

## Geography



Welcome to the first edition of our new-look subject update, which replaces the letter you would have received previously. This update complements the regular monthly and weekly communications from SQA, with more information relevant to Geography, and details of what we have been working on.

I would encourage you to make regular use of the Geography subject pages, where you will find support documents such as answers to **Common Questions**, and links to other areas of interest. Documents that must be treated confidentially can be found on SQA's secure site and you can arrange access to these through your SQA Co-ordinator.

I hope you find the following update helpful; please contact me if you have any questions.

**Angela Baird**  
Qualifications Manager

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## Contacting the team

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## Updates to documents

The National 4 Added Value Unit Specification and Added Value Unit assessment were updated in August 2014. The National 5 Course Assessment Specification and Course Assessment Task were also updated in August 2014. The requirement for fieldwork and maps was removed from these documents. The intention of these updates is to provide teachers and lecturers with further information and clarification based on feedback we have received. Further detail can be found on the **notification of changes** spreadsheet.

### **National 5 Geography assignment, Marking Instructions**

The Marking Instructions were updated during this year's main diet. This was to assist Markers by providing further clarity to ensure consistency across marking.

### **2014 question paper, Marking Instructions**

Finalised Marking Instructions for the 2014 question paper have been published on the National 5 Geography subject page of SQA's website.

### **Time extended for National 5 Geography question paper**

The duration of the 2015 National 5 Geography question paper will be extended by 15 minutes. Candidates will now have 1 hour and 45 minutes to complete the question paper. This follows feedback from practitioners.

The 2015 exam timetable on our website has been updated to reflect this; however, we will not be making any changes to hard copies of the timetable. Practitioners should refer to the online version of the 2015 exam timetable for the correct start and finish times.

We will update the Specimen Question Paper and Course Assessment Specification to incorporate these changes.

### **New Higher**

Higher Course specifications, Unit specifications and Course Assessment Specifications containing mandatory information on the new Higher were reviewed and revised in April and May 2014, along with the Higher Unit assessment support packs.

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## Example question paper

We will be publishing an example question paper for this Course. This will show you how existing past paper questions or items have been amended and adapted for use as support for Course assessment preparation. This will provide an additional support for centres, alongside the specimen question paper previously published and the 'Guidance on the use of past papers' document.

## Advanced Higher — development update

The development of the new Advanced Higher Geography Course is progressing with the support and encouragement of the subject working group which includes a wide range of subject specialists who currently deliver the existing Advanced Higher Course. The new National Course at Advanced Higher will build on the strengths and the geographical skills sets from the existing Advanced Higher. The opportunity has been taken to align the new Advanced Higher Course with changes at National 5 and Higher, to update the skills sets at Advanced Higher and revise the methods of assessment, increasing personalisation and choice for learners.

The subject working group has been mindful of the views expressed through a series of detailed consultations to reduce the level and duplication of assessment within the existing Advanced Higher Course. To this end:

- ◆ At Unit level, the group has reviewed and clarified some Unit Outcomes and Assessment Standards. These do not change the overall level of demand of the Units. Unit assessment support packs will be based on these amended Unit Outcomes and Assessment Standards.
- ◆ At Course assessment level, the group has produced a set of general marking principles that set out how the two components of the Course will be assessed. The new Course will maintain the skills sets assessed in the current Course, whilst introducing opportunities for more integrated questions, allowing candidates to illustrate high-order thinking skills.

The Advanced Higher Course comparison document, covering points of change and areas of stability, will illustrate progression from Higher and provide further details on the Course content and assessment.

## Support and guidance

### National 5 Geography — assignment

The first live diet, in May 2014, highlighted the need to remind centres of the following in relation to the assignment:

- ◆ To access all of the marks available, the processed information must be included with the candidates' reports.
  - ◆ The processed information should be used to record evidence which has been gathered and processed during the research phase; the candidate should then refer to this in the production of evidence phase.
  - ◆ The processed information may include annotated maps, diagrams and photographs, tables and charts, summary notes from a text and so on.
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- ◆ Candidates will not be awarded marks for copying large chunks of information from their processed information sheet.
  - ◆ Information on assessment conditions for the assignment can be found in the Geography assignment **general assessment information**.

There is no mandatory template for the National 5 Geography assignment, however, centres are free to produce their own if they wish to do so. An example of a template can be found in the Coursework Assessment Task which is available on SQA's secure site. A flyleaf will be produced for the submission of candidate evidence and, as per the 2014 diet, these will be sent to centres in advance of the submission date. A copy will also be available on SQA's secure site.

### **Geography assessment reports**

Guidance on performance in external Course assessments and evidence generated for internal assessment is published annually. This includes external assessment reports and verification key messages, all of which will be available in the autumn via the relevant subject pages of SQA's website. Internal assessment reports will not be published for the new National Courses. The following verification key messages are now available:

- ◆ **National 3 to National 5 Geography**

Please take time to read the above report as it contains useful feedback on candidate performance in 2013–14.

### **Unit assessment — prior verification**

Centres are reminded that prior verification is only recommended when a centre has chosen to develop their own unit assessment or where *significant changes* have been made to an SQA-produced Unit assessment support pack. Using the same assessment task in a different context, eg different geographical area, is not a significant change.

### **Higher Geography support**

We are currently working on additional advice for centres in relation to integration of Course content, as well as further advice on approaches to the assignment.

## **Looking ahead to 2014–15**

We would like to express our thanks to all those who have undertaken duties during session 2013–14. The work that all the teams carry out is very much appreciated and we look forward to continuing to work with them during session 2014–15.

### **Recruitment opportunities**

We are currently in the process of recruiting for a number of roles that we are looking to fill between now and February 2015. This includes:

- ◆ Advanced Higher Item Writer
  - ◆ Advanced Higher Item Checker
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- ◆ Advanced Higher Question Paper Reviewer
  - ◆ Advanced Higher Question Paper Validator
  - ◆ Higher Team Leader
  - ◆ Higher Senior Team Leader
  
  - ◆ Senior Team Leader (verification)
  - ◆ Markers

For more information, please visit <http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfeappointeevacancies>

### **Understanding Standards**

Throughout session 2014–15, we will be publishing a range of Understanding Standards materials for both Unit and Course assessment. These materials will include candidate evidence with commentaries and can be used by centres for training and bench-marking purposes. We will also run Understanding Standards events for Unit assessment, for Nominees to share knowledge of Unit assessment with their colleagues. In addition, we will run Understanding Standards events for Course assessment for National 5, which will be open to all subject specialists.

Further information will follow in SQA's weekly and monthly centre updates.

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