

Planned changes to Higher Biology from session 2018-19

Units and unit assessments will be removed from the Higher Biology course from session 2018-19 onwards. We are strengthening the course assessment to ensure that candidates continue to be assessed on the full content of the course, and to maintain the current course value of 24 SCQF credit points.

Clarification of course content in the Higher course

As highlighted in the [October 2017 subject update](#), we will remove some course content from the Higher Biology course, re-order some content, and provide clarification of required depth of knowledge. The course content will be organised into three areas of study:

- DNA and the genome
- Metabolism and survival
- Sustainability and interdependence.

In deciding the appropriate changes for the Higher Biology course, we consulted with our National Qualification Support Team (NQST), which includes teachers and lecturers, representatives of the Royal Society of Biology and members of the examination teams. We also took on board feedback from previous centre surveys.

31 January 2018: UPDATE: We will publish details by the end of February 2018 on what content is being removed from Higher Biology and what content is being re-ordered.

Overview of changes to the Higher course assessment

Current course assessment	Revised course assessment
Question paper: 100 marks (83.3%) Assignment: 20 marks (16.7%)	Two question papers: 120 marks (80%) Assignment: 20 marks scaled to 30 marks (20%)

Changes to the question paper

Current question paper	Revised question papers from 2018-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours 30 minutes • Worth 100 marks • Contains two sections (Section 1: objective test – 20 marks; Section 2: extended response – 80 marks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours (This is the total exam time. The exam will be split into two question papers, with a break in between) • Worth a combined 120 marks (allocation of marks to be confirmed by end of April 2018) • The objective test and extended response questions will now become separate question papers

From session 2018-19, candidates will sit two Higher Biology question papers. The current question paper is being extended to allow more skills, knowledge and understanding to be sampled, following the removal of units from the course. Given the duration of the exam, it will be split into two question papers to provide candidates with a break.

The timings and marks for each question paper will be confirmed in the revised course specification document, which will be published at the end of April 2018.

Assignment

The assignment assessment task is being revised to provide clear progression from the new National 5 assignment. The assignment will be a report of experimental work and research undertaken by the candidate.

The assignment has a total mark allocation of 20 marks that will be scaled to 30 marks. The assignment will contribute 20% of the overall marks available for the course assessment.

Documents and assessment support materials

More detail on the requirements for the Higher course will be provided in the revised Higher course specification, which will be published at the end of April 2018. Course support notes will be added to the revised course specification as an appendix by the end of May 2018, to provide additional clarity and guidance. We will also publish a summary of the changes to the Higher course content. The assignment assessment task, containing instructions for teachers and lecturers, marking instructions and instructions for candidates will be published by the end of May 2018.

We will publish a specimen question paper for each of the two papers that will make up the examination. These materials will be published by the end of September 2018.

Understanding the delivery of free-standing Biology units at SCQF level 6

Units at SCQF level 6 will remain available as free-standing units and all existing unit assessment support packs will remain available for teachers and lecturers to use as a resource; they will not be revised in line with the revisions to the course content. As the units will no longer contribute to the achievement of the Higher Biology course they are therefore not subject to the same updates.

More information

For more information on changes to assessment in National Qualifications, please visit www.sqa.org.uk/nqchanges

If you have any queries about these changes, please e-mail mycentre@sqa.org.uk