



NQ verification 2022–23 round 1 and 2

Qualification verification summary report

Section 1: verification group information

Verification group name:	Environmental Science
Verification activity:	Event
Date published:	June 2023

National Course components and/or National Units verified

Course/Unit code	Course/Unit level	Course/Unit title
H24R 73	National 3	Environmental Science: Earth's Resources
H24S 73	National 3	Environmental Science: Sustainability
H24P 74	National 4	Environmental Science: Living Environment
H24R 74	National 4	Environmental Science: Earth's Resources
H24S 74	National 4	Environmental Science: Sustainability
J265 75	SCQF level 5	Environmental Science: Sustainability
J261 76	SCQF level 6	Environmental Science: Living Environment

Section 2: comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Almost all centres had used the most recently published SQA unit assessment support (UAS) packs for assessment.

One centre had removed questions from the assessment in the UAS pack, which reduced the level of demand inappropriately. If centres modify the assessment in the published UAS packs, the modifications must not change the level of demand of the assessment. The published UAS packs are set at minimum competency for the level.

One centre produced their own assessment using previously published SQA exam questions in the assessment. Unit assessments must be secure and unseen to candidates, so it is not appropriate to use past paper questions. Past paper questions may also contain grade A marks, which are not suitable for inclusion in a unit assessment.

Assessment judgements

Assessors had, in general, made assessment judgements in line with national standards.

Some centres had annotated the marking instructions with additional alternative responses to the marking instructions to show alternative answers that are acceptable or not acceptable. The UAS marking instructions are not exhaustive and centres are encouraged to annotate them, as this aids consistency between assessors and internal verifiers within a centre. Centres should make sure that any annotations are correct scientifically.

Most centres used the holistic approach of applying marks and a cut-off score of 50% to the assessment. A very small number of centres had used the original approach of assessing assessment standard (AS) 2.1 and each of the problem-solving skills for AS 2.2 separately. Both approaches are acceptable.

When using the approach of assessing the assessment standards and problem-solving skills separately, it is important that centres make this clear. Some of the centres adopting this approach included a total, for example out of 20, but then judged whether each candidate had passed the assessment standards and problem-solving skills independently. Using this methodology, centres must avoid putting a single total for the assessment as a whole.

Centres are reminded that candidates do not need to pass each key area to pass AS 2.1; a candidate passes AS 2.1 if they get half or more of the accurate statements correct across the key areas, when using this approach to assessment.

Some questions specify that the answer must be appropriate to the previous part of a question. In these questions, an answer in the second part of the question that does not relate to the first part cannot be awarded the mark. However, where a candidate gives an answer to the first part that is incorrect and then gives an answer to the second part that is consistent with their previous incorrect answer, they may be awarded the second mark. This ensures a candidate is not penalised twice for the same mistake.

Some centres failed to demonstrate that any internal verification had been carried out. Centres are reminded that internal verification of assessments is necessary. Centres can refer to the [internal verification toolkit](#) on SQA's website. Where internal verification had been carried out, it was clear and detailed, and the final decision made was obvious.

Section 3: general comments

Centres must confirm at the start of the year that they are using the most up-to-date assessments if they are using the UAS packs.

If a centre decides to adapt a UAS pack significantly, the adapted assessment should be submitted to SQA for prior verification before it is used. This helps ensure that candidates are not assessed using invalid assessment instruments.

When centres are using the approach of allocating marks and a cut-off score, they must make sure to total the number of marks awarded correctly.

There is no need to internally verify all evidence. An appropriate sample can be verified.

Internal verification was generally good. Many centres showed a high level of annotation on candidate evidence, showing internal verification was rigorous. Where the assessor and the internal verifier do not agree, the final decision must be made clear.

Both the assessor and the internal verifier must be aware of the standard of answer expected for each level of qualification, and both must be aware that the marking guidance is not meant to be exhaustive and can be annotated by the centre.