



National 4 Biology: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17

Early in 2016, each subject area was reviewed and the results published in individual [Subject Review Reports](#) in May. Some actions applied immediately for candidates in session 2016–17, other actions were for later years.

This Guidance note explains the impact on assessment for candidates being presented in session 2016–17 and must be read in conjunction with the Subject Review Report as the principal guide to arrangements for this year.

(Previously published subject documents affected by the subject changes will be amended in due course. There may be a period of misalignment.)

Unit assessment

◆ Outcome 1

Candidates are no longer required to show full mastery of the Assessment Standards to achieve Outcome 1. Instead, five out of the six Assessment Standards for Outcome 1 must be met to achieve a pass.

Assessment Standard	Achieved (✓ or x)					
1.1	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.3	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
1.4	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
1.5	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
1.6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Pass/Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

Important note: There is still the requirement for candidates to be given the opportunity to meet all Assessment Standards. The above threshold has been put in place to reduce the volume of re-assessment, where that is required.

Re-assessment

Candidates may be given the opportunity to re-draft their original Outcome 1 report or to carry out a new experiment/practical investigation.

◆ **Outcome 2**

Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3

Assessment Standards 2.2 and 2.3 have been **removed**. Candidates are therefore no longer required to produce a short report(s) covering these Assessment Standards.

Assessment Standards 2.1 and 2.4

Assessment Standards 2.1 (making accurate statements) and 2.4 (solving problems) are no longer required to be passed independently. Assessment Standards 2.1 and 2.4 can now be assessed by means of a single assessment for each Unit.

Outcome 2 will now consist of two Assessment Standards, Assessment Standard 2.1 (making accurate statements) and Assessment Standard 2.4 (solving problems).

During session 2016–17, centres have two possible options when assessing Outcome 2 (AS 2.1 and 2.4). Option 1 is detailed on pages 3–6 and Option 2 is on page 7.

Option 1: Assessment

Candidates can be assessed by means of a single test that contains marks and a cut-off score. A suitable Unit assessment will cover all of the key areas (AS 2.1) **and** assess each of the problem solving skills (AS 2.4).

Where a candidate achieves 50% or more of the total marks available in a single Unit assessment they will pass Outcome 2 for that Unit. Existing Unit assessment support packs can be used during session 2016–17. Guidance on the use of each pack is noted below.

(a) Unit assessment support pack 1 (Unit-by-Unit approach)

As these packages contain questions on all of the key areas (AS 2.1) and questions covering each of the problem solving skills (AS 2.4), Unit assessment support pack 1 **is suitable** for use as a single assessment for its associated Unit.

The number of marks available for each question should be combined to give the total number of marks available. A cut-off score of 50% should be applied to each of these Unit assessments.

Where a centre is using Unit assessment support pack 1 they should apply the cut-off scores shown in the following table:

Unit assessment support pack 1 (V 2.0)	Total number of marks available (AS 2.1 + AS 2.4)	Cut-off score
H207 74 Cell Biology	22	11/22
H208 74 Multicellular Organisms	19	10/19
H209 74 Life on Earth	15	8/15

(b) Unit assessment support pack 2 (combined approach)

As these packages contain questions covering only Assessment Standard 2.1 they are **not suitable** for use as a single assessment for their associated Units.

If a centre wishes to use Unit assessment support pack 2 as a single Unit assessment, questions covering each of the three problem solving skills would need to be added. A **minimum of 1 mark per problem solving skill per Unit** would be acceptable.

The following table indicates the total number of marks available for the key areas (AS 2.1) in each of these Unit assessments. These marks should be combined with the marks added to assess the problem solving skills (AS 2.4) before the 50% cut-off score is applied.

Unit assessment support pack 2 (V 2.0)	Total number of marks available (AS 2.1)
H207 74 Cell Biology	22
H208 74 Multicellular Organisms	21
H209 74 Life on Earth	13

(c) Unit assessment support pack 3 (portfolio approach)

It is still acceptable for centres to use this method of assessment.

Candidates should be given the opportunity to make accurate statements for all of the key areas of each Unit (AS 2.1). They must also be given opportunities throughout the Course to answer questions on each of the three problem solving skills (AS 2.4).

Evidence should be collected as candidates progress through the Course. For Assessment Standard 2.1, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the total KU marks available for **each** Unit. For Assessment Standard 2.4, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the **total** marks available for all three problem solving skills.

Examples are given below:

◆ **Example A**

This candidate has passed Outcome 2 for all three Units as they have achieved 50% or more of the total KU marks available for each Unit **and** 50% or more of the total marks available for all three problem solving skills across the three Units.

Unit	Assessment Standard (marks achieved)	
	2.1	2.4
H207 74 Cell Biology	12/22	4/6
H208 74 Multicellular Organisms	12/21	
H209 74 Life on Earth	9/13	

◆ **Example B**

This candidate has not passed Outcome 2 for all three Units as, although they have achieved 50% or more of the total KU marks available, they have not achieved 50% or more of the total marks available for all three problem solving skills across the three Units.

Unit	Assessment Standard (marks achieved)	
	2.1	2.4
H207 74 Cell Biology	11/22	2/6
H208 74 Multicellular Organisms	11/21	
H209 74 Life on Earth	7/13	

Option 1: Re-assessment

SQA's guidance on re-assessment is that there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Re-assessment should be carried out under the same conditions as the original assessment. It is at a centre's discretion as to how they re-assess their candidates. Candidates may be given a full re-assessment opportunity, or be re-assessed on individual key areas and/or problem solving skills. Regardless of which option is chosen, candidates must achieve 50% or more of each re-assessment opportunity.

Option 2: Assessment

Centres can continue to use the Unit assessment support packs from SQA's secure site or their own centre devised assessments in the same way as before.

If this option is chosen, 50% or more of the KU statements (AS 2.1) made by candidates must be correct in the Unit assessment and at least one correct response for each problem solving skill (AS 2.4) is required to pass Outcome 2. However, if a candidate is given more than one opportunity in a Unit assessment to provide a response for a problem solving skill, then they must answer 50% or more correctly.

Option 2: Re-assessment

SQA's guidance on re-assessment is that there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Re-assessment should be carried out under the same conditions as the original assessment. It is at a centre's discretion as to how they re-assess their candidates. Candidates may be given a full re-assessment opportunity, or be re-assessed on individual key areas and/or problem solving skills. Regardless of which KU option is chosen, candidates must achieve 50% or more of each re-assessment opportunity.

Important note: During session 2016–17 existing Unit assessment support packs will be amended to incorporate the changes outlined in the Biology Review Report. Unit assessment support pack 1, for all Units, will be amended to ensure that each pack has the same total number of marks. Unit assessment support pack 2, for all Units, will be amended to include questions covering each of the problem solving skills as well as ensuring that each pack has the same total number of marks.

Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit

Marks and a cut-off score have been introduced to the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit. Centres must use the criteria exemplified in the following table to assess the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit during session 2016–17. A cut-off score of 50% should be applied. Candidates must achieve 7 marks or more to pass.

Assessment Standard	Expected response	Max mark	Making assessment judgements	Additional guidance
1.1 Choosing, with justification, a relevant issue in biology	<p>State clearly the issue to be investigated.</p> <p>State briefly in what way the issue is relevant to the environment/society.</p>	2	<p>1 mark for clearly stating what is to be investigated.</p> <p>1 mark for stating why the issue being investigated is relevant to the environment/society.</p>	<p>Evidence for this Assessment Standard is likely to be produced during Stage 1: the research stage of the assignment, and may be found in a candidate's log or journal.</p> <p>Supplementary evidence may be gathered through observation and/or supplementary questioning.</p>
1.2 Researching the issue	Select information/data from at least two relevant sources for inclusion in the report/presentation/poster/leaflet.	2	<p>2 marks for inclusion of relevant information/data selected from two or more sources.</p> <p>This could include raw data from an experiment/practical activity, extracted tables, graphs, diagrams and text, from two or more sources.</p> <p>Only one of the sources of information/data may be from an experiment/practical activity carried out by the candidate.</p>	<p>Evidence for this Assessment Standard is likely to be produced during Stage 1: the research stage of the assignment and may be found in a candidate's log or journal.</p> <p>The information selected must be appropriate and sufficient to progress to Stage 2: the communication stage of the assignment and must be included within the report/presentation/poster/leaflet.</p>

Assessment Standard	Expected response	Max mark	Making assessment judgements	Additional guidance
	<p>-----</p> <p>Record at least two relevant sources of information/data in such a way that they could be retrieved by a third party.</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>1</p>	<p>1 mark for inclusion of relevant information/data selected from only one source.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>1 mark for recording at least two relevant sources of information/data in such a way that they could be retrieved by a third party (there is no need to follow a formal referencing system).</p>	<p>Information/data could be selected from the internet, books, newspapers, journals, publications, experiment/practical activity or any other appropriate source.</p> <p>Supplementary evidence may be gathered through observation and/or supplementary questioning.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Sources may be identified anywhere in the report/presentation/poster/leaflet.</p> <p>If one of the sources is an experiment/practical activity, then the title and the aim should be recorded.</p> <p>The candidate may have more than two sources, but only two of these sources need to have sufficient detail to allow them to be retrieved by a third party.</p> <p>References of websites must be a complete URL address. Wikipedia/www.bbc.co.uk etc is not acceptable.</p>

Assessment Standard	Expected response	Max mark	Making assessment judgements	Additional guidance
<p>1.3 Processing and presenting appropriate information/data</p>	<p>Present information/data from one of their selected sources in a different way.</p> <p>The presentation of this information/data must use a diagram, flow chart, table, graph, chart, key, or other appropriate format with all appropriate labelling.</p> <p>Process their presented piece of information/data accurately. The processing can include: plotting graphs/charts from tables, populating tables from other sources.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>1 mark for presenting their information/data in an appropriate format to convey the information/data sufficiently.</p> <p>1 mark for including the correct headings, labels and units where appropriate.</p> <p>1 mark for processing the presented piece of information/data accurately. Processing can include, for example: plotting graphs/charts from tables, populating tables from other sources.</p>	<p>Evidence for this Assessment Standard is likely to be produced during Stage 2: the communication stage of the assignment.</p> <p>All appropriate headings, labels and units for the presented information/data must be included.</p> <p>Graphs must have appropriate scales.</p> <p>Almost all (90%) of processing is correct, ie points plotted on line graphs, bar tops on bar graphs, segments in pie charts, values entered in tables etc.</p>

Assessment Standard	Expected response	Max mark	Making assessment judgements	Additional guidance
1.4 Apply knowledge and understanding of biology	Explains/describes the underlying biology as it relates to the issue.	2	<p>2 marks for explaining/describing two points which are relevant to the issue, showing that the candidate understands some of the underlying biology.</p> <p>1 mark for explaining/describing one point which is relevant to the issue, showing that the candidate understands a little of the underlying biology.</p>	<p>Evidence for this Assessment Standard is likely to be produced during Stage 2: the communication stage of the assignment.</p> <p>Two relevant points have been explained/described at a depth appropriate to National 4 Biology.</p> <p>One relevant point has been explained/described at a depth appropriate to National 4 Biology.</p> <p>Where some of the biology given is incomplete, wrong or contradictory, these marks can still be awarded.</p>
	<p>-----</p> <p>Explains/describes at least one impact of the issue on the environment/society, using some knowledge of the underlying biology.</p>	1	<p>-----</p> <p>1 mark for explaining/describing one impact of the issue on the environment/society using some knowledge of the underlying biology.</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>The impact(s) may be positive and/or negative.</p>

Assessment Standard	Expected response	Max mark	Making assessment judgements	Additional guidance
1.5 Communicating the findings of the investigation	Communicate the findings in a way that is clear, concise, relevant and appropriately structured.	3	<p>1 mark for summing up/drawing a conclusion of the findings of the investigation.</p> <p>1 mark for communicating the findings clearly and concisely.</p> <p>1 mark for an appropriate structure.</p>	<p>A short statement summarising /concluding the findings of the investigation. This must be backed up by the evidence included in the investigation.</p> <p>Evidence for the assignment could be found in one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a report ◆ a presentation, with supplementary/ supporting material such as PowerPoint slides with notes ◆ a conference/annotated information poster (a document that can communicate the research findings, and should have a short title, an introduction, an overview of the issue being researched, results in appropriate format, summary of findings, and a listing of the two relevant sources — someone could fully read the poster in less than five minutes) ◆ an information leaflet
	Total	14	Candidates must achieve 7 marks or more to pass.	

Fallback from National 5 Biology

There are no automatic compensatory arrangements. However, fallback opportunities exist, at National 4 Biology, for those candidates that have failed to achieve a full Course award at National 5 Biology.

National 4 and 5 Biology Units are in a hierarchy; for example if a candidate passes the **complete** Unit(s) at National 5 there would be no requirement for them to be presented for the same Unit(s) at National 4. The candidate could therefore achieve a National 4 Course award with a combination of Units at National 5 and/or National 4 **plus** the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit, provided that they were entered for the National 4 Course and resulted as appropriate.

The candidate's certificate would show the Unit(s) achieved at National 5 and/or National 4 and the Course award at National 4.

Important note: A National 5 Assignment can be used as evidence for the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit. If a National 5 Assignment is being used as evidence for the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit it must be internally assessed. The assessor must judge this evidence using the new marking criteria for the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit (available on pages 9–13). If the candidate achieves 7 marks or more they will pass the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit. If the candidate fails to achieve 7 marks or more they can be given the opportunity to re-draft their report. This would count as a re-assessment opportunity.

Understanding Standards packs

Existing Understanding Standards packs are still current and will be updated in due course.