



Scottish Qualifications Authority
Ùghdarras Theisteanas Na H-Alba

To: Head of Centres/SQA Co-ordinators — Secondary schools and Further Education colleges
Cc: Directors of Education, SCIS, CfE Liaison Team

September 2013

Action by Recipient	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Response required
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Note and pass on
<input type="checkbox"/>	None — update/information only

Dear Colleague

New National Qualifications — National 1 to National 5

This is a special Curriculum for Excellence update letter for SQA Co-ordinators, Faculty and Subject heads and teachers/lecturers of the new National Qualifications being implemented in this session, 2013–2014.

The information that follows is intended to highlight some important information for colleagues responsible for delivery of the new National Qualifications, and a number of web links are listed throughout this document for that purpose.

Contents

1. Specifications, guidance and advice documents
2. Quality assurance
3. SQA-produced Unit assessment support
4. Assessment of the Added Value Unit at National 4 and Course assessment at National 5
5. Course comparisons: points of change/areas of stability
6. SQA stationery for e-assessment of Coursework
7. SQA Connect
8. Issuing of results
9. Subject-specific information

Printed copies of this letter will be provided to all centres.

Please disseminate this information to all colleagues involved in delivery of the new National Qualifications.

Thank you.

Roderic Gillespie
Head of Curriculum for Excellence
Scottish Qualifications Authority

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ
An Togalach Optima, 58 Sràid MhicDhonnachaidh, Glaschu, G2 8DQ

Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD
Lowden, 24 Shawfair an Iar, Dal Chè, EH22 1FD

T: 0345 279 1000 E: customer@sqa.org.uk W: www.sqa.org.uk

Chairman: Graham Houston FRSA FCMI
Chief Executive: Janet Brown BSc PhD FInstP FRSE

FAO: SQA Co-ordinators, Faculty and Subject heads, and teachers/lecturers of the new National Qualifications — National 1 to National 5

1 Specifications, guidance and advice documents

Following the development of assessment support materials for National 1 (Phase 1) to National 5, and feedback from teachers/lecturers throughout our series of Subject Implementation events, we have updated some of the key documents for the new National Qualifications. Updated documents are now available for National 2 to National 5 in all relevant subjects. These documents contain both mandatory information (in the Specifications) and advice and guidance (in the Support Notes). You can download all of these documents from the relevant [subject pages](#) or from the [National 2 web page](#). In line with our standard practice, these documents will contain version information and a note of changes, where necessary, so that you can recognise the most up-to-date documents.

2 Quality assurance

There is a new quality assurance process for the new National Qualifications (the existing system will continue for other National Qualifications, while those are still offered). External verification is part of SQA's quality assurance process designed to ensure that a centre's assessment approaches and assessment judgements are valid, reliable and meet national standards.

We offer a free **prior verification** service, to support centres that wish to devise their own assessments or significantly change SQA's assessments to suit their particular needs. We advise centres to take advantage of this service at an early stage, and before using any centre-generated/significantly changed assessments with candidates.

With the submitting centre's permission, assessments that have successfully achieved prior verification at the appropriate level will be made available on our secure website as a resource for centres.

Guidance on prior verification, and on the new quality assurance process for Units and internally-assessed components of Course assessment, including the evidence centres must provide for external verification, is available on our website at www.sqa.org.uk/cfeqa; on the [National 1 web page](#); and on the relevant [subject pages](#) for National 2 to National 5.

A Professional Development Award at SCQF level 8, 'Conduct the Internal Verification Process', is available for those who perform internal quality assurance duties as part of their role, such as teachers/lecturers involved in internal verification of assessment decisions for National Qualifications in schools and colleges. More information on this Professional Development Award is available [here](#).

3 SQA-produced Unit assessment support

Assessment support materials are now available for all National 1 Units (Phase 1), National 2, National 3, National 4 and National 5 qualifications. Other than for the National 4 Added Value Unit (see section 4 below), when assessing candidates you can:

- ◆ use SQA-produced Unit assessment support packs
- ◆ adapt SQA-produced Unit assessment support packs: for your own assessment purposes
- ◆ use SQA-produced Unit assessment support packs: as a basis to develop your own Unit assessments

You can access all SQA-produced assessment materials via your SQA Co-ordinator. These packs are valid from August 2013 and must be held securely and treated as confidential.

SQA-produced Unit assessment support packs are designed to assess competence against Outcomes and Assessment Standards on a Pass/Fail basis. Unless otherwise stated, for assessment of most Units (other than the National 4 Added Value Unit assessments), there are no restrictions on the conditions and methods of assessment. This allows professional judgement and facilitates personalisation of approaches.

A range of additional assessment support materials is now available, including assessment support for Units at National 1 and bridging packs for National 5 Literacy, Gàidhlig: Literacy, and Numeracy Units. Annotated Unit assessment support packs for Literacy Units in English and Gàidhlig, for those working with learners with particular difficulties in reading and writing, are now available on [SQA's secure site](#).

These SQA-produced Unit assessment support packs are valid from August 2013. We strongly recommend assessors use the latest versions when planning their assessments. However, centres will not be disadvantaged, for verification purposes, if they have used earlier versions. More information on using Unit assessment support packs can be found [here](#).

4 Assessment of the Added Value Unit at National 4, and Course assessment at National 5

For all subjects at National 4, for the first two years of implementation (Session 2013/14 and Session 2014/15), practitioners must use the:

- ◆ method of assessment
- ◆ conditions set out for assessment, and reassessment, of candidates
- ◆ Judging evidence tables for judgement of candidates' evidence

as prescribed in the SQA-produced Added Value Unit assessments.

You should refer to the 'Added Value Unit Assessment' heading on the relevant National 4 subject web page, for guidance on the method of assessment and an outline of the level of flexibility within the subject area.

Details about flexibility are clearly described in the relevant Added Value Unit assessment.

At National 5, for subjects with non-question paper Components of Course assessment, centres must use the SQA-produced Course assessments which are described in detail in the relevant General Assessment Information and Assessment Task documents. As far as possible, the published assessments provide considerable flexibility and choice for candidates and centres, the limits of which are clearly described in these documents.

Information on Course assessment for National 5 (such as Specimen Question Papers and Coursework information) is available on each National 5 subject page. Practitioners can access all SQA-produced assessment materials through the SQA Co-ordinator.

A number of subjects at National 4 and National 5 are developing banks of assessments to provide flexibility and choice for centres and candidates. All assessment banks of this type will be fully populated by the end of September 2013.

Recognising positive achievement

There are no automatic compensatory arrangements at any level. However, there are arrangements for learners who do not achieve the Course assessment of a National 5 Course, but who may be able to achieve the Course at National 4 instead. These arrangements are referred to as 'Recognising Positive Achievement'. A guide to recognising positive achievement is available from our website at www.sqa.org.uk/cfedelivery.

5 Course comparisons: points of change/areas of stability

We have published a document for each subject which outlines some of the changes and the areas of stability across National 3, National 4 and National 5, in relation to both Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2. These documents are intended to help teachers/lecturers identify what has changed and what will remain the same within their subjects. The Course Comparisons document is available on the 'Related Information' panel of each subject page.

Some items in past papers from Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2 may be a useful resource to support learning and teaching, and in preparing for assessment. It is important to note that the items used should be appropriate to the subject and level. In particular, assessors should make careful reference to the published National 5 Specimen Question Paper and note the information contained in both General Marking Principles and detailed Marking Instructions.

A summary of publications for each Course from National 1 to National 5 can be found in the tables below. We hope this will be of further assistance to centres in planning and delivering Courses. The documents are available on the relevant subject page (www.sqa.org.uk/national1; www.sqa.org.uk/national2; www.sqa.org.uk/browsecfesubjects) or on [SQA's secure site](#), as indicated.

6 SQA stationery for e-assessment of Coursework

SQA will produce stationery for some Coursework at National 5. Where it is provided, it will be mandatory to use this stationery to submit candidates' evidence. Further information will be provided to centres on the subject areas for which this stationery will be issued by SQA.

7 SQA Connect

SQA Connect is our online customer portal that allows you to access a range of SQA services, providing delivery and operational support for our qualifications.

Some new services being introduced to support the new National Qualifications can only be accessed through SQA Connect. This includes Results Services and the revised approach to Quality Assurance that is being introduced for the new National Qualifications (National 1 to National 5) only.

The SQA Connect portal is available [here](#).

8 Issuing of results

The issuing of results in August 2014 will continue as normal, and will include the new National Qualifications at National 1 to National 5.

9 Subject-specific information

Each subject has a homepage with a brief overview of the subject and links for each level, eg National 3, National 4, National 5. There is an easy download tool for access to all documents.

The subject level page provides level-specific information. For example, National 5 has links to the specimen question paper and/or Coursework information. National 4 has information on Added Value Unit assessment.

There is a related information panel on the right-hand side of the homepage and subject level pages containing further links to useful information on our website and external websites, for example:

- ◆ subject-specific Verification information
- ◆ National 3 to National 5 Course Comparison document
- ◆ notification of changes to published documents
- ◆ Education Scotland website for additional subject support

An electronic version of this update along with all subject-specific information is available on the [subject pages](#).

The published documents listed in the tables below for:

- ◆ National 1 and National 2
- ◆ National 3 to National 5

should also be referred to and read in conjunction with this letter for more detailed subject information.

We will also provide a Curriculum for Excellence subject advice letter to help you make the best use of our subject web pages.

The SQA Qualifications Manager Subject Update letters will be issued as normal for existing qualifications.

List of Curriculum for Excellence published documents To access these publications for each subject, go to: www.sqa.org.uk/browsecfesubjects or SQA's secure site			
National 1(SCQF 1)		National 2 (SCQF 2)	
Mandatory documents	◆ Unit Specification	◆ Course Specification	◆ Unit Specification
Advice and guidance	◆ Unit Support Notes	◆ Course and Unit Support Notes	
Assessment support These documents are available on SQA's secure website	◆ Unit assessment support materials including Judging evidence table	◆ Unit assessment support materials, including Judging evidence table	
National 3 (SCQF 3)		National 4 (SCQF 4)	National 5 (SCQF 5)
Mandatory documents	◆ Course Specification ◆ Unit Specification	◆ Course Specification ◆ Unit Specification ◆ Added Value Unit Specification	◆ Course Specification ◆ Unit Specification ◆ Course Assessment Specification
Advice and guidance	◆ Course and Unit Support Notes	◆ Course and Unit Support Notes	◆ Course and Unit Support Notes
Assessment support These documents are available on SQA's secure website* or on SQA open website. You can arrange access to all SQA-produced assessment materials through your SQA Co-ordinator.	◆ *Unit assessment support materials	◆ *Unit assessment support materials ◆ *Added Value Unit Assessment	◆ *Unit assessment support materials ◆ Coursework Information (where applicable) — General Assessment Information including General Marking Instructions — *Assessment Task including Marking Instructions ◆ Specimen question paper (where applicable), including General Marking Principles; detailed Marking Instructions

The most comprehensive source of information about the new National Qualifications is [SQA's website](#). Some relevant web links have been provided below for your convenience:

Faculty and Subject heads:

Subject-specific information, including information on Units and Courses is available at: www.sqa.org.uk/browsecfesubjects.

Quality assurance information, including external verification, is available at: www.sqa.org.uk/cfega.

SQA Co-ordinators:

In addition to the above links, Co-ordinators can access confidential Unit and Course assessment support materials from [SQA's secure site](#).