

## Computing Science

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This update contains information on any recent updates to documents for Computing Science along with further information and guidance.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Dave Main**  
Qualifications Manager

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## The Qualifications Team

**Dave Main**  
Qualifications Manager

**Anna Deacon/Scott Durkin**  
Qualifications Officers

**Raymond Simpson**  
Subject Implementation Manager

## Changes to documents in August and September

As part of our agreed schedule of planned changes to documents for session 2016–17, some documents have been revised as a result of centre feedback. Changes were put to our National Qualifications Support Team for their consideration and details of any changes can be found at [www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjectchanges](http://www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjectchanges)

## Further information and guidance

### Changes to National Courses

In September 2016, the Deputy First Minister announced that unit assessments will be removed from National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. These changes will be implemented over a three-year period and we have started to review how each course is assessed.

[Find out more about the changes to National Courses.](#)

### What's next for Subject Review Reports?

Following the Scottish Government decision to make changes to unit assessment in National Courses, we are reviewing current activities with regard to the Subject Review Reports and associated guidance notes.

Completed review report actions for 2016–17 will remain. Actions for 2017–18 onwards may be cancelled or rescheduled in light of the work associated with the revisions to National Courses, especially those relating to unit assessments.

Further information and subject-specific updates will continue to be communicated via Centre News and the subject web pages.

### Guidance note

- [Computing Science: Understanding the next steps for National Qualifications](#)

This document outlines the specific actions to take or points to be aware of when carrying out assessments with your candidates in session 2016–17.

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## Removal of exemplar question papers

Exemplar question papers were created as a revision resource for learners during the implementation of the new Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications. As we now have two years' worth of past papers for new Higher as well as a specimen question paper for each subject with an exam, the exemplar question papers will be removed from our website in the week commencing 24 October 2016. Associated guidance documents and guidance on the use of past paper questions documents will also be removed at this time.

The Advanced Higher exemplar question papers and associated guidance will remain for session 2016–17 and will be removed from the website in July 2017.

## Technologies survey

We recently issued a survey to provide us with information that we will use as the basis of our Subject Review Report work and our thanks go to all who responded to this. Our intention is to publish the survey results upon completion of our Subject Review Report activity.

## Reference language

Following discussion with our higher education colleagues, we have revised our 'reference language' document. Rather than having a different version for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, we now have a document that covers all levels and also a summary document. These can be found under the 'Assessment support' section on the subject level pages.

As previously advised, whilst we will use this reference language to present 'code-type' questions in our question papers, there is no requirement for candidates to respond to these questions in this reference language. Please see past papers and marking instructions for examples of this.

## Coursework

Please note that the coursework for this subject (a large project at Advanced Higher and choice from a secure bank at National 5 and Higher) must be delivered and assessed as it is and without alteration. This includes activity such as reformatting the task or providing candidates with a template for completion. If changes are made it affects the validity of the assessment and will have an impact on the marks available to candidates. This could result in a 'not accepted' verification result, the need to re-mark an entire candidate group, the unavailability of higher mark ranges (because the task is less demanding), a delay in certification, or further centre investigation.

Likewise, with National 5 and Higher, the task must be undertaken as a single assessment event (ie not spread across different parts of the academic year) — full details of the assessment conditions can be found in the Course Assessment Specification.

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Additionally, our coursework tasks have been designed for candidates to interpret the problem set and develop their own unique solution — centres are reminded that group work, discussion and shared solutions are not permitted in coursework assessment. Furthermore, candidates cannot have coursework reissued to them to improve upon it once it has been submitted for assessment.

## British Computing Society terms

As with predecessor qualifications, we will use the British Computing Society's *Glossary of Computing* to define any technical language that we use in our documentation and question papers. This will also include the adoption of prefixes such as 'kibi' and 'mebi' in relevant situations (such as calculations related to storage/file sizes); however, we will not begin using these prefixes until session 2017–18.

## Advanced Higher question paper

From session 2016–17 (ie the forthcoming examination diet), we will be changing the format of the Advanced Higher Computing Science question paper to a separate question paper and answer booklet. The question structure and content are not affected by this change.

## Course Reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual Course Reports for the subject(s) and levels you are teaching. These reports are produced following the annual diet of exams and are published by the end of October. The reports provide informed and valuable commentary on the assessment for each component in the course, and include a summary of:

- candidate performance in the course assessment
- areas in which candidates performed well
- areas which candidates found demanding

The reports also contain advice on preparing future candidates, and statistical data relating to grade boundaries. Course Reports will be available from the relevant subject pages of our website at [www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects](http://www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects)

## Verification Key Messages

Key messages from rounds 1 and 2 of verification in session 2015–16 are available on the relevant subject pages of our website at [www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects](http://www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects). You can access them from the 'Verification and Course Reports' tab.

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## Looking ahead to session 2016–17

### National Qualification Support Team

Ahead of the autumn meeting of the Computing Science National Qualification Support Team (NQST) we would like to add to the existing membership.

NQSTs are subject-specific stakeholder consultation groups that feed back to SQA on the internal and external assessment of National Qualifications.

These groups communicate via secure online discussion forums as well as an annual face-to-face meeting.

For more information and to express an interest in joining the team, visit [www.sqa.org.uk/ngst](http://www.sqa.org.uk/ngst)

### Marker recruitment opportunities for 2017

We are now accepting marker applications from teaching professionals to contribute to the 2017 exam diet. If you are interested in joining us as a marker, please visit the [appointee opportunities](#) section of our website where you will find a marker advert for all subjects and levels, with details of the role.

Becoming a marker helps to increase your awareness of the demands of course assessment and provides excellent professional and personal development.

Please check [www.sqa.org.uk/appointees](http://www.sqa.org.uk/appointees) regularly for other appointee opportunities which may be of interest to you.

### Understanding Standards programme

Our Understanding Standards programme will continue in the coming session and will include nominee training events, subject-specific course events and the publication of further Understanding Standards materials.

### Understanding Standards course events 2016–17

We are running a programme of subject-specific Understanding Standards events from October 2016 until January 2017. The majority of these events will focus on the standards required for course assessment at Advanced Higher.

For more information and to book your place, visit [www.sqa.org.uk/ngevents](http://www.sqa.org.uk/ngevents). Please note that for each subject there is a maximum of one place per centre.

### Understanding Standards materials

Understanding Standards materials contain real examples of candidate evidence from course and unit assessments, along with a commentary that explains why the evidence has or has not

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met the assessment standards. These materials are a really useful resource for helping you to strengthen your understanding of the standards required for assessment.

We will continue to publish new Understanding Standards materials throughout the coming session and you can access them from the following locations:

<b>SQA Understanding Standards website</b> ( <a href="http://www.understandingstandards.org.uk">www.understandingstandards.org.uk</a> )	<b>SQA Secure website</b> ( <a href="https://secure.sqa.org.uk">https://secure.sqa.org.uk</a> )
Candidate evidence and commentaries for <b>externally assessed</b> components of course assessment (including question papers).	Candidate evidence and commentaries for unit assessment and <b>internally assessed</b> components of course assessment.

You can arrange access to our secure website through your SQA co-ordinator. Any materials downloaded from our secure website must be stored securely and treated as confidential.

## Extra support to help you deliver your courses

### Continuing professional development (CPD)

We will continue to offer subject-specific CPD support at a local authority, independent schools or college level, subject to request. This involves an experienced SQA appointee providing advice and guidance on any areas of concern that are not already addressed by the Understanding Standards programme.

Please note that CPD requests should be made by the appropriate representative from the local authority, independent school or college. For each request we will agree with the representative the content to be covered and the most appropriate way to deliver the support, eg in person, by webinar or by video conference/teleconference.

CPD requests can be made at [www.sqa.org.uk/cpdform](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cpdform)

## Stay informed

### Subscribe to Centre News

Our weekly Centre News newsletter contains the latest news and updates for centres delivering SQA qualifications. It also includes subject-specific news and a regular reminder of key dates during the session.

To subscribe, visit <http://mailer.sqa.org.uk>

### Visit your subject pages

Make sure you regularly visit your subject pages, where you can access documents and assessment support materials for your courses, Verification Key Messages and information on

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coursework. You will also find the latest news updates for your courses in the 'Updates and announcements' section.

Visit [www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects](http://www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects)

## Sign up to MyAlerts

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YouTube: [SQAonline](https://www.youtube.com/SQAonline)

### Contact us

For centre enquiries, please contact our Customer Support Team:

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