



NQ Verification 2013–14

Key Message Reports

Verification group name:	English
Levels	N3 to N5
Date published:	July 2014

This Report combines all Verification Key Messages for the academic session 2013-14.



NQ Verification 2013–14 Key Messages Round 1

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	English
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	January 2014

National Courses/Units/Awards verified:

English National 3, 4 and 5

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The majority of centres presented assessment materials either from the Unit assessment support packs (UASPs) on SQA's secure website or derived from these. Where non-UASP materials were used, these had been either internally verified by the centre and approved by SQA or had been effectively modelled on official materials and did not require prior verification.

Analysis and Evaluation / Understanding Language

Reading: UASP or UASP-derived materials were used successfully by almost all centres.

A small number of centres had incorrectly submitted critical essays as evidence of reading. Centres are reminded that assessment of reading should be based on previously unseen texts.

Listening: UASP or UASP-derived materials were used successfully by almost all centres.

A small number of centres who had devised their own listening materials inadvertently focused more on media techniques than features of spoken

language. Centres are reminded that assessment of listening should focus on aspects of spoken language.

Creation and Production / Producing Language

Writing: UASP or UASP-derived materials were used successfully by almost all centres. Many centres had effectively adapted the judging evidence tables to match writing activities that tied in with their Course content.

Talking: UASP or UASP-derived materials were used successfully by almost all centres.

Added Value Unit / Literacy

All centres who had submitted Added Value Units for verification were aware of the requirement to use the SQA-produced assessment pack.

Almost all centres who submitted Literacy materials did so using SQA combined packages.

Assessment judgements

Verification teams were able to confirm the majority of assessment judgements of the centres who submitted material in Round 1. Where this was not the case, assessment judgements had either not been securely based on the published Assessment Standards of the Course Units, or centres had used alternative approaches to measuring success.

Not all centres had been made aware of the requirement to submit an indication of the internal verification procedures used by the department. While this was not a barrier to approval in the first round of verification, it was extremely helpful for Verifiers to have a clear context in which assessment judgements had been made. Centres should be aware of *Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications* (February 2011).

Analysis and Evaluation / Understanding Language

Reading: Almost all centres made effective use of the judging evidence tables to assess candidate performance against Assessment Standards.

In some cases, centres were overly-focused on using an aggregate score to arrive at a judgement of whether or not the standard had been met. Using a notional score to award a pass/fail meant that some candidates were awarded a pass when they had failed to meet a key aspect of the Assessment Standard — for example, meeting a target score, but not explaining their reasoning behind their choice of audience or purpose — or were judged to have failed when they had picked up on the key aspects of the standard but had not met the target score set by the centre.

Rather than applying a target-based approach to individual Assessment Standards in reading and listening, centres are advised to focus on the 'Making

assessment judgements' section of the judging evidence tables when reviewing candidate performance.

Some very effective but simple techniques to aid and clarify marking were adopted by centres: using different-coloured highlighters to pick out successful answers for each standard worked well, as did noting on the candidate script where an answer related to the Assessment Standard.

Listening: Almost all centres made effective use of the judging evidence tables to assess candidate performance against Assessment Standards.

Creation and Production / Producing Language

Writing: Almost all centres made effective use of the judging evidence tables to assess candidate performance against Assessment Standards.

Where centres have adapted UASP materials to best fit in with their individual Course context, it would be helpful if a brief overview of this was submitted rather than just the candidate work in isolation.

Some centres had, quite appropriately, submitted ongoing folio work for verification but had incorrectly submitted English portfolio marks rather than a pass/fail judgement.

Centres are advised that verification focuses on pass/fail judgements against Assessment Standards only and that assessment judgements for writing need to clearly relate to these Assessment Standards. English portfolio marks relate only to external assessment.

Talking: Almost all centres made effective use of the judging evidence tables to assess candidate performance against Assessment Standards.

There is no requirement that recordings of candidate performance be submitted. Where centres submit documentation, however, it would be helpful to have a brief overview of the conditions of assessment along with clear information as to how assessment judgements were arrived at.

Added Value and Literacy

Almost all centres made effective use of the judging evidence tables to assess candidate performance against Assessment Standards.

It would be helpful for verification of Added Value Units if the candidate workbook was submitted along with the final written piece/assessment record. In some cases, for example, it was not clear how, or if, centres had assessed Assessment Standard 1.4.

Centres should also be aware that these supplementary questions may provide an opportunity for students to pick up on aspects that had been less fully explained in their earlier presentation.

Section 3: General comments

Administration

Each centre selected for verification should submit evidence for a sample of 12 candidates. The centre can choose which Unit (or Units, in a combined approach) to select for each level.

The sample submitted should comprise four candidates per level at the three different levels (National 3, 4 and 5). When completing the Verification Sample Form, it would be helpful if candidates were entered in this order.

If the centre does not have candidates (or sufficient candidates) at one level then further candidates should be added to the levels they do present at to ensure there is still a sample of 12 candidates.

The centre must choose the same Unit for all candidates at any one level, but can choose different Units for different levels.

Ideally the sample should include a variety of candidate performances covering both pass and fail categories.

Centres should take care when transcribing details onto the Verification Sample Form that pass/fail indications match, and that Unit codes are entered correctly. On this form, 'interim evidence' relates only to where one Outcome from a Unit is submitted — eg only writing from the Creation and Production Unit.

Centres are reminded that the use of SQA Added Value Unit assessment material is mandatory for this session.

Many centres had created effective cover slips to set targets in concrete terms to both support and provide feedback to candidates. It is important that centre-devised assessment materials related clearly to the Assessment Standards for each Outcome.

Centres are required to submit an indication of the internal verification approaches adopted. A clear context of the conditions of assessment and internal verification procedures is extremely helpful to supporting Verifiers in confirming assessment judgements. *Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications* (February 2011) provides advice on the development and maintenance of an effective internal quality assurance system.

http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/InternalVerificationGuideforSQAcentres.pdf

Centres must ensure that assessments devised internally within departments address all the relevant Assessment Standards for the Unit Outcome and give candidates full opportunity within the task to be able to demonstrate their performance against the standards.

Centres are reminded that marking should be viewed holistically.

For example, in the Added Value Unit, word count and talk lengths are advisory — the overriding consideration is that length is appropriate to purpose — and should not be used to penalise candidates who have clearly demonstrated that they can meet the Assessment Standards.

In reading and in listening, candidates might fail to state the audience when specifically asked, but correctly identify the audience in response to a later question.

Analysis and Evaluation / Understanding Language

It is a requirement that assessment material for the Analysis and Evaluation / Understanding Language Units be unseen.

The use of cut-off scores to arrive at assessment judgements for the Analysis and Evaluation Unit is not recommended. Centres must focus on the 'Making assessment judgements' section of the judging evidence tables when reviewing candidate performance.

Creation and Production / Producing Language

Centres are reminded that while in the assessment conditions for writing it states that 'The assessor will provide reasonable assistance' it goes on to say that 'It is not acceptable for the assessor to provide key ideas, to provide a structure or plan, to suggest specific wording or to correct errors in spelling and/or punctuation.'

While it is entirely permissible that re-assessed work be submitted for writing, comments to support redrafting should be given on the basis of broad advice.



NQ Verification 2013/14 Key Messages Round 2

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	English
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2014

National Courses/Units verified:

English National 3, 4 and 5

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Overall, centres should be commended for the approaches to learning and teaching taken and the attention to detail in assessing candidates' work. Some centres provided some wonderful examples of candidates' assessment material, including posters used during talks, records of discussion and thorough notes about questions asked as part of the Added Value Unit assessment.

There was a great deal of evidence to show the astonishing amount of work that has gone into making sure that candidates have covered all of the Outcomes, while also studying a huge range of texts. There were some very inventive responses to the Added Value Unit assessment, including some where candidates had demonstrated a real enthusiasm for the topic they had studied. Centres actively engaged with the new assessments by linking assessment approaches, assessing naturally-occurring evidence and allowing greater independence to candidates.

Assessment approaches

Analysis and Evaluation/Understanding Language

Outcome 1 — reading

Some centres had applied marks to Outcome 1 assessments, and while this may be helpful in preparing candidates for the external examination at National 5, this is not helpful in assessing whether candidates have achieved the Assessment Standards required for internal assessment. Centres are reminded that candidates are only required to achieve the Assessment Standards for internal assessment and focusing on marks can often lead to an incorrect assessment judgement by centres.

There were still some instances of centres submitting critical essays as evidence for Outcome 1 (reading). Centres are reminded that the assessment of Outcome 1 should be based on previously unseen texts.

The majority of centres were clear about re-assessment of candidates, although there was some evidence of centres who had offered re-assessment of Outcome 1 using the same assessment piece. Centres are reminded that once a piece has been assessed and feedback has been given to the candidate, a new assessment should be used for re-assessment. It was pleasing to see, however, that almost all centres were aware that for re-assessment candidates only needed to be re-assessed on the Assessment Standard they had failed to achieve, rather than the whole Outcome.

There was some evidence of assessment approaches which were too demanding and required candidates to achieve the Assessment Standards more than once. Centres are reminded that each Assessment Standard only needs to be achieved once in order for the candidate to achieve the Outcome.

Outcome 2 — listening

A small number of centres had misinterpreted the requirement for Assessment Standard 2.3, which asks candidates to 'identify and analyse various features of a speaker's use of language and its effect'. Centres are reminded that the focus for this Assessment Standard is on spoken language and not visual or aural media techniques, such as close-ups, camera angles, music and so on.

Added Value Unit

There were some instances where the approach to the Added Value Unit was driven by the assessor, rather than the candidate. Centres are reminded that the Added Value Unit assessment must feature the candidate's own choice of texts and should show evidence of personalisation and choice. Themes and ideas might come out of class teaching, but the spirit of the Added Value Unit is personalisation and choice and the independent application of skills. Candidates should demonstrate what they have learned, not what they have been taught.

Assessment judgements

Centres, where possible, should select evidence to demonstrate a range of assessment judgements: pass, borderline pass, borderline fail etc. There were a large number of centres who presented only clear passes.

There was some evidence of centres stating that candidates had passed when they had not achieved all of the Assessment Standards. Centres are reminded that all Assessment Standards need to be achieved in order for a candidate to achieve the Unit.

There was a lack of clarity from several centres in recording assessment judgements. For instance, some centres had recorded that candidates had passed on the flyleaf, but that they had failed on the actual assessment piece. Centres are reminded that, in order to verify assessment judgements, a clear statement of whether a candidate passes or fails must be recorded accurately. It is also helpful to record clearly where Assessment Standards have been achieved. Centres who demonstrated good practice made effective use of the 'judging evidence' tables to assess candidate performance against Assessment Standards.

Creation and Production/Producing Language

Outcome 2 — talking

There was a lack of consistency in how centres recorded where the Assessment Standards were achieved for Outcome 2 of the *Creation and Production* Unit. Centres are reminded that they must provide a detailed checklist with comments from the assessor in line with the Assessment Standards, or a recording of the candidate's talk. Simply providing a tick against the Assessment Standards does not provide enough evidence to ensure candidates have met the Assessment Standards.

Added Value Unit

There was some confusion about the assessment of candidates' evaluation of their researched texts. Some centres had been too restrictive in stating that the candidates must provide evidence for this in their final presentation. Centres are reminded that candidates can provide evidence for this element separately as is stated in the Unit: 'Candidates may provide evidence of their evaluation within the learning log, as part of a conversation or discussion or within the final presentation.'

03

Section 3: General comments

A number of centres sent whole Units for verification. Centres are reminded that only one Outcome was required for this round of verification.

There was still some confusion surrounding the process of internal verification. For some centres, the importance of internal verification must be emphasised, as this process will help to pick up inconsistencies in assessment judgements and assessment approaches.

Many centres demonstrated effective internal verification approaches through cross-marking, sampling and providing commentary on assessment judgements.

On the other hand, some centres provided evidence of internal verification which was too onerous on the assessors. It is not necessary for every piece of work to be verified by several assessors — a sample is all that is required and this may be verified by one other assessor.



NQ Verification 2013–14

Key Messages Round 3

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	English
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2014

National Courses/Units verified:

National 4 English — Added Value Unit

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

There were some innovative and engaging approaches to the Added Value Unit where candidates had been able to demonstrate their passion for topics and their application of skills developed across the Course. Combined approaches had also been taken with a number of centres opting for discursive writing. This approach was a useful one as it allowed for research and planning, provided the centre placed an additional requirement that the candidates evaluated the texts used for research and responded to oral questions.

The majority of centres have fully engaged with the ethos of the Added Value Unit in terms of the need to demonstrate the candidate's own assessment focus and presentation of their own ideas. There was a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that candidates had clearly selected their topics and appeared engaged in the process, producing strong results. There were, however, still a small number of centres which had taken a class approach to the Added Value Unit. Centres are reminded that the Added Value Unit must be the candidate's own choice of texts and should show evidence of personalisation and choice.

While there was often evidence of candidates considering the main ideas in the texts they had used for research, greater evaluation of the texts needed to be demonstrated by some candidates. Centres are reminded that the central focus of the Added Value Unit is for candidates to evaluate the success of the texts used for research using critical terminology.

Centres which demonstrated good practice in the Added Value Unit often provided evidence through candidates' learning logs, along with the final presentation. This enabled a clear understanding of where assessment judgements had been made. Centres are encouraged to ensure candidates make detailed notes in log books and that the log books are submitted for verification.

Candidates should specify, or include, the texts they have used to enable the assessor/verifier to judge the candidates' understanding and evaluation of the texts.

Assessment judgements

Overall, centres were accurate in their application of assessment judgements and where there was any discrepancy centres tended to be too punitive in the application of Assessment Standards. Centres are reminded again that the Assessment Standard only needs to be achieved once by the candidate.

A small number of centres had misinterpreted the requirements of the Added Value Unit by applying too much rigour in relation to the candidate's use of spelling and syntax. The candidate is required to provide information with a clear structure, show an understanding of the key ideas in the texts and an evaluation of the success of each text.

The Assessment Standard which proved the most challenging for centres was Assessment Standard 1.4. For this Assessment Standard to be evidenced centres are required to provide evidence of the candidate's responses to oral questions. This could be in the form of a recording of the candidate's oral response, **or** a detailed checklist of the candidate's oral response, **or** detailed observation notes from the assessor. The requirement for a detailed checklist/observation notes means that the centre should provide comments from the assessor in line with the Assessment Standards, not simply a tick against the Assessment Standards. It is also helpful for centres to provide the questions given to the candidates in order to illustrate the relevance of the candidate's responses. Centres are reminded that there must be appropriate evidence to show clearly the basis on which assessment judgements have been made.

There was some confusion about the assessment of candidates' evaluation of their researched texts. Some centres had been too restrictive in stating that the candidates must provide evidence for this in their final presentation. Centres are reminded of the holistic nature of assessment and that candidates can provide evidence for this element of the Unit 'within the learning log, as part of a conversation or discussion or within the final presentation'.

There was some evidence of centres stating that candidates had passed when they had not achieved all of the Assessment Standards. Centres are reminded that all Assessment Standards need to be achieved in order for a candidate to achieve the Unit requirements.

03

Section 3: General comments

The requirement for an internal verification process is still unclear for some centres. While many centres provided evidence of an internal verification policy they did not provide evidence of this policy being put into practice. There is a need to see evidence of internal verification through such practices as cross-marking, sampling or comments on candidates' work stating how Assessment Standards have been achieved. Centres which were engaging with this practice had used such recording devices as: coloured highlighters to demonstrate where Assessment Standards had been achieved on candidates' work, and/or evidence of at least two assessors commenting on candidates' work through grids or on the candidates' scripts.