NQ Physics Verification Summary 2025–26

Verification information

Subject	Physics
Verification activity	Event
Round	1
Date published	September 2026

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
H258 73	National 3	Physics: Dynamics and Space
H256 74	National 4	Physics: Electricity and Energy
H258 74	National 4	Physics: Dynamics and Space
H25A 74	National 4	Physics: Waves and Radiation
J26L 75	SCQF level 5	Physics: Electricity and Energy
J2CK 75	SCQF level 5	Physics: Dynamics and Space
J2CL 75	SCQF level 5	Physics: Waves and Radiation
J20A 76	SCQF level 6	Physics: Electricity

Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

All centres selected for this verification unit assessment support (UAS) packs. These are available from our secure website.

Most centres used the holistic assessment packs, Outcome 2: Assessment activity 2 — test 1 or test 2, to make clear assessment judgements on candidate attainment.

A small number of centres assessed outcome 2 using the original Package 1: Unit-by-unit approach UAS pack. These centres used an invalid approach by either allocating 1 mark to every question and applying a holistic cut off score of 50%, or by applying a 50% cut-off score to problem-solving skills collectively. The advice in previous verification summary reports and in the packs makes it clear that, where centres adapt the original assessment support packs, they should allocate 3 marks to the processing questions. The advice also makes it clear that centres must add or substitute additional processing questions to reflect the importance of calculations in physics. Centres that used this assessment method did not make any alterations to the assessment, and resulted in a ‘not accepted’ decision for assessment approach.

As Qualifications Scotland has two dedicated outcome 2 tests that are designed for holistic assessment, centres should use these rather than trying to adapt the original UAS pack assessment. These original UAS packs have been removed from our secure website.

Centres that used the Outcome 2: Assessment Activity 2 — test 1 or test 2 packs did not have any issues with either their approach to assessment or their assessment judgements.

Centres that submitted evidence for outcome 1 used the Package 1: Unit-by-unit UAS pack and clearly applied the evidence requirements in the judging evidence table. Some centres used an outcome 1 assessed for a different unit as evidence for the complete assessment of the unit being verified, which is a valid approach. Some centres used an outcome 1 for a different unit as evidence for the complete

assessment of the unit being verified, which is a valid approach, as evidence for outcome 1 in one unit may be transferred as evidence to other units.

Assessment judgements

All centres that used the Outcome 2: Assessment Activity 2 — test 1 or test 2 packs used the holistic assessment method and made accurate assessment judgements.

Where centres attempted to use the original ‘atomistic’ assessment pack with marks and a cut-off score, centres received a ‘not accepted’ decision, as they did not follow the instructions about how to adapt the assessment correctly. This resulted in an invalid approach, meaning the assessment judgements were neither reliable nor accurate.

For the evidence submitted by centres as ‘interim’, this must be judged on a pass or fail basis. Centres are reminded that this is not a final assessment decision, but a judgement based solely on the evidence submitted. The assessment decision can be altered at a later stage once all outcomes have been assessed and any completed re-assessment has been taken into account.

For evidence marked as complete, centres are reminded that they must include evidence for both outcome 1 and outcome 2.

All centres included evidence of internal verification. In most centres, internal verification was highly effective, although some was less effective. The centres with highly effective internal verification supplied detailed evidence of communication between the assessor and the internal verifier, and made the final decision clear. However, in a small number of centres where the assessor and internal verifier did not agree, the final decision for each candidate was not always clear. In a few cases, the internal verification process was not effective. There were examples where internal verifiers did not identify errors in assessors’ marking decisions, and others where they amended correct assessment decisions, resulting in incorrect judgements. There were a small number of instances where both the assessor and the internal verifier accepted alternative answers that were either incorrect or did not answer the question being asked.

General comments

Most centres clearly marked the evidence supplied as interim. It was clear that these centres understood that assessment of a single outcome demonstrates interim evidence, and evidence that covers both outcomes constitutes complete evidence.

We have advised centres that, because we previously provided tests for use as holistic assessments, centres must not adapt the original UAS packs for use as holistic assessments. We recently published updated unit specifications and two updated UAS packs for each unit at all levels. These packs contain a test with marks and a cut-off score. The original UAS packs have been removed from our secure website and must not be used in the future.

For session 2026–27 onwards, all centres must use the holistic approach of an end-of-unit test with marks and a cut-off score. The original 'atomistic' approach has been removed, and centres must not split tests into smaller 'chunks'. The holistic approach reduces workload for teachers and lecturers and simplifies the tracking of attainment.

Candidates must have achieved both outcomes from a unit before a final decision is submitted to Qualifications Scotland. Centres are also reminded that achievement of outcome 1 in one unit can be used as evidence in the other units (with the exception of the unit Researching Physics at SCQF level 6 and the unit Investigating Physics at SCQF level 7).

If a centre is using a physics unit as part of a National Certificate (NC) or National Progression Award (NPA), outcome 1 must be subject-specific. An outcome 1 for a biology, chemistry, or other science unit cannot be used as evidence for a physics unit.

With the holistic approach, centres must apply the principles set out in Physics: general marking principles (National 3 to Advanced Higher, alongside the specific marking guidance for each test, to make accurate assessment decisions on candidate evidence.

Centres are reminded that if alternative answers that are not included in the marking guidance are accepted, then the marking guidance should be annotated to allow other assessors and internal verifiers in the centre to apply standards consistently. Alternative answers must be correct scientifically and must answer the question asked. Centres must not change responses identified in the marking guidance within the UAS packs as ‘do not accept’ to ‘accept’.

NQ Physics Verification Summary 2025–26

Verification information

Subject	Physics
Verification activity	Event
Round	2
Date published	September 2026

National Units verified

Unit code	Unit level	Unit title
H25C 74	National 4	Physics Assignment

Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

Round 2 verification focused on the National 4 Physics Assignment added value unit. Almost all the centres used our added value unit assessment support (UAS) pack and applied the holistic approach, with marks and a cut-off score, to assess candidate evidence for this unit.

A small number of centres submitted copies of candidates' National 5 Assignments that had been marked against the National 4 criteria. This caused issues for these centres, as the National 4 added value unit requires the candidates to select a topical issue in physics, which is not a requirement for the National 5 assignment. This means many of the marks are not accessible to candidates. Centres that chose to carry out National 4 assignments rather than trying to adapt the National 5 assignment had far fewer issues when making assessment decisions.

For the National 4 added value unit, it is important to remind candidates to select a topical issue in physics as the subject of their assignment, rather than attempting to investigate a basic physics principle that is linked to a physics relationship.

Assessment judgements

Almost all the centres in this year's sample used the candidate assessment record on page 20 of the UAS pack to tabulate the final marks awarded for each of the five assessment standards. Most centres supported their marking decisions by annotating the candidate's evidence with the specific assessment standard beside where the evidence could be found.

A few centres were lenient when it came to marking assessment standard 1.1 by awarding candidates 2 marks, even when the selected investigation was not on a topical issue.

A few centres were also lenient when it came to assessment standard 1.2(b), as the reference for an experiment must be the experiment title and aim for it to count as the reference. These centres awarded marks for the overall title and aim of the assignment as the reference for the experiment, which is not appropriate.

For assessment standard 1.3, candidates are required to change the format of display of either their experimental data or one of the sources of internet and/or literature information they selected to use. For graphs of candidates' experimental data, a number of centres were lenient and awarded marks for lines of best fit that were either forced through the origin or used an inappropriate line of best fit or curve that was above or below the plotted points.

A few centres were lenient in their application of the marking instructions and awarded the maximum 3 marks for assessment standard 1.4, even if the selected topic was not a topical issue in physics or the candidate had not described or explained its impact on society or the environment.

A few centres awarded multiple marks for different assessment standards against the same piece of information in the candidate's evidence. This led to inflated final marks. Assessors and internal verifiers must not 'double-credit' the same information against different assessment standards.

General comments

Centres must ensure that candidates are issued with the instructions to candidates on pages 14 to 18 of the Physics Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit support pack. To ensure fairness across all centres and candidates, these instructions must not be altered or supplemented with centre-devised instructions or checklists.

Candidates must not be issued with templates for any part of the assessment.

Where candidates have a log book for collecting their research evidence, this must not contain prompts or additional information.

Where candidates decide to communicate through a PowerPoint presentation, they must be reminded to submit speaker notes with the slides.

The research stage involves selecting data and/or information from the internet, books, journals, and/or an experiment or practical investigation. Candidates must use and reference at least two appropriate sources in a way that would allow someone else to find them. Where information comes from a website, the full URL must be given. The data and/or information can be included in a candidate's log or journal.

For the communication stage, it is important that centres conduct this under staff supervision to ensure that the evidence that a candidate submits is their own work.

Centre staff must also check the evidence that candidates intend to use during the communication stage to ensure that they do not use pre-prepared evidence.

Centres are also reminded that candidates must achieve at least 7 out of 14 marks to pass this unit.