

Biology, Human Biology and Science



This update contains information on any recent updates to documents for your subject along with further information and guidance.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jonathan Gillies
Qualifications Manager



The Qualifications Team

Jonathan Gillies

Qualifications Manager

Paula Greenwood

Qualifications Officer

Lynn Wallwork

Qualifications Co-ordinator

Jackie Breakenridge

Subject Implementation Manager

Changes to documents in August and September

The following necessary changes have been identified as a result of the exam diet and grade boundary meetings which took place during the summer months.

National 5

Coursework: General Assessment Information; Coursework Assessment Task

The National 5 Biology assignment marking instructions were updated during the exam diet. The instructions for candidates were also updated to reflect these changes. The changes were made to provide further clarity to assist markers.

Higher

Coursework: General Assessment Information; Coursework Assessment Task

The Higher Biology and Higher Human Biology assignment marking instructions were updated during the exam diet. The instructions for candidates were also updated to reflect these changes. The changes were made to provide further clarity to assist markers.

Advanced Higher

Coursework: General Assessment Information; Project Assessment Task

The Advanced Higher Biology project marking instructions were updated during the exam diet. The instructions for candidates were also updated to reflect these changes. The changes were made to provide further clarity to assist markers and to clarify assessment conditions for candidates.

The Notification of Changes spreadsheet has been updated to reflect the latest changes to documents. You can view the spreadsheet at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjectchanges

Further information and guidance

Changes to National Courses

In September 2016, the Deputy First Minister announced that unit assessments will be removed from National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. These changes will be implemented over a three-year period and we have started to review how each course is assessed.

[Find out more about the changes to National Courses.](#)

What's next for Subject Review Reports?

Following the Scottish Government decision to make changes to unit assessment in National Courses, we are reviewing current activities with regard to the Subject Review Reports and associated guidance notes.

Completed review report actions for 2016–17 will remain. Actions for 2017–18 onwards may be cancelled or rescheduled in light of the work associated with the revisions to National Courses, especially those relating to unit assessments.

Further information and subject-specific updates will continue to be communicated via Centre News and the subject web pages.

Guidance notes

- [National 3 Biology: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)
- [National 4 Biology: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)
- [National 5 Biology: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)
- [Higher Biology: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)
- [Advanced Higher Biology: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)
- [Higher Human Biology: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)
- [National 3 Science: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)
- [National 4 Science: Understanding the next steps for session 2016–17](#)

These documents outline the specific actions to take or points to be aware of when carrying out assessments with your candidates in session 2016–17.

Removal of exemplar question papers

Exemplar question papers were created as a revision resource for learners during the implementation of the new Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications. As we now have two years' worth of past papers for new Higher as well as a specimen question paper for each subject with an exam, the exemplar question papers will be removed from our website in the week commencing 24 October 2016. Associated guidance documents and guidance on the use of past paper questions documents will also be removed at this time.

The Advanced Higher exemplar question papers and associated guidance will remain for session 2016–17 and will be removed from the website in July 2017.

Course Reports

We strongly recommend that you read the annual Course Reports for the subject(s) and levels you are teaching. These reports are produced following the annual diet of exams and are now available. The reports provide informed and valuable commentary on the assessment for each component in the course, and include a summary of:

- candidate performance in the course assessment
- areas in which candidates performed well
- areas which candidates found demanding

The reports also contain advice on preparing future candidates, and statistical data relating to grade boundaries. Course Reports are available from the relevant subject pages of our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects

Verification Key Messages

Key messages from rounds 1 and 2 of verification in session 2015–16 are available on the relevant subject pages of our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects. You can access them from the 'Verification and Course Reports' tab.

Looking ahead to session 2016–17

National Qualification Support Team

Ahead of the autumn meeting of the Biology and Science National Qualification Support Teams (NQSTs) we would like to add to the existing membership.

NQSTs are subject-specific stakeholder consultation groups that feed back to SQA on the internal and external assessment of National Qualifications.

These groups communicate via secure online discussion forums as well as an annual face-to-face meeting.

For more information and to express an interest in joining the team, visit www.sqa.org.uk/nqst

Marker recruitment opportunities for 2017

We are now accepting marker applications from teaching professionals to contribute to the 2017 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 www.sqa.org.uk/appointees regularly for other appointee opportunities which may be of interest to you.

Understanding Standards programme

Our Understanding Standards programme will continue in the coming session and will include subject-specific course events and the publication of further Understanding Standards materials.

Understanding Standards course events 2016–17

We are running a programme of subject-specific Understanding Standards events from October 2016 until January 2017. The majority of these events will focus on the standards required for course assessment at Advanced Higher.

For more information and to book your place, visit www.sqa.org.uk/ngevents. Please note that for each subject there is a maximum of one place per centre.

Understanding Standards materials

Understanding Standards materials contain real examples of candidate evidence from course and unit assessments, along with a commentary that explains why the evidence has or has not met the assessment standards. These materials are a really useful resource for helping you to strengthen your understanding of the standards required for assessment.

We will continue to publish new Understanding Standards materials throughout the coming session and you can access them from the following locations:

SQA Understanding Standards website (www.understandingstandards.org.uk)	SQA Secure website (https://secure.sqa.org.uk)
Candidate evidence and commentaries for externally assessed components of course assessment (including question papers).	Candidate evidence and commentaries for unit assessment and internally assessed components of course assessment.

You can arrange access to our secure website through your SQA co-ordinator. Any materials downloaded from our secure website must be stored securely and treated as confidential.

Extra support to help you deliver your courses

Continuing professional development (CPD)

We will continue to offer subject-specific CPD support at a local authority, independent school or college level, subject to request. This involves an experienced SQA appointee providing advice and guidance on any areas of concern that are not already addressed by the Understanding Standards programme.

Please note that CPD requests should be made by the appropriate representative from the local authority, independent school or college. For each request we will agree with the representative the content to be covered and the most appropriate way to deliver the support, eg in person, by webinar or by video conference/teleconference.

CPD requests can be made at www.sqa.org.uk/cpdfom

Stay informed

Subscribe to Centre News

Our weekly Centre News newsletter contains the latest news and updates for centres delivering SQA qualifications. It also includes subject-specific news and a regular reminder of key dates during the session. To subscribe, visit <http://mailer.sqa.org.uk>

Visit your subject pages

Make sure you regularly visit your subject pages, where you can access documents and assessment support materials for your courses, Verification Key Messages and information on coursework. You will also find the latest news updates for your courses in the 'Updates and announcements' section. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects

Visit your subject blog

Make sure you regularly visit your subject blog, where you can access all of the latest news and information relating to the work that we do. Visit blogs.sqa.org.uk/lifesciences/

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Contact us

For centre enquiries, please contact our Customer Support Team:

Tel: 0303 333 0330

Fax: 0345 213 5000

E-mail: mycentre@sqa.org.uk
