

National Assessment Bank packs

Vetter's Guide

Version 1.0 - August 2006

Preface

This document provides guidance to veters of National Assessment Bank (NAB) packs. Advice is provided on the structure and content of NAB packs and on the process of vetting.

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Introduction

National Assessment Bank (NAB) packs are designed to support teachers and lecturers in implementing National Qualifications and to assist in establishing and maintaining national assessment standards. NAB packs are provided for Units which are part of National Courses and may also be provided for freestanding Units.

All assessments for inclusion in a NAB pack must be based on the appropriate National Unit Specification as published by SQA. The NAB writer also receives a brief to give further assistance.

When vetting the NAB pack, you are asked to make a judgement about whether or not the Instrument of Assessment:

- is valid and reliable
- is manageable and practicable for candidates and centres
- covers the full standards as expressed in the Unit – Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements
- adheres to the assessment rules for National Units which are part of National Courses

To help you make this judgement you will have been provided with:

- a complete draft of the NAB pack
- a copy of the Unit Specification
- a copy of the writer's brief
- this vetter's guide

The writer will have been asked to provide an Instrument of Assessment which is based on the *Statement of Standards* and the *Guidance on approaches to assessment* in the Unit specification and which conforms to the writer's brief. It is important that you are very familiar with these before you begin to vet the NAB pack.

Once you have read the draft and followed the *Detailed guidance for vettors* in the next section, you should mark up any suggested changes on the draft and complete the NAB Vetter's Summary Sheet. Both should then be sent to your contact in the NAB section of the Assessment Materials team using the envelope provided.

Overview of the National Assessment Bank pack

All NAB packs contain the following sections:

Introduction

Instrument of Assessment

Marking Information

They may also have an Appendix which contains any essential supplementary information.

Much of the text in the *Introduction* is standard. You should not suggest any changes to this standard text and need only check that the information provided under the following

headings is accurate and consistent with the *Statement of Standards* in the Unit Specification and the Instrument of Assessment.

- Instrument of Assessment
- Assessment conditions
- Timing and duration
- Estimates and Appeals – the first two paragraphs in this section are standard and should not be altered.

The next section, *Instrument of Assessment*, contains the Instrument(s) of Assessment which will allow candidates to generate evidence of achievement and may be used by centres for this purpose. The *Marking information* section contains guidance about what candidates must do to achieve the Unit. It is important that you check carefully that the Instrument of Assessment and guidance meet all the requirements of the *Statement of Standards* in the Unit specification.

Additional essential information may be given in the form of an Appendix but the use of an Appendix is not mandatory. You should check that any information in this section is consistent with the Unit specification and the Instrument of Assessment contained in the NAB pack.

More detailed guidance on the process of vetting is contained in the next section.

Detailed guidance for vetters

NAB packs are available to a wide audience. You should bear this in mind when vetting the Instrument(s) of Assessment and make sure that the material in general is as comprehensive and self-explanatory as possible.

Detailed guidance is provided below and follows the order of the sections as they appear in the pack.

Introduction

In this section of the pack you should check the following:

- have the Unit title and SCQF level been inserted correctly in the second introductory paragraph?

Instrument of Assessment

Has a summary of the Instrument of Assessment been provided which includes:

- a brief and accurate description of the Instrument of Assessment?
- related Outcomes stated exactly as they appear in the Unit specification?
- accurate and comprehensive information on the evidence which should be retained by centres?

Assessment Conditions

- Do the assessment conditions described match those stated in the *Evidence Requirements* of the Unit specification?

Timing and duration

- Is the information on timing and duration of assessment consistent with the *Evidence Requirements* of the Unit specification?

Estimates and Appeals

- Is the information in the third paragraph accurate and helpful?

Instrument of Assessment

The following guidelines apply to the assessment of Units in National Courses with a grade:

- the assessment of a one-credit, knowledge-based Unit should take no longer than one hour.
- the assessment of a one credit Unit which involves a longer practical assignment or project should define clearly the conditions of assessment and the minimum Evidence Requirements necessary to demonstrate achievement.

- there should normally be only one and no more than two Instruments of Assessment in a one-credit Unit.

You should be satisfied that the Instrument(s) of Assessment you are vetting conform to these guidelines.

NAB packs are available to a wide audience and you should also be satisfied that the material contained in them is as comprehensive and self-explanatory as possible.

You should consider the following guidance before beginning to vet the Instrument of Assessment:

Validity

- Does the Instrument of Assessment (or Instruments of Assessment) provide coverage of all Outcomes?
- Is the Instrument of Assessment set at a standard consistent with the Performance Criteria?
- Does the Instrument of Assessment match the stated Evidence Requirements?

Reliability

Instruments of Assessment should allow consistent judgements to be made by all assessors, while retaining any necessary flexibility in Unit delivery (as reflected in the stated Evidence Requirements).

Where the Instrument of Assessment is a test or question paper:

- does it keep candidate choice to the minimum consistent with any stated flexibility; all areas of choice should be clearly indicated; and alternative questions/tasks or activities/contexts should be equivalent in demand? Remember, choice of questions lowers consistency (reliability) of candidate results.
- does it have enough questions included to generate sufficient evidence of candidate achievement?
- is it supported by comprehensive marking instructions which relate clearly to the Evidence Requirements?
- where appropriate, does it include a cut-off score in the marking information which represents the minimum mark required to achieve success in the Unit?

Practicality and compatibility with good assessment practice

NAB packs should support Unit assessment which is as holistic as possible, normally involving no more than two Instruments of Assessment.

- Have more than two Instruments of Assessment been used in this pack? (If yes, please comment on the appropriateness of this within the context of the Unit.)

Assessment events should also be capable of being readily set up and conducted without undue demand on centres and the teachers and lecturers concerned.

- Is the Instrument of Assessment relatively easy to arrange, in terms of context and required resources, irrespective of location?
- Are there no significant cost implications for centres?

Accessibility

Unit assessment should be as accessible to as wide a range of candidates as possible.

Are all instructions, questions and tasks:

- expressed in straightforward, easily interpreted language, using familiar technical or specialist terms as appropriate but avoiding jargon?
- wherever possible expressed in the active voice?
- written in such a way as to be accessible to as many candidates as possible?

Information for marking

For each Instrument of Assessment there should be clear guidance which will help centres to reach an assessment decision.

The guidance should:

- be unambiguous and clearly illustrate the standard expected of candidates who achieve the Unit.
- be as comprehensive as possible and cover all Performance Criteria in the Unit.
- be accurate in terms of subject content and/or skills.

Appendix 1

Note on sampling the content of a Unit

The production of evidence, direct or inferred, for all Outcomes and Performance Criteria is required for Unit assessment. **Outcomes and Performance Criteria cannot be sampled: all Outcomes and Performance Criteria must be covered on each assessment occasion.** However sampling of content can be considered when designing Unit assessments. Particularly in knowledge-based Units, you may be using some kind of **sampling of content** in order to be able to infer that a candidate would be competent in those parts of the Unit content not assessed on that particular occasion.

Where sampling is used it is normally carried out in supervised conditions and a different sample chosen on each assessment occasion so that candidates are not able to predict what they will be asked. If, though, there are certain items of knowledge or skills which **must** be assessed on each assessment occasion in order to demonstrate competence in the Outcome/Unit then this should be stated in the Evidence Requirements.

The way in which a sample is chosen will depend on the subject matter of the Unit and the section to which it relates. There is no minimum size of sample but if the proportion chosen for sampling is low, then the evidence generated by the sample may make it more difficult to infer that candidates are competent across all the **mandatory content** of the Unit. The sample must provide an opportunity to candidates to produce **sufficient** evidence to meet the requirements of **all** Outcomes and Performance Criteria and to allow an assessor to judge them competent in terms of the complete content of the Unit, ie to infer from the evidence generated by the sample that candidates will be able to demonstrate the same skills and knowledge to the same standard in any sample. As long as these conditions are met, then the choice of sample should be governed by the subject matter and context of the Unit. To sum up, in relation to sampling, the Evidence Requirements should specify clearly:

- whether any items should be included on each assessment occasion and which they are - this will apply if the Unit contains items which are considered crucial to the achievement of competence for the Unit, or if the Unit has an embedded Core Skill
- that a different sample or questions - where the same areas are covered in each assessment - should be chosen on each assessment occasion (apart from those items which must be assessed on every occasion)
- the conditions of assessment
- the standard of attainment required to demonstrate competence (refer to NAB pack)

If you are embedding a Core Skill, you need to ensure that assessment of the Core Skill is also covered in the Evidence Requirements of the carrier Unit. This will be particularly important if you are using sampling as a method of assessment, since the Core Skill will have to be covered in every sample selected.

Appendix 2

Checklist for Bias in Instruments of Assessment

Checklist for Bias

Assessment instruments should offer all candidates an equal opportunity to demonstrate their attainment. The tasks, the language in which they are presented and any associated illustrative material should reflect an inclusive view of society.

While this checklist does not claim to be definitive, it will assist you in the preparation of fair and inclusive assessment tasks which relate to a contemporary environment.

- Are males and females equally represented?
- Are situations and contexts, used in the question paper, equally within the experience of male and female candidates?
- Are females and males portrayed as being of equal status and as being equally competent?
- Is the respective contribution of women and men to shaping society and impacting on history, adequately presented?
- Are females portrayed in passive, sensitive role and males in more aggressive active roles?
- Is the word order relating to gender varied, ie, not always “men and women”, “boys and girls” and “he or she”?
- Are occupations referred to in a gender-neutral way (eg, police officer rather than policeman; firefighter rather than fireman)?
- Where people are portrayed, do they reflect the diverse and changing nature of modern Scotland?
- Do your questions avoid ethnic stereotyping, tokenism and Eurocentricity? By Eurocentricity we mean: are the notions of power, leadership and competence to make decisions or initiate development represented solely as attributes of Europeans?
- Are people from diverse backgrounds seen to be participating in a realistic and positive way?
- Are the situations and contexts that you used outwith the experience of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds?
- Is the use of words with racially sensitive connotations avoided?
- Are the customs, cultures and religions of non-western and non-white people marginalized or positioned as inferior in your question paper?
- Does the text and related questions make assumptions about cultural, social or religious backgrounds which will make them inaccessible to any candidate?

- Does the text and related questions make assumptions about cultural, social or religious backgrounds, which will make them offensive or off-putting to any candidate? (We emphasise that there should be **NO** racist or derogatory language in any assessment situation, even in an anti-racist context.)
- Do your questions avoid stereotyping on the basis of factors such as gender, race and disability?
- Do your questions avoid making assumptions about disabled people?
- Are disabled and non disabled people seen as having equal status?
- Are disabled people seen in a positive role?
- Do any of your questions include positive promotion of inclusion and equality?