



**National Qualifications 2022**  
**Qualification Verification Summary Report**  
**Scottish Studies: Scotland in**  
**Focus**

**Verification group number: 613**

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

# National Qualifications Awards

## Scottish Studies

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

H3YP 43 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 3)

H3YP 44 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 4)

H3YP 45 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 5)

H3YP 46 Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 6)

## General comments

This session, verification for Scottish Studies (Scotland in Focus) was conducted remotely. Nine centres were verified this session and verification was completed between February and May 2022.

Four of those centres presented for level 4, seven centres presented for level 5, and one centre presented for level 6.

The majority of these centres demonstrated understanding of the national standards for the unit. Two of the centres had assessment judgements accepted after further evidence had been provided. One of these had verification judgements accepted after further candidate evidence had been provided.

Verification samples across centres included candidate evidence from levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. However, a number of candidates were judged to have achieved a level which had not yet, in fact, been achieved. Centres were advised to ensure candidates were focused on establishing clear aims which showed how the candidates were broadening their knowledge of Scotland, and that completed work reflected these aims in sufficient detail for the candidates' level. Some centres provided candidate evidence where more than two aims were given, and this disadvantaged candidates as they were not able to provide sufficient depth as they were attempting to cover too many aims. Centres were also advised to ensure that candidate aims fulfilled the main purpose of the Scotland in Focus unit: to broaden learners' knowledge of Scotland.

Centres are advised to continue to focus on ensuring that candidates have not relied too heavily on source material and that information is not lifted from sources without reinterpretation. External verifiers advised centres to use dialogue with candidates to support assessment decisions, particularly when candidates have given oral presentations. This is a particularly helpful approach when candidates have lifted directly from sources in a written response. Centres were advised that detailed teacher notes or detailed learner notes should be included as evidence of dialogue and oral presentations.

Remote verification was used to review assessment decisions. Much of the communication was done by email as a result, though for some centres, Teams calls were arranged to allow dialogue with centre staff. These interactions were

positive and allowed assessment decisions to be confirmed and centres to ask questions. Centre staff used verification meetings online to seek advice on levels, content and delivery of their courses as well as on presentation and national standards.

External verifiers saw a limited range of activities, with candidate activities mainly being focused on written responses in a report format. There were fewer occasions this year where outdoor learning or creative evidence was being utilised. This is inevitably due to the restrictions necessary during the pandemic. It is hoped that, when schools are under fewer restrictions, there will be a return to those more activity-based and creative approaches.

External verifiers found that candidates were, in the main, presented at the correct level though there were a few instances where candidates should have been assessed at a lower level.

## **Course arrangements, unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials**

In general, centres were using appropriate SQA documentation to support candidates to reach the national standard. Centres are advised to use the candidate and assessor checklists evidenced in the unit assessment support packs (UASPs) to ensure candidates are assessed against the appropriate assessment standards, particularly when quality assuring candidate evidence for verification. Centres are also reminded that assessment standards are different for each level and candidates must be assessed using the appropriate assessment standards.

Some centres were not aware of exemplification of standards on the Understanding Standards section of SQA Secure or the Starter Packs on the front-facing SQA site, and were directed to these to assist in quality assurance. Some centres were using UASPs available on SQA Secure. Centres are reminded that SQA offers a prior verification service for centres that devise their own assessment materials.

## **Evidence requirements**

Evidence requirements were understood by most centres. Those centres which used candidate and assessor checklists were able to demonstrate an effective way to document assessment decisions and ensure assessment standards are being met. Comments added to assessor checklists proved to be particularly helpful to verifiers; these are not mandatory, but significantly add to our understanding of the assessment of individual candidate evidence. Some centres were able to evidence systems for internal quality assurance done internally by including the comments of internal verifiers on candidate evidence.

Centres are reminded that clear aims are required for all candidates — one for levels 3 and 4 and two for levels 5 and 6. Candidates must also present specific, detailed information about sources and resources: sources include texts, videos,

interviews, newspapers, etc, and could be referenced like a bibliography; resources include equipment needed, such as stationery, ICT equipment, etc.

### **Administration of assessments**

Centres had judged candidate evidence to the national standard effectively in most cases.

Evidence of internal verification was in place in some centres. In some centres, internal verification systems were effective: there was evidence of clear discussion of the standards and of the whole moderation process. Some centres were not able to provide evidence of internal verification and were advised that this should be a focus for the future.

### **Areas of good practice**

- ◆ Some centres were using published, or amended, candidate and assessor checklists with detailed comments.
- ◆ Some centres used either a candidate brief or an introductory set of lessons to ensure candidates knew what was expected of them.
- ◆ In most centres, it was evident that candidates had a wide choice for their Scotland in Focus units and had clearly made use of the personalisation and choice the course allows. There was a range of topics, which had allowed candidates to demonstrate that they had broadened their knowledge of Scotland: investigating tourism, the Scottish Parliament, Scottish fashion, Scottish culture, language, traditions, history, sport, wildlife, religion, trade, and Scottish inventions, etc.
- ◆ Some candidates had feedback on the assessor checklist which showed how the candidates had or had not met the assessment standards. This feedback came from internal assessors, and internal and external verifiers within the internal verification system. This is a helpful method of showing candidate achievement.
- ◆ Evidence of cross-marking was available in some centres and there was evidence of clear and supportive written comments on some examples of candidate evidence.
- ◆ Some centres had a clear internal quality assurance policy, and procedures in place showed a focused and organised approach to internal assessment and internal verification.
- ◆ Some centres provided records and minutes of meetings which formed the quality assurance process, showing the planning process undertaken by the centre and actions taken for each candidate.
- ◆ Some centres provided notes from internal verification processes, which allowed the external verifier to see the policy in action.
- ◆ Some centres demonstrated partnership working with another centre.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

- ◆ Centre staff should ensure candidates clearly identify their aims in order to achieve assessment standard 1.1 (identifying aims in relation to broadening their knowledge of Scotland).
- ◆ Aims need to be clearly expressed and (for levels 5 and 6) be clearly distinct from each other.
- ◆ Aims should also be specifically focused on how the candidates will broaden their existing knowledge of Scotland.
- ◆ Aims should not exceed the number specified for the level the candidate is being presented for. This allows candidates to provide sufficient depth for the one or two aims required.
- ◆ Exemplification of effective, and less effective, aims may help candidates begin their assignments with more focus.
- ◆ Centres should also continue to encourage candidates to record their sources in detail and with accuracy to ensure that standard 1.3 (identifying sources of information and resources) is met. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that specific sources are clearly identified either in a logbook or in a detailed bibliography. Evaluation of sources should also be encouraged at all levels.
- ◆ Use of a variety of types of specific sources is preferred; candidates could be encouraged to use books, TV documentaries, interviews and surveys, as well as internet sources (search engines should not be given as sources — specific websites and web pages should be referenced).
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to undertake different activities to match their individual skills; while written reports are entirely acceptable, other forms of product, eg artwork, electronic presentation, talks to peers, interview, group debate, and drama production, are also valid and may allow candidates to demonstrate their strengths in a more effective way.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded not to be too reliant upon source material. Over-reliance on source material, without rephrasing or reinterpretation, does not show understanding of the topic and therefore is not suitable evidence of candidates broadening their knowledge of their Scottish topic. Centres must clearly instruct candidates to express information in their own words and that material should not be lifted directly from a source unless this is acknowledged. Centres are advised to take a stringent approach to avoid plagiarism.
- ◆ When a candidate's chosen activity is a talk, centres are advised to ensure detailed notes are created and kept, either by the assessor or the candidate. Discussions should be supported by detailed notes from the assessor and/or candidate notes. This is a mandatory part of the assessment and, without evidence, the external verifier cannot assess the effectiveness of assessment judgements made by the centre. The centre must provide evidence of this assessment standard having been achieved in the form of a transcript of the conversation, detailed teacher notes which replicate the conversation, or detailed candidate evidence.
- ◆ The centre should ensure that implicit evaluation should be given appropriate credit: candidates will often evaluate alongside the information provided.

Discussion of the impact, importance or significance of the topic anywhere in the candidate material is evidence of analysis/evaluation.

- ◆ It is recommended that candidates complete a Candidate Evidence Checklist from the UASPs.
- ◆ Centres should consider using the assessor checklist sheets to record cross-marking and agreed assessment decisions more clearly.
- ◆ Centres should ensure all assessment decisions made are judged against the appropriate assessment standards for the Scotland in Focus unit.
- ◆ Centres are advised to ensure there is a clear understanding about the level of detail required for each level. Centres should review the [support materials on aims on the SQA website](#). At SCQF level 4, teachers and lecturers can offer advice to learners to help them choose appropriate aims, activities, sources and resources. Level 4 work is characterised by being 'in some detail'. At level 5, only minimal support is allowed, therefore teachers and lecturers can respond to direct questions from learners to help them identify aims, activities, sources and resources.
- ◆ Internal verification of levels should take place and evidence of this should be retained (notes on candidates' work; minutes of meetings, etc) along with the instrument of assessment and marking schemes used.
- ◆ Centres are advised to ensure that annotations on candidate evidence should match what has been resulted on the evidence checklists — ie if a candidate has been judged to have passed the unit or assessment standard, it should say so on all the paperwork consistently.
- ◆ Encouraging universal use of units within NQ Courses 'with a Scottish context' is recommended; this will allow more candidates to achieve the full Award. Centres should note that candidates need to be entered for these units, and a pass resulted, to allow achievement of the full Award.
- ◆ Centre staff are reminded that all centres offering SQA qualifications must have an effective internal quality-assurance system in place which ensures that all candidates are assessed accurately, fairly, and consistently to national standards. The centre could refer to the Internal Verification Toolkit available here: [www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit](http://www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit).
- ◆ It would be helpful to see evidence of meeting minutes, and assessment decisions, such as annotations on candidate evidence of where assessment judgements were agreed or discussed.