NQ Verification 2015–16
Key Message Reports

Verification group name:	Politics
Levels	Higher
Date published:	October 2016

This Report combines all Verification Key Messages for the academic session 2015-2016.

NQ Verification 2015–16 Key Messages Round 1

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	Politics
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	March 2016

National Courses/Units verified:

H4L2 76   Higher   Politics: Political Theory
H4L3 76   Higher   Politics: Political Systems
H4L4 76   Higher   Politics: Political Parties and Elections

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

The majority of centres verified used the SQA-produced Unit assessment support packs (UASPs).

There are a number of ways in which the SQA Unit assessment requirements can be met. For example, by using:

♦ the SQA-produced UASPs
♦ centre-produced Unit assessments that have been prior verified and published on SQA's website
♦ centre-devised materials (prior verified)

SQA has provided three Higher Politics Unit assessment support packs (UASPs) to complement a range of teaching and learning approaches (Unit-by-Unit, Combined and Portfolio approaches). Remember, if you produce your own assessment task or revise the SQA-produced UASP you must ensure it allows candidates to meet each of the Assessment Standards. We strongly recommend that you make use of SQA's prior verification service for your centre-devised assessments.

Whilst flexibility exists in creating assessment items, a range of factors need to be considered in determining the level of demand with regard to sources. Guidance on the level of detail in the sources and complexity of the sources can be found in the advice and guidance section (Course and Unit Support Notes) of the Higher Politics web page.

Any assessments submitted for prior verification should have been internally quality assured by centre staff beforehand. We strongly recommend that you submit significantly changed assessments for prior verification before you use them for assessment purposes.

Further information on SQA's prior verification service

Centres are reminded that the Unit Specifications have been designed to be open and flexible and to give you discretion to decide the most appropriate methods or instrument of assessment. You can therefore use your professional judgement to decide whether or not the assessment evidence from candidates meets the standards specified in the Unit Specification.

Appendix 1 in each UASP has been designed to be detached and given to candidates. The context given in the appendix may be adapted to suit your candidates or modified to be made more relevant to your candidates. If you do this and retain the same level of demand/difficulty, and you follow the advice in the pack — particularly in judging evidence — this is considered a minor change and does not require prior verification.

Assessment judgements

Most centres' assessment judgements were in line with national standards, reliable and accepted; and assessors had made effective use of the information on judging evidence to support assessment judgements for each candidate.

Centres are reminded that the basis of assessment in the Units is pass/fail. Therefore the allocation of marks is not required and may be unhelpful to the candidate, especially when marks are not closely aligned to Assessment Standards. Where centres use marks and indicate a pass mark, they must ensure that the pass mark allocated covers the minimum standard to pass an Assessment Standard and indicate clearly how the marks allocated translate into attainment in all of the Assessment Standards.

The judging evidence tables in the SQA-produced Unit assessment support packs describe how the Outcomes/Assessment Standards can be met. Assessment judgements have to be made against each Assessment Standard. Judging evidence may involve assessing the degree of accuracy, relevance or the number of correct responses in the evidence and, if desired, marks can be used to assist in this process.

Assessors must ensure that candidates have opportunities to gather evidence for all the Unit Outcomes and Assessment Standards. Evidence may be generated using assessment activities such as:

- the candidate's written responses
- slides in support of an oral presentation
- the candidate's visual product
- a photograph or recording of a visual product
- the candidate's notes used to support an oral presentation
- video/audio recording
- assessor checklist
- assessor observation notes

It should also be recognised that evidence could occur naturally during learning and teaching.

Assessors should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding of their candidates, to determine the most appropriate ways to generate evidence and the conditions and contexts in which they are used.

In the case of assessment by observation or oral questioning, evidence should include assessors' comments and other relevant supporting evidence that shows clearly the basis on which assessment judgements have been made.

Centres are reminded that there are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access during, and no time restrictions for, the assessment task.

In judging assessment evidence, SQA's main focus is to ensure Assessment Standards are met and all work presented for assessment is genuinely the candidates' own work.

03 Section 3: General comments

Most centres that were verified provided evidence that their internal verification process was thorough and effective with documented professional dialogue between the assessor and internal verifier.

Good practice was shown by some centres that had annotations on candidate evidence by both the assessor and internal verifier giving a clear overview of the final assessment judgements.

One centre devised their own Candidate Record of Unit Assessment that was an example of excellent practice, showing clearly the Units that the candidates had passed and the internal verification procedures that had been undertaken by the centre.

Another centre provided useful and effective feedback to individual candidates as evidenced on the candidate scripts. There was clear evidence to show when candidates' work was revisited to achieve the standard. This was particularly

evident where learning conversations took place and were recorded appropriately.

Overall, most centres provided some commentary on Candidate Assessment Record sheets against the Assessment Standards with a brief explanation as to why the assessment judgements had been made.

Centres are reminded that they must have an effective internal quality assurance system which ensures that all candidates are assessed accurately, fairly and consistently to national standards and that all internal assessments must be internally verified.

For external verification it is good practice to include a note of explanation regarding the internal quality assurance policies and procedures used. Further information about internal verification is available in the Internal Verification Toolkit at: www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit.

It is recommended that in order to maximise the opportunities for candidates to pass Unit assessments, assessors should not lose sight of the purpose of the broader Unit Outcomes by overly focusing on, and breaking down, each Assessment Standard. This can lead to over-assessment. Rather, they should look for opportunities where a piece of assessment evidence can be used to satisfy several Assessment Standards.

Centres are reminded that they should submit the following evidence for external verification:

♦ Verification Sample Form completed with details provided for all candidates in the sample
♦ a completed Candidate Evidence Flyleaf for each candidate
♦ the Unit assessment and information on judging evidence
♦ the assessed candidate evidence
♦ the recording documentation with the assessment judgements for each candidate (eg candidate assessment record or similar documented evidence of assessor judgements)
♦ evidence of the application of internal verification processes

Before submitting evidence for external verification, centres should ensure that they have referred to the guidance documents. Guidance on evidence required for external verification of Units is provided on SQA's quality assurance web page.

A copy of the Politics Update letter issued in October 2015 can be found on the Politics subject web page.