



NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 1

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Modern Languages — Gaelic Learners
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

H277 75 National 5	Gaelic Learners: Understanding Language
H278 76 Higher	Gaelic: Using Language
H277 76 Higher	Gaelic: Understanding Language
H277 77 Advanced Higher	Gaelic: Understanding Language

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The approaches to assessment were 'Accepted' for almost all centres that were selected for verification. This demonstrates that almost all centres have followed guidelines and made use of the feedback and support provided by SQA in publication updates, the Key Messages reports and at events (for nominees and practitioners) in 2014 and in 2015. This should be reassuring for practitioners and is to be commended.

In the case of centres that were not accepted, it is imperative that they use the feedback and support provided in SQA publication updates, the Key Messages reports and at events (for nominees and practitioners).

A large majority of centres used the Unit assessment support packs (available on SQA's secure site) to assess their candidates.

If a centre has used a centre-devised assessment or amended a task and/or a judging evidence table, the created/revised task and judging evidence table must be included within the submission for verification.

Centres clearly indicated which Unit assessment support pack they used, eg Package 1, N5, Reading. It is recommended that one copy of the judging evidence table, the task, the texts and transcripts — for listening tasks— are also included for the whole sample. There is, however, no need to include one copy inside each candidate's clear envelope.

Many centres successfully adapted published assessments to suit the needs of their candidates or to allow for personalisation and choice without affecting the Assessment Standards and Outcomes. This is to be praised.

It is important to note, however, that amendments should not alter the mandatory Assessment Standards included in the judging evidence table and any amendments must only be reflected in the exemplification column (fourth column) of the table, where necessary.

No centre used a centre-devised assessment. The verification team would encourage centres to devise and submit assessments for prior verification in future years.

If centres are not confident about the validity of their centre-devised assessments, they should request their assessments be prior verified through SQA's prior verification service. This should be requested before instruments are used to assess candidates.

Centres should feel free to reformat the assessments provided in the Unit assessment support packs by slightly amending the questions, the texts or the layout to suit their candidates' needs while maintaining the standards. Should the amendments to the texts or questions be minor, these do not require to be prior verified.

Assessment judgements

It is reassuring to report that the assessment judgements made by assessors in almost all centres have been 'Accepted' as they were overall in line with national standards. Some comments were made when specific minor issues arose which did not affect the judgement.

This demonstrates that almost all centres have successfully implemented guidelines and made use of the feedback and support provided by SQA in publication updates, the Key Messages reports and at events (for nominees and practitioners) in 2014 and 15. Overall, staff have made best use of the expertise already in place in centres or in clusters of centres. This should be reassuring for practitioners and is to be commended. Tertiary sector centres are encouraged to access this feedback and support.

Centres are to be commended for submitting a range of evidence, ie some passes and some fails, including judgements for borderline evidence. This helps ensure more effective and relevant feedback.

Centres should ensure that they submit documentation for each piece of evidence, clearly demonstrating how assessment judgements are made and clearly indicating the overall outcome of pass or fail and for each Assessment Standard of the Outcome, eg an assessment outcome record/commentary/checklist for each candidate. Centres should also ensure that a copy of the judging evidence table (where appropriate, amended in the fourth column only) is included alongside the instrument of assessment.

Detailed commentaries about each candidate's performance are very useful for internal and external verification purposes and are to be commended. However, it is acknowledged that this approach can be time-consuming. Therefore, a detailed checklist for each candidate's performance can be just as useful for the verifier, and more practical for the centre. This could also be used as effective feedback to candidates.

Centres should amend judging evidence tables in the Unit assessment support packs with a range of possible answers to demonstrate how assessment judgements are made for each Assessment Standard (fourth column).

The judging evidence table in the Unit assessment support pack should be used as a guide: the answers listed in the fourth column are only exemplifications of how a candidate may address each Assessment Standard. It is recommended that centres populate the judging evidence table (fourth column) with a range of other possible answers that have been accepted by the centre.

Centre-devised information on judging evidence must be clearly referenced against each Assessment Standard. The award of marks is not a feature of Unit assessments. The inclusion of 'marks out of' will be disregarded for verification purposes.

Many centres have clearly justified how they made their assessment judgements. This should be commended. Some centres noted each Assessment Standard next to each of the candidates' responses or on their written scripts as 1.2 / 2.3 etc... to evidence where the candidates had addressed these Assessment Standards. This is good practice as it is very useful and appropriate for internal and external verification purposes. A couple of centres used a colour-coded approach, highlighting each response addressing an assessment standard in a different colour in the judging evidence table and then highlighting the candidates' scripts using this system. It was very clear where each assessment Standard had been met.

Centres took a mostly holistic and positive approach to marking candidate work. A candidate should be given credit for answers as long as the candidate meets each Assessment Standard overall, regardless of whether they are necessarily in the correct place. For instance, if a pupil does not have the correct information in one question, but has it in another, they may still be able to demonstrate evidence of addressing an Assessment Standard by demonstrating understanding of main details etc. Equally, one answer from a candidate might address more than one Assessment Standard. This depends on the difficulty of

the text the response relates to: is this section of the text simple, straightforward, detailed, detailed and complex, complex and sophisticated?

Centres are reminded that assessors should ignore extraneous material that does not contradict the response.

Specificities of the assessment of talking

For the assessment of talking in the Using Language Unit, centres used a variety of questions, including unexpected and more open questions to assess candidates. This allowed for a more natural conversation and for candidates to demonstrate their ability to sustain the conversation.

Assisting SQA in giving more extensive feedback on the verification of a talking assessment, good quality audio recordings were included which ensured a more detailed and accurate comment.

For the assessment of talking in the Using Language Unit, there is no requirement to submit an audio recording of candidate work. No centre took this approach. If no audio recording is submitted, centres must submit a detailed checklist or commentary with some examples of what each candidate says referenced against each Assessment Standard for the Outcome.

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Section 3: General comments

What evidence should a centre send in for a verification round?

Most centres submitted very clear and well-organised packages for verification, which is to be commended. This has facilitated the verification process and assisted in providing useful feedback to centres.

Complete evidence for the one Unit may be taken from different Unit assessment support packs, ie listening Outcomes may have been assessed using an assessment from one combined pack and reading Outcomes may have been assessed using an assessment from another. Some centres took this approach and it is to be commended.

The verification team is not concerned whether a candidate has passed or failed an Outcome/a Unit. Nominees only verify that that the judgements made by the centre's assessor(s) are acceptable or not. Indeed a candidate may well have been re-assessed by the centre since the evidence had been submitted for verification. Centres will enter the final Unit outcomes for their candidates at a later stage (see centre's SQA Co-ordinator).

How to complete the SQA Verification Sample Form

It is important that the SQA Verification Sample Form is completed correctly and matches the information on pupil scripts and the Candidate Evidence Flyleaf. This is very important, as the judgement (pass/fail) entered on the Verification Sample Form is what the verification exercise is based on, regardless of what is

entered on the candidates' scripts or individual record forms. Scottish Candidate Numbers must be entered.

Centres should arrange candidates in alphabetical order for each level and/or Unit on the Verification Sample Form: eg A–Z at National 3 reading, then A–Z at National 4 listening, then A–Z at National 5 writing. The order of the candidates' evidence must match the order on the Verification Sample Form.

Each candidate should only be entered on the sample form once per Unit: eg for Understanding Language, not one entry for reading and one for listening.

The Unit code (eg H277) and level code (eg 77) need to be clearly and correctly entered. You will find the list of Unit/level codes on page 1 of this report.

The Pass/Fail column should only be completed with 'Pass' or 'Fail' and should not be left blank.

If a centre submits complete evidence for a Unit, eg a reading and listening assessments for the Understanding Language Unit, then the column Pass/Fail on the Verification Sample Form should be completed to show the overall outcome for the Unit, not for each individual assessment. For example, a candidate needs to pass both a reading and a listening assessment to pass the entire Understanding Language Unit.

No entry should be made in the 'Nominee Review' column.

The judgement entered on the Verification Sample Form is for verification purposes (ie has the centre's Assessor(s) judged the evidence in line with national standards?) and is not necessarily final as there might be an opportunity for a candidate to be re-assessed at a later stage if not already done.

How to complete the Candidate Evidence Flyleaf

Centres should enter:

- ◆ 'Complete' when both elements for one Unit are included, eg when reading and listening for the Understanding Language Unit are submitted. Note that 'Complete' does not necessarily mean 'Final'; a candidate could be re-assessed at a later stage if not already done at that level.
- ◆ 'Interim' when a single element from a Unit is included; eg only the reading element of the Understanding Language Unit is included.
- ◆ 'Mixed' when elements of two Units are combined (eg reading and talking).

What evidence of internal verification and quality assurance should a centre send?

This could be a covering note explaining the process used (eg cross-marking, discussion on validity of centre-devised assessments at meetings) and a clear indication on the candidate scripts or on the candidate record form that the work was internally verified and the judgements agreed.

Some centres have spent a remarkable amount of time detailing their quality assurance procedures, which is to be commended.

The internal verification/quality assurance arrangements could be modelled on a whole centre/local authority one, rather than one being developed for each subject to avoid duplication of systems.

Centres devising their internal verification procedures may find SQA's verification toolkit helpful: www.sqa.org.uk/IVToolkit.

How do I share my concerns/queries about any aspects of the verification process for Gaelic Learners?

Any queries/concerns should be sent to SQA via the centre's SQA Co-ordinator. They should not be included in any envelopes destined for verification. The verification team consisting of nominees and appointees cannot respond to these, as their role is to focus on the verification process.

Can a prelim be used to assess Units?

This is not a recommended approach as the Unit assessments have a formative goal, following the study of a specific topic/context. It is important that candidates are not disadvantaged by a 'dual purpose' approach, which does not take into account differences between reaching a competency level in a Unit assessment and undertaking a Course assessment. If this approach is selected, the centre would have to create clear links against each Assessment Standard in the judging evidence table. It is important that the overall purpose question used — either commercially or centre-devised — by its nature covers the whole text and not only a passage of the text. The same caution should be applied in utilising National Qualifications past papers for assessment purposes, in particular listening, where the format of the texts and types of question used is different to those used currently.