



Monitoring Standards over Time Report 2017:

National Qualifications and Higher National Units in 2017 compared with previous years

Publication date: November 2018

Publication code: AE7895b

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ
Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD

www.sqa.org.uk

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications. If it is reproduced, SQA should be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be used for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from SQA. It must not be reproduced for trade or commercial purposes.

© Scottish Qualifications Authority

Contents

1 Introduction	1
The 2017 programme	1
Methodology	2
2 Findings: National Qualifications	4
Materials reviewed for National Qualifications	4
Advanced Higher Geography 2017 compared to Advanced Higher Geography 2013	5
Advanced Higher Modern Studies 2017 compared to Advanced Higher Modern Studies 2013	9
Higher Chemistry 2017 compared to Higher Chemistry 2013	13
Higher Physics 2017 compared to Higher Physics 2013	17
Higher French 2017 compared to Higher French 2013	21
National 5 Graphic Communication 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Graphic Communication 2013	25
National 5 Physics 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Physics 2013	29
National 5 Psychology 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Psychology 2013	33
3 Findings: Higher National Units	37
Unit: Computing: Graded Unit 1 (H1J8 34) 2017 compared to Computing: Graded Unit 1 (DH36 34) 2013	39
Unit: Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (H48X 35) 2017 compared to Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (DN4P 35) 2013	42
Unit: Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34) 2017 compared to Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34) 2013	45
Unit: Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34) 2017 compared to Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34) 2013	47
Unit: Hospitality Supervision (H198 34) 2017 compared to Hospitality Supervision (H198 34) 2013	49
Unit: Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35) 2017 compared to Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35) 2013	52
Unit: Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34) 2017 compared to Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34) 2013	54
Unit: Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (FM67 34) 2017 compared to Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (DW90 34) 2013	56
Unit: Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35) 2017 compared to Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35) 2013	58
4 Summary of findings	59
5 SQA's response	62

National Qualifications

62

Higher National Units

65

1 Introduction

As part of its monitoring standards programme, SQA reviews a range of qualifications each year to check that standards are maintained over time. For National Qualifications (NQs) this complements the Awarding Meeting procedures which ensure year-to-year comparability of grade boundaries in course assessments and for Higher National Qualifications (HNs) it complements the work carried out by Verifiers year on year.

The reviews play an important role in ensuring that SQA continues to offer qualifications of a consistently high standard and help inform future developments in qualification specification and assessment.

The reviews:

- ◆ compare the assessment demands made on candidates
- ◆ compare the levels of performance required to achieve a particular grade/pass
- ◆ consider how these are related taking into account a range of available information (eg educational context, known student characteristics, results, etc)

The 2017 programme

This review compares evidence collected during the academic year 2016–17 with evidence archived from a previous year. The reviews were carried out in January–February 2018. This report brings together the findings of the comparisons over time conducted for the following qualifications:

National Qualifications

Advanced Higher Geography	2017 and 2013
Advanced Higher Modern Studies	2017 and 2013
Higher Chemistry	2017 and 2013
Higher Physics	2017 and 2013
Higher French	2017 and 2013
National 5 Graphic Communication Intermediate 2 Graphic Communication	2017 2013
National 5 Physics Intermediate 2 Physics	2017 2013
National 5 Psychology Intermediate 2 Psychology	2017 2013

Higher National Units

Computing	
Computing: Graded Unit 1 (H1J8 34)	2017
Computing: Graded Unit 1 (DH36 34)	2013
Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (H48X 35)	2017
Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (DN4P 35)	2013
Hospitality	
Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34)	2017
Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34)	2013
Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34) Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34)	2017
	2013
Hospitality Supervision (H198 34)	2017
Hospitality Supervision (H198 34)	2013
Social Sciences	
Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35)	2017
Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35)	2013
Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34)	2017
Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34)	2013
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (FM67 34)	2017
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (DW90 34)	2013
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35)	2017
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35)	2013

Methodology

The purpose of a standards review is to establish whether qualifications have remained comparable over time. For SQA, this means that a course has remained equally demanding over time, even when reviewed or replaced by an equivalent course — ie candidates in one year have been set tasks that were just as demanding as in another year, and similar evidence has received the same judgement.

This is done by collating and analysing the views of a number of qualification specialists (normally three) who have reviewed the specifications and associated assessment instruments and samples of candidates' work across the two comparator years.

The reviewers are provided access to a set of materials for the relevant qualification for the two comparator years from SQA's archive. This includes details of what the qualification was designed to assess, how it was assessed and examples of candidates' performances.

Reviewers provide feedback by completing a standard questionnaire for the qualification type, detailing the reasons for their responses and giving an overall judgement.

The questionnaires comprise a series of questions under the following headings:

National Qualifications	Higher National Units
Educational context	Educational context
Course and assessment specification	Unit specifications/standards and guidance
Course assessment	Assessment practice
Marking and grading	Quality of evidence
Scripts	Judgement of evidence
Overall judgement	Overall judgement

The reviewers analyse the level of demand of a qualification in two years by comparing:

- ◆ the demands set by arrangements documents and/or or course specification/group award specification
- ◆ the demands set by assessment specifications
- ◆ the demands set by the assessments based on the above

The work is carried out by each reviewer independently. The completed questionnaires containing the judgment and comments from the reviewers have been summarised in the following sections of the report.

The findings are presented in two sections, one for each qualification category: National Qualifications and Higher National Qualifications.

2 Findings: National Qualifications

Materials reviewed for National Qualifications

The material used is available centrally in SQA. Where possible, the results for internally assessed course components are provided. The material provided comprises:

- ◆ course arrangements/course specification documents (which describe the skills, knowledge and understanding, and grade related criteria, and specify the assessment)
- ◆ SQA course assessment instruments and marking instructions
- ◆ grade boundaries and grade distributions
- ◆ candidates' scripts for each of these categories:
 - closest to the minimum mark for a grade A (band 2)
 - closest to the minimum mark for a grade C (band 6)

Compiling the report

The completed questionnaires have been summarised for each subject. Normally there are three reviewers, but occasionally there are only two. Where different views were expressed, these have been reported.

It should be appreciated that the task is a difficult one and often involves making fine judgements, so it should not be surprising that different individuals interpret the evidence in slightly different ways or focus on different aspects of the qualification.

For National Qualifications standard tables and commentary have been included for each subject:

- ◆ entries and attainment
- ◆ entries and attainment by gender
- ◆ grade boundaries

This is part of the statistical information provided to reviewers to assist them in making comparisons.

Advanced Higher Geography 2017 compared to Advanced Higher Geography 2013

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the second year of the Advanced Higher (AH) Geography course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses, while the 2017 candidates followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher courses.

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
2017	779	23.5%	61.6%	89.7%	95.0%	5.0%
2013	807	28.4%	72.1%	95.0%	97.6%	2.4%

Entries:

- ◆ There was a slight drop from 807 in 2013 to 779 in 2017.
- ◆ in 2016, 40% of the entries were male and 60% were female. There was almost an identical split in 2013.

Attainment:

- ◆ The A–C pass rate was 90% in 2017 compared to 95% in 2013 with 24% and 28% respectively achieving an A pass.
- ◆ Female candidates' pass rates were better, particularly at Grade A.

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2017	39.8	60.2	19.0	25.8	85.5	92.3
2013	41.3	58.7	21.9	32.9	92.2	97.0

Support

SQA Understanding Standards events and webinars, combined with regular SQA Updates and annual Subject Reports have contributed to supporting the learning and teaching process for the new qualification. Commercially published study guides provided further support.

Reference was made to the challenges faced by centres in resourcing support for candidates taking this advanced course.

Course specification

The 2013 course had three units:

DF4A 13	Geographical Methods and Techniques (Advanced Higher)
DF48 13	Geographical Study (Advanced Higher)
DF49 13	Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

The 2017 course had two units:

H7VJ 77	Geographical Skills (Advanced Higher)
H7VK 77	Geographical Issues (Advanced Higher)

Overall, there had been minimal change in the delivery of the course in terms of content and pedagogy and the course specification was judged to be of similar demand in both 2017 and 2013.

Assessment specification

2013	2017
<i>To gain an award the candidate was required to pass:</i>	
Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment	Two internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course Assessment Components	
1. Question paper	1. Question paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 60 marks ◆ 2 hours 30 minutes <p>Assesses: <i>Geographical Methods and Techniques</i> unit</p> <p>Section A: (30 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ choice of one of two questions <p>Section B: (20 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ choice of one of two questions; <p>Section C: (10 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ one compulsory question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 50 marks ◆ 2 hours 30 minutes <p>Assesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Map Interpretation (20 marks), ◆ Gathering and Processing Techniques (10 marks) ◆ Geographical Data Handling (20 marks). ◆ all questions compulsory
2. Folio	2. Project - Folio
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 140 marks ◆ managed by centres within SQA guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 100 marks ◆ managed by centres within SQA guidelines

2013	2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ conducted under some supervision and control ◆ externally marked <p>Section A: (80 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Geographical Study ◆ a report on geographical research ◆ max length: 25 sides of A4 paper <p>Section B: (60 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Geographical Issues ◆ an essay critically evaluating an issue from a geographical perspective ◆ max length: 12 sides of A4 paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ conducted under some supervision and control ◆ externally marked <p>Section A: (60 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Geographical Study ◆ a detailed study based on geographical research ◆ max length: 3,000 words <p>Section B: (40 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Geographical Issues ◆ a critical evaluation of an issue from a geographical perspective ◆ max length: 1,800 words ◆ managed by centres

The slight shift in the balance of marks across the components from folio to question paper between 2013 and 2017 was judged to have no impact on the demand of the course.

Overall the 2017 course arrangements/course specification and course assessment specifications were judged as no more demanding by all three reviewers.

Course assessment

One reviewers judged the assessment to be no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. One judged the folio only to be more demanding and one judged both the folio and question paper (particularly for 'C' candidates) to be more demanding. Reasons given were:

- ◆ The distribution of marks within the components has affected the level of demand for both the question paper and the folio.
- ◆ The map question and the statistics/data question were judged as more demanding in 2017 for C candidates in particular (although less demanding for A candidates).
- ◆ The folio was regarded as more demanding due to the change in the marking, with four criteria being assessed in 2013 and seven criteria in 2017 for the study part of the folio, while for the issue part of the folio there were four criteria in 2013 and five in 2017.

Marking and grading

Two of the reviewers concluded that the combination of grade boundaries, course assessment instruments and marking instructions was no more demanding in 2017 than 2013; one reviewer judged 2017 to be more demanding.

The assessment of the folio in particular was seen as increasing demand due to:

- ◆ the use of a word count in 2017 by comparison with a page count used in 2013
- ◆ an increase in the number of criteria assessed

In 2013 there were four key areas of assessment for each part of the folio. Mark descriptors comprised a holistic statement for the mark range together with performance descriptors relating to each of the four key areas being assessed within each mark range.

In 2017, seven elements were assessed for one part of the folio and five for the other. For each assessable element, performance-related criteria described typical performances for each mark or mark range within that element.

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
2017	150	123 (82%)	101 (67%)	84 (56%)	68 (45%)	60 (40%)
2013	100	80 (80%)	68 (68%)	58 (58%)	49 (49%)	44 (44%)

Scripts

Ten pairs of question paper scripts were reviewed at Grade A and nine at Grade C. Overall the C grade scripts were judged as poorer in 2017 compared to 2013. The judgement of A grade scripts was more variable across the two years.

Overall judgement

Two of the reviewers concluded that overall Advanced Higher Geography 2017 was no more demanding than 2013; one reviewer judged 2017 to be more demanding.

Advanced Higher Modern Studies 2017 compared to Advanced Higher Modern Studies 2013

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the second year of the Advanced Higher Modern Studies course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 would have followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses, while the 2017 candidates had followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher.

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
2017	859	28.2%	55.5%	81.4%	89.3%	10.7%
2013	833	31.8%	58.1%	92.3%	96.3%	3.7%

Entries:

- ◆ entry patterns were similar in both years
- ◆ more than twice as many females as males took the courses

Attainment:

- ◆ pass rates were higher in 2013
- ◆ the A pass rate was 28% in 2017 and 32% in 2013
- ◆ the overall A–C pass rate was 81% in 2017 and 92% in 2013
- ◆ the pass rate was higher for females than for males, in both years

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2017	29.3	70.7	22.6	29.9	76.6	81.4
2013	32.2	67.8	30.2	32.6	89.6	93.6

Course specification

The 2013 course comprised two units:

F1HD 13	Political and Social Issues (Advanced Higher)
F1HE 13	Modern Studies: Practical Research (Advanced Higher)

For the *Political and Social Issues Unit*, candidates studied one of three Study Themes: Comparative Politics and Research Methods **or** Law and Order and Research Methods **or** The European Union and Research Methods. Each Study Theme contained four contexts.

In the *Modern Studies: Practical Research Unit* candidates carried out independent research on the content of a Study Theme studied in the *Political and Social Issues Unit*.

The 2017 course had two units:

H7X4 77	Modern Studies: Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher)
H7X5 77	Modern Studies: Researching Contemporary Issues (Advanced Higher)

There were three Study Themes: Political Issues; Social Issues, Law and Order; and Social Issues, Social Inequality. Each Study Theme contained four contexts.

Generally, the demands of the course in both years was judged as broadly similar. The course content had remained mostly the same, apart from the replacement of the European Union theme with one on Social Inequality.

Assessment specification

2013	2017
<i>To gain an award the candidate was required to pass</i>	
Two internally-assessed units and the course assessment	Two internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course Assessment Components	
1. Question paper	1. Question paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 90 marks ◆ 3 hours <p>One of three Study Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Comparative Politics and Research Methods ◆ Law and Order and Research Methods ◆ The European Union and Research Methods <p>In chosen study theme:</p> <p>Part A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ two from three 30 mark questions <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ two mandatory 15 mark questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 90 marks ◆ 3 hours <p>One of three Sections/Study Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Political Issues and Research Methods ◆ Social Issues, Law and Order and Research Methods ◆ Social Issues, Social Inequality and Research Methods <p>In chosen study theme/section:</p> <p>Part A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ two from three 30 mark questions ◆ use command word 'Discuss ...' <p>Part B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ two mandatory 15 mark questions

2013	2017
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ use command word 'To what extent ...'
2. Dissertation	2. Project – Dissertation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 45 marks ◆ title (hypothesis) drawn from content of study theme studied in <i>Political and Social Issues</i> unit ◆ externally marked ◆ max length: 5,000 words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 50 marks ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines ◆ bank of titles to exemplify suitable questions/hypothesis ◆ conducted under some supervision and control ◆ externally marked ◆ word range: 4,000–5,000 words

While the course arrangements/course specification and course assessment specifications in both years were judged as broadly similar (both required unit assessments, dissertation and essays/research methods), all three reviewers judged those for 2017 to be overall more demanding than 2013. Particular points noted were:

- ◆ The course assessment specification for 2013 was judged to provide greater specification of course content.
- ◆ There was a requirement to include country comparisons in 2017 but not in 2013.

Course assessment

On the whole, the assessment in 2017 was considered more demanding than 2013 by all three reviewers. Reviewers cited the following reasons:

- ◆ Research methods questions were more demanding (eg had to relate arguments to a given scenario).
- ◆ Country comparators were introduced as a mandatory element of all three sections in the 2017 question paper.
- ◆ There was a greater emphasis on synthesis, analysis and evaluation in 2017.
- ◆ Methodology was included in the dissertation word count in 2017 but not in 2013. This required greater conciseness, but the same depth, in 2017.

Marking and grading

The reviewers concluded that the combination of grade boundaries, course assessment instruments and marking instructions was more demanding in 2017 than in 2013, and noted the following:

- ◆ There was the added demand that candidates make an international comparison in all topics in the 2017 extended essay questions.
- ◆ The more detailed marking instructions made explicit reference to a hierarchy of skills linked to analysis, evaluation, comparison, synthesis and the ability to draw conclusions.

While the skills assessed were similar in both years, there was greater explicit reference in marking to higher-order skills in 2017.

- ◆ The grade boundary information would also tend to indicate that the 2017 assessment was more demanding. While grade boundaries for A, B and C were set at notional in both years (at 70%, 60%, 50%), the pass rate was somewhat lower in 2017. For example, the A–C pass rate was 81% in 2017 and 92% in 2013 (see the *Entries and attainment* section).

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
2017	140	119 (85%)	98 (70%)	84 (60%)	70 (50%)	63 (43%)
2013	135	108 (80%)	94 (70%)	80 (60%)	67 (50%)	60 (44%)

Scripts

Ten pairs of question paper scripts were reviewed at Grade A and 10 at Grade C. Overall the 2017 scripts were judged to be generally of a better quality than those of 2013; this was the judgement of all three reviewers and for both grades.

Overall judgement

The Advanced Higher Modern Studies in 2017 was judged overall to be more demanding than in 2013. The main reasons provided were:

- ◆ There had been an overall increase in the technical demand and quality of higher-order skills needed to gain an A pass.
- ◆ Candidates were required to apply their knowledge and skills more explicitly than in 2013.

Higher Chemistry 2017 compared to Higher Chemistry 2013

Note: this subject was reviewed by only two specialists.

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the third year of the Higher Chemistry course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses, while the 2017 candidates followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher courses.

There were two Higher Chemistry courses in 2013 — revised and traditional. Only the traditional course is considered here. (The revised course had 652 entries in 2013.)

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
2017	10,135	30.8%	55.0%	76.2%	84.5%	15.5%
2013	10,004	31.1%	55.1%	78.1%	86.7%	13.3%

Entries:

- ♦ there was a slight (2%) drop between 2013 and 2017
- ♦ the male/female split remained identical at 49% / 51%

Attainment:

- ♦ In both years 31% of candidates achieved an A grade while the A–C pass rate was 76% in 2017 and 78% in 2013.

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2017	48.8	51.2	29.0	31.5	74.1	77.3
2013	49.4	50.6	30.9	31.3	77.9	78.3

Support

In 2017 the Higher course was in its third session, by which time teachers should have adjusted to the new content and changes to assessment introduced with Curriculum for Excellence. For example, in 2017, candidates had to be prepared for the exam as well as the assignment, whereas in 2013, candidates only had to be prepared for the exam.

Changes in educational context were not seen to have a significant impact on the general ability of candidates to meet the demands made by the course and its assessment.

Course specification

The 2013 course comprised three units:

D069 12	Energy Matters (Higher)
D070 12	The World of Carbon (Higher)
D071 12	Chemical Reactions (Higher)

The 2017 course comprised four units:

H4KH 76	Chemical Changes and Structure (Higher)
H4KK 76	Researching Chemistry (Higher)
H21J 76	Nature's Chemistry (Higher)
H21L 76	Chemistry in Society (Higher)

The rationale and aims, together with the breadth and depth of skills, knowledge and understanding, were judged as similar in both years.

Assessment specification

2013	2017
To gain an award the candidate was required to pass	
Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment	Four internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course assessment components	
1. Question paper	1. Question paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 100 marks ◆ 2 hours 30 minutes <p>Section A: (40 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ objective (multiple choice) questions <p>Section B: (60 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ extended-answer questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 100 marks ◆ 2 hours 30 minutes <p>Section 1: (20 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ objective (multiple choice) questions <p>Section 2: (80 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ restricted and extended response questions
-	2. Assignment

2013	2017
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 20 marks ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines ◆ conducted under a high degree of supervision and control ◆ externally marked ◆ word range: 800–1,500 words

The course arrangements for 2013 were judged to have a greater emphasis on knowledge and understanding in chemistry compared with the 2017 course specification, which had a much reduced body of knowledge to be assessed and a greater emphasis on skills. However, this shift in emphasis was not considered to necessarily increase the level of demand. While the body of facts covered in the course was reduced in 2017, the skills development, particularly in the new unit Researching Chemistry, made new and different demands of the candidates.

One reviewer considered that the reduction in the length of the objective test section from 40 marks to 20 marks reduced the accessibility of the assessment, although this was offset to some extent by the introduction of the assignment, which tends to benefit candidates.

Overall, the 2017 course arrangements/course specification and course assessment specifications was judged as no more demanding by one reviewer but more demanding by the other, due to increased demands of the assessment specification.

Course assessment

The course assessment was judged as more demanding in 2017 by one reviewer, and less demanding by the other. Aspects of the 2017 assessment judged as more demanding by the one reviewer were:

- ◆ structure of the assessment, and in particular the reduction of objective questions
- ◆ greater emphasis on problem-solving type questions and more complex questions
- ◆ slightly more questions requiring use of data and requiring integrations of knowledge into new situations

The other reviewer, pointing out the differences between the two assessments, considered that elements which potentially increased demand in 2017 were balanced by other elements which reduced demands.

Marking and grading

A major difference between 2013 and 2017 was the removal of half marks from Section 2 of the question paper. This was considered as potentially making it more difficult for candidates to accumulate partial marks, particularly C grade candidates. This was, however, at least partially offset by an increase in mark allocation for some questions. (The marks allocation had increased from 100 to 120 marks.)

The grade boundaries for the 2017 paper were substantially higher than those in 2013. The application of these raised grade boundaries in 2017 balanced the somewhat reduced demand of the 2017 instrument (allowing for the considerable differences in the courses which were being assessed in the two different years). This led one reviewer to conclude that, in 2017, the combination of grade boundaries, course assessment instruments and marking instructions was no more demanding than before.

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
2017	120	108 (90%)	90 (75%)	79 (66%)	68 (57%)	62 (52%)
2013	100	83 (83%)	72 (72%)	60 (60%)	49 (49%)	43 (43%)

Scripts

Six pairs of scripts were reviewed at Grade A and six at Grade C. Overall the 2017 scripts were judged to be generally of a better quality than those of 2013.

Overall judgement

One reviewer judged Higher Chemistry 2017 as more demanding than Higher Chemistry 2013 and the other reviewer judged it as no more demanding.

The substantial difference between the 2013 and the 2017 course made direct comparison difficult. The reviewers made the following points:

- ◆ In the 2013 course the emphasis was on knowledge and understanding, while in 2017 there was a much reduced body of knowledge and a greater emphasis on the development of researching chemistry skills.
- ◆ The assessment in 2013 consisted of a question paper only, while the assessment in 2017 comprised a question paper and an assignment.
- ◆ The grade boundaries for the 2017 paper were substantially higher than those of the 2013 paper. Given that the pass rates were similar in both years, could indicate that the course assessment was less demanding in 2017 but that this was balanced out by raising the grade boundary marks.

Higher Physics 2017 compared to Higher Physics 2013

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the third year of the Higher Physics course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses while the 2017 candidates followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher courses.

There were two Higher Physics courses in 2013, revised and traditional. Only the traditional course is considered here. (The revised course had 841 entries in 2013.)

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
2017	8,956	28.3%	54.3%	76.0%	84.1%	15.9%
2013	8,793	27.5%	53.4%	76.9%	86.0%	14.0%

Entries:

- ♦ there was a slight (2%) increase in entries between 2013 and 2017
- ♦ in 2017 males accounted for just under three quarters of the entries (74%), representing an increase from 71% in 2013

Attainment:

- ♦ the overall pass rate was similar in both years and the smaller female cohort achieved better results overall

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2017	74.1	25.9	25.6	35.3	73.8	81.8
2013	70.7	29.3	26.1	30.8	75.4	80.7

Support

Teaching and learning for the new course was supported through implementation events, the Understanding Standards programme, and a range of support materials published online.

It was noted that candidates in 2017 would have received a minimum of one year's teaching by a Physics specialist, whereas those following the Standard Grade course in 2013 would have a minimum of two years.

Course specification

The 2013 course had three units:

D383 12	Mechanics and Properties of Matter (Higher)
D380 12	Electricity and Electronics (Higher)
D384 12	Radiation and Matter (Higher)

The 2017 course had four units:

H4KY 76	Physics: Our Dynamic Universe (Higher)
H4L0 76	Physics: Particles and Waves (Higher)
H4KX 76	Physics: Electricity (Higher)
H4L1 76	Researching Physics (Higher)

Assessment specification

2013	2017
<i>To gain an award the candidate was required to pass</i>	
Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment	Four internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course Assessment Components	
1. Question paper	1. Question paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 90 marks ◆ 2 hours 30 minutes ◆ data sheet provided <p>Section A: (40 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ objective (multiple choice) questions <p>Section B: (70 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ short and restricted response questions ◆ all questions mandatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 100 marks ◆ 2 hours 30 minutes ◆ data sheet provided <p>Section 1: (20 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ objective (multiple choice) questions <p>Section 2: (110 marks scaled to 80 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ restricted and extended response questions ◆ all questions mandatory
-	2. Assignment

2013	2017
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 20 marks ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines ◆ conducted under a high degree of supervision and control ◆ externally marked ◆ word range: 800–1,500 words

With the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence qualification there was a change of emphasis with more of a focus on skills as opposed to knowledge and understanding. This is evidenced by the majority of the marks in the assignment and the final 'skills' question in the question paper.

In common with the other sciences, the introduction of the assignment to the Higher Physics course means that the course assessment is no longer solely dependent upon one final question paper.

In 2013, there was coverage of course content across the three learning outcomes, with the skills associated with practical work — eg processing, analysis and evaluative skills — being assessed at unit level only, on a pass/fail basis. In 2017, these skills were assessed through the course assessment tasks — either the question paper or the assignment task. The fact that these are marked, graded and assessed centrally was considered to give a greater importance and weighting to these skills and their effect on any achieved final grade.

The reviewers noted that the 2013 paper had more complex multi-stage numerical problem-solving questions, while the 2017 paper was more accessible from a mathematical perspective. This was balanced, however, by the greater requirement in 2017 to apply knowledge in unfamiliar contexts.

Overall, the course arrangements/course specification and course assessment specifications were judged no more demanding in 2017 compared to 2013 by two reviewers, and more demanding by one.

Course assessment

The course assessment was judged no more demanding in 2017 compared to 2013 by two reviewers and more demanding by one. The reviewer giving the 'more demanding' judgement said that this was to reflect the greater range of skills being assessed, but also commented that this did not appear to have impacted on candidate performance.

Marking and grading

Reference was made to the replacement of half marks in 2013 with a different marking system in 2017 with an increased number of marks available.

The reduction in the number of numerically based questions and the introduction of more open-ended questions was perceived to increase marking demands. This was offset, however, by support given before and during the marking process.

It was noted that grade boundary marks, except at A, had increased between 2013 and 2017 and were closer to 'notional'.

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
2017	120	100 (83%)	82 (68%)	69 (58%)	57 (48%)	51 (43%)
2013	90	70 (78%)	61 (68%)	50 (56%)	40 (44%)	35 (39%)

The combination of grade boundaries, course assessment instruments and marking instructions was judged by two reviewers to make the level of demand no more demanding in 2017 than 2013. The third reviewer commented that, while 2017 could be considered more demanding due to the increased range of skills (practical and analysis) being assessed, candidates appear to have dealt with the level of demand well.

Scripts

Six pairs of question paper scripts were reviewed at Grade A and six at Grade C. Overall, at C grade, the 2017 scripts were judged to be generally of a better quality than those of 2013 by two of the reviewers, and sometimes better/sometimes poorer by the third reviewer. For A grade they were judged as similar quality by two reviewers and sometimes better/sometimes poorer by the third reviewer.

Overall judgement

The overall judgement was that the Higher Physics 2017 was no more demanding than Higher Physics in 2013, with the demands of the 2013 course being replaced with other demands which provide challenge to the 2017 course in a different way. Reviewers made the following points:

- ◆ The 2017 question paper, with an increase in the number of marks, samples slightly more widely from the course than before but in the same depth.
- ◆ The shift away from concentrating on knowledge and numerical problem-solving towards exploring other skills has reduced the demand of the course in terms of hours spent by students consolidating and memorising.
- ◆ Some of the questions posed in 2013 required more complex and involved responses from the candidates than some of the questions in 2017. However, the 2013 questions were more predictable.
- ◆ The 2013 paper was more mathematically demanding.
- ◆ In 2017, candidates were presented with new alternative complexities, such as the introduction of questions posed in unfamiliar contexts.

Higher French 2017 compared to Higher French 2013

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the third year of the Higher French course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses, while the 2017 candidates followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher courses.

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
2017	3,918	43.4%	68.6%	87.3%	93.0%	7.0%
2013	4,239	43.1%	63.8%	82.9%	90.2%	9.8%

Entries:

- ◆ entries declined by 8% between 2013 and 2017
- ◆ the male/female split has remained constant at 24% male and 76% female

Attainment:

- ◆ the A pass rate was the same in both years at 43%
- ◆ the A–C pass rate was higher in 2017 at 87% (83% in 2013)
- ◆ attainment was similar for males and females in both years

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2017	24.4	75.6	42.7	43.3	88.3	86.8
2013	24.0	76.0	42.0	43.4	82.0	83.2

Changes in educational context were not judged to have a significant impact on the general ability of candidates to meet the demands made by the course and its assessment.

Course specification

The 2013 course had two units, one mandatory and one optional.

Mandatory unit

D339 12	French: Language (Higher)
---------	---------------------------

Optional units

D342 12	French: Extended Reading/Viewing (Higher)
D338 12	French: Language in Work (Higher)

The 2017 course had two mandatory units:

H724 76	French: Understanding Language (Higher)
H725 76	French: Using Language (Higher)

Assessment specification

2013	2017
<i>To gain an award the candidate was required to pass</i>	
Two internally-assessed units (one mandatory and one optional) and the course assessment	Two internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course assessment components (<i>components are numbered as in the assessment specifications</i>)	
2. Paper I: Reading and Directed Writing	1. Question paper 1: Reading and Directed Writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 45 marks ◆ 1 hour 40 minutes <p>Part A 1: (30 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reading ◆ glossary provided and dictionary permitted <p>Part B: (15 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Directed Writing ◆ use of dictionary permitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 40 marks ◆ 1 hour 40 minutes <p>Section 1: (30 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reading ◆ glossary provided and dictionary permitted <p>Section 2: (10 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Directed Writing ◆ use of dictionary permitted
3. Paper II: Listening and Writing	2. Question paper 2: Listening and Writing

2013	2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 30 marks ◆ 1 hour <p>Section A: (20 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listening ◆ use of dictionary permitted <p>Section B: (10 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Writing ◆ use of dictionary permitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 30 marks ◆ 1 hour <p>Section A: (20 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listening ◆ use of dictionary permitted <p>Section B: (10 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Writing ◆ use of dictionary permitted
1. Oral Assessment: Speaking	3. Performance: Talking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 25 marks ◆ 6–8 minutes ◆ internally conducted and marked using SQA marking instructions ◆ audio-recorded for external verification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 30 marks ◆ at least 6 minutes ◆ internally conducted and marked using SQA marking instructions ◆ audio-recorded for external verification

The 2017 course arrangements/course specification and course assessment specifications were judged no more demanding in 2017 compared to 2013. Both courses assess the same Listening, Reading, Talking and Writing skills and the breadth and depth of skills, knowledge and understanding examined remained consistent across the two years.

Course assessment

All three reviewers judged the 2017 course assessment to be no more demanding than 2013. Some aspects of the 2017 assessment were judged as increasing accessibility of the qualification:

- ◆ in 2017 the Reading contexts were more meaningful and relevant to the candidates than in 2013 (*media versus* a second home in the country)
- ◆ the optionality in Directed Writing and reduction in the number of points to be addressed from six to four
- ◆ the change in the weighting in the Directed Writing and Performance of Talking

However, the slightly increased accessibility of the examination for candidates was mitigated by a change to the grade boundaries.

Marking and grading

The combination of grade boundaries, course assessment instruments and marking instructions was judged as no more demanding in 2017 than 2013.

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
2017	100	87	72	60	49	43
2013	100	85	70	60	50	45

Scripts

Ten pairs of scripts were reviewed at Grade A and ten at Grade C. Overall, at C grade, the 2017 scripts were judged to be generally of a better quality than those of 2013 by one of the reviewers, and generally the same quality by the other two reviewers. The A grade scripts were judged as better in 2017 by all three reviewers.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the course specification, course assessment specification, assessment instruments, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence, Higher French 2017 was judged to be no more demanding than Higher French in 2013.

National 5 Graphic Communication 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Graphic Communication 2013

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the fourth year of the National 5 Graphic Communication course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses, while the 2017 candidates followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher courses.

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
National 5 2017	6,302	35.9%	64.1%	85.0%	91.2%	8.8%
Intermediate 2 2013	3,129	45.4%	72.7%	88.2%	92.7%	7.3%

Entries:

- ◆ National 5 entries were double those for the Intermediate 2; in 2013 a substantial number (4,040) followed the Standard Grade qualification
- ◆ the course was more than twice as popular with males than females

Attainment:

- ◆ pass rates were slightly lower for the 2017 qualification with an A–C pass rate of 85%, compared to 88% for the 2013 qualification
- ◆ the difference was more marked for the A grade, with 36% achieving this in 2017 compared to 45% in 2013
- ◆ the smaller female cohort achieved better grades than the larger male cohort

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
National 5 2017	70.4	29.6	29.8	50.3	82.3	91.5
Intermediate 2 2013	71.4	28.6	43.1	51.2	87.5	90.1

Support

Professional development issues following the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence course have taken a number of years to be fully addressed.

Course specification

The 2013 course had three units:

F397 11	Technical Graphics 1 (Intermediate 2)
F398 11	Technical Graphics 2 (Intermediate 2)
D173 11	Computer Graphics (Intermediate 2)

The 2017 course comprised two units:

H27V 75	2D Graphic Communication (National 5)
H27W 75	3D and Pictorial Graphic Communication (National 5)

The major difference between the two courses is the absence of technical drawing in National 5 and the inclusion of desktop publishing and computer aided design as essentially new content.

Assessment specification

2013	2017
<i>To gain an award the candidate was required to pass</i>	
Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment	Two internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course assessment components	
1. Question paper	1. Question paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 70 marks ◆ 2 hours 30 minutes ◆ knowledge and drawing skills across all three units; ratio of marks allocated to knowledge and drawing questions was approximately 20:50. ◆ all 8 questions mandatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 60 marks ◆ 1 hours 30 minutes ◆ approximately 50% of the marks awarded for questions related to 2D Graphic Communication and 50% to 3D and Pictorial Graphic Communication ◆ all 5 questions mandatory
2. Graphic Presentation Folio	2. Assignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 30 marks ◆ internally assessed with external verification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 60 marks ◆ set by SQA (bank of assignments) and conducted under some supervision and control ◆ internally marked by centre staff in line with SQA marking instructions and quality assured by SQA

In 2013, technical drawing was the focus of the assessment and commanded over 70% of the marks total. In 2017 the course assessment was equally split between the question paper and the assignment, and had greater emphasis on desktop publishing and computer aided design.

The difference in content and assessment between the two courses made comparison difficult. Two reviewers judged course arrangements/course specification and course assessment specifications on the whole no more demanding in 2017 than 2013. The third reviewer considered that the 2017 course assessment specification was more demanding in terms of a greater range of topic areas covered and a greater depth of knowledge required by candidates.

Course assessment

The course assessment in 2017 was judged as no more demanding than that in 2013 by two reviewers and more demanding by one.

Aspects found more demanding in 2017 were:

- ◆ less predictability in content
- ◆ greater depth of knowledge and broader range of topic areas
- ◆ greater requirement to develop a strategy to answer questions

Marking and grading

The combination of grade boundaries, course assessment instruments and marking instructions was judged no more demanding in 2017 by two reviewers and more demanding by one reviewer. In particular, in 2017 more responses were required to go beyond the simple recall of knowledge which characterised 2013 theory questions.

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
National 5 2017	120	104 (87%)	86 (72%)	74 (62%)	62 (52%)	56 (47%)
Intermediate 2 2013	100	88 (88%)	73 (73%)	63 (63%)	54 (54%)	49 (49%)

Scripts

Ten pairs of scripts were reviewed at Grade A and ten at Grade C. All three reviewers judged the 2017 scripts to be of better quality in all instances.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the course specification, assessment specification, assessment instruments, marking and grading and the quality of the candidate evidence, the

Graphic Communication, National 5, 2017 was judged by two reviewers to be no more demanding compared to Intermediate 2 Graphic Communication 2013 and was judged to be more demanding by the third reviewer.

National 5 Physics 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Physics 2013

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the fourth year of the National 5 Physics course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 would have followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses while in 2017 candidates followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher.

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
National 5 2017	14,164	31.7%	53.2%	73.2%	82.6%	17.4%
Intermediate 2 2013	4,873	34.1%	56.6%	75.9%	83.7%	16.3%

Entries:

- ◆ National 5 entries were almost three times those for the Intermediate 2. (The majority of candidates studying Physics at this level in 2013 would have taken the Standard Grade qualification.)
- ◆ The courses were more than twice as popular with males than females.

Attainment:

- ◆ pass rates were slightly higher in 2013
- ◆ in 2017 the A–C rate was 73% and the A rate was 32%
- ◆ in 2013 the figures were 76% and 34%
- ◆ the smaller female cohort achieved better grades than larger male cohort

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
National 5 2017	72.0	28.0	28.6	39.6	70.3	80.5
Intermediate 2 2013	73.9	26.1	28.9	48.8	73.3	83.4

Support

The support provided by SQA through Understanding Standards events together with the publication of course reports and marking instructions were regarded as important resources for staff delivering the course.

Changes in educational context were not judged to have a significant impact on the general ability of candidates to meet the demands made by the course and its assessment.

Course specification

The 2013 course had four units:

D379 11	Mechanics and Heat (Intermediate 2)
D380 11	Electricity and Electronics (Intermediate 2)
D381 11	Waves and Optics (Intermediate 2)
D382 11	Radioactivity (Intermediate 2)

The 2017 course comprised three units:

H256 75	Physics: Electricity and Energy (National 5)
H25A 75	Physics: Waves and Radiation (National 5)
H258 75	Physics: Dynamics and Space (National 5)

The reviewers highlighted the following points of comparison for the course:

- ◆ The aims and rationale of Intermediate 2 and National 5 were almost identical.
- ◆ Intermediate 2 required a qualification in Maths to study the course; there is no such explicit requirement for National 5.
- ◆ Content for Intermediate 2 was specified in detail; ‘content statements’ for National 5 much less so. The lack of specific detail on breadth and depth of content for National 5 was seen to create a degree of uncertainty in preparing candidates for the examination.
- ◆ Two of the more challenging concepts of Intermediate 2 (momentum and total internal reflection) were omitted from National 5 (and moved to Higher level), and one content area (gas laws) was been moved from Higher to National 5.

Assessment specification

2013 Intermediate 2	2017 National 5
<i>To gain an award the candidate was required to pass</i>	
Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment	Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course assessment components	
1. Question paper	1. Question paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 100 marks ◆ 2 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 80 marks ◆ 2 hours
Section A: (20 marks)	Section 1: (20 marks)

2013 Intermediate 2	2017 National 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ multiple choice <p>Section B: (80 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ short and restricted response questions ◆ all questions mandatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ objective test <p>Section 2: (90 marks scaled to 60 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ restricted and extended response questions ◆ all questions mandatory
-	2. Assignment
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 20 marks ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines ◆ conducted under high degree of supervision and control ◆ externally marked

Overall, the 2017 course arrangements/course specification and course assessment specifications were judged as no more demanding by two reviewers and more demanding by one.

Aspects of the assessment noted as potentially increasing demand for 2017:

- ◆ The inclusion of the assignment as part of the National 5 assessment is a major difference compared with the Intermediate 2 question paper component only and requires skills not assessed in Intermediate 2.
- ◆ National 5 has a small (4%) proportion of open-ended questions; there were no such questions in Intermediate 2.
- ◆ A greater emphasis on questions requiring explanation rather than straightforward recall of knowledge and a greater proportion of more challenging questions overall.

Aspects of the assessment noted as potentially decreasing demand for 2017:

- ◆ The National 5 exam paper is laid out as a structured response booklet with spaces for candidates' responses; an unstructured response booklet was provided for Intermediate 2 candidates. The space provided makes it easier for candidates to gauge the length of response required and makes it less likely that they would omit questions.
- ◆ A candidate with a lower component 1 score in National 5 could enhance their mark with their assignment (component 2) score. This opportunity was not available to an Intermediate 2 candidate who must rely on achieving a grade via component 1 only.

Course assessment

The 2017 course assessment was judged as no more demanding by two reviewers and more demanding by one. The particular aspects judged as more demanding in 2017 were:

- ◆ the balance between C and A grade questions
- ◆ the requirement for candidates to devise a strategy to answer questions

- ◆ the demands of specific questions/tasks

The introduction of the assignment was viewed by one reviewer as reducing demand as there was now less pressure on the final question paper.

Marking and grading

The combination of grade boundaries, course assessment instruments and marking instructions was judged more demanding in 2017 than in 2013.

It was noted that half marks could be awarded in 2013 but not in 2017, and that scaling of marks was used in the National 5 qualification for Section 2 of the question paper.

Grade boundaries for the 2013 Intermediate 2 course were very close to the notional values (70%/60%/50%). Grade boundaries for the 2017 National 5 course assessment were below notional values, by two marks at grade A and five marks at grade C level. This was to take into account issues relating to the level of demand of particular questions in the exam paper, as well as the overall demand of the paper.

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
National 5 2017	100	85	68	56	45	39
Intermediate 2 2013	100	84	69	59	50	45

Scripts

Nine pairs of scripts were reviewed at Grade A and ten at Grade C. The A grade scripts were judged overall to be either generally of a better quality in 2017 (two reviewers) or the same quality (one reviewer) as 2013. For C grade scripts, reviewers' overall judgments were variable, although the 2017 scripts were more often viewed as better than those from 2013.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the course specification, course assessment specification, assessment instruments, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence, the Physics National 5 in 2017 was judged by two reviewers to be no more demanding than Intermediate 2 Physics in 2013 and (slightly) more demanding by one.

National 5 Psychology 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Psychology 2013

Note: this subject was reviewed by only two specialists.

Educational context

Session 2016–17 was the fourth year of the National 5 Psychology course introduced to support Curriculum for Excellence. Candidates in 2013 followed Standard Grade/Intermediate/Higher (Higher Still)/Advanced Higher courses while in 2017 candidates followed Curriculum for Excellence National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher courses.

Entries and attainment

Year	Entries	A	A–B	A–C	A–D	No Award
National 5 2017	622	36.3%	55.6%	70.4%	76.7%	23.3%
Intermediate 2 2013	518	30.9%	56.8%	74.5%	80.7%	19.3%

Entries:

- ◆ entries increased by 20% between 2013 and 2017
- ◆ the course was more than twice as popular with females than males
- ◆ the male/female split was similar in both years

Attainment:

- ◆ the A–C pass rate was 70% in 2017 and 75% in 2013
- ◆ a higher proportion of candidates achieved an A grade in 2017 at 36% compared to 31% in 2013
- ◆ the proportion of candidates achieving no award was 23% in 2017 and 19% in 2013.

Breakdown of entries and attainment by gender:

Year	% Entries		% Grade A		% Grade A–C	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
National 5 2017	27.2	72.8	33.7	37.1	63.9	72.8
Intermediate 2 2013	29.2	70.8	27.8	32.2	70.2	76.3

It was noted that an increasing number of schools are being approved to offer this traditionally college-based qualification. This was seen as having an impact on the marks available for the ethics section of the assignment in 2017.

Course specification

The 2013 course had three units:

F5B4 11	Psychology: Understanding the Individual (Intermediate 2)
DF5L 11	Psychology: Investigating Behaviour (Intermediate 2)
F5B5 11	Psychology: The Individual in the Social Context (Intermediate 2)

The 2017 course had three units:

H260 75	Psychology: Research (National 5)
H261 75	Psychology: Individual Behaviour (National 5)
H262 75	Psychology: Social Behaviour (National 5)

Similarities between the two courses:

- ◆ The aims and principles of the qualifications are largely similar — developing a basic knowledge and understanding of Psychology whilst focusing on the practical applications, supported by both classical and contemporary research
- ◆ Candidates studied topics covering three distinct areas; Individual Behaviour, Social Behaviour and Research.

Differences:

- ◆ At Intermediate 2 there was little flexibility and opportunity for centres to select appropriate topics for their candidates. Specific marks were awarded for knowledge and understanding and analysis and evaluation.
- ◆ The National 5 was seen as allowing greater personalisation and choice for candidates. It comprised two mandatory topics and two optional topics (chosen by the centre) and an assignment.
- ◆ In the Intermediate 2 course, research was assessed as part of the question paper but in National 5 it was assessed through the assignment.

Assessment specification

2013 Intermediate 2	2017 National 5
<i>To gain an award the candidate was required to pass</i>	
Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment	Three internally-assessed units and the course assessment
Course assessment components	
1. Question paper	1. Question paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 100 marks ◆ 2 hours <p>Section 1: (40 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Understanding the Individual (2 compulsory question) <p>Section 2: (20 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Investigating Behaviour (1 compulsory question) <p>Section 3: (40 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Individual in the Social Context (2 questions: one compulsory, one from choice of three) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 50 marks ◆ 1 hour 30 minutes ◆ 3 compulsory questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — one answered in the context of the Individual Behaviour: Optional Topic studied by the candidate (15 marks) — one related the mandatory topic of Individual Behaviour: Sleep and Dreams and Conformity (15 marks) — one related the mandatory topic of Conformity (20 marks)
–	2. Assignment
–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 30 marks ◆ choice of topics within SQA guidelines ◆ conducted under some supervision and control ◆ externally marked

Overall the course arrangements/specifications and course assessment specification were judged as no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013 by both reviewers.

Course assessment

The course assessment in 2017 was judged as no more demanding than that in 2013 by both reviewers.

The following points were noted by the reviewers:

- ◆ The introduction of the assignment was a major change in the modes of assessment. However, the demand for candidates was judged to be similar.

- ◆ The 2017 question paper was judged to require a slightly greater application of knowledge and understanding to real-life contexts.
- ◆ However, in 2017 the balance of marks was in favour of the mandatory topics rather than the optional topics as in 2013. This could potentially have decreased challenge in 2017.

Marking and grading

One reviewer judged that there was no differences in the Marking Instructions and the relation of grade boundaries to marks that affected the level of demand. The other reviewer considered that 2017 was more demanding than 2013. It was judged that in 2013 there was a greater emphasis on recall/describe, while in 2017 there was an increased requirement to demonstrate application of knowledge, provide explanations and to evaluate.

Grade boundaries:

Year	Max Mark	GRADE BOUNDARIES				
		Upper A	A Mark	B Mark	C Mark	D Mark
National 5 2017	80	68 (85%)	56 (70%)	48 (60%)	40 (50%)	36 (45%)
Intermediate 2 2013	100	83 (83%)	68 (68%)	58 (58%)	48 (48%)	43 (43%)

Scripts

Ten pairs of scripts were reviewed at Grade A and ten at Grade C. The C grade scripts were judged overall to be generally of better quality in 2017, while the A grade scripts were judged generally of better quality by one reviewer and sometimes better/sometimes poorer by one reviewer.

Overall judgement

Both reviewers agreed that the demands of the course specifications were similar in 2017 and 2013. However, the 2017 course assessment was judged as more demanding in the following respects:

- ◆ The assignment component (which replaced the Research section of the question paper) required the application of knowledge and understanding.
- ◆ The mandatory content for the unit: Individual Behaviour (Sleep and Dreams) was more demanding than any pre- Curriculum for Excellence unit.
- ◆ Candidates in 2013 gained marks for each relevant point made, whereas those in 2017 had to respond appropriately to command terms to gain marks, eg provide detail for 'describe', commentaries for 'explain'.
- ◆ The assessment instruments were more demanding in National 5, with a stronger emphasis on skills rather than content knowledge.

Overall, one reviewer judged that National 5 Psychology 2017 was more demanding than Intermediate 2 Psychology 2013 and one reviewer judged that it was no more demanding.

3 Findings: Higher National Units

Materials reviewed for Higher National Units

Centres with candidates who have recently achieved one of the mandatory units in the sample of qualifications are asked to submit assessment material, marking guidelines, instructions to candidates, internal verification forms and the work of two candidates whose evidence exemplifies the standard for the qualification.

The material reviewed was available electronically in SQA and consists of materials relating to the academic year of 2016–17 and to the previous academic year of 2012–13. The material provided comprised:

- ◆ unit specifications (which describe the standard)
- ◆ assessment materials (including internal assessment instructions, instruments of assessment, assessment support packs and marking guidelines)
- ◆ candidates' evidence

Compiling the report

The completed questionnaires have been summarised for each unit. Normally there will be three reviewers, but occasionally there are only two. Where different views were expressed, these have been reported.

It should be appreciated that the task is a difficult one and often involves making fine judgements, so it should not be surprising that different individuals interpret the evidence in slightly different ways or focus on different aspects of the units.

It is worth noting that the review covers a sample of Higher National Units and statistical information is not available for reporting in the same way as National Qualifications.

The following Higher National units were included in the monitoring standards programme for 2017:

Computing	
Computing: Graded Unit 1 (H1J8 34)	2017
Computing: Graded Unit 1 (DH36 34)	2013
Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (H48X 35)	2017
Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (DN4P 35)	2013
Hospitality	
Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34)	2017
Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34)	2013
Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34)	2017
Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34)	2013
Hospitality Supervision (H198 34)	2017
Hospitality Supervision (H198 34)	2013

Social Sciences	
Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35)	2017
Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35)	2013
Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34)	2017
Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34)	2013
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (FM67 34)	2017
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (DW90 34)	2013
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35)	2017
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35)	2013

Unit: Computing: Graded Unit 1 (H1J8 34) 2017 compared to Computing: Graded Unit 1 (DH36 34) 2013

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 unit based on a specification (first published in May 2012) and the previous version of the unit, which was still in use in 2013. The new unit structure is different with:

- ◆ a new section added
- ◆ changes made to the allocation of marks with more emphasis on practical application
- ◆ cut-off scores removed from each section

This has resulted in a change to the marking scheme (reducing marks for selected-response questions and increasing marks for constructed-response questions). One reviewer indicated this could impact on candidates' grades, noting that literature findings suggest candidates tend to perform better on selected-response questions than constructed-response questions. That said, another reviewer indicated the changes had no significant impact on the general ability of candidates. Other comments regarding the revised unit indicated:

- ◆ it appears to equip candidates with more practical knowledge of subjects and can better prepare them for the workplace
- ◆ the introduction of internet study sources was perceived to benefit candidates

There have been no major changes to national teaching practice or the workplace in computing since 2013 that would impact on the graded unit results. However, it was suggested some changes to teaching practice would be needed to meet the requirements of the revised unit, particularly in relation to the application of knowledge. One reviewer suggested the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence has resulted in an increased focus in skills such as critical thinking, research, investigation, critical analysis, evaluation and reflection, particularly relevant in the new Curriculum for Excellence Highers available from 2015–16. It was suggested this improves candidates' independent study skills and benefits those who undertake the computing graded unit.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

Most aspects of the unit specification/standards and guidance were judged by the reviewers to be either no different or no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013. There were some differences in opinion in the areas of knowledge and/or skills and evidence requirements, of which two out of the three reviewers indicated were more demanding than in 2013.

Two of the reviewers indicated the sample of candidate evidence was too small to provide sufficient evidence of the overall judgement made. However, taking all the evidence into

account from the small sample, the level of demand was judged by the majority of reviewers to be no more demanding in 2013 and 2017. Reviewers provided the following comments:

- ◆ The marking scheme was simplified, resulting in differences in the scores of the 2013 and 2017 cohorts, and there was more reliance on the constructed-response questions to receive a grade.
- ◆ The 2017 unit specification assessed candidates on more challenging material than in 2013 due to the introduction of topics requiring more analysis, problem solving, software development etc.
- ◆ The guidance for designing the assessment states section two is mandatory, but candidates may choose not to attempt the question and may still pass the examination.

Assessment practice

No overall consensus was reached by the reviewers on assessment practice, with opinion on most aspects varying between being no different and being more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. There was, however, agreement that there were no differences between the two years in the areas of 'purpose/conditions resources', and 'other issues'. The main reasons provided for the ratings are consistent with those previously mentioned, eg the small sample size of six candidates, and changes in the marking scheme.

One reviewer compared candidate scores over both years against the changes that were made to the marking scheme for selected-response questions and constructed-response questions, and found:

- ◆ Candidates in 2013 did significantly better in the selected-response questions for which there were 30 marks available.
- ◆ Candidates did less well in the 2017 sample where the marks had reduced to 15.
- ◆ The reduction in selected-response questions impacts on candidates who have to address an additional 15 marks with constructed responses.

Despite the instruments of assessment being regarded as very different in the two years in terms of the number and style of questions, this was perceived to have very little impact on the level of the assessment. The exception to this was the integrated question in section 2, which was considered to be more challenging, as evidenced by candidates who achieved a good overall pass yet scored less well on this question.

The choice of questions in section 3 provides candidates with the opportunity to select topics where they are more confident, consequently offering potential to achieve a higher grade whilst being less prepared.

An issue was identified with the 2017 unit specification guidance which conflicts with the marking scheme.

Quality of evidence

On the whole there was consensus in this area with the reviewers indicating there were no changes to the quality of evidence in both years.

Judgement of evidence

The reviewers indicated the evidence was judged similarly over both years. One reviewer noted the standard of marking to be similar in both years.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment support pack, assessment instrument, marking and grading and the quality of the candidate evidence, Computing: Graded Unit 1 (H1J8 34) was judged by one reviewer to be no more demanding in 2017 than Computing: Graded Unit 1 (DH36 34) in 2013. The other two reviewers judged it to be more demanding and noted the following factors:

- ◆ an additional mandatory unit in the structure
- ◆ the new 15 marks compulsory integrative question
- ◆ the change to the marking scheme, particularly around selected responses and constructed responses in the multiple choice paper
- ◆ the inclusion of topics that require more analysis, problem solving software development and troubleshooting

Further comments indicated the level of responses of candidates within each grade was as expected, met the standards and had been marked appropriately.

Unit: Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (H48X 35) 2017 compared to Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (DN4P 35) 2013

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 unit (which was revised in 2012), and the previous version of the unit, which was still being used in 2013. The graded unit is project-based and, according to two of the reviewers, has remained almost identical to the previous version, with similar structure and content, despite changes in host awards and other units. However, the other reviewer indicated the units have changed considerably, noting that whilst this altered the focus of the work, the task remained broadly similar. The same reviewer mentioned changes to the Higher National Group Award in 2012 which impacted on the mandatory units and skills.

There have been major changes in simulation technology and virtual technology since 2013, which one reviewer noted have enabled evidence collection to be more straightforward for candidates. In the last five years there has been a move away from fixed installations to mobile computing resources and virtualised networks, which according to one reviewer, is not reflected in the work done by candidates or in the project-based graded units. However, it was recognised that whilst this may evolve, there are still many organisations who use the old technology and systems, so the knowledge and skills gained in the project remain relevant.

No major changes to national teaching practice in computing were reported. It was noted that teaching practice was unlikely to have deviated from the supervisory approach taken by tutors for the graded unit. A number of changes were noted to have impacted on different areas, including:

- ◆ The use of virtual and cloud technology in the workplace was considered to have impacted on the work-based projects, with evidence noted at the evaluation stage of one candidate's project report.
- ◆ There is an increased focus on improving the quality of report writing, referencing and checking candidate authenticity, all of which may have impacted positively on the quality of assessment evidence.
- ◆ FE colleges have tightened up on assessment and internal verification practices, resulting in increased levels of internal and external standardisation.
- ◆ There has been a change to the required skills to meet a recognised skills gap through an increase in networking and development roles.

One reviewer suggested the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence has resulted in an increased focus on the following skills:

- ◆ critical thinking
- ◆ research
- ◆ investigation
- ◆ critical analysis

- ◆ evaluation and reflection

This was noted to be particularly relevant in the new Curriculum for Excellence Highers available from 2015–16 and to improve independent study skills and benefit any candidates who undertake the current graded unit. However, it was highlighted that candidates in 2013 would not have had this experience.

Candidates now require an overall ability in computing; this includes the knowledge of providing technical support and server administration, where the use of open source is proving to be challenging for many candidates. From a sample of two assessments (2017) from one college, a reviewer identified the following: assessments were similar to the SQA produced assessment support pack however one presented a slightly more complex problem; both candidates undertook a project-based assignment on the same specification; both received similar support; and there was evidence of remediation for a candidate awarded a C grade. This was compared with a sample of nine candidates from 2013. Although difficult to generalise from a small sample, the reviewer indicated the changes had no discernible effect on the general ability of candidates.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

Overall the unit specification/standards and guidance were considered by all three reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013. This takes into account differences in opinion across all aspects of the unit specification/standards and guidance. Reasons provided by the reviewers included:

- ◆ Although fewer units were referred to in the 2017 graded unit than in 2013, this did not imply the unit was less demanding, when taking into account that most new units had increased to double credits.
- ◆ There were virtually no other changes in the unit specification, project stages, minimum evidence requirements, marking guidelines and marking distributions.
- ◆ Differences in the unit specifications have resulted in improvements in the level of detail being more relevant to the workplace. However, it was noted this has not altered the level of demand.

Some positive feedback was provided on the information for assessors being more comprehensive, and that the changes made to available marks and their focus was now clearer for candidates to understand.

Assessment practice

No overall consensus was reached across most aspects of assessment. Two of the reviewers indicated the assessment was no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. To this end they agreed:

- ◆ There was no difference in the coverage of standards and level of demand.
- ◆ The aspects of layout and presentation, clarity and fit for purpose, and provision of information were no more demanding.

This contrasted with the views of one reviewer, who rated these aspects as being more demanding in 2017, noting that the changes made to align the unit with current business practice placed greater demand on candidates.

One reviewer indicated the unit continues to be assessed using a project-based assignment for which a case study was the most popular approach and appeared to be broadly similar in both the 2017 and 2013 units. Further comments were made regarding the minimum evidence requirements, noted to be clearer for candidates for the planning and evaluation stages.

The Assessment Support Packs for both years were considered by one reviewer to be similar, in terms of complexity and knowledge and skills requirements, and having received only a very minor revision.

Quality of evidence

On the whole there was consensus in this area, with two reviewers indicating there were no changes to the quality of evidence in both years, and the other similarly considering the quality of evidence to be the same.

Judgement of evidence

Two reviewers indicated the evidence was judged similarly over both years. Correspondingly, the other reviewer considered there to be no difference. One reviewer noted that C grade candidates demonstrated consistent performance, exhibited through the submissions, which contained a large number of screenshots and pages.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment support pack, assessment instrument, marking and grading and the quality of the candidate evidence, Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (H48X 35) was judged by two reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 than Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (DN4P 35) in 2013. The third reviewer indicated it was slightly more demanding, expressing their opinion that the 2017 cohort had a slightly more demanding project, which could be due to technological developments since 2013.

This additional complexity was judged to have had no impact on candidate performance, which was noted to match the 2013 sample. According to one reviewer, assessment had remained similar over the two years in terms of problem solving and technical application, for which wording was clarified in the revised unit specification (H48X 35). The assessment instrument and quality of evidence were noted to be similar to 2013 and largely unaffected by minor changes.

Unit: Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34) 2017 compared to Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34) 2013

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 and 2013 unit. The unit was revised in 2015 with no significant changes made to the unit structure, principally some clarification of language to avert ambiguity in the unit purpose and outcomes. The reviewers provided the following comments on the unit:

- ◆ the new version of the unit covers all key requirements
- ◆ it meets the needs and demands of the industry
- ◆ it enhances the skills, knowledge and employability of candidates

The revised unit specification was considered to have taken into account the ways food and beverage provision has changed significantly in the industry in terms of innovation, modern techniques, services styles, customer feedback and social media. This was perceived to have increased the demands on candidates and on academic teams for maintaining currency. Integration of assessment between this unit and H198 34 Hospitality Supervision is available, and provides a more holistic approach to assessment and learning over both units. The overall teaching hours have been reduced due to a change to the length of semesters; as such there is now more emphasis on independent study, which one reviewer noted can affect the ability of those candidates who are not prepared to work independently.

There was a perception that a high number of the candidates already work in the industry, and that the recognition of prior learning can be accommodated by fast-tracking of written and practical assessments of those with relevant practical experience. It was noted most candidates are confident in the use of IT programmes and applications, which was perceived as an important requirement of the unit for employability.

Some challenges were highlighted with centres who are experiencing increasing issues affecting recruitment due to competition from universities. In addition, it was suggested there has been a considerable increase in the number of candidates requiring additional support due to:

- ◆ literacy issues
- ◆ many candidates affected by mental health issues
- ◆ issues retaining students whose first language is not English

One reviewer indicated these changes in candidates could cause major barriers to learning through poor attendance and the inability to engage and focus on achieving.

The unit requires the integration of practical classes, for which commercial training restaurants are providing an excellent realistic environment. However, it was suggested this resource needs to be balanced with academic requirements, and that its associated costs may put pressure on centres to make profit.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

Across all centres the unit specification/standards and guidance were found by all three reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 compared to 2013. There was general consensus that all aspects of the unit were either no more demanding, no different, or had not changed. The findings position well with a point made by two of the reviewers who indicated the revised unit aligns with current industry practices rather than changing the level of demand.

Assessment practice

The assessment was considered to be no more demanding on the candidate in 2017 compared to 2013. The reviewers commented that the unit:

- ◆ supports candidates to demonstrate currency with industry practices
- ◆ introduces the elements of investigating and reporting of findings on trends
- ◆ meets customer needs, expectations and legislative requirements

Quality of evidence

The reviewers considered quality of evidence to be the same in both years.

Judgement of evidence

The reviewers indicated there were no changes in the judgement of evidence over the two years. The SQA exemplar materials were used in all evidence presented, and assessment judgements were considered to be fair, accurate and appropriate.

Overall judgement

The unit Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34) was judged by all reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 than Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34) in 2013. This takes into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment support pack, assessment instrument, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence.

It was also repeatedly noted the changes made to the unit specification and assessment support packs between 2013 and 2017 did not result in any significant change to the level of demand. Rather, they simply brought the unit in line with current industry practices.

Unit: Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34) 2017 compared to Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34) 2013

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 and 2013 unit. The unit was introduced in 2004 and was revised in 2009 with minimal changes which had no impact on its aim, purpose, or focus. The Assessment Support Pack was last revised in 2010 but has not affected the ability of candidates to demonstrate their attainment. The following comments were noted:

- ◆ The overall teaching hours have been reduced due to a change to the length of semesters; as such, delivery and assessment have been condensed and there is now more emphasis in the unit on independent study.
- ◆ The shorter teaching sessions can impact on candidates' level of knowledge and understanding, and can affect the ability of candidates who are not prepared to work independently.
- ◆ The changes have had a positive impact on candidates by consolidating the knowledge and understanding of control systems in hospitality.

With the use of IT widespread within the industry, the unit depends on resources being made available for IT within the centres. Accordingly, IT units are included as standard in many centres offering the Higher National Hospitality Group Awards. The majority of candidates are confident in using IT programmes.

The timetabling of the unit varies across centres, but most centres ensure candidates are competent in the use of spreadsheets before undertaking this unit. Delivery of IT in the context of hospitality seems to improve the knowledge, understanding and skills of candidates rather than through business and maths, and is regarded as being of benefit to other units in the framework.

The reviewers noted a number of challenges:

- ◆ Maths and calculations need to be managed.
- ◆ Many candidates display a 'fear' of financial units,
- ◆ Not all candidates are familiar with figures.
- ◆ Centres are experiencing increasing issues affecting recruitment due to competition from universities.
- ◆ There has been a considerable increase in the number of candidates requiring additional support due to literacy issues.
- ◆ Many candidates are affected by mental health issues.
- ◆ There are issues with retaining students whose first language is not English.

It was suggested these challenges can cause major barriers to learning through poor attendance and lack of ability to engage and focus on achieving.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

Across all centres, all aspects of the unit specification/standards and guidance were considered by all three reviewers to be no different in 2017 in comparison to 2013, and therefore no more demanding on candidates. This was echoed in the following comments from reviewers:

- ◆ There were minimal changes.
- ◆ The same level of detail of financial and control systems used by the industry have been maintained.
- ◆ The level of demand on candidates was consistent.

Assessment practice

The vast majority of aspects of the assessment were considered to be no different, and therefore no more demanding on the candidate in 2017 in comparison to 2013. The comments from the reviewers reflect this, indicating the assessment tasks required by the unit are consistent and no more demanding. One reviewer rated the general approach in assessment instruments to be less demanding due to some centres having used the 2009 Assessment Support Pack requiring candidates to draw a pie chart, which was removed from the 2010 Assessment Support Pack.

Quality of evidence

The reviewers considered quality of evidence to be the same in both years.

Judgement of evidence

The reviewers indicated there were no changes in the judgement of evidence over both years. The SQA Assessment Support Pack was considered to have been used effectively in judging candidate evidence. One reviewer noted an issue where candidate achievement which was based on successfully completing tasks had resulted in marks not always being allocated.

Overall judgement

The unit, Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34) was judged by all reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. This takes account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment support pack, assessment instrument, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence. The reviewers noted that minor changes made to the unit and the assessment tasks have neither affected the purpose and aim of the unit nor compromised effectiveness, and that it remains fit for purpose and valid for the industry. The SQA assessment support packs were used in all assessments and were considered to have provided a consistent approach in both years, resulting in similar quality and judgment of evidence.

Unit: Hospitality Supervision (H198 34) 2017 compared to Hospitality Supervision (H198 34) 2013

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 and 2013 unit, which has been revised twice since 2012. The unit addresses previous industry concerns over the lack of supervisory skills, which has resulted in outcome 1 changing focus from a disciplinary approach towards staff management to better understanding the leadership and supportive role of front-line managers. The changes also support the opinion of one reviewer that the career aspiration of many candidates is to achieve a supervisory position early in their career.

The overall teaching hours were reduced due to a change to the length of semesters. This means delivery and assessment have been condensed, and there is now more emphasis in the unit on independent study. The reviewers noted that this could give rise to challenges:

- ◆ It can affect the ability of those candidates who are not prepared to work independently.
- ◆ Workplace changes could impact on candidates due to additional pressures placed on teaching staff.

It was suggested there is an increasing demand to operate commercially viable training restaurants and production kitchens. Candidates are provided with the opportunity to undertake and experience a realistic leadership supervisory role for the practical activities, and to maintain quality standards and meet the needs of customers.

The development of teams and the importance of team ethos in hospitality is perceived as the basis of the industry. One reviewer noted that many candidates have the basic skills but lack the supervisory skills and associated practices. This is why the unit improves knowledge and understanding of the role and responsibilities of the supervisor.

Confidence-building was viewed to be integral to this unit, which one reviewer suggested enhances the opportunities for candidates to achieve a supervisory position.

The reviewers noted a number of challenges:

- ◆ Centres are experiencing increasing issues affecting recruitment due to competition from universities.
- ◆ There has been a considerable increase in the number of candidates requiring additional support due to literacy issues.
- ◆ Many candidates are affected by mental health issues.
- ◆ There are issues retaining students whose first language is not English.

The unit continues to provide the opportunity for integrating assessment tasks with other units, which in the opinion of one reviewer reduces the assessment burden on candidates and academic staff, and provides extended practical skill implementation. The skills of confidence, communication, leadership and organisation relate to employability as well as hospitality

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

Across all centres, all aspects of the unit specification/standards and guidance were considered by all three reviewers to be either no different or no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013, with all reviewers agreeing that the overall unit was no more demanding than before. Two reviewers noted a change to the focus of outcome 1, which now provides a better understanding of supervisory skills, but both agreed it was no more demanding.

Assessment practice

There were some mixed results from the reviewers on the assessment practice, though most aspects were rated no different or no more demanding. The majority judged the assessment overall no more demanding on the candidate in 2017 in comparison to 2013. However, one reviewer indicated the assessment was less demanding in the following areas:

- ◆ the general approach to assessment
- ◆ the coverage of standards
- ◆ the information about the purpose, conditions and resources

The same reviewer highlighted changes to assessment which affect demand, marginally. These included: short response questions replacing mini case studies; additional criteria to be assessed in the SQA exemplar assessment; and changes to conditions of assessment. The SQA Assessment Support Packs were considered to be fit for purpose and to have provided consistency in the approaches to assessment across centres.

Quality of evidence

All reviewers indicated there were no changes to the quality of evidence in both years.

Judgement of evidence

All reviewers indicated there were no changes in the judgement of evidence over both years. Further comments suggested that:

- ◆ assessments were considered to be fair, accurate and appropriate
- ◆ feedback to candidates varied between centres from being comprehensive to being less detailed

Overall judgement

The unit, Hospitality Supervision (H198 34), was judged to be no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. This takes into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment support pack, assessment instrument, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence.

The reviewers noted that changes made to the unit have enhanced employability and improved the knowledge and skills aspects of supervisory units. Nevertheless, this has not compromised the standards or demand of the unit, or impacted on the quality of evidence.

Unit: Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35) 2017 compared to Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35) 2013

Note: this unit was reviewed by only two specialists.

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 and the 2013 unit. The structure had remained the same in the period with no changes identified. Accordingly, there were no apparent changes in teaching practice or delivery. Reviewers indicated that candidates were a similar mix over both years and, given that there were no changes, there was no apparent effect on their general ability.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

Overall the unit specification/standards and guidance were considered by the two reviewers to be no different, and therefore no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013. One minor amendment to a specification was mentioned by one reviewer, who indicated this provided clarification rather than a change and had not impacted on any candidate.

Assessment practice

All aspects of the assessment were considered by the reviewers to be either no different or no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013. This resulted in an overall judgement the assessment was no more demanding. Comments from the reviewers reflect this:

- ◆ One reviewer compared the traditional open-book essay used in 2013 with a centre-devised alternative assessment (the pamphlet) in 2017 (prior verification accepted).
- ◆ Whilst candidates might find the alternative assessment more interesting, and it would result in different forms of presentation, it would be no more or less demanding than in 2013.
- ◆ The 2017 instrument of assessment required the same level of work from candidates but was more engaging and meaningful.

Quality of evidence

On the whole there was consensus in this area, with both reviewers indicating there were no difference in the quality of evidence in both years.

Judgement of evidence

The reviewers indicated the judgement of evidence was no different in both years.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment specification, assessment instrument, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence, Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35) was judged by the reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. Reviewers indicated there was no significant change in standards, and demands from 2013 to 2017 were directly equivalent. Both reviewers referred to the limited range of evidence available for 2017 (one centre and two candidates), indicating this would not be representative of assessments across the sector.

Unit: Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34) 2017 compared to Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34) 2013

Note: this unit was reviewed by only two specialists.

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 and 2013 unit. The structure has remained exactly the same, and no changes were identified over the period. In terms of teaching practice, a reference was made to some centres delivering this unit alongside Psychology B and/or Graded Unit 1 to suit their timetable, but there is no impact on the performance of candidates. An anecdotal reference was made to candidates entering the Higher National Group Award with fewer relevant academic skills, which has an impact on essay-writing and academic reading as well as across the course.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

The unit specification/standards and guidance were considered by the two reviewers to be no different, and therefore no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013.

Assessment practice

Most aspects of the assessment were considered by the reviewers to be no different in 2017 in comparison to 2013, resulting in an overall judgement that the assessment was no more demanding. The following comments were noted:

- ◆ An instance where a centre devised a multiple choice assessment instrument was found to be less demanding by one reviewer.
- ◆ Outcomes 1 and 2 tend to produce similar questions.
- ◆ Centres are becoming more confident in understanding the assessment requirements and are moving away from simply replicating the exemplar to developing papers which reflect its style
- ◆ Remediation is being used appropriately across centres.
- ◆ The closed-book component for outcomes 1 and 2 are invaluable in helping to prepare candidates for Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 examination.

Quality of evidence

There was general consensus in this area, with both reviewers indicating there were no differences in the quality of evidence. The only exception to this was the earlier point about the centre-devised multiple choice paper (prior verified assessment) used in one centre, which was perceived to be of lower quality.

Judgement of evidence

The reviewers indicated the judgement of evidence was no different in the two years.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment specification, assessment instrument, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence, Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34) was judged by the reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. Reviewers indicated the unit remained the same throughout the period, and that most assessments were the traditional type, with the exception of the centre who introduced the multiple choice paper.

Unit: Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (FM67 34) 2017 compared to Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (DW90 34) 2013

Note: this unit was reviewed by only two specialists.

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 and 2013 unit. Although in 2013 the predecessor unit was used, reviewers found there was no significant difference, so the demands remained the same and no significant impact can be deduced. Some variation was noted across centres in the timing throughout the final teaching block, but this did not affect the end-of-course assessment. No changes were identified in teaching practice over the period. Candidate cohorts were noted to be similar in both years.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

The unit specification/standards and guidance were considered by the two reviewers to be no different, and therefore no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013. It was noted there may have been changes made to the discipline units which inform the questions in the assessment for this unit, but this was perceived to have had no significant change to the assessment or its demand.

Assessment practice

All aspects of the assessment were considered by both reviewers to be no different in 2017 in comparison to 2013, resulting in an overall judgement the assessment was no more demanding. A comment was made recognising the growing confidence of centres in delivering the unit.

Quality of evidence

Both reviewers agreed there were no differences in the quality of evidence.

Judgement of evidence

The reviewers indicated the judgement of evidence was similar in the two years, and therefore no more demanding.

Overall judgement

Taking into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment specification, assessment instrument, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence,

Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (FM67 34) in 2017 was judged by the reviewers to be no more demanding than Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (DW90 34) in 2013. One reviewer noted:

- ◆ Subtle changes were made to ensure clear annotating of awarded marks.
- ◆ The differences were observed between assessors within centres, as opposed to across centres in both years.

Unit: Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35) 2017 compared to Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35) 2013

Note: this unit was reviewed by only two specialists.

Educational context

The comparison being made is between the 2017 and 2013 unit which remained the same throughout the period. No changes were identified in the either teaching practice over the period. Candidate cohorts were similar in both years.

Unit specifications/standards and guidance

The unit specification/standards and guidance were considered by the two reviewers to be no different, and therefore no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013. It was noted the new unit came in July 2012, and that one centre from the sample used the predecessor unit (D2M 35) in 2013 with prior verified assessments submitted and approved prior to the change. However, the demands were found to be equivalent and there was no impact on candidates.

Assessment practice

All aspects of the assessment were considered by both reviewers to be either no different or no more demanding in 2017 in comparison to 2013, resulting in an overall judgement that the assessment was no more demanding. This takes into account the previous point regarding the sample which used the predecessor unit (D2M 35).

Quality of evidence

Both reviewers agreed that there were no difference in the quality of evidence.

Judgement of evidence

The reviewers indicated the judgement of evidence was similar in both years therefore no more demanding.

Overall judgement

The unit Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35) was judged by the reviewers to be no more demanding in 2017 than in 2013. This takes into account all aspects of the unit specification, assessment specification, assessment instrument, marking and grading, and the quality of the candidate evidence.

4 Summary of findings

The overall conclusions of the subject reviewers are summarised below.

Qualification	Outcome (2017 compared to 2013...)	Comment (on differences)
National Qualifications		
Advanced Higher Geography	no more demanding by two reviewers and more demanding by one reviewer	n/a
Advanced Higher Modern Studies	more demanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ increase in technical demand/higher-order skills for A pass ◆ more explicit application of knowledge and skills
Higher Chemistry	more demanding by one reviewer and no more demanding by other	◆ substantial differences in courses made comparison difficult
Higher Physics	no more demanding	◆ courses present different challenges
Higher French	no more demanding	n/a
National 5 Graphic Communication and Intermediate 2 Graphic Communication	no more demanding (two reviewers); more demanding (one reviewer)	◆ differences in content and assessment made comparison difficult
National 5 Physics and Intermediate 2 Physics	no more demanding (two reviewers); (slightly) more demanding (one reviewer)	n/a
National 5 Psychology and Intermediate 2 Psychology	more demanding by one reviewer and no more demanding by other	◆ aspects of the assessment considered more demanding

Qualification	Outcome (2017 compared to 2013...)	Comment (on differences)
Higher National Units		
Computing: Graded Unit 1 (H1J8 34) and Computing: Graded Unit 1 (DH36 34)	more demanding by two reviewers; no more demanding by one reviewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ an additional mandatory unit in the structure ◆ a new 15-marks compulsory integrative question ◆ change to the marking scheme ◆ the inclusion of topics that require more analysis, problem solving software development and troubleshooting
Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (H48X 35) and Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (DN4P 35)	no more demanding by two reviewers; slightly more demanding by one reviewer	the 2017 cohort had a slightly more demanding project which could be due to technological developments since 2013
Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34)	no more demanding	n/a
Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34)	no more demanding	n/a
Hospitality Supervision (H198 34)	no more demanding	n/a
Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35)	no more demanding	n/a
Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34) and Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34)	no more demanding	n/a
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (FM67 34) Social Sciences:	no more demanding	n/a

Qualification	Outcome (2017 compared to 2013...)	Comment (on differences)
Graded Unit 1 (DW90 34)		
Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35)	no more demanding	n/a

5 SQA's response

National Qualifications

Advanced Higher Geography: 2017 and 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that on balance the overall demand of Advanced Higher Geography in 2017 compared to 2013 was broadly similar.

Action

SQA introduced a revised AH Geography Course in 2016 as a result of the CfE review. The requirements for the revised course were agreed by practitioners as appropriate for this level of study.

The report refers to the change in mark distributions within the question paper. In 2013 there was a greater emphasis on map interpretation questions, which accounted for 50% of the marks available in the question paper; data handling accounted for 33% of the marks, and gathering and processing accounted for 17%. The 2017 paper has a more even distribution of marks available for map interpretation and data handling, with each accounting for 40% of the marks; the marks available for gathering and processing increased to 20%.

The report also refers to the map interpretation and data handling questions in the 2017 question paper being more demanding for C candidates and less demanding for A candidates. Post-examination analysis of candidate performance in the 2017 question paper indicated that some questions in the paper had been more demanding than intended and that this had a greater impact on C candidates; the grade boundaries were adjusted accordingly. There was no evidence that any questions were less demanding for A candidates.

The report refers to the change in marking criteria in the folio components of the course assessment in 2017. Post-examination analysis in 2017 found that some marks were not accessible to candidates as a result of the revised marking criteria. The grade boundaries were set to take account of this, and the issue was addressed for the 2018 diet of examinations.

Advanced Higher Modern Studies: 2017 and 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that Advanced Higher Modern Studies 2017 was more demanding than Advanced Higher Studies 2013.

Action

We note that the reviewers concluded that the 2017 Advanced Higher Modern Studies question paper was judged to be more demanding than in 2013. Under CfE, SQA introduced a revised Advanced Higher Modern Studies course in 2016 which strengthened the course assessment, and which was agreed as being appropriate for this SCQF level by experienced practitioners.

The overall A–C pass rate in 2013 was 92.3%, higher than average for an Advanced Higher course. The 2017 pass rate moved closer to average and in addition, the National Rating, which compares levels of challenge across courses, moved to a more equitable position.

We note the reference to greater specification of course content in 2013 and we will look to address this during the current review of Advanced Higher Modern Studies.

We will also discuss and consider the findings of this monitoring standards work during the current review.

Higher Chemistry: 2017 and 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that on balance the overall demand of Advanced Higher Chemistry in 2017 compared to 2013 was broadly similar.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Higher Physics: 2017 and 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that the overall demand of Higher Physics in 2017 compared to 2013 was similar.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Higher French: 2017 and 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that the overall demand of Higher French in 2017 compared to 2013 was similar.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

National 5 Graphic Communication 2017 and Intermediate 2 Graphic Communication 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that on balance the overall demand of National 5 Graphic Communication in 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Graphic Communication in 2013 was broadly similar.

Action

It was noted that differences in content and assessment made comparison difficult.

Advances in CAD software and the consequence of this for possible progression paths mean that there have been huge changes from Intermediate 2 to National 5. For example, a draughtsman/architect using a drawing board is a thing of the past, and our courses need to recognise this and provide for a different progression path such as a draughtsman/architect using intuitive software packages.

Whilst manual drawing skills are no longer assessed, and there is no obligation for them to be taught, a number of centres will still teach this area of content early in the course as it gives a practical understanding of orthographic projection and related views (which the CAD software now does for candidates), which candidates can then apply to CAD work.

National 5 Physics 2017 and Intermediate 2 Physics 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that the overall demand of National 5 Physics in 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Physics in 2013 was similar.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

National 5 Psychology 2017 and Intermediate 2 Psychology 2013

Conclusion

It was judged that on balance the overall demand of National 5 Psychology in 2017 compared to Intermediate 2 Psychology in 2013 was similar.

Action

Two different courses are being compared in this report: Intermediate 2 Psychology and National 5 Psychology. National 5 Psychology was developed as part of the CfE review. As a result, and as per the ethos of CfE, the course has a greater emphasis on skills than the previous Psychology Course at this level. This greater emphasis on skills in the course assessment is referred to in the report.

The report also refers to the use of command words in assessments. In line with other subjects, care was taken when developing assessments for National 5 Psychology to ensure

that command words are used consistently and that candidates gain marks for responding appropriately to the command word used in a question.

The requirements of National 5 Psychology, including the mandatory topics, were agreed by practitioners as appropriate for this level of study. There has been no evidence from verification or post-examination analysis to suggest that 'Sleep and Dreams' is too demanding for this level of course, but there was evidence that the topic was too content heavy. This was addressed for the 2018 diet of examinations as part of the recent revision of National Qualifications.

The report refers to the increased number of schools having an impact on the marks available in the ethics section of the assignment. The type of centre had no impact on the structure of the assignment, so it is difficult to understand the basis on which this statement was made. If it is referring to marks attained rather than marks available, post-examination evidence indicates that most ethical breaches are made by college candidates, so it is college candidates who are less able to access the marks in this section.

Attainment figures for 2017 indicate more A grades than 2013, and a similar number of B grades. However, the overall A–C pass rate is lower, and the number of No Awards is greater. In 2013 an Intermediate 1 qualification in Psychology was available for candidates, but in 2017 there was no National 4 Psychology Course. This may account for the attainment statistics. Certainly, feedback from markers in 2017 indicated that some candidates were not ready for a course at National 5 level.

Higher National Units

Computing: Graded Unit 1 (H1J8 34) 2017 and Computing: Graded Unit 1 (DH36 34) 2013

Conclusion

On balance, unit H1J8 34 in 2017 was judged to be more demanding than unit DH36 34 in 2013.

Action

A review is currently underway.

Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (H48X 35) 2017 and Computing: Technical Support: Graded Unit 2 (DN4P 35) 2013

Conclusion

On balance unit H48X 35 in 2017 and unit DNP 35 in 2013 were judged to be similar in demand.

Action

A review is currently underway.

Food and Beverage Service (DL3G 34): 2017 and 2013**Conclusion**

It was judged that the assessment demand of the unit in 2017 and in 2013 was the same.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Hospitality: Financial and Control Systems (DL3T 34): 2017 and 2013**Conclusion**

It was judged that the assessment demand of the unit in 2017 and in 2013 was the same.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Hospitality Supervision (H198 34): 2017 and 2013**Conclusion**

It was judged that the assessment demand of the unit in 2017 and in 2013 was the same.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Social Science: Research Issues (FM0J 35): 2017 and 2013**Conclusion**

It was judged that the assessment demand of the unit in 2017 and in 2013 was the same.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Social Science: Research and Methodology (FM66 34): 2017 and 2013**Conclusion**

It was judged that the assessment demand of the unit in 2017 and in 2013 was the same.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (FM67 34) 2017 and Social Sciences: Graded Unit 1 (DW90 34) 2013**Conclusion**

It was judged that unit FM67 34 in 2017 and unit DW90 34 in 2013 were similar in demand.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.

Social Sciences: Graded Unit 3 (FM6A 35): 2017 and 2013**Conclusion**

It was judged that the assessment demand of the unit in 2017 and in 2013 was the same.

Action

No action is necessary as the standard remained constant.