



Higher Biology: understanding the next steps for session 2017–18

This guidance note explains the impact on assessment for candidates being presented in session 2017–18.

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Unit assessment

Outcome 1

Candidates are no longer required to show full mastery of the assessment standards to achieve Outcome 1. Instead, 5 out of the 6 assessment standards for Outcome 1 must be met to achieve a pass.

The following table outlines the scenarios in which candidates can achieve Outcome 1.

Scenario	Assessment Standard achieved (✓ or x)						Overall result
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	
1	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pass
2	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pass
3	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	Pass
4	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	Pass
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	Pass
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	Pass

Important note: There is still the requirement for candidates to be given the opportunity to meet all assessment standards. The above threshold has been put in place to reduce the volume of re-assessment where that is required.

Re-assessment

Candidates may be given the opportunity to re-draft their original outcome 1 report or to carry out a new experiment/practical investigation.

Outcome 2

Assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2

Assessment standards 2.1 (making accurate statements) and 2.2 (solving problems) are no longer required to be passed independently. Assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2 can now be assessed by means of a single assessment for each unit.

Candidates can be assessed by means of a single test that contains marks and a cut-off score. A suitable unit assessment will cover all of the key areas (AS 2.1) **and** assess each of the problem-solving skills (AS 2.2).

Where a candidate achieves 50% or more of the total marks available in a single unit assessment they will pass Outcome 2 for that unit. Existing unit assessment support packs can be used during session 2017–2018. Guidance on the use of each unit assessment support pack is noted below.

a) Unit assessment support pack 1 (unit-by-unit approach)

As these packages contain questions on all of the key areas (AS 2.1) and questions covering each of the problem-solving skills (AS 2.2), unit assessment support pack 1 **is suitable** for use as a single assessment for its associated unit.

The number of marks available for each question should be combined to give the total number of marks available. A cut-off score of 50% should be applied to each of these unit assessments.

Where a centre is using unit assessment support pack 1 they should apply the cut-off scores shown in the following table:

Unit assessment support pack 1 (V4.0)	Total number of marks available (AS 2.1 + AS 2.2)	Cut-off score
H4KD 76 DNA and the Genome	31	16
H4KE 76 Metabolism and Survival	37	19
H4KF 76 Sustainability and Interdependence	36	18

Outcome 2 assessment activity 2 — tests

As these tests contain questions on all of the key areas (AS 2.1), questions covering each of the problem-solving skills (AS 2.2), marks and cut-off scores, each one **is suitable** for use as a single assessment for its associated unit.

Where a centre is using one of these tests they should apply the cut-off scores shown in the following table:

Unit assessment support pack 1 (V4.0)	Total number of marks available (AS 2.1 + AS 2.2)	Cut-off score
H4KD 76 DNA and the Genome	40	20
H4KE 76 Metabolism and Survival	40	20
H4KF 76 Sustainability and Interdependence	40	20

Note: During session 2017–18 centres can continue to assess AS 2.1 and 2.2 separately using the existing unit assessment support packs. If they choose to do this, 50% or more of the KU statements (AS 2.1) made by candidates must be correct in the unit assessment and at least one correct response for each problem-solving skill (AS 2.2) is required to pass Outcome 2. However, if a candidate is given more than one opportunity in a unit assessment to provide a response for a problem-solving skill, then they must answer 50% or more correctly. Guidance on re-assessment is provided on page 5.

b) Unit assessment support pack 3 (portfolio approach)

It is still acceptable for centres to use this method of assessment.

Candidates should be given the opportunity to make accurate statements for all of the key areas of each unit (AS 2.1). They must also be given opportunities throughout the course to answer questions on each of the four problem-solving skills (AS 2.2).

Evidence should be collected as candidates progress through the course. For Assessment Standard 2.1, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the total KU marks available for **each** unit. For Assessment Standard 2.2, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the **total** marks available for all four problem-solving skills.

Examples are given below.

Example A

This candidate has passed Outcome 2 for all 3 units as they have achieved 50% or more of the total KU marks available for each unit **and** 50% or more of the total marks available for all four problem-solving skills across the three units.

Unit	Assessment Standard (marks achieved)	
	2.1	2.2
H4KD 76 DNA and the Genome	20/30	7/12
H4KE 76 Metabolism and Survival	24/28	
H4KF 76 Sustainability and Interdependence	29/35	

Example B

This candidate has not passed Outcome 2 for all 3 units as, although they have achieved 50% or more of the total KU marks available, they have not achieved 50% or more of the total marks available for all four problem-solving skills across the three units.

Unit	Assessment Standard (marks achieved)	
	2.1	2.2
H4KD 76 DNA and the Genome	16/30	2/12
H4KE 76 Metabolism and Survival	14/28	
H4KF 76 Sustainability and Interdependence	25/35	

Re-assessment

SQA's guidance on re-assessment is that there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Re-assessment should be carried out under the same conditions as the original assessment. It is at a centre's discretion as to how they re-assess their candidates. Candidates may be given a full re-assessment opportunity, or be re-assessed on individual key areas and/or problem-solving skills. Regardless of which option is chosen, candidates must achieve 50% or more of each re-assessment opportunity.

If assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2 are combined then candidates must achieve 50% of the overall marks available in the re-assessment.

If assessment standard 2.1 is assessed separately then candidates must achieve 50% of the 2.1 marks available in the re-assessment.

If assessment standard 2.2 is assessed separately then candidates must achieve 50% of the marks available for each problem-solving skill in the re-assessment.