



**National Qualifications 2011  
Internal Assessment Report  
Geography**

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

# National Qualifications (NQ) Units

(ie freestanding units which contribute to NPAs or NCs etc.)

## Titles/levels of NQ Units Verified

DF3C 10	Geography: Physical Environments (Intermediate 1)
DF43 10	Geography: Human Environments (Intermediate 1)
DF3C 11	Geography: Physical Environments (Intermediate 2)
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)
DF44 12	Geography: Environmental Interactions (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.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Across Intermediate 1/2, Higher and Advanced Higher (Geographical Study and Geographical Issues only) the internal assessment seems to be well understood and used by centres appropriately. However, the verification process highlighted an issue with the understanding of the requirements for the Advanced Higher Geographical Methods and Techniques (GMT). The particular issue is explained in detail under the section below entitled 'Areas for improvement'.

Overall, the quality of candidates' performance exemplifies the high standard of professional support from teachers/lecturers given to candidates in centres.

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.

## Evidence Requirements

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.

## Administration of assessments

Centres which had obviously adopted a policy of cross-marking/internal verification procedures are to be particularly commended. Such centres present few, if any, problems for the Verifiers, as the centre is more likely to have identified and acted on any inconsistencies

in the marking. It is recognised that a centre with a single-person department may have difficulty with internal verification but they may consider linking up with a neighbouring centre for cross-marking purposes.

An increasing number of centres are following the advice given in previous years in taking ownership of the NAB items by including departmental front covers. These often include all the relevant information required for both internal and external verification.

The following advice has been included in the last few years' reports in support of centres with new staff. 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.
- ◆ There is a clear and definite approach to marking, suggesting a clear policy being followed by the centre and illustrated by the following:
  - One piece of relevant evidence is submitted in support of the centre's decision.
  - 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.
  - The use of 'd' or 'e' at ticks to ensure the balance of marks across a 'describe and explain' question.
  - 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.
  - 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/areas for improvement**

Out of a total of 35 centres verified, only five, all at Advanced Higher (GMT) were deemed to be 'Not Accepted'. After support and advice from the verification team, these centres provided suitable evidence to be deemed 'Accepted' (see under 'Areas for Improvement' for full details on the issues causing concern at the verification event).

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.
- ◆ At Advanced Higher, the quality of evidence submitted by some centres was impressive. It is evident that these 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**

The verification process identified a particular issue in the operation of Unit DF4A 13: Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher).

Five centres were deemed 'Not Accepted' as they did not fulfil the requirements as set out in:

- ◆ pages 23 to 31 of the Arrangements document  
[www.sqa.org.uk/files\\_ccc/Geography\\_AdvHigher.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Geography_AdvHigher.pdf)  
 – National Unit specification: statement of standards — Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher)

and/or

- ◆ the guidance within the NAB item — Geographical Methods and Techniques DF4A 13/NAB001

### **General comments**

The following Verifiers' observations and advice should be read in conjunction with the above documentation to appreciate the basis for the Verifiers' concern:

- ◆ Most centres submitted all the candidates' work without selecting what was needed for the verification process. As a result, they had not checked that there was sufficient evidence for all five techniques.
- ◆ One centre sent everything the candidates had produced which made finding relevant evidence difficult and time consuming for the Verifiers. Centres are responsible for submitting the relevant information and in a manner that allows the verification process to be undertaken in a timely fashion.
- ◆ Many centres ticked all/most of the boxes in the Candidate Record Sheet and not just the boxes for the evidence submitted for verification. This meant that some centres confused themselves and did not include items in one or more of the prescribed categories.
- ◆ Very few centres used a marking grid which would have encouraged cross-marking and checking of evidence before submission for verification.
- ◆ Centres submitted evidence for techniques that are not on the prescribed list.
- ◆ Few centres used past papers to provide evidence. Past paper questions can be used to generate evidence for techniques 4(a) and 4(b). The evidence, or lack of suitable evidence, for these techniques was the cause of major concern at this year's verification event.

- ◆ A number of centres did not submit the assessment instruments and marking schemes that were used to generate evidence. Others sent in photocopies of assessment items and candidates' evidence which were often unclear and difficult to read. In both instances the lack of evidence made it difficult or impossible for Verifiers to agree with the centres' decisions.
- ◆ Marking of the map interpretation evidence for the AH GMT was in many cases very generous.
- ◆ At Advanced Higher '....candidates must study and apply complex geographical methods and techniques to analyse information and identify relationships, and to present information'. In some centres the quality of evidence submitted did not meet the required standard.