

Modern Languages



This update contains information relevant to your subject and details of the support available to you.

We also publish updates on the new National Courses in the 'Updates and Announcements' section of the relevant [subject pages](#). I would encourage you to make regular use of our subject pages, where you will find support documents, answers to common questions, and links to other areas of interest. You can also sign up for 'My Alerts', SQA's e-mail update service, that notifies you whenever content you are interested in is added or updated on our website. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/myalerts to register.

We hope you find the following update helpful.

Jim McDonald and Marilyn Waters
Qualifications Managers

The Qualifications Team

Jim McDonald and Marilyn Waters
Qualifications Managers

Quroum Beg, Elaine Clusker, Rhoda Morrison, Carolyn O'Reilly, Malcolm Wilson
Qualifications Officers

Key messages from Diet 2014–15

Course Reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual Course Reports for the subject(s) 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 are available from the relevant [subject pages](#) of our website.

Verification Key Messages

Key Messages from round 2 of verification in session 2014–15 were published over the summer. They are available from the relevant [subject pages](#), where you can access them from the 'Verification and Course Reports' heading in the 'Assessment Support' section.

Documents and assessment support materials

It is important that you read the full suite of documents for your Course, as well as those relating to assessment, and that you refer to the latest versions.

Information on documents and assessment support materials for National 1 to Advanced Higher can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/supportdocuments.

National 3 to Higher documents

As we communicated in our May 2015 subject update, we updated some documents for National 4 Modern Languages for use in session 2015–16. These updates were made in April 2015 and the following revisions were made:

Unit Specification for the *Modern Languages Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit*.

You can find more details of these revisions in the [May 2015 subject update](#).

National 3 to Higher Unit assessment support

In August 2015, we updated some Unit assessment support materials for National 3 to Higher. Please refer to the 'Notification of Changes' tables for your curricular area, as these provide a summary of the changes to each document and include details of the revised version numbers. These are available from www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges.

The use of SQA-produced Unit assessments is not mandatory; however, if you are using them, we strongly encourage you to use the most up-to-date versions. Please note that you may continue to use existing versions of the Unit assessments until the end of session 2015–16 and both will be accepted for verification purposes.

The updated Unit assessment support materials are available from our secure website and you can arrange access to them through your SQA Co-ordinator.

Further information on the reasons for the changes to Unit assessment support, and guidance on the next steps to take, is provided below. This information was also communicated to centres in August 2015.

Changes have been made to a number of Unit assessment support packs for National 3, National 4, National 5 and Higher Modern Languages Courses.

Changes to these documents are relatively minor, and do not necessitate a change in assessment practice. In large part, amendments have been made to address minor typographical errors, and to eliminate discrepancies between documents, particularly in generic sections, published earlier in the development process.

Where appropriate, commentary relating to restrictions on the principle of open assessment has also been removed. Centres are encouraged to review the updated Unit assessment support packs as and when they may be selected for use with candidates. Centres may wish to reprint particular assessment instruments, judging evidence information, or other relevant supporting documentation at this point.

To find out more about using our Unit assessment support packs, visit www.sqa.org.uk/unitassessment.

National 5 and Higher Coursework information

Following discussion with colleagues and feedback from practitioners, we have published revised General Assessment Information (GAI) in relation to National 5 Coursework (Talking).

The Detailed Marking Instructions in the GAI have been expanded, to include discrete Pegged Mark Descriptors for both the Presentation and Conversation elements of the Talking assessment, categorised under the sub headings of *Content, Accuracy, Language Resource*.

The Descriptors for *Conversation – natural element* have been renamed *Sustaining the conversation* with expanded commentaries for each of the Pegged Mark Descriptors.

The updated National 5 General Assessment Information is available to download [here](#).

Higher Specimen Question Papers, Exemplar Question Papers and past paper guidance

We have taken the opportunity to clarify Marking Instructions for both Directed Writing and Writing at Higher as a result of feedback from both colleagues preparing candidates for examination and from Markers during diet 2015.

Revisions to the Marking Instructions are fairly minor, and do not have an impact on approaches to delivery. We have taken the opportunity, for instance, to clarify wording in the General Marking Principles where colleagues told us that there was the potential for confusion.

The updated Marking Instructions are included in revised the Higher Specimen and Exemplar Question Paper packages and are available to download from the relevant [subject pages](#).

Advanced Higher documents

In April and May 2015, we updated the mandatory documents and Course/Unit Support Notes for Advanced Higher. The following revisions were made:

Course Specification, Course Assessment Specification and Unit Specifications: clarifications made to information on structure and coverage of Course and Unit assessment where appropriate, to reflect decisions made during the development process.

Course and Unit Support Notes: clarifications made throughout to ensure consistency and alignment with other Course and assessment documents.

You can also view the Notification of changes spreadsheets for National 3 to Higher, and Advanced Higher at www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges.

Advanced Higher Exemplar Question Papers

In December 2015, we will publish Exemplar Question Papers for all new Advanced Higher Courses that include a question paper as part of the Course assessment.

Please note that for Modern Languages Exemplar Question Papers, there is an emphasis on the contexts of *society* and *culture*. The papers have been sourced from recent Advanced Higher question papers, and reflect Prescribed Themes and Topics which featured previously.

Specimen Question Papers and live assessment sample across society, learning, employability, culture.

Advice and guidance

National 5 Listening Examinations

We have increased the length of the National 5 Listening exam from 25 minutes (approx.) to 30 minutes (approx.). This change will take effect from 2016, and has been included in the Examination Timetable 2016. The increase in length will ensure sufficient time for candidates to undertake the examination comfortably.

Chinese languages: Cantonese, Mandarin (Simplified), Mandarin (Traditional) – change to standard character font

In discussion with Principal Assessors of Chinese languages and other colleagues, we are changing the standard font for Chinese languages – Cantonese, Mandarin (Simplified) and Mandarin (Traditional) – from Sim Sun to Arial Unicode MS. The new font brings benefits in terms of accessibility and now features in updated Unit assessment support materials, Specimen, and Exemplar Question Papers. Examinations in and after 2016 will also feature Arial Unicode MS.

Coming up in 2015–16

Understanding Standards 2015–16

From the end of October 2015, we will publish further Understanding Standards packs for National 1 to Higher. These packs contain candidate evidence and commentaries for Unit assessment and internally assessed Components of Course assessment.

From November 2015 to January 2016, we will hold subject-specific Understanding Standards events for teachers and lecturers. The main focus of these events will be on Course assessment at Higher. Understanding Standards events for Modern Languages will take place on the following dates:

- Wednesday 02 and Thursday 03 December (Stirling)

Materials from the recent Nominee training events will also be published on our website.

The focus of these events is Course assessment at Higher. For Chinese languages and Urdu only, there will be a whole day event on Thursday 03 December, focusing on Course assessment at Higher **and National 5**.

For more information, visit www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards

Details of the Understanding Standards materials for each subject are available from the [subject pages](#).

National 4 Added Value Units

You now have the option of developing your own National 4 Added Value Unit assessments for use with candidates.

Please note that this is not a requirement and you can continue to use SQA-produced Added Value Unit assessments. Most SQA-produced Added Value Unit assessments already allow considerable flexibility in the choice of a context for the assessment, while some provide a context that you can change.

If you choose to develop your own Added Value Unit assessment, we strongly advise submitting it to us for prior verification before using it with candidates.

Further information can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/unitassessment.

Marker recruitment opportunities for 2016

We are now accepting Marker applications from teaching professionals to contribute to the 2016 examination diet. If you are interested in joining us as a Marker please visit the [appointee opportunities](#) section of our website where you will find a marker advert for all subjects and levels, with details of the role.

Our current Markers will confirm to you that the experience of marking helps increase their awareness of the demands of Course assessment and that marking is excellent professional and personal development.

Please check www.sqa.org.uk/appointees regularly for other appointee opportunities which may be of interest to you.

Contact us

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