



# Qualification Verification Summary Report

## NQ Verification 2018–19

### Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Environmental Science
Verification event/visiting information:	Event
Date published:	June 2019

### National Units verified:

Unit code	Level	Unit title
H24P 73	National 3	Living Environment
H24S 73	National 3	Sustainability
H24P 74	National 4	Living Environment
H24R 74	National 4	Earth's Resources
H24T 74	National 4	Science — added value unit
H24P 75	SCQF level 5	Living Environment
H24R 75	SCQF level 5	Earth's Resources
H24S 75	SCQF level 5	Sustainability
H24P 76	SCQF level 6	Living Environment
H24R 76	SCQF level 6	Earth's Resources
H24S 76	SCQF level 6	Sustainability

### Section 2: Comments on assessment

#### Assessment approaches

In round 1 of verification, most centres had chosen to use the published SQA unit assessment support packs. Some centres made minor adjustments to the marking instructions, which is to be encouraged.

One centre added questions to a published assessment which increased the level of demand of the assessment beyond the appropriate level for the unit and was therefore judged as not accepted. Where a centre makes significant changes to a published assessment they should make use of SQA's prior verification service.

Centres are reminded to use the most up-to-date versions of assessments, which were published on the SQA secure site in 2018.

In round 2 of verification, all centres had chosen to use the published SQA unit assessment support packs. Again, some centres made minor adjustments to the marking schemes, which is to be encouraged. These adjustments were annotated onto the marking schemes.

A few centres had used a centre-devised assessment or had made adaptations to the questions in the unit assessment support pack (UASP). Where centres are devising their own assessment instruments or are making major adaptations to the UASP, it is strongly recommended that these assessments are submitted for prior verification. Centres should also submit a grid to identify which questions are testing which key areas or skills, similar to those contained within the UASPs.

Adding marks to questions is acceptable, but must be approached with caution as this can change the balance and demand of the assessment. For example, changing a single response question in the UASP to a question requiring an explanation worth three marks could change the balance of the test. It may also disadvantage some candidates in that they may be able to give the single required response but not the more extended explanation being sought in a three mark question.

Centres are reminded that unit assessments are set at minimum competence level and are not intended to provide differentiation with, for example, 'A' grade questions.

For guidance on constructing appropriate alternative unit assessments, centres are advised to use the information provided in package 3 — the Portfolio approach.

Some centres had used UASPs that are no longer valid and are no longer on the SQA secure website. Centres must use UASPs that are valid and which are currently available on the SQA secure site.

If SCQF level 5 and/or SCQF level 6 units are being assessed, candidates must complete an outcome 1 assessment. Centres are reminded that they must follow the assessment instructions. One centre supplied candidates with a template to follow at SCQF level 6. The SCQF level 6 UASP clearly states that a template may not be provided. Centres are reminded that they should familiarise themselves with all the instructions for assessment before an assessment is carried out, and they should follow these instructions.

## **Assessment judgements**

Centres are reminded that rigorous, accurate and consistent application of the marking instructions is essential. Some centres were not consistent in their application of the marking scheme, which is not acceptable. The marking guidance is not meant to be exhaustive and centres are encouraged to annotate any minor changes they make to the marking instructions. If a candidate uses correct alternative answers then these should be marked as correct. Centres are reminded, however, that any changes made to the marking scheme must be scientifically correct.

Generally, centres had applied the marking scheme accurately and consistently. However, some centres were judged to have been severe in their assessment judgements, particularly at National 3. Centres are reminded to make sure that they are marking at the correct level.

Some centres were giving too much guidance to candidates. Guidance should not direct candidates to a specific response, and should not take the form of model answers.

Centres are reminded that they must use the correct scientific terminology. In particular, assessors should not mistake reintroduced species and introduced species, as the two terms are different and not synonymous.

Centres should also be conscious that where a question has two parts for one mark, the candidate must answer both parts to receive the mark. If only one part of the question is answered, then the mark should not be awarded.

Several centres had sent outcome 1 assessments for verification. Generally these had been assessed poorly with many incorrect decisions. Centres are reminded that they must apply the judging evidence requirements correctly and rigorously.

For assessment outcome 1.1, some centres had not given credit if a candidate did not explicitly state the dependent and independent variables. However, if a candidate refers to the independent and dependent variable in the report, they should be credited for this.

When candidates give a list of resources, they must include the key resources needed for the experiment. When there are no safety implications for the practical element, the candidate should include this in the report.

Where a calculation is included, assessors should check that the calculation is correct. Assessment standard 1.4 was often marked too leniently.

Centres are reminded that graphs must be drawn correctly and plotted accurately, within a half-box tolerance on graph paper. Some centres had not assessed the accuracy of the graphs correctly and had judged that candidates had passed the assessment standard when it was not appropriate.

Where a candidate has performed an experiment with replicates, it is not appropriate to award a pass for assessment standard 1.6 if the answer given is that the experiment should have more replications.

Where a candidate draws a diagram in their outcome 1, the diagram should be a correct scientific diagram.

Internal verification was generally good. There was a high level of annotation showing that internal verification was rigorous. Where the internal verifier and the marker do not agree, it is essential to show what the final decision is.

## **Section 3: General comments**

Centres should ensure that they are always using the most up-to-date assessments, if they are using the UASPs.

Centres are reminded that there is no need to internally verify all evidence; an appropriate sample can be verified. Internal verification was generally good. A high level of annotation in many centres showed that internal verification was rigorous. Where the internal verifier and the initial assessor do not agree, it is essential that it is made clear what the final decision is. It is essential that both the initial assessor and the internal verifier are aware of the level of answer that is expected for each level of qualification, and that both are aware that the marking guidance is not meant to be exhaustive and can be amended by the centre, so long as the marking guidance is annotated to show any amendments.