National Qualifications
Subject Update Autumn 2018

Computing Science

The Qualifications Team

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Diet 2018

Course reports

Please read the annual course reports for Computing Science. We produce these reports following the exam diet and they provide information on how candidates performed in course assessment for National Qualifications.

The course reports include a summary of areas candidates performed well in and areas candidates found demanding. They also contain advice on preparing future candidates and statistical data relating to grade boundaries. Course reports are available from the Computing Science subject pages of our website.

Coursework

Conditions of assessment for coursework

To ensure fairness for all candidates, it is essential that you apply the specified assessment conditions for coursework. During the 2018 diet, we saw a number of incidences of potential malpractice, where some centres had not followed the required conditions of assessment for the National 5 assignment.

Please ensure you refer to the following documents when conducting coursework with your candidates. These documents detail the specific conditions of assessment that must be applied for each assessment:

- course specification (National 5 and Higher)
- course assessment specification (Advanced Higher)
- coursework assessment task

You must also refer to our [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#), which provides important information on the time and volume of assessment, the use of resources, and the supervision, control and authentication of assessment — including examples.

National 5 and Higher

In August 2018 we published the specimen coursework assessment task for National 5 and Higher Computing Science with updated instructions for teachers and lecturers, and for candidates, to provide consistent instructions for both National 5 and Higher Computing Science specimen coursework assessment tasks.

The 'Instructions for teachers and lecturers' section of the National 5 and Higher specimen coursework assessment tasks has been updated based on questions we received about the 2018 National 5 task and feedback from markers. Some clarifications and key points to highlight are:

- The duration of the assessment must not exceed 8 hours. The 8 hours can be structured in any way that suits the centre's local circumstances.
- There is no issue with giving candidates practice tasks or activities as a means of assignment preparation (much as a candidate may work through past papers ahead of the question paper), but teachers and lecturers must ensure that any practice tasks or activities are not designed specifically to inform candidates of the content of the assignment or to provide them with code that can be used for the assignment.
- There is no requirement to print evidence single-sided or in colour. However, candidates should be advised to check that code in their printouts is legible. This is particularly important where screenshots are pasted into a document as the code may be too small to read.
- Teachers and lecturers should make sure candidates understand the evidence required for the task and how to gather this. They should also encourage candidates to use the evidence checklist provided in order to ensure that all completed work has been printed and submitted to SQA.
- The task should not be adapted by centres in any way that changes the meaning or provides candidates with a structure or support. This includes centre-devised templates which break tasks down into smaller sections and prompt candidates to insert evidence.

Advanced Higher

Centres delivering the Advanced Higher course this session should be aware that candidate evidence must be submitted to SQA for external marking.

Please refer to the [Guidance on the Advanced Higher Computing Science Project for session 2018-19](#) document on the Advanced Higher subject page under the 'Coursework' tab.

Submitting coursework

Please ensure your candidates use the current, published coursework assessment tasks.

The session 2018–19 National 5 and Higher assignments will be published on SQA's secure website in January 2019.

The 2018–19 uplift dates are:

- National 5 assignment   21 March 2019
- Higher assignment   28 March 2019
- Advanced Higher assignment   24 April 2019

Please liaise with your SQA co-ordinator to ensure that all materials are prepared in time for uplift.

Higher

Online resources to help you prepare for Higher assessment

As part of our Understanding Standards programme, we are providing a range of online resources to help you develop your understanding of the standards required in the revised course assessments for Higher. We have tailored this to each subject. Resources for Computing Science include:

- **Candidate evidence and commentaries** — examples of candidate assessment evidence for the specimen assignment with a written commentary, to explain why the evidence has or has not met the required standards for the revised assessment.
- **Course assessment events** — CPD workshops that made use of teaching resources for the web design and development, and database design and development areas of the course. All materials from these workshops are now available.

You can access Understanding Standards materials via the 'Understanding Standards' tab on the Higher subject page. Find out more about the Understanding Standards programme at www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards.

Other resources to support Higher Computing Science

Education Scotland — teaching resources
We have worked in partnership with Education Scotland to identify and produce teaching resources to support the revised Higher course.

Details of the available materials can be found in the 'Course support notes' section of the course specification. All materials are available via Glow.

Course support notes resources
The web and database files that the course support notes appendices are based on are available on the Higher Computing Science subject page from the 'Course support' section.

Past paper questions
We have produced a document which lists questions from past papers that would be suitable for the revised Higher course content. This may help you to source questions for revision or for prelims. The document is available from the 'Course support' section of the Higher Computing Science subject page.

Units that were previously part of the Higher course

The units that were previously part of the Higher course are now available as freestanding units at SCQF level 6. These units no longer contribute to the Higher course.

We have removed references to Higher course from the freestanding unit specifications, which are available from the freestanding units web page for each subject. There is a link to the freestanding units page from the 'see also' section on the subject landing page.

Advanced Higher

Changes to assessment in Advanced Higher course from session 2019–20

We will remove units and unit assessments from the Advanced Higher course for session 2019–20. We have started our review of the Advanced Higher course assessments and we will work closely with our National Qualifications Support Team (NQST) to identify the appropriate changes. Our NQST includes teachers and lecturers who currently deliver National Courses and representatives of professional associations.

Advanced Higher materials will be published as follows:

End of April 2019	Revised Advanced Higher course specification
End of May to end of September 2019	Course support notes Revised specimen question paper Revised coursework assessment task

We will provide further information about the changes to Advanced Higher assessment by the end of January 2019.

Further information and guidance

National 5 Understanding Standards events

We are hosting the following three Understanding Standards events for the National 5 course in November:

- 13 November 2018   Dunblane
- 15 November 2018   Edinburgh
- 16 November 2018   Glasgow

These events will focus on the revised National 5 course assessment, using candidate evidence from the 2018 diet to exemplify standards for both the question paper and assignment. It also provides a great opportunity for practitioners to come together and network with colleagues and to have their questions answered by senior SQA appointees. To book a place, please use our online events booking system at https://athena.sqameet.net

Updated common questions (including revised National 5 and Higher)

We have updated our Common Questions document to incorporate the National 5 Q&A document and some of the common questions we have been asked about the revised Higher course.

This is a single document which answers the common questions about Computing Science from National 3 to Advanced Higher, including a section on the National 5 and Higher assignment. It can be found on the [subject page](#).

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