



Internal Assessment Report 2010: Geography (122)

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified

DF43 09: Geography: Human Environments (Access3)
DF44 09: Geography: Environmental Interactions (Access 3)
DF43 10: Geography: Human Environments (Intermediate 1)
DF44 10: Geography: Environmental Interactions (Intermediate 1)
DF43 11: Geography: Human Environments (Intermediate 2)
DF44 11: Geography: Environmental Interactions (Intermediate 2)
DF3C 12: Geography: Physical Environments (Higher)
DF43 12: Geography: Human Environments (Higher)
DF48 13: Geographical Study (Advanced Higher)
DF49 13: Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)
DF4A 13: Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher)

General comments

Evidence from verifiers' reports confirms once again that the vast majority of centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the National Standards. This is borne out by the quality of the evidence and the support material submitted by centres. This professional approach to the verification process by centres allows verifiers to complete their task with relative ease.

Across all levels, Access 3, Intermediate 1/2, Higher and Advanced Higher, the internal assessment seems to be well understood and used by centres appropriately. Overall, the quality of candidates' performance exemplifies the high standard of professional support from teachers/lecturers given to candidates in centres.

Many centres submitted evidence that had been carefully marked and presented. Ticks on scripts showed exactly where marks were being awarded and this was very helpful to the verification team. Verifiers commented on the number of centres in which scripts were annotated by the markers and this provided good feedback for candidates.

Centres must ensure that they are using NABs which support the current Arrangements documents. Furthermore, centres should ensure that all teaching staff are fully aware of the arrangements for using and marking NAB items as outlined in the introductory pages of the NAB packs.

Centres should destroy NAB items which are no longer current to prevent any future confusion. Centres which had obviously adopted a policy of cross marking/internal verification procedures are to be particularly commended. Such centres presented a few, if any, problems for the verifiers, as they had already identified and acted on any inconsistencies or ambiguity, if there were any, in the marking of individual members of staff.

Centres that have single person departments might think about linking up with a neighbouring centre for cross marking purposes.

Centres may like to follow the growing examples where centres take ownership of the NAB items by including departmental front covers. These include all the relevant information for both internal and external verification.

The following advice has been included in the last few years' reports. I do so again in support of centres. The verifiers are looking for a number of items to satisfy the requirements:

- ◆ The candidate evidence matches with the list of names on the Verification Sample form VS00 as supplied by SQA.
- ◆ The centre has used an approved NAB item as supplied by SQA or other instruments of assessment which have been prior verified by SQA.
- ◆ There is a clear and definite approach to marking, suggesting a clear policy being followed by the centre and illustrated by the following:
 - Ticks on candidates' work are useful and help to identify where the teacher is giving credit, following the marking practice advocated by SQA.
 - Additional written comments on the candidates' work in support of the assessment is highly valued, both for the candidate in how to improve their future performance and for verifiers to ensure a candidate/centre meets the requirements of the Unit.
 - Detailed and accurate comments avoid the use of subjective terms which might lead to confusion. Clear and unambiguous comments allow the verification team to quickly identify where a centre is being too lenient, or too harsh, on the candidate.
 - Cross marking of candidates' work is valuable evidence of internal verification of the centre's work. Where staffing does not allow centres to cross mark internally, then centres may consider pairing up with a nearby centre for mutual support.
 - The more detailed the comments written by the teacher, the more likely the teacher's judgement will be understood and accepted by the verifier.
 - Centres should provide evidence that re-assessment has taken place where necessary.

Areas of good practice

Out of a total of 33 centres verified, all were deemed to be 'Accepted'.

Feedback from verifiers identified the following key strengths:

- ◆ Candidate performance ranged from good to excellent, and few of those sampled had failed the Units. The team felt that the standard of candidates' responses and teacher marking and advice had continued to improve, as in previous years.

- ◆ The quality of the candidates' responses suggests the very good quality of learning and teaching in centres.
- ◆ The team were able to report, again, that this year's sample of centres were applying marking schemes well and were clearly indicating where marks were being awarded on candidates' evidence.
- ◆ A growing number of centres, when marking, include annotated comments which help the verifier to understand the marking of candidates' work by the centre.
- ◆ A few centres use (d) for description or (e) for explanation etc, which also aids the verification process.
- ◆ The number of centres using cross marking as part of their internal verification process grows each year. Where evident, this process was commended in the verifier's report form that is sent back to centres. For centres where cross marking was not evident, the verifiers included a request for the centre to consider this approach in the future.
- ◆ It was pleasing to see an increasing number of centres taking ownership of the NAB items by adding their own departmental covers. These provide for all — candidates, parents, teachers and verifiers — very clear information about the candidate, source of the assessment item, and marking. This clearly indicates a centre that has planned and integrated the NAB items into their teaching and learning programme. As with cross marking, this approach is to be encouraged and commended.
- ◆ At Advanced Higher, the quality of evidence submitted was impressive. It is evident that centres have a clear understanding of what is required and are providing good support mechanisms for candidates.
- ◆ There are centres that show levels of excellence in the support they provide to candidates and in their internal verification procedures.

Areas for improvement

Some centres are, however, still making elementary/minor errors.

The completion of the Verification Sample form for some centres still causes difficulty. A number of centres, though fewer each year, include marks and other information rather than the symbols P (Pass), F (Fail) or W (Withdrawn), as per instructions supplied by SQA.

Despite repeated reminders, a few centres are still using out of date NAB items (pre-October 2007) as evident from:

- ◆ the date of publication stamped on the NAB item submitted with the verification material
- ◆ the use of half marks on candidates' scripts in questions asking for the identification of features, where previously candidates were awarded half marks for each correct feature. With the move to full marks, the instructions for the allocation of marks has changed.

I include once again, for exemplification purposes, some examples that demonstrate the new instructions for marking:

In mapping type questions worth three marks, the following should be observed:

‘Award 1 mark for every two correctly matched rivers. No marks for one correct match.’

Or

‘Four correct — three marks;
Two or three correct — two marks;
One correct — one mark.’

In questions where candidates are asked to provide a named example, a few centres are still crediting candidates with a mark for such a named example. This goes against the convention used both in the internal and external assessments.

I include once again, for exemplification purposes, some examples that demonstrate the instruction for marking:

For a 12 mark question

This will depend on the city chosen. If no named city, mark out of a maximum of 10.

For an eight mark question

If no country is named, mark out of a maximum of six marks.

Where candidates give specific named locations they are entitled to credit, as shown in the instructions to markers below:

‘Answers will depend on the choice of old industrial area, but must be authentic for the chosen area. Award up to one mark for specific named locations, eg Rhondda Valley, Cardiff Docks, etc.’

In this case, the candidate will get no marks for just naming South Wales.