NQ verification 2022–23 round 2

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	**Biology**
Verification activity:	**Event**
Date published:	**June 2023**

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
J4A9 75	SCQF level 5	Cell Biology
J4AA 75	SCQF level 5	Biology: Multicellular Organisms
J4AC 75	SCQF level 5	Biology: Life on Earth
J4A6 76	SCQF level 6	Biology: DNA and the Genome
J4A7 76	SCQF level 6	Biology: Metabolism and Survival
J4A8 76	SCQF level 6	Biology: Sustainability and Interdependence
J4A3 76	SCQF level 6	Human Biology: Human Cells
J4A5 76	SCQF level 6	Human Biology: Physiology and Health
J4A4 76	SCQF level 6	Human Biology: Neurobiology and Immunology

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Almost all centres used the SQA unit assessment support (UAS) packs, which meant that there were generally few problems with the approach to assessment.

A small number of centres used outdated versions of the UAS packs. Centres must use the most up-to-date UAS packs from SQA's secure website.

A small number of centres used their own assessments. Centre-devised assessments are acceptable as long as they meet national standards. Centres that devise their own summative unit assessments, or significantly change SQA's assessments to suit their needs, can use SQA's free prior-verification service. The service gives centres additional confidence that their proposed assessment is fit for purpose and meets national standards.

Assessment judgements

Candidates are no longer required to pass assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2 independently. With a unit-by-unit approach, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the total marks available in a **single** unit assessment to pass outcome 2 for that unit.

Most centres used the appropriate thresholds for the assessment approach they used. However, a small number of centres used a combination of the unit-by-unit and portfolio approaches. Centres must not use a portfolio approach to assess units at SCQF level 5 and SCQF level 6.

Centres can refer to the audio presentation in the Understanding Standards section of the [Biology subject pages](#) for clarification about thresholds for each approach.

Most centres' assessment judgements were in line with national standards. However, it was clear that some centres inconsistently applied the marking guidance. Centres must apply the agreed marking guidance consistently and use internal verification to ensure that all candidates are assessed to national standards.

Marking guidance provided in the SQA UAS packs is not intended to be exhaustive and centres can modify it. Almost all centres demonstrated good practice by annotating their marking guidance and detailing acceptable alternative answers. A small number of centres accepted appropriate answers that were not included in their marking guidance. Recording additional acceptable answers ensures that assessments are fair and equitable for all candidates.

Some centres added incorrect answers to their marking guidance. If a centre amends SQA marking guidance to include additional answers for a question, they must ensure that these meet the national standards demonstrated in the current SQA UAS packs.

Section 3: general comments

Centres offering SQA qualifications must have an effective internal quality assurance system that ensures all candidates are assessed accurately, fairly, and consistently to national standards. Centres selected for external verification must provide details of their quality assurance processes. Providing an internal verification policy to external verifiers gives a better understanding of the processes implemented in the centre.

Some centres provided evidence of their internal verification processes, specifically internal verification records. Most centres showed good practice by including notes from the internal verifier and demonstrating how they made assessment judgements. However, this did not always lead to consistent, reliable assessment judgements, specifically if they applied the marking guidance leniently.

Some centres provided evidence of cross-marking. However, the final assessment judgement was not always clear if the marks awarded by the assessor and cross-marker were different. Centres must clearly indicate the final judgement on the candidate evidence.

Centres should record any discussions that take place during their internal verification process. They can use a candidate record sheet or an internal verification record sheet. Clearly annotating the candidate evidence, indicating where marks have or have not been awarded, is very helpful for candidates, other assessors, and verifiers.

Centres should review their internal verification processes to ensure that they are effective. It is good practice to use the [Internal Verification Toolkit](#).