



**National Qualifications 2013
Internal Assessment Report
English and Communication**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified:

Course Units verified:

F796 10 Language Study Intermediate 1

F796 11 Language Study Intermediate 2

F796 12 Language Study Higher

General comments

To a large extent, the centres verified showed a clear understanding of the requirements of the Performance Criteria. As a result, marking of the two Outcomes (Close Reading and Writing) was, in most cases, accurate, and consistent with national standards.

Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Almost all centres selected for verification were familiar with the Unit specification.

In a few cases, however, there was evidence of continued confusion over the marking of the Writing, a point addressed in last year's *NQ English and Communication Internal Assessment Report*. Writing for the Unit should be marked Pass or Fail, by judging whether or not it has met the Performance Criteria. The use of the 25-point scale is for external assessment.

The requirement for the use of a valid instrument of assessment (commonly referred to as a 'NAB'), in the assessment of Close Reading, has been repeated annually for some years. Centres should ensure that the chosen Close Reading or Textual Analysis is eligible for use. This can only be done by checking whether or not it is on the current list of available passages on the NAB. When an instrument of assessment is withdrawn from use, it is no longer eligible for the assessment of the Outcome, and will not be accepted at verification. Exceptions are made, up to a point, for instruments of assessment withdrawn during the current session.

Evidence Requirements

Of the small number deemed Not Accepted at verification, the majority failed as a result of incomplete submissions. In all such cases, the Writing Outcome was omitted.

Wherever possible, Verifiers will attempt to complete the verification using the sample submitted. Incomplete submissions — in which one Outcome is missing

— cannot, however, be assessed, since the verification of the centre's assessments relates to the complete Unit, for which both Outcomes are required.

A missing element in the submitted sample is an easy enough deficiency to correct. It is possible, of course, that the re-submitted sample will be adjudged Not Accepted, and the centre required to undertake an assessment review. This extension of the process is unlikely to be completed before the end of May (for samples initially required for the end of March), and will take most centres beyond the point at which senior pupils are in school, making any necessary re-assessment problematic.

Centres required to undertake an assessment review should be aware that all SQA assessments in English are put on Hold until the review is satisfactorily concluded.

Administration of assessments

In all cases, Verifiers found that the administration of the centre assessments was in line with the Unit specifications and Course Arrangements, with clear understanding of the differing requirements for 'Controlled Conditions': for Close Reading, a supervised, timed examination; for Writing, a process that guaranteed authenticity.

Centres should note that the monitoring of Controlled Conditions is not the responsibility of SQA. It is assumed that the Close Reading will have been undertaken as specified, and that the class teacher will have supervised the planning and drafting of the Writing piece.

Verifiers will expect to see a Close Reading script that has been marked in line with the marking guidelines, and a clear indication of whether it has reached the pass mark. For Writing, only the final piece is required, with Pass or Fail clearly indicated, preferably with a comment related to the Performance Criteria.

Areas of good practice

In the assessment of Close Reading, Verifiers commented positively on the following:

- ◆ In many centres, there was evidence of cross-marking and review of scripts, a helpful aid to consistency.
- ◆ There was much excellent work, with many candidates demonstrating insight and sophistication.
- ◆ Many candidates showed good awareness of what was required and how to answer.

In Writing, Verifiers commented positively on the following:

- ◆ There was much evidence of useful candidate guidance and feedback. This was particularly effective when addressing the next steps required to aid improvement. In some centres, feedback was provided by attaching the Performance Criteria to the script, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.
- ◆ There was often a pleasing range of tasks and genres. Many candidates had undertaken interesting and sometimes challenging tasks, and produced some impressive work.
- ◆ In many cases, the level of student engagement with the given task was impressive.
- ◆ Although there is no requirement to do so, some centres sent candidates' research notes and earlier drafts. In these cases, there was impressive evidence of positive teacher intervention, in annotations, supportive comment and corrections.
- ◆ In Imaginative Writing, there was evidence of good understanding of the key elements of narrative.

Specific areas for improvement

On occasion, it is evident in verification that candidates are presented at a level beyond their competence. Verifiers understand the pressures associated with presentation policy in centres; nonetheless, candidates are not well served by presentation for a Course that they will clearly not achieve. To repeat a point made in an earlier report, the external exam will more harshly expose weakness, particularly in Close Reading.

Marking of Close Reading was sometimes generous, with over-rewarding of thin or vague answers, particularly on analysis and evaluation questions. A focus on Close Reading skills and answering techniques would help to address this deficiency.

In Higher Close Reading, the marking of some questions on imagery did not take account of the requirement to establish the literal meaning of the image.

In some Close Reading scripts, it was not clear why marks were awarded. It seems an obvious point, but it is helpful if ticks are used to indicate the points for which marks are gained, and the mark itself shown clearly in the margin.

In Writing, it was occasionally clear that candidates were responding to set tasks, or that approaches were rather similar. This will often lead to writing which, while perfectly competent, lacks engagement with the topic.

In Discursive Writing, sources consulted should be indicated.

While there was a good deal of stylish writing evident, there was also some thin stuff, with little heed paid to the requirement for depth and complexity, particularly at Higher.