

Biology and Human Biology

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Diet 2019

Changes to documents following Diet 2019

National 5 and Higher coursework

Owing to the high volume of malpractice cases across the sciences relating to the assignments, we have updated the course specifications and the coursework assessment task documents for National 5 Biology, Higher Biology, and Higher Human Biology, for session 2019–20 onwards, to address the issues raised. To ensure fairness for all candidates, it is essential that centres apply the specified assessment conditions for coursework.

For the majority of centres, there will be little or no change to previous practice, since most centres were already adhering to the conditions laid down in the coursework assessment task.

Range of assignment topics

The common practice in most centres for biology is for candidates to choose from a range of topics to be investigated, however, it is acceptable for the same general topic to be investigated in a class and across classes. Teachers and lecturers must ensure that a variety of experiments are carried out, or a variety of independent variables are investigated, or both.

While it was clear that most centres were offering candidates a choice of topic to investigate, it was evident that a minority of centres were not following the information in the coursework assessment task, and were allowing candidates to choose topics that were not suitable for the level or not offering any candidate choice at all.

In some cases, not only had all candidates investigated the same independent variable within a topic but they also had identical range and interval for the independent variable. In addition, lack of candidate choice was leading to candidates including the same data from an internet/literature source in their reports.

We have updated and clarified the assessment guidance in the coursework assessment tasks in relation to the research and report stage of the assignment. A summary of these updates is provided below.

Research stage

Choosing the topic

Teachers and lecturers must minimise the number of candidates investigating the same topic within a class.

Experimental research

If instructions for the experimental procedure are supplied these must only be a basic list of instructions.

If candidates are working in a small group it is acceptable for them to share experimental data within the small group, but they cannot share this data with other individuals or across groups.

Internet/literature research

The internet/literature research must be the work of the individual candidate; they cannot work in a group to carry out this research.

In circumstances where there is difficulty in locating secondary data/information, teachers and lecturers may provide candidates with a wide list of URLs and/or a wide range of books and/or journals.

Only where internet access is an issue, can teachers and lecturers provide candidates with a printed copy of the full content of all URLs given in the list.

Report stage

Where a candidate takes a table with raw data into the report stage this must not have additional blank or pre-populated columns for mean and derived values.

Data/information taken from the internet or literature must not include sample calculations.

Extracts chosen to assist with writing about the underlying biology during the report stage must be:

- ◆ chosen by the candidate — they must select what information to extract
- ◆ verbatim — it must be a direct copy, which can be a printout, photocopy or handwritten (and word for word)
- ◆ from an internet/literature source — not from centre-devised course material/class notes. Candidate notes of any description are not permitted

- ◆ checked by the teacher or lecturer to ensure that it is an extract (unannotated), and not notes or a draft

There is no size limit on an extract; however, it must be an extract and not the full document.

Applying these updates should create a climate in which candidates can produce original work within the conditions of assessment.

Please see the history of changes tables in the coursework assessment tasks for further details. The documents are available on the relevant subject pages of our website.

National 5 Biology Course Specification

We have made a minor correction to the phrasing of a description in key area 2.1b in the course support notes section of the National 5 Biology Course Specification.

Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology Course Specifications

We have made a minor amendment to the Higher course specifications to address an inconsistency in the current wording. A reference to ions has been added to key area 3.1b in the course support notes section of the Higher Biology Course Specification, and to key area 1.8 in the course support notes section of the Higher Human Biology Course Specification.

Please see the history of changes tables in the course specifications for further details. The documents are available on the relevant subject pages of our website.

Changes to documents following Diet 2020

National 5 and Higher Coursework

Important notice: from session 2020–21 onwards, teachers and lecturers **must not** provide candidates with a list of sources for their internet/literature research or printed copies of the content of these sources.

Further information on updates to the coursework assessment task documents for National 5 and Higher will be communicated to centres in due course.

Course reports

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

Course reports include a summary of areas candidates performed well in and areas candidates found demanding. They also contain advice on preparing candidates for future assessment, and statistical data relating to grade boundaries. Course reports are available from the subject pages of our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects.

Information and guidance

Higher Understanding Standards materials

We have recently published four exemplar Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology assignments with associated commentaries.

You can access Understanding Standards materials via the 'Understanding Standards' tab on the subject pages of our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects.

Exemplar material for the Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology question papers will be published by the end of November.

External verification of units

The purpose of external verification is to approve a centre's assessment approach and assessment judgements. To allow external verifiers to make an informed decision, sufficient evidence to demonstrate a centre's assessment approach and assessment judgements must be provided.

Centres must indicate whether evidence is complete or interim on the candidate evidence flyleaf.

If a unit is not fully completed at the time of external verification, centres may submit whatever assessed candidates' evidence is available, provided that it is sufficient to meet the requirements. This would be deemed as interim evidence.

Complete evidence must include evidence for both outcome 1 and outcome 2.

In 2019, a single qualification verification summary report replaced the verification key messages. The Biology Qualification Verification Summary Report for session 2018–19 was published on the relevant [subject pages](#) in June 2019.

Freestanding units at SCQF level 5

New codes for freestanding units at SCQF level 5 have been added to the relevant unit specifications and unit assessment support packs.

Recognising Positive Achievement

Recognising Positive Achievement is no longer available from this session.

We have removed guidance from the SCQF level 5 unit specifications about adapting the unit assessment support packs for the specific purpose of recognising positive achievement. Recognising positive achievement arrangements, from National 5 to National 4, are no longer available from this session.

As the freestanding units at SCQF level 5 no longer contribute to the National 5 Biology course, they will not be subject to the same updates as the course documents. The content of the units is based on the previous National 5 Biology course content and does not reflect

the revisions to the course. When delivering a freestanding unit at SCQF level 5, it is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all of the content of the key areas pertaining to that unit are covered.

All of the assessments in the National 5 unit assessment support packs are valid for the corresponding freestanding SCQF level 5 units. The package 1, 2 and portfolio unit assessment support packs have been recoded to match the freestanding SCQF level 5 unit codes. The outcome 2, assessment activity 2 tests have also been recoded to match the freestanding unit codes. For re-assessment purposes, unit assessment support package 2 (combined approach) cannot be used in combination with the outcome 2, assessment activity 2 tests, due to similarities with the questions.

Freestanding units at SCQF levels 6

New codes for freestanding units at SCQF levels 6 have been added to the relevant unit specifications.

All of the assessments in the Higher unit assessment support packs are valid for the corresponding freestanding SCQF level 6 units. The package 1, 2 and portfolio packs have been recoded to match the freestanding SCQF 6 unit codes. The outcome 2, assessment activity 2 tests will be recoded to match the unit specification codes in due course. For re-assessment purposes, unit assessment support package 2 (combined approach) cannot be used in combination with the outcome 2, assessment activity 2 tests, due to similarities with the questions.

Course content change comparison documents

The course content change comparison documents for National 5 Biology, Higher Biology, and Higher Human Biology have been removed from the subject pages of our website.

Recruitment opportunities for 2020

We would like to thank all appointees who worked with us in session 2018–19.

We are now accepting marker applications from teaching professionals to contribute to the 2020 exam diet. If you are interested in joining us as a marker, please visit the [appointee opportunities section of our website](#), where you will find a marker advert for all subjects and levels with details of the role.

Becoming a marker helps to increase your awareness of the demands of course assessment and provides excellent professional and personal development.

Please check [the appointees section of our website](#) regularly for other appointee opportunities that may be of interest to you.

Advanced Higher

Online resources to help you prepare for Advanced Higher assessment

As part of our Understanding Standards programme, we are providing a range of supportive resources to help you develop your understanding of the standards required in the revised course assessments for Advanced Higher. This may include audio presentations, published candidate evidence and commentary materials, and webinar recordings, which we have tailored to meet the needs of each subject.

You can access Understanding Standards materials via the 'Understanding Standards' tab on the [subject pages](#) of our website.

Advanced Higher Understanding Standards events

We are running a series of Understanding Standards events in 2019 for Advanced Higher Biology. The first event took place in Aberdeen on 27 September. Further events are scheduled for 31 October in Glasgow and 11 November in Edinburgh. The Glasgow and Edinburgh events are fully booked, however we will publish the materials from these events on the Advanced Higher Biology section of the Understanding Standards website, following the last event.

You can access Understanding Standards materials via the 'Understanding Standards' tab on the subject pages of our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects

Advanced Higher Biology twilight sessions

We are working in partnership with Glasgow University to deliver twilight sessions to support the delivery of Advanced Higher Biology.

A session took place in May 2019 to support the delivery of 'Selection' from the topic of Organisms and Evolution. The materials used at that event are free to be used in the teaching of the course and are available on the [subject pages](#) of our website.

A second twilight session took place on 22 October 2019, on the topic of Immunology. The presentations and supporting notes will be available on the Advanced Higher [subject page](#) of our website in due course.

Units that were previously part of the Advanced Higher courses

The units that were previously part of the Advanced Higher courses are now available as freestanding units at SCQF level 7. These units no longer contribute to the Advanced Higher courses. We have removed references to Advanced Higher courses 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](#).

Centres delivering the Advanced Higher Biology **course** from session 2019–20 must deliver the revised course content. Candidates will be assessed through the course assessment only.

Assessments for freestanding SCQF level 7 units

The revised Advanced Higher course does not contain units. The unit assessment support (UAS) packs are **not** affected by the recent changes to the content of the Advanced Higher course and they will **not** be revised. The previous course content is assessed in the UAS packs.

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