

## Computing Science



Welcome to the first edition of our new look subject update. This complements our regular monthly and weekly communications, with more information relevant to your subject and details of what we have been working on.

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. Documents that must be treated confidentially can be found on our secure site and you can arrange access to these through your SQA Co-ordinator.

I hope you find the following update helpful, and please contact us if you have any questions.

**Dave Main**  
**Qualifications Manager**

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## Contacting the team

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## General information

### Outgoing National Courses

Session 2014-15 is the last year that the existing Access, Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher Courses will be available. The final examinations for these Courses will take place in May/June 2015. If you have any candidates undertaking these qualifications over two years, they should have already completed the first year of the Course by now; they should not be starting it.

## Updates to documents

In the **special edition June 2014 update** on the new National Qualifications, we explained that we would be making updates to documents containing mandatory information on National 3 to National 5 Courses, along with the associated Unit assessment support packs.

### National 3 to National 5

We have reviewed and updated all of the documents containing mandatory information on National 3 to National 5 Computing Science, with a view to adding clarity where it was required. There are no fundamental changes to these documents but we encourage all practitioners to make themselves familiar with the latest versions. A high level summary of these updates can be found in the Notification of changes spreadsheet for National 3 to National 5 Technologies at **[www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges)**

We have also updated the Unit assessment support packs to provide more detailed guidance on assessment activities, gathering candidate evidence, making assessment decisions and completing the candidate assessment record. This follows verification activities and feedback gathered from practitioners throughout session 2013-14.

While we would recommend referring to these updated packs, practitioners are free to continue using the existing versions and both will be accepted for verification purposes. The use of Unit assessment support packs is not mandatory.

We have also reviewed the National 5 Course assignment documentation. The Course assignments are unchanged, but where required we have added clarity to the documentation.

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## **New Higher**

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

A high level summary of the updates to mandatory documents can be found in the Notification of changes spreadsheet for new Higher Technologies at [www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjectchanges)

## **Support and guidance**

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

Finalised Marking Instructions for the 2014 Question Papers are now available from the [National 5 Computing Science page](#).

### **Reports on assessment performance**

We annually publish guidance on performance in externally marked Course assessments and evidence generated from internal assessments. This includes Course Reports, External Assessment Reports and Verification Key Messages Reports; all of which will be available in the autumn via the relevant subject pages of SQA's website at [www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects)

Please note that Internal Assessment Reports will not be published for the new National Courses.

Please take time to consider each of the above reports as the information that they contain is essential reading.

### **Use of software in new National Courses**

We are sometimes asked if a particular language or piece of software is appropriate for use in Computing Science Courses. As with the existing NQ Computing and Information Systems Courses, we don't prescribe, recommend or exclude anything; practitioners are free to use whichever software they choose, as long as it meets the requirements of the Course.

### **National 4 and National 5 coursework**

Practitioners are reminded that, for the National 4 Added Value Unit assessment and the National 5 assignment, candidates are expected to undertake the task themselves and solve the problem independently. As such, in a class group we would expect to see a variety of responses and a range of marks.

Candidates must not be given a 'sample' solution (or similar) before undertaking the task. Should you wish your candidates to practice for the assessment, or to demonstrate an approach, this should be done separately using a task that does not count towards their final grade; eg a task that you have devised yourself.

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## Looking ahead to 2014–15

We would like to express our gratitude and extend our thanks to all those who have undertaken SQA duties in session 2013–14. We appreciate the work that all the teams carry out and look forward to continuing to work with them during session 2014–15.

### **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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