

NQ Biology Verification Summary 2025–26

Verification information

Subject	Biology
Verification activity	Event
Round	1
Date published	July 2026

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
H207 73	National 3	Cell Biology
H208 73	National 3	Biology: Multicellular Organisms
H209 73	National 3	Biology: Life on Earth
H207 74	National 4	Cell Biology
H208 74	National 4	Biology: Multicellular Organisms
H209 74	National 4	Biology: Life on Earth
J4A9 75	SCQF level 5	Cell Biology
J4AC 75	SCQF level 5	Biology: Life on Earth
J4A3 76	SCQF level 6	Human Biology: Human Cells

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
J4A5 76	SCQF level 6	Human Biology: Physiology and Health
J4A6 76	SCQF level 6	Biology: DNA and the Genome
J72Y 77	SCQF level 7	Biology: Cells and Proteins

Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All centres used our unit assessment support (UAS) packs, however, a small number of centres used outdated versions of the UAS packs. Centres must use the most up-to-date UAS packs and corresponding marking guidance from our secure website.

Outcome 1: The candidate will apply skills of scientific inquiry and draw on knowledge and understanding of the key areas of the unit to carry out an experiment/practical investigation

Some centres indicated that the candidate evidence they submitted was complete, but they did not provide an outcome 1 report for their candidates. Complete evidence must include evidence for both outcome 1 **and** outcome 2 and candidates cannot pass a unit until they pass **both** outcomes. If a candidate has not completed an outcome 1 report, centres should mark the evidence as interim. Evidence of outcome 1 is transferable between freestanding units at the same level and, therefore, candidates should only complete one outcome 1.

Centre staff should familiarise themselves with the guidance for outcome 1 in the judging evidence table in the relevant UAS pack. Candidates must have the opportunity to meet all assessment standards for outcome 1. Centres should ensure that the contexts candidates choose for experiments or practical investigations allow them to demonstrate active planning. Some centres demonstrated excellent practice for assessment standard 1.1, submitting evidence that clearly demonstrated candidate involvement in planning their practical for outcome 1.

Some centres used a template for outcome 1 for National 4 level, which is not allowed.

Assessment standard 1.1

Candidates should describe dependent variables in relation to the aim. For National 3, National 4 and SCQF level 5, the aim can include the indirect measurement instead of the dependent variable. For example, a candidate may state their aim as 'To investigate the effect of temperature on volume of froth produced' rather than 'To investigate the effect of temperature on enzyme activity'. At SCQF level 6 and SCQF level 7, candidates must state the dependent variable in the aim, for example 'To investigate the effect of substrate concentration on enzyme inhibition'.

Candidates should include key measurements or observations in the report. Candidates do not need to make separate statements about the key measurements or observations. They can include these in a description of the method.

Candidates must describe any safety considerations as part of the method. At National 3 level candidates only need to provide details of safety precautions taken. For example, candidates could state that they wore safety goggles. At National 4 level, candidates should provide greater detail of the safety considerations. For example, candidates could state that they wore safety goggles to protect their eyes. At SCQF level 5, again, candidates need to give more detail about the safety considerations. For example, candidates could state that they wore safety goggles to protect their eyes from chemicals. At SCQF level 6 and SCQF level 7, candidates need to describe and explain the safety considerations. For example, candidates could state that they wore safety goggles to protect their eyes from the chemicals used as these chemicals were irritants.

Assessment standard 1.3

Candidates must present the raw data for their experiment or practical investigation in a relevant format, for example a table. This must include headings and units, where appropriate. Centres should make sure that candidates carry out at least one repeat of their practical and record the data obtained at National 4 and SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7. Candidates do not need to include averages in this table; however, some

candidates chose to. If candidates include the average in their table, 'average(s)', is an incomplete heading.

Assessment standard 1.5

Conclusions should relate to the aim. For National 3, National 4 and SCQF level 5, the aim may refer to the indirect measurement of the dependent variable. It is, therefore, acceptable for candidates to refer to the indirect measurement in their conclusion. For SCQF level 6 and SCQF level 7, candidates must refer to the dependent variable in their conclusion, not only any indirect measurements that they have used. The data in the report should support the conclusion.

Assessment standard 1.6

If candidates include improvements as part of their evaluation, these must not be measures that they have already carried out in their method. For example, if a candidate describes using a water bath in their method, they cannot suggest using a water bath as an improvement in their evaluation.

Outcome 2

A small number of centres submitted candidate evidence for outcome 2 without the marking guidance they used for judging the evidence. When preparing a sample to submit for verification, centres must include the marking guidance that corresponds with the candidate evidence.

A small number of centres amended questions in the UAS packs. While centres are allowed to make minor amendments to these packs, they must ensure that the amendments do not change the level of difficulty of the assessment. If centres modify UAS packs, or use centre-devised materials, they can submit them for [prior verification](#) before they use them with candidates. This ensures that the assessment meets the national standard.

Assessment judgements

Candidates do not need to pass assessment standards 2.1 and 2.2 independently.

With a unit-by-unit approach, candidates must achieve 50% or more of the total marks available in a single unit assessment to pass outcome 2 for that unit. All centres using the unit-by-unit approach used the appropriate threshold.

With a portfolio approach, candidates must achieve 50% of the total marks available for assessment standard 2.1 in each unit and 50% of the total marks available for assessment standard 2.2 across all three units.

Centres can refer to the [Understanding Standards audio presentations](#) on our website for clarification on thresholds for each approach.

Most centres' assessment judgements were in line with the national standard. However, some centres inconsistently applied the marking guidance. Centres must apply the agreed marking guidance consistently and use internal verification to ensure that they assess all candidates to national standards.

A small number of centres made errors calculating the total marks, which led to some candidates receiving an incorrect pass or fail decision. In these cases, there was no evidence of internal verification.

Marking guidance in our UAS packs is not exhaustive and centres can add to it if candidates give an additional acceptable answer. Almost all centres demonstrated good practice by annotating their marking guidance and including acceptable alternative answers. A small number of centres accepted appropriate answers that they did not add to their marking guidance. Centres should add all additional acceptable answers to their marking guidance so that assessment judgements are consistent for all of their candidates. Some centres accepted incorrect answers and added these to their marking guidance. If a centre amends our marking guidance to include additional answers for a question, they must ensure that these answers meet the national standard demonstrated in our current UAS packs.

General comments

All centres offering our qualifications must have an effective internal quality assurance process to ensure that they assess all candidates accurately, fairly, and consistently to national standards.

Most centres provided evidence of internal verification, specifically cross-marking. Some centres also provided evidence of discussions between the marker and the internal verifier, clearly indicating final marking decisions. A small number of centres did not indicate the final assessment decision on candidate evidence or on an accompanying assessment record. Centres must record the final pass or fail decisions so they are clear.

A small number of centres used more than one internal verifier for the same unit. Using one internal verifier per unit helps keep the approach and assessment judgements consistent.

NQ Biology Verification Summary 2025–26

Verification information

Subject	Biology
Verification activity	Event
Round	2
Date published	July 2026

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
H20A 74	National 4	Biology Assignment

Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Almost all centres used the Biology Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit Assessment effectively to assess the added value unit.

Some centres gave candidates a research log book to record information/data during stage 1 of the assessment, which is allowed. However, some centres also gave candidates extra guidance, which exceeded the level allowed. If centres give candidates a research log book for stage 1, they must make sure that the log book does not include guidance that exceeds the level allowed.

Almost all centres that used the log book approach for stage 1 gave candidates an opportunity to complete the communication stage (through a report, presentation, annotated poster or information leaflet), allowing them to access the remaining assessment standards. A few centres did not give candidates the opportunity to communicate their findings, preventing them from accessing the marks for assessment standard 1.5b (communicating the findings clearly and concisely) and 1.5c (appropriate structure). Centres must ensure that candidates have the opportunity to communicate their findings. Communication methods can include reports, PowerPoint presentations, posters and information leaflets.

Most evidence centres submitted for verification was in poster form, with almost all candidates clearly dividing their poster into sections representing each of the assessment standards. Almost all centres annotated the candidate evidence to show where they awarded marks for each assessment standard. However, for assessment standard 1.4, it was not always clear whether the centre awarded the marks for assessment standard 1.4a (explaining/describing the underlying biology as it relates to the issue) or for assessment standard 1.4b (explaining/describing one impact of the issue on the environment/society, using some underlying biology). Centres should annotate candidate evidence to make it clear where they awarded the marks for assessment standard 1.4.

Some centres included a candidate assessment record, indicating the marks awarded for each assessment standard, which is good practice.

If a candidate does not achieve 50% of the available marks in their first assessment opportunity, they do not have to redraft their entire report or presentation. They only need to redraft the parts relevant to the assessment standard or standards they did not achieve in the first draft, or add some supplementary evidence, to demonstrate that they have achieved the required number of marks.

In some centres, all candidates researched the same topic. Centres must give candidates an opportunity for personalisation and choice when selecting their research topic.

For assessment standard 1.2, a small number of centres appeared to have given candidates a research support pack from which to choose their sources of

information/data. To meet the requirements for assessment standard 1.2, candidates must identify their own sources of information/data.

Some centres submitted evidenced for the Cell Biology, Multicellular Organisms and Life on Earth units in addition to the evidence for the added value unit. This extra candidate evidence was not necessary because round 2 of verification focuses only on the added value unit.

Assessment judgements

Many centres divided the requirements for each assessment standard into a checklist, detailing the individual marks in each assessment standard. This is an example of good practice, helping candidates and assessors to ensure all aspects of each assessment standard are addressed.

A small number of centres amended the added value unit judging evidence table. Although centres can amend the marking guidance in our UAS packs, they must not amend the marking guidance in the added value unit judging evidence table.

A small number of centres made numerical errors when transferring marks from the candidate evidence to candidate record sheets or class record sheets. This resulted in errors in the total number of marks recorded for some candidates. Candidate records must accurately reflect the marks achieved by candidates. A number of centres recorded the agreed overall total marks for each candidate on the candidate evidence, which is good practice.

Assessment standard 1.1: choosing, with justification, a relevant issue in biology

Almost all candidates made some form of statement about the issue they were investigating. Most candidates did this by providing a well-structured aim, allowing them to meet the requirements for assessment standard 1.1a. A one-word title is not sufficient to award the mark for assessment standard 1.1a.

To meet assessment standard 1.1b, candidates must include a statement explaining the relevance of the issue to the environment/society. Many candidates, however, did not provide this justification or they provided a justification that was insufficient to

meet the requirement of this assessment standard. Centres can take a holistic approach when awarding the mark for assessment standard 1.1b. They can combine information from separate parts of a candidate's evidence to award the mark for this assessment standard.

As there is also a requirement to explain the impact of the issue on the environment/society for assessment standard 1.4, candidates must consider this carefully when selecting their topics for research. If a candidate chooses a topic that will not allow them to fully meet assessment standards 1.1 and 1.4, the teacher or lecturer should direct the candidate to choose a different topic.

Assessment standard 1.2: researching the issue

Almost all candidates included relevant information/data from two sources in their evidence. This information/data took a variety of forms, including text extracts, tabular data and graphical data. Almost all candidates selected data that was appropriate for their chosen topic.

Almost all candidates provided two appropriate references for their selected data. Some candidates used an experiment or practical activity as one of their two sources of data.

A small number of centres awarded the mark for assessment standard 1.2b, indicating that candidates recorded at least two relevant sources of information/data in a way that they could be retrieved by a third party. However, one or both of these references did not relate to the sources provided by the candidate. The references candidates provide should relate to the sources included in their evidence.

If a candidate includes their own data, then they must record the title and aim as the reference for this source. This must be separate from the title and aim of the added value unit assignment itself.

Assessment standard 1.3: processing and presenting appropriate information/ data

Almost all candidates provided evidence of presenting one of their pieces of information/data in a different way to that found in their source. Most candidates presented their data in the form of a graph or table, but not always with the accuracy required at this level. A small number of candidates processed a line graph into a bar graph or a bar graph into a line graph. Processing one form of graph to another is not an appropriate form of processing.

The scales on a graph are acceptable if the candidate provides three numbers that allow them to establish a linear scale. One of these three numbers does not have to be zero.

Candidates should plot points on a graph to within plus or minus a half box tolerance. For the added value unit only, candidates are only required to plot a minimum of 90% of their points accurately to achieve the mark. Candidates cannot achieve the mark for accurate plotting if their source data does not have clear values or minor grid lines.

A small number of centres awarded the marks for assessment standard 1.3 for processing source data that candidates did not include in their evidence. Centres cannot award the marks for assessment standard 1.3 if the candidate does not provide the original source data for comparison.

Assessment standard 1.4: applying knowledge and understanding of biology relevant to the issue

Candidates can only gain marks for assessment standard 1.4a for descriptions or explanations of underlying biology that are relevant to the issue they are investigating. Centres can take a holistic approach to awarding the mark for assessment standard 1.4a. They can combine information from separate parts of a candidate's evidence to award the mark for this assessment standard.

Candidates can only access the mark for assessment standard 1.4b if they explain or describe the impact using some knowledge of biology. For a small number of candidates, centres awarded the marks for assessment standards 1.1b and 1.4b for

the same piece of information. Centres must only award the marks for these assessment standards for separate statements. Assessment standard 1.4b requires greater detail than assessment standard 1.1b.

Assessment standard 1.5: communicating the findings of the investigation

Most candidates gave a conclusion or a summary of their findings, allowing them to access the mark available for assessment standard 1.5a. However, a small number of candidates did not support their conclusions with data/information. Candidates must draw a conclusion or summarise their findings and support these with some of the evidence in their investigation. Candidates' conclusions do not need to be based on all of their evidence.

A small number of centres did not award the mark for this assessment standard if the candidate's conclusion was not linked to the aim. The information most of these candidates provided, although not an appropriate conclusion, was a sufficient summary of the findings of the investigation. These candidates should, therefore, have received the mark for this assessment standard. Candidates can either draw a conclusion based on the information/data or summarise their findings to achieve the mark for assessment standard 1.5a.

A small number of centres awarded the mark for this assessment standard when the candidate's conclusion contained additional information not discussed elsewhere in their evidence. Candidates must only draw a conclusion using the information in their evidence.

General comments

A small number of centres submitted Verification Sample Forms without all of the necessary information. Centre staff must make sure that the unit code and level code are on the Verification Sample Form. Complete evidence must contain evidence of all added value unit assessment standards.

Centres offering our qualifications must have an effective internal quality assurance system that ensures that all candidates are assessed accurately, fairly, and

consistently to national standards. Centres selected for external verification should provide details of their quality assurance processes, for example, their internal verification and moderation policy. This gives our verifiers a better understanding of the processes implemented in the centre.

Although most centres did not provide a copy of their internal verification and moderation policy, it was evident that they routinely used cross-marking to make assessment judgements for most candidates. If the marker and internal verifier decisions differed, however, the final assessment judgements were not always clear. If the assessment judgements of the marker and internal verifier differ, they must have a discussion and note the final assessment decisions on the candidate evidence and/or the candidate assessment record.

Some centres provided evidence of their internal verification processes, specifically internal verification records. Some centres showed good practice by including notes from the internal verifier and demonstrating how they made assessment judgements. However, this did not always lead to consistent, reliable assessment judgements as they applied the marking guidance leniently or severely.

Centres should record any discussions that take place during their internal verification process. They can use a candidate record sheet or an internal verification record sheet. Clearly annotating the candidate evidence, to show where assessors have awarded marks, is very helpful for candidates, other assessors and verifiers.

Centres should review their internal verification processes to ensure they are effective. It is good practice to use the [NQ internal verification toolkit](#) on our website.