

## Geography

### The Qualifications Team

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## Changes to assessment at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher

As announced by the Deputy First Minister in September 2016, units and unit assessments are being removed from National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses on a phased basis over three years:

- National 5 from 2017–18
- Higher from 2018–19
- Advanced Higher from 2019–20

For more information, including a Q&A on the implications of these changes, please visit our website at [www.sqa.org.uk/nqchanges](http://www.sqa.org.uk/nqchanges)

### Units that were previously part of National 5 courses

The units that were previously part of National 5 courses are now freestanding units at SCQF level 5. They can no longer be used to contribute to the achievement of a National 5 course.

We will remove all references to National 5 courses from the unit specifications, unit support notes and unit assessment support packs in due course, and the unit support notes will be added to the unit specifications as an appendix. The unit specifications will also be relocated to a new freestanding units web page for each subject.

Further information on the timescales for this will be provided in our weekly Centre News newsletter.

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## Changes to assessment in National 5

The National 5 Geography course is now assessed through the following components:

Component	Marks
question paper	80
assignment	20

### Clarification of course content in the National 5 course

There are three sections in the course:

- Physical environments
- Human environments
- Global issues

The skills covered by the course include:

- mapping skills related to Ordnance Survey maps
- extracting, interpreting and presenting numerical and graphical information

## Changes to assessment in Higher courses from session 2018–19

Units and unit assessments will be removed from Higher courses from session 2018–19 and we have started our review of the Higher course assessments. For this, we are working closely with our National Qualifications Support Teams (NQSTs) for each subject. Our NQSTs include teachers and lecturers who currently deliver National Courses, and representatives of professional associations. We will also meet with a sample of teachers to gauge their views on the proposed changes and the implications of these.

The publication of new and revised Higher materials will follow a similar timescale to National 5:

<b>End of April 2018</b>	Revised Higher course specifications
<b>End of May to end of September 2018</b>	Course support notes New/revised specimen question papers New/revised coursework assessment tasks

We will provide further information on what the changes to assessment are for each subject by the end of January 2018.

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## Conditions of assessment for coursework

To ensure fairness for all candidates, it is essential that the specified assessment conditions for coursework are consistently applied in all centres. The following documents detail the specific conditions that must be followed in each assessment:

- course specification
- course assessment specification (Higher and Advanced Higher only)
- coursework assessment task

In addition to these documents, you must also refer to the following document, which is available from the coursework section of the National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher web pages:

- [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)

This document provides important information on the time and volume of assessment, the use of resources, and the supervision, control and authentication of assessment — including examples.

## Changes to documents

### Revised National 5 documents and assessment support materials

Following the removal of units and unit assessments from the National 5 Geography course, we have strengthened the course assessment to ensure it assesses the full content of the course.

We have published a revised course specification and revised assessment support materials for the National 5 course, which detail the requirements of the revised course assessments from session 2017–18 onwards. The documents are available from the National 5 subject web pages at [www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects](http://www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects). Further information on the changes to documents and assessment support materials is provided below.

#### Course specification

In April 2017, we published a revised course specification which provides detailed information about the National 5 course and course assessment, including the conditions of assessment that must be followed. The revised document was produced by merging the previous course specifications, course assessment specifications and general assessment information into a single, streamlined document. Course support notes have been added to the course specification as an appendix.

The National 5 Geography course specification is available on the [National 5 Geography subject page](#).

#### Specimen question paper

The question paper has 80 marks and the time for the examination is now 2 hours and 20 minutes. This allows more of the content of the course to be sampled in the examination.

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The National 5 Geography specimen question paper is available on the [National 5 Geography subject page](#).

### **Coursework assessment task**

There is no change to the assignment.

The following documents are now available on the [National 5 Geography subject page](#):

- Coursework assessment task
- Assignment Report
- Assignment Processed Information Sheet

## **Changes to documents following Diet 2017**

### **Advanced Higher Geography coursework**

During the 2017 exam diet, changes were made to the wording in the marking instructions for both parts of the Advanced Higher Geography folio. The purpose of these changes was to provide clarity for markers in relation to how marks could be awarded.

The assessment task for Advanced Higher Geography was revised to reflect the changes to the marking instructions and is available on our [secure website](#) which can be accessed through your SQA co-ordinator.

## **Supportive resources**

### **National 5 CPD webinar**

To help teachers and lecturers prepare for the changes to assessment in the National 5 course, we ran a series of subject-specific continuing professional development (CPD) webinars that focused on the requirements of the course assessment.

A webinar providing further information about the revised course will take place on Friday, 10 November 2017.

Recordings of these webinars are available to view online via our website and can be accessed from the **CPD webinar/audio and support** tab on the [National 5 Geography subject page](#).

### **National 5 audio presentation**

We have published an audio presentation that focuses on the requirements of the revised National 5 course assessment.

The audio presentation provides a detailed overview of the revised course.

You can access the audio presentation from the **CPD webinar/audio and support** tab on the [National 5 Geography subject page](#).

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## Further information and guidance

### Course reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual course reports for the subject 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 comment 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 2016–17 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.

The reports provide comments on good practice for assessment approaches and for making assessment judgements. Brief examples of candidate work which meet the assessment standard are included also, to show good practice for individual assessment standards.

### Understanding Standards materials

Our Understanding Standards programme will continue in the coming session and will include the publication of further Understanding Standards materials for the Advanced Higher folio.

Understanding Standards materials contain real examples of candidate evidence from course assessments (question paper and assignment) and unit assessments, along with a commentary that explains why the evidence has or has not met the assessment standards. These materials are a useful resource for helping you to strengthen your understanding of the standards required for assessment.

There is a series of webinars available for National 4, Higher and Advanced Higher:

- National 4 Added Value Unit
- Higher assignment and question paper
- Advanced Higher folio
- Advanced Higher units

We will continue to publish new Understanding Standards materials throughout the coming session and you can access them from the [Understanding Standards website](#).

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## Stay informed

### Subscribe to Centre News

Our weekly Centre News newsletter contains the latest news and updates for centres delivering SQA qualifications. The newsletter is sent to your SQA co-ordinator and you can also subscribe directly at <http://mailer.sqa.org.uk/centrenews/step1>

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