

Autumn 2011

To: SQA Co-ordinator
LEA
Directors of Education
Customer Accounts Managers
All Centres

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

Contact Name – Dave Main
Direct Line – 0845 213 5478
E-mail – dave.main@sqa.org.uk

Dear Colleague

National Qualifications Update — Computing, Computing Studies, Information Systems and SfW Creative Digital Media

Comment [d1]:

The contents of this update, which provides information and advice to centres in relation to National Qualifications in Computing, Computing Studies, Information Systems and SfW Creative Digital Media Courses at all levels, should be passed to the members of staff responsible for these subjects.

Comment [d2]:

SQA Appointees

We would like to express our gratitude and extend our thanks to all those who have undertaken duties in session 2010-11. We appreciate the work that all the teams carry out and look forward to session 2011-12.

Marking and Verification are extremely important and highly valued components of the education system in Scotland. Many teachers carry out these roles as part of their Continuous Professional Development or to further their own understanding of the assessment process. If you are interested in becoming a Marker or Verifier for next year's diet of examinations and have at least three years experience of teaching in the relevant subject and level, please complete an appointee application form, which can be downloaded from the Appointee Management page of SQA's website www.sqa.org.uk/am, and return it to am@sqa.org.uk.

Comment [d3]:

Final Presentations - Standard Grade

As you will be aware, our Standard Grade Courses are ending and the final examinations will be in May/ June 2013 - this means that your final groups of learners on these two-year Courses will have started in August 2011. No learner should begin a Standard Grade Course in August 2012.

External and Internal Assessment Reports

These reports will be available from the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk) in early November. It is essential that you take time to read through these reports as they contain pertinent feedback on Diet 2010-11. The reports contain advice for centres about the areas in which learners performed well and in which they found difficulties and one point that was referred to in many of the External Assessment Reports was the examination technique of the learners – the reports make specific reference to this but a common point was that learners were answering 'Describe/ Explain' questions with responses that were more appropriate for 'State' questions and, as such, were not attracting marks.

e-NABs (Computing and Computing Studies)

As advised in previous Update Letters, there is now a full range of electronic National Assessment Bank materials available for the Units of the Computing Studies (Intermediate 1), Computing (Intermediate 2) and Computing (Higher). These assessments are being delivered through SQA's e-assessment system – SOLAR (www.solar.org.uk) and if you would like your learners to benefit from these e-NABs, please contact the e-assessment team on solar@sqa.org.uk.

Verification

It is a condition of approval to offer SQA qualifications that robust internal verification procedures are in place, implemented and documented at your centre. Please ensure that these procedures are adhered to.

Coursework Tasks (Computing, Computing Studies and Information Systems).

Standard Grade Coursework Tasks and Projects

The Tasks and Projects remain unchanged and are currently available from the secure area of the website.

National Qualifications Coursework Tasks (Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher)

Coursework Tasks for learners who will be sitting their examination in May/ June 2012 will be available from the secure area of our website from the start of November 2011. These are the **only** Coursework Tasks that can be used with learners who will be undertaking our Question Papers in May/ June 2012. However we have now published the Coursework Tasks from previous years (for practice/ revision/ learning & teaching purposes) alongside the past Question Papers and these can be found at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/findpastpaper.htm>.

It should be noted that the Coursework Task forms part of the Course Assessment along with the Question Paper. Learners must, therefore attempt the correct level of Coursework Task in relation to the Question Paper which they will later sit, eg. the mark for a Higher Coursework Task cannot be combined with the mark for an Intermediate 2

Comment [d4]:

Question Paper to get a Course award. Learners will also perform better if they are set a task which is suitable to their abilities.

Another point to note is that, when marking the Coursework Tasks of your learners, we would expect to see a broad range of marks as each learner will perform differently – further information relating to this is included with each of the Coursework Tasks.

Additionally, each year we receive various enquires about our Coursework Tasks; the following points answer those most often received.

- We do not recommend or prefer any specific programming language/ languages but ask that centres are sure that their language of choice meets the requirements of both the Course and the Coursework Task.
- The Coursework Task must be followed and if an algorithm is given then this must be used and not substituted with an alternate. Any work related to this where our algorithm is not used, cannot be marked as correct.
- Where comparisons are requested, these must be suitably detailed (a table alone is not sufficient) and learners must clearly show why one compared item is more suitable/ appropriate than another and then use this to support their justification.

Digital Question Papers

As you will be aware, your centre can request additional support for learners with an additional assessment need (for example the provision of a scribe to assist writing). With these requests, there are often instances where learners wish to type their responses because of their additional assessment need, however you may not be aware that we are also able to provide the Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 Computing Studies Question Papers in a digital format – a PDF file of the actual Question Paper where learners can type their responses directly into the spaces for the answers (this is then printed, it cannot be saved, by yourselves and submitted with the Question Papers of the other learners). If this is something that you think may be more appropriate for learners in this position than typing responses onto a blank word processor document, then please feel free to ask for it as part of the normal process for additional assessment/ support requests. Further information (including a list of all subjects/ levels where these are available and also examples of past digital papers) can be found at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/30030.html>.

Geographical Information Systems

A new National Progression Award (NPA) has been developed in the area of Geographical Information Systems – GC80 46 Geographical Information Systems: An Introduction. Full details on this SCQF level 6 qualification can be found at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47311.html>.

Curriculum for Excellence

Work is ongoing in the development of the new Curriculum for Excellence qualifications and the Curriculum Area Review Group (CARG) and the Qualification Design Teams

(QDTs) have met several times. All information, including documentation in draft form, will be published on our website at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42545.html>.

Should you require any further information regarding the content of this letter or any other matter relating to SG/ NQ Computing, Computing Studies, Information Studies and Skills for Work - Creative Digital Media Courses, please contact us using the details provided below.

Comment [d5]:

Dave Main
dave.main@sqa.org.uk

Qualifications Manager
0845 213 5478

Robbie Paterson
robbie.paterson@sqa.org.uk

Qualifications Officer
0845 213 5490

Yours faithfully



Dave Main
Qualifications Manager
Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths