

23 November 2007

To: SQA Co-ordinator (secondary schools, FE colleges)  
Directors of Education  
SCIS  
Customer Account Managers

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the  
delivery of National Qualifications in Psychology**

Action by Recipient
Response required
✓ Note and pass on
Note — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

**National Qualifications in Psychology**

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for National Qualifications in Psychology.

**Diet 2007**

Centres are advised to access the Principal Assessor and Senior Verifier reports for Psychology for diet 2007. These reports contain essential advice and feedback for all teachers/lecturers delivering National Qualifications in Psychology.

The following reports can be found on the Psychology pages of SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)):

- ◆ Principal Assessor report for Intermediate 1 Psychology
- ◆ Principal Assessor report for Intermediate 2 Psychology
- ◆ Principal Assessor report for Higher Psychology
- ◆ Senior Verifier report for Psychology

**Marking instructions**

The question papers and finalised marking instructions for diet 2007 Course assessments at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher levels are posted on the Psychology web page. It is hoped that these will be of benefit to staff when preparing a prelim paper or when submitting evidence in the event of making appeals.

## **Important update**

It has been agreed to implement some interim **changes to Course content at all levels of Psychology** which will affect the **2008 external assessment**. In the Unit *Psychology: Understanding the Individual* at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher levels three domains must be taught but only two are currently assessed. **In section A of the 2008 external assessment there will now be a third question covering the remaining domain which will give candidates the opportunity to answer two questions from three.**

All three questions in section A of the Higher question paper will have a similar structure — questions will always be two-part and will either be worth 10 marks each or will be worth 12 and 8. There will therefore be no 20 mark essay questions in this section. Please note that this refers to section A only — there will still be an essay question in section C. It is important that centres take this into consideration when devising prelims. The Course assessment specification has been updated to reflect this change.

The three NABs currently available for the Unit *Psychology: Understanding the Individual* have two assessments for each domain. If staff take the option of teaching only two domains, they can extract the topics they wish to assess to compile a suitable assessment. Care should be taken that the overall KU/AE balance is correct.

In addition at **Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 level**, the Unit *Psychology: Investigating Behaviour* currently requires that **two** classroom based research activities are carried out. The mandatory requirements have been reduced to **one** classroom research activity **either** experimental **or** non-experimental survey task. These changes have been made to the Arrangements documents for Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 on SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

The decision to make these interim changes was taken for a number of reasons. Since the revised Courses in Psychology were implemented SQA has been monitoring both results and feedback from teaching staff. One consistent comment has been that there is too much content to cover. This interim measure of adding in a third question in section A of the exam will allow staff to either continue to teach all three domains in Unit 1 or to teach only two domains knowing that there will be a question in the exam on whichever two they teach.

While SQA would have preferred to have given centres more notice of these changes, a decision had to be taken quickly to allow centres to benefit from the changes this session.

All SQA National Courses are reviewed in a three-five year cycle and a group of subject specialists, consisting of teachers and lecturers from across Scotland, has been convened to look at any longer term changes that may be required in Courses in Psychology. New National Assessment Bank (NAB) items and specimen question papers will be available when a long term review has taken place.

## **SQA Academy and SFEU event**

Part one of a two day staff development event is being held on 7 November 2007 in collaboration with SQA Academy and Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU). This event is aimed at teachers and lecturers responsible for the delivery and assessment of Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher Psychology, and will

enhance their understanding of the assessment process, including setting assessments, marking and the appeals process. The event will be held in SFEU offices, Argyle Court, Stirling, and is free of charge. Part two of the training will be on 13 February 2008. For further details and registration please log onto the SFEU website at [www.sfeu.ac.uk/events](http://www.sfeu.ac.uk/events).

## Appeals

The procedures for stage 1 and 2 appeals were completed during September and October. The most commonly found problems in evidence submitted for appeals this year were:

- ◆ evidence has been marked inconsistently and does not match the national standard
- ◆ evidence submitted does not reflect centre estimate
- ◆ the balance of knowledge and understanding and analysis and evaluation (KU 60% and AE 40%) as set out in the specimen question paper must be adhered to in the prelim
- ◆ NABs submitted as evidence did not take account of the difference in the KU/AE balance between question paper and NABs
- ◆ the KU/AE balance and structure clearly laid out in the Course assessment specifications and the specimen question paper was not adhered to

Centres should note that the above problems may disadvantage candidates.

Colleagues are requested to follow the guidance set out in the following documents prior to submitting appeals:

- ◆ *The Appeals Process: a guide for centres* (AA0690/3, June 2002)
- ◆ *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements* (BA0992, June 2007)

The document noted above — *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on Evidence Requirements* — has undergone revision and has been posted on SQA's website. The revised version clarifies what evidence is required when submitting an appeal for question paper based Courses and states:

The evidence for the question paper could include:

- ◆ a prelim which covers all Units and replicates the standard, format, duration and security of SQA's question paper. This could support an appeal for Grades A, B and C and would be the most convincing evidence for an appeal for Grade A.
- ◆ a prelim which covers all Units and is split into parts and the two parts have been separated by a period of time rather than being taken on one occasion. Centres should be aware that the level of demand is less than the Course assessment. The level of demand can be increased in a number of ways such as by raising the cut-off scores or by increasing the level of challenge of the prelim. This could support an appeal for Grades A, B and C.
- ◆ a prelim which covers a minimum of two Units of the Course plus supporting evidence, such as a high scoring NAB, for the third Unit would support an appeal for a Grade C (and possibly Grade B), but not for a Grade A.

## **Higher Research Investigation**

Five Research Investigation briefs are now listed for session 2007/08. Candidates **must** base their investigation on one of these briefs. This list covers the constraints/choices within the Course arrangements and can be found on the NQ Psychology page of SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)), along with the Revised Higher Research Investigation Guidelines and the Research Investigation: Ethics Guidance.

Centres are reminded that all Higher Research Investigations must be submitted to SQA for external assessment. Research Investigations will be uplifted from your centre on **Thursday 24 April 2008**.

As stated in previous update letters, concerns have been raised by the Principal Assessor (PA) and the examining team regarding apparent lack of regard for ethical considerations when conducting research for the Research Investigations (RI). It is important to remind centres of the guidelines issued by the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the Association for the Teaching of Psychology in Scotland (ATPS) regarding the use of under-age children as participants in research and the safety of candidates carrying out research for the Research Investigation Higher. The guidelines laid down by these bodies are summarised in the document *Research Investigation Guidelines (2004)* issued by SQA and available on SQA's website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)) on the NQ Psychology page.

## **Being an SQA Marker**

Each year the number of entries for the Psychology Courses is increasing and SQA are in need of additional Markers. If you are interested in becoming a Marker in Psychology, please e-mail [markers@sqa.org.uk](mailto:markers@sqa.org.uk) or call our Marker Helpline (0131-561 6825) and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you are in your third year of teaching the Course or have been teaching it within the past three years.

We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer an appointment for this year. Psychology will continue to be centrally marked — this entails Markers marking scripts over two separate weekend periods in the same venue. In a number of subject areas we have had recent examples where the results in centres have improved dramatically after a member of staff joined the marking team. The experience of marking helps to increase the awareness of the demands of Course assessment and is proven to be excellent professional and personal development.

## **Assessment Panel**

The remit and make-up of the Social Sciences Assessment Panel has been reviewed with the result that there are now more representatives for each subject — Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy and Politics. The Social Sciences Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year to look at issues arising in the assessment of Social Science subjects. Colleagues are free to feed issues arising in their subject to the Panel either directly through panel members or via SQA officers.

I hope that you find the above information useful. If you would like to discuss any matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to telephone me on 0845 213 5502, or e-mail: [tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk](mailto:tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk).

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Stannage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Tom Stannage  
Qualifications Manager  
NQ Social Sciences