject Implementation Events, which will run from 26 January 2015 to 2 April 2015. These events are targeted at Principal Teachers, Faculty Heads, and Course/Subject Leaders. All events will be interactive, with the opportunity for delegates to engage in workshop sessions and discussions. For more information and to book a place, please visit [www.sqa.org.uk/cfeevents](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfeevents)

## Subject-specific information

Each subject has its own web page and we would encourage you and your teaching colleagues to check your subject page on a regular basis. Here you can find useful updates and announcements as well as access to the documents highlighted in the table below. We have a **Guide to Accessing Support Materials** and **video** available to help you make the most of your subject page. Find these in the **related information** section at [www.sqa.org.uk/cfe](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfe)

## Published documents

We have published a range of support materials to enable you to deliver your Courses. The following table details the documents currently available across each qualification level from National 1 to new Higher.

To access these publications for each subject, go to [www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects) or **\*SQA's secure site**.

Level	Mandatory documents	Advice and guidance	Assessment support
National 1 (SCQF 1)	Unit Specification	Unit Support Notes	Unit assessment support materials
National 2 (SCQF 2)	Course Specification Unit Specification	Course and Unit Support Notes	Unit assessment support materials
National 3 (SCQF 3)	Course Specification Unit Specification	Course and Unit Support Notes	Unit assessment support materials
National 4 (SCQF 4)	Course Specification Unit Specification Added Value Unit Specification	Course and Unit Support Notes	<b>*Unit assessment support materials</b> <b>*Added Value Unit Assessment</b>
National 5 (SCQF 5) & New Higher (SCQF 6)	Course Specification Unit Specification Course Assessment Specification	Course and Unit Support Notes	Unit assessment support materials Coursework information (where applicable) General Assessment Information including General Marking Instructions <b>*Assessment Task including Marking Instructions</b> Specimen Question Paper (where applicable), including General Marking Principles; Detailed Marking Instructions Guidance on the Use of Past Papers

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## Quality assurance

In early June, we announced our revised quality assurance programme for the session 2014-15.

Changes will be introduced in the coming months which will increase teacher support and reduce the number of verification rounds from three to two. The move is in line with the long-term plan for quality assuring the new qualifications, which have been developed to support Curriculum for Excellence.

Our revised approach will involve supporting and strengthening teachers' and lecturers' experience and confidence in understanding and applying national standards.

## Verification timeline

September 2014	November 2014	February 2015	May 2015*
National 1 to National 5 Understanding Standards events for nominees	Higher Understanding Standards events for nominees	Round 1 Verification: National 1 to Higher Unit assessments	Round 2 Verification: National 5 and Higher Course Component assessments National 4 Added Value Unit assessments <i>* for subjects that require it, visiting verification activities will take place during March/April/May</i>

## Prior verification

If you are going to devise your own assessments or significantly change the ones we have provided, please make use of our free **prior verification** support service before using these assessments with candidates.

With your permission, assessments that have successfully achieved prior verification at the appropriate level may be made available on our secure website as a resource for centres.

More details can be found at [www.sqa.org.uk/cfeqa](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfeqa)

## Conduct the Internal Verification Process

We have developed a Professional Development Award (PDA) at SCQF level 8 for those who perform internal quality assurance duties as part of their role. For further information **browse PDAs** at [www.sqa.org.uk/pda](http://www.sqa.org.uk/pda)

## Recognising Positive Achievement

Our Recognising Positive Achievement arrangements are in place to support candidates who do not achieve a National 5 Course assessment, but who may be able to achieve the Course at National 4 instead.

It is important that the relevant National 5 candidates in your centre are made aware of these arrangements so that, in the event of a National 4 Course being awarded as a result of Recognising Positive Achievement, the affected candidate or candidates understand what has happened.

A guide to these arrangements is available on our Recognising Positive Achievement web page at [www.sqa.org.uk/rpa](http://www.sqa.org.uk/rpa)

