



Common questions about National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Computing Science

Unit assessment

When using SQA's Unit assessment support packs, must we use the tasks exactly as they are, or can we change them in any way?

With any of our Unit assessment support packs, you are free to adapt them as you see fit (or, alternatively, use an assessment of your own creation), as long as they help the candidate meet the Assessment Standards.

However, if you make substantial changes to a SQA Unit assessment, or create your own, we recommend submitting the assessment for prior verification to ensure that it is suitable. Details of this process can be found [here](#).

In Unit assessment, if a candidate answers one question incorrectly, do they have to do another assessment task?

If the candidate has only made a slight error or perhaps not given enough detail in their answer, then it is acceptable to give the assessment back to the candidate and ask them to add more to their answer.

You could also look for other evidence that the candidate may have completed which meets the standard. If this is not possible, then give the candidate another task that could allow them the opportunity to meet that stage of the assessment.

This advice applies to all levels of Unit assessment.

Why does the Snowboarding task 6 in the National 5 ISDD Unit assessment support package 1 not make sense?

This is because the first sentence should read 'Produce a report/layout showing all the runs that are graded green and are less than 2km in length'. This will be addressed in our next planned round of revisions.

The Added Value Unit states that candidates should learn a graphical design notation. Would it be acceptable for National 4 candidates to design the code using pseudocode?

Making assessment judgements says 'candidate selects and uses appropriate graphical or contemporary design notation'. As pseudocode is a contemporary design notation, candidates could use this rather than a graphical design notation.

Is the National 4 Added Value Unit going to change from year to year?

There are currently three Added Value Unit assessments to choose from. Centres can also adapt these or create their own assessments for the Added Value Unit, within limits that are clearly described in the 'Assessment overview' of the *Added Value Unit assessment*. All assessments, whether produced by SQA or a centre, should be marked against the judging evidence tables in the SQA Added Value Unit assessment documents.

We will continue to provide a free prior verification service to schools and colleges who devise their own assessments, or who significantly change SQA's assessments to suit their particular needs. Find out more about prior verification [here](#).

If a National 4 candidate passes both National 4 Units but not the Added Value Unit, will they automatically get the National 3 Course award? If not, what would a centre have to do to facilitate this?

Although a hierarchy exists, there is no 'automatic' certification from National 4 to National 3; however, there is a straightforward process for these circumstances.

The centre would need to enter the candidate for the National 3 Course, but they would not have to enter or assess them for the National 3 Units, as Unit passes at National 4 would be credited towards the Course at National 3. The candidate's certificate would therefore show a pass for the National 3 Course and a pass for both National 4 Units.

For further information, please visit the Recognising Positive Achievement page www.sqa.org.uk/rpa

Can you give a National 4 candidate a National 5 Course assignment instead of a National 4 Added Value Unit assessment?

No. A National 4 candidate should be given a National 4 Added Value Unit assessment; and a National 5 candidate should be given a National 5 Course assignment.

Course assessment

If a National 5 candidate doesn't achieve the Course assessment, what needs to happen for them to get the National 4 Course award instead?

Once grades are determined and centres are notified, SQA will advise which candidates fall into this position (ie they have passed all of the Units of a Course at National 5 but have not got a passing grade in the Course assessment). If the centre chooses, there is the opportunity for the candidate to achieve a National 4 Course award.

To do this, the centre would enter the candidate for the National 4 Added Value Unit, set the candidate a National 4 Added Value Unit assessment and then assess it. Once achieved, they would then need to result it as a pass and this Unit result would generate a pass for the National 4 Course.

In Computing Science, the National 5 Course assignments and National 4 Added Value Unit assessments are very similar. Whilst this was designed to help facilitate bi-level delivery, it also assists candidates in the 'fall-back' situation described above.

Instead of doing a National 4 Added Value Unit assessment, the centre could re-assess the candidate's National 5 Course assignment against the Assessment Standards of the National 4 Added Value Unit and, if met, this would provide appropriate evidence to result the Unit.

However, there are important points to note:

- ◆ There is no threshold mark in the National 5 Course assignment that equates to a National 4 Added Value Unit pass.
- ◆ Where the National 4 Added Value Unit Assessment Standards are not being met by the National 5 Course assignment evidence, the centre will have to provide an alternative assessment to meet this need.

In the 'Games review' assignment, how can there be identification of correct inputs in the analysis stage of the website, if there are no inputs in a static website?

The Course assignment asks for the identification of inputs to the problem. So, although the website has no inputs, the website part of the problem has inputs in terms of the graphics, text, hyperlinks etc required to create the website.

Is it necessary for candidates to complete the Added Value Unit assessment and the National 5 Course assignment in the same session?

There is no obligation for National 5 candidates to also complete the National 4 Added Value Unit assessment; centres should enter candidates for the Course at the level that they think is most appropriate.

General

What software does SQA recommend?

SQA does not recommend any software; however, we do give a list of requirements in order to complete the tasks given within the Course.

For the National 5 database assignment task, our centre has an OLE server that won't work for images. Is it acceptable to use an attachment field instead?

Yes, an attachment field will be acceptable.

Do I have to teach my candidates to write programs using 'Haggis'?

Candidates do not need to be taught to write programs using 'Haggis'. 'Haggis' is the name of a reference language developed by colleagues in the higher education sector. SQA use a subset of this as a standardised way of presenting code in assessments (such as question papers).

Initially, our documentation referred to this as 'pseudocode' but, to avoid confusion with informal pseudocode, we now use the more correct term 'reference language'.

In question papers where candidates are asked to write code, they may respond using any programming language, pseudocode or any other design notation. Therefore, candidates still need to be taught about pseudocode at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, as part of 'Design notations'.

More information on reference language can be found in the 'Advice and guidance' section of each level. The document for Higher can be found [here](#):

General Curriculum for Excellence questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.