



NQ Verification 2021–22 Round 1

Qualification Verification Summary Report

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Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name: Biology
Verification event/visiting information: Event
Date published: June 2022

National Courses/Units verified:

H207 74 Cell Biology
H208 74 Multicellular Organisms
H209 74 Life on Earth

The requirement to complete outcome 1 for the unit assessment at National 4 and the Added Value Unit (AVU) at National 4 was removed for session 2021–22. Centres can refer to the [National Course modification summary: Biology](#) for further information.

Centres selected for National 4 Biology units submitted evidence for outcome 2 only.

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Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Most centres used the published SQA unit assessment support packs (UASPs), that meant there were generally few problems concerning the approach to assessment.

However, a small number of centres used older versions of the SQA UASPs. Centres are reminded to use the most up-to-date versions and corresponding marking guidance from the SQA Secure site: www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure.

Assessment judgements

Centres are reminded that candidates are no longer required to pass assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2 independently. Where this unit-by-unit approach is

adopted, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the total marks available in a **single** unit assessment to pass outcome 2 for that unit.

Most centres used the appropriate thresholds for the approach adopted for their candidates. However, a small number of centres used the unit-by-unit threshold for candidates that had been assessed using the portfolio approach.

Where a portfolio approach is adopted, candidates must achieve 50% of the total marks available for assessment standard 2.1 in **each** unit and 50% of the total marks available for assessment standard 2.2 **across all three units**. Centres can refer to the Understanding Standards audio presentation on the SQA website for further clarification regarding the implementation of thresholds for each approach. https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/BiologyUnitsAssessmentandExternalVerification.ppsx

Marking guidance provided in the UASPs is not intended to be exhaustive of all possibilities and can be modified. Some centres showed good practice by discussing and amending the marking guidance before the assessments were used. However, where this is the case care should be taken to ensure that alternative answers meet the national standard demonstrated in the original SQA UASPs. Underlining and/or bracketing words in an answer often changes the level of difficulty and should be used with caution. Some centres showed a degree of leniency in their application of the marking guidance.

Centres are advised to apply the agreed marking guidance and use internal verification to ensure that all candidates are assessed accurately, fairly, and consistently to national standards. Centres are reminded that all modifications should be clearly identified on the marking guidance and that any modifications are of an **equivalent standard to the existing marking guidance**. Several centres applied this rule effectively, annotating their marking guidance and detailing acceptable alternative answers. However, a small number of centres included modifications that resulted in inconsistencies in their assessment judgements. Centres are reminded to discuss the marking guidance prior to the use of an assessment to improve consistency in the application of the marking guidance.

Questions that were answered poorly or where inconsistency was of particular concern were as follows:

H207 74 Cell Biology: unit assessment support pack 1

Question 8: Candidates often incorrectly identified the procedure. Where centres had been lenient in the marking of the explanation, candidates had not provided enough detail for the mark to be awarded.

H207 74 Cell Biology: Outcome 2, Assessment Activity 2

Question 8(a): Where centres had been lenient for the explanation or reason, candidates had not provided enough detail for the mark to be awarded.

H209 74 Life on Earth: unit assessment support pack 1

Q1(a): Where centres had been lenient, candidates had often missed the link between the organisms.

Q1(d)(i): Few candidates provided the answer in the marking guidance.

Q5: Few candidates provided the answer in the marking guidance.

Q6(b): A small number of centres had amended the UASP and marking guidance to incorrectly allocate a mark for providing the name of an organism from the diagram. A mark should not be awarded for this as candidates are merely selecting an organism from the list provided. Few candidates were able to provide a sufficiently detailed description for their selected organism.

Q7(a): Few candidates provided the link as exemplified in the marking guidance.

Centres are reminded that a rigorous, accurate and consistent application of assessment judgements is essential. This can be facilitated by effective internal verification procedures within a centre.

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Section 3: General comments

Centre staff are reminded that all centres offering SQA qualifications must have an effective internal quality assurance system to ensure all candidates are assessed accurately, fairly, and consistently to national standards. Centres selected for external verification are expected to provide details of their quality assurance processes. Most centres choose to do this by submitting a copy of their internal verification and moderation policy document.

Some centres provided evidence of their internal verification processes and most of these showed good practice by including notes from the internal verifier and demonstrating how assessment judgements were made. This often included some evidence of internal verification having taken place, specifically cross-marking. However, this did not always lead to consistent, reliable assessment judgements being made, specifically the marking guidance was leniently applied.

Some centres provided evidence that cross-marking had taken place. However, where the mark awarded by the assessor and cross-marker were different, the final judgement decisions were not always clear. Centres are reminded that, where cross-marking has taken place, any discrepancies between marks awarded by the assessor and cross-marker should be discussed and the final judgement decision clearly indicated on the candidate evidence.

Centres are advised to record any decisions taken during their internal verification process with appropriate statements on the candidate's work or a candidate record sheet, ensuring it is clear where candidates have met an assessment standard. Clear annotation by assessors on the candidate evidence, indicating where aspects of each assessment standard have, or have not, been met is very helpful for candidates, other assessors, and verifiers. This makes

clear what has been achieved, and what has yet to be achieved. Assessor comments on assessment judgements are also useful in helping to make it clear why these judgments have been made.

Centres should review their internal verification processes to ensure that they are effective. Centres are advised to refer to the Internal Verification Toolkit for further guidance: (www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74670.html).