



NQ Verification 2016–17

Key Messages Round 1

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Environmental Science
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2017

National Courses/Units verified:

Unit code	Level	Unit title
H24P 73	National 3	Living Environment
H24P 74	National 4	Living Environment
H24P 75	National 5	Living Environment
H24P 76	Higher	Living Environment

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The verification sample was small, so there are limited comments for this round of verification.

All centres had chosen to use the published SQA unit assessment support packs. Some centres made minor adjustments to the mark schemes, which is to be encouraged. One centre had altered the number of marks each assessment opportunity offered. This approach changed the balance of the assessment and was not accepted.

When a centre makes significant changes to an assessment they should make use of [SQA's prior verification service](#).

Assessment judgements

Centres that had sent outcome 1 for verification had correctly applied the threshold of five out of six assessment standards for passing this outcome.

Some centres are still assessing assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2 separately, whilst some centres are assessing these assessment standards together, with a

50% pass mark for both assessment standards. Either approach is currently acceptable.

Rigorous, accurate and consistent application of the marking scheme is essential. The marking guidance is not meant to be exhaustive and it is encouraged that centres annotate any minor changes they make to the mark scheme.

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

It is important that assessors are familiar with the technical language in the course that may be outside their specialisation. Technical terms must be used correctly. In particular, mistaking intra- and inter-specific competition and mistaking bioaccumulation and biomagnification were errors that were observed. Also, some centres were accepting that energy is lost from a food chain by growth, which is incorrect. This answer should not be marked correct.

While correct spelling is not critical for a mark to be awarded, care must be taken where a candidate has appeared to have mistaken two technical terms. Where a misspelled word may cause confusion with another technical term, the mark should not be awarded.

03

Section 3: General comments

Where candidates have used software to generate graphs, then both minor and major gridlines must be visible so accuracy can be verified. Also, when using software to generate graphs, the scales must be appropriate.

Centres are reminded that there is no need to internally verify all evidence; an appropriate sample can be verified. When the internal verifier and assessor disagree, the centre needs to make sure that the final decision can be identified easily.