



**National Qualifications 2019**  
**Qualification Verification Summary Report**  
**Scottish Studies: Scotland in**  
**Focus**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

# National Qualifications Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

H3YP 43	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 3)
H3YP 44	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 4)
H3YP 45	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 5)
H3YP 46	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 6)

## General comments

Verification visits were made to nine centres between February and May of 2019. The majority of these centres demonstrated understanding of the national standard.

Two of the centres were accepted for verification after further evidence of the centre's assessment judgements had been provided. One centre was accepted for verification after further candidate evidence had been provided; this centre was willing to re-assess candidates after work had been done to support candidates to reach the required standard.

Verification samples across centres included candidate evidence from levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. A number of candidates were judged to have achieved a level which had not yet, in fact, been achieved. The centres were advised to ensure candidates were focused on establishing clear aims which showed how the candidates were broadening their knowledge of Scotland, and that completed work reflected these aims in sufficient detail for the candidates' level. Centres are advised to continue to focus on ensuring that candidates have not relied too heavily on source material and that information is not lifted from sources without reinterpretation.

Visiting verification enhances the verification process; dialogue with centre staff was positive and allowed assessment decisions to be confirmed. Qualification verifiers saw a variety of activities, and also noted a few occasions where outdoor learning was being used effectively, and also where skills for work were being developed well within the framework of Scottish Studies. Verifiers found that candidates were, in the main, presented at the correct level. Centre staff used the verification visits to seek advice on levels, content and delivery of their courses as well as on presentation and national standards.

Visiting verifiers advised centres to use and record dialogue with candidates to support assessment decisions, particularly when candidates have given oral presentations, and to remember that the main purpose of the Scotland in Focus unit is to broaden learners' knowledge of Scotland

## **Course arrangements, unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials**

In general, centres were using a full range of appropriate SQA documentation to support candidates to reach the national standard. Some centres were not aware of exemplification of standards on the Understanding Standards section of SQA Secure and were directed to this to assist in quality assurance. Most centres were using unit assessment support packs (ASPs) available on SQA Secure. Centres are reminded that SQA offers a prior verification service for centres who devise their own assessment materials.

### **Evidence requirements**

Evidence requirements were understood by most centres. Use of the candidate and assessor checklists is recommended as an effective way to document assessment decisions and ensure assessment standards are being met. Comments added to assessor checklists proved to be particularly helpful to verifiers; these are not mandatory, but significantly add to our understanding of the assessment of individual candidate evidence. Centres are reminded that clear aims are required for all candidates, and specific, detailed information about sources and resources is also required.

### **Administration of assessments**

Centres had judged candidate evidence to the national standard effectively in most cases. Visiting verification appeared to be helpful in terms of confirming that the correct decisions had been taken, as well as allowing centre staff to adjust levels, in some cases, following discussion. Evidence of internal verification was in place in some centres. In some centres, internal verifications systems were highly effective: there was evidence of clear discussion of the standards and of the whole moderation process.

## Areas of good practice

- ◆ Some centres were using published, or amended, candidate and assessor checklists with detailed comments. This was enhanced by dialogue with staff during visits, which clarified the reasons behind assessment decisions. There was evidence of good working practices and communication in some centres.
- ◆ Some centres used either a candidate brief or an introductory set of lessons to ensure candidates knew what was expected of them. In addition, centres were often using dialogue with candidates to tailor the activity to their specific skills.
- ◆ In several centres, the award was offered as an alternative pathway for learners and it was clear that centres were working collaboratively to ensure the course was inclusive, supportive and engaging for all learners. Strategies to include pupil inclusion have been used, including: mind mapping, poster work and oral responses.
- ◆ In most centres, it was evident that candidates had a wide choice for their Scotland in Focus units and had clearly made use of the personalisation and choice the course allows. There was an impressive range of topics, which had allowed candidates to demonstrate that they had broadened their knowledge of Scotland: Scottish culture, language, traditions, history, sport, wildlife, etc. There was evidence of innovative practice, with candidates being introduced to the ideas of culture, national identity and stereotypes; sectarianism; and also with elements of Scottish history, such as the Scottish Wars of Independence.
- ◆ Several centres demonstrated good practice in learning and teaching approaches, including highlighting and promoting the skills the award develops during assemblies, and delivering a block of introductory lessons which supported candidates in applying personalisation and choice, evidenced by the broad range of topics previously mentioned. Active learning approaches were also evident in most centres.
- ◆ Some schools had provided specific guidelines and resources to support pupils in avoidance of 'lifting' source material.
- ◆ Some centres included a focus on Skills for Learning. Individuals were pursuing their own learning and being provided opportunities to: develop thinking skills (remembering, understanding, applying and creating); apply skills, use technology, work independently and develop presentation skills.
- ◆ Some centres used outdoor learning experiences connected with the award. These provided excellent opportunities for skills development and also for placing their studies in a real-life context.
- ◆ Some centres are actively considering how to use other units from across the curriculum to provide further breadth of knowledge and to develop a wider range of skills, including practical skills.
- ◆ Dialogue between assessors involved in assessing/verifying often revealed that detailed debate and discussion had helped to confirm assessment judgements.
- ◆ In some centres, there was evidence of very well-organised records of the centre's internal verification process.

- ◆ Evidence of cross marking was available in most centres and there was evidence of clear and supportive written comments on most examples of candidate evidence.
- ◆ Most centres had a clear internal quality assurance policy, and procedures in place showed a focused and organised approach to internal assessment and internal verification.
- ◆ Centres were keen to use verification visits to ask for advice and gain confidence in their assessment judgements; often this extended to discussion of plans to expand the use of the award with larger/more varied groups of candidates.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

- ◆ Centre staff should ensure candidates clearly identify their aims in order to achieve assessment standard 1.1 (identifying aims in relation to broadening their knowledge of Scotland).
- ◆ Aims need to be clearly expressed and (for levels 5 and 6) be clearly distinct from each other.
- ◆ Aims should also be specifically focused on how the candidates will broaden their existing knowledge of Scotland.
- ◆ Exemplification of effective, and less effective, aims may help candidates begin their assignments with more focus.
- ◆ Centres should also continue to encourage candidates to record their sources in detail and with accuracy to ensure that standard 1.3 (identifying sources of information and resources) is met. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that specific sources are clearly identified either in a logbook or in a detailed bibliography. Evaluation of sources should also be encouraged at all levels.
- ◆ Use of a variety of types of specific sources is preferred; candidates could be encouraged to use books, TV documentaries, interviews and surveys, as well as internet sources (search engines should not be given as sources — specific websites/webpages should be referenced).
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to undertake different activities to match their individual skills; while written reports are entirely acceptable, other forms of product, eg artwork, electronic presentation, talks to peers, interview, group debate, and drama production, are also valid.
- ◆ Centres should consider using the assessor checklist sheets to record cross marking and agreed assessment decisions more clearly. Centres should ensure all assessment decisions made are judged against the assessment standards for the Scotland in Focus unit.
- ◆ It is also recommended that candidates complete a Candidate Evidence Checklist from the unit ASPs.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded not to be too reliant upon source material. Over-reliance on source material, without rephrasing or reinterpretation, does not show understanding of the topic and therefore is not suitable evidence of candidates broadening their knowledge of their Scottish topic. Centres must clearly instruct candidates to express information in their own words and that

material should not be lifted directly from a source unless this is acknowledged. Centres are advised to take a stringent approach to avoid plagiarism.

- ◆ When a candidate's chosen activity is a talk, centres are advised to ensure detailed notes are created and kept, either by the assessors or the candidate.
- ◆ Internal verification of levels should take place and evidence of this should be retained (notes on pupils' work; minutes of meetings, etc) along with the instrument of assessment and marking schemes used.
- ◆ Encouraging universal use of units within NQ courses 'with a Scottish context' is recommended; this will allow more candidates to achieve the full award. Centres should note candidates need to be entered for these units and a pass resulted to allow achievement of the award.