



REVIEW OF INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS



A Report by the National Qualifications
Steering Group to the Scottish Executive





FOREWORD



I welcome the unanimity which the National Qualifications Steering Group has been able to achieve in this report into the initial implementation of the new National Qualifications. The Group reaffirmed the existence of a shared commitment across representatives of a range of interests to the essential principles of the new National Qualifications Framework and there was universal recognition that the introduction of the new National Qualifications Framework has delivered many of the key objectives. In particular, the Group recognised the value of having achieved a structure of qualifications which better meets the needs of candidates across the whole range of ability levels. It is encouraging that the uptake of National Qualifications has been greater than anticipated and that all levels are now being taught in schools and colleges, even though full implementation had been expected to take at least 3 years.

The Group was also unanimous in its recognition that there were lessons to be learnt from the initial implementation periods. The system is too complex in some respects. This has stood in the way of the development of understanding by users and has meant that some aspects of the system's initial implementation have been seen as unhelpful by users. The Group was greatly assisted in establishing what the impact had been on users' experience and perceptions by the range of survey evidence which was available to us.

The recommendations contained in the report are divided into firm recommendations for urgent action to address the lessons learned and the identification of options for more substantial change, which the Group recognised would require wider consultation if they were to be pursued. In all the recommendations, the Group has sought to ensure that the system would continue to meet the needs of all students.

I thank the members of the National Qualifications Review Working Group and the National Qualifications Steering Group for the considerable time and thought they put into the review and for the constructive approach which has characterised their work.

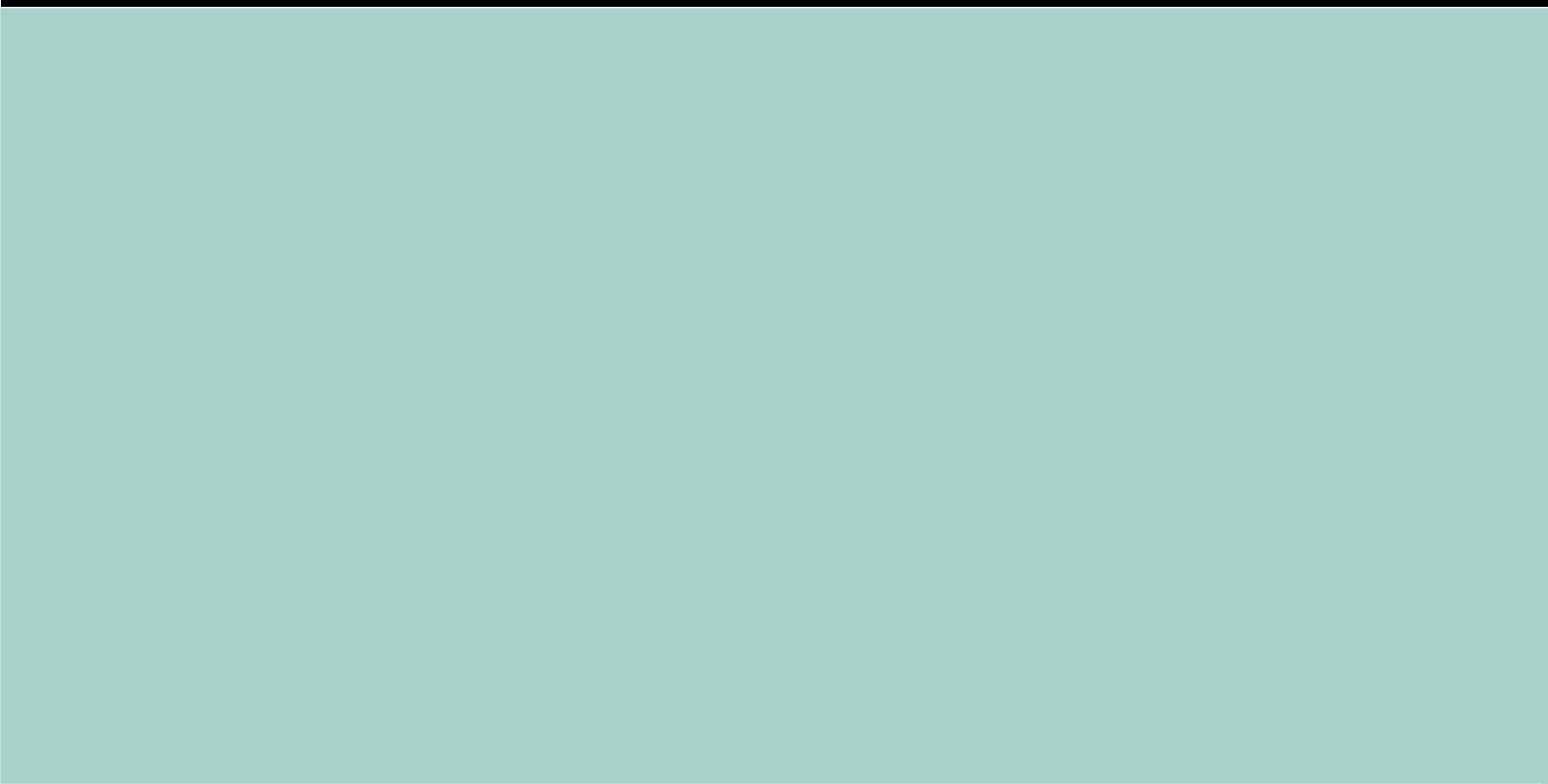
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Scottish Ministers announced in March 2000 that the Scottish Executive would undertake a review of the first year of the implementation of new National Qualifications introduced as part of the Higher Still reforms. The Review was carried out by the National Qualifications Steering Group, using evidence drawn from a wide variety of sources. It took account of evidence obtained during the first and second years of implementation of the new Qualifications.

This report sets out the findings of the review, and makes proposals to Ministers for action. These include a number of recommendations for immediate action that could be implemented without changing any of the original design principles of National Qualifications. They also include a proposal to consider and consult on more fundamental changes.

The report proposes an overarching aim for National Qualifications: to meet the needs of all categories of candidates. It also lists a number of principles the Group considers essential if National Qualifications are to promote achievement of key priorities for education, positive educational experiences, and high standards.

The report identifies the key contributions made by both internal and external assessment, and the importance of unitisation, in ensuring that candidate needs are met and certification is based on reliable and valid evidence of candidate achievement. The evidence indicates strong support for the retention of internal assessment, on the basis of the benefits to candidates reported in survey evidence, but also significant concern about the total burden of assessment on both candidates and teachers. Recent inspection evidence suggested that in the second year of implementation, many schools felt they were coping better with assessment. However the balance of evidence led the group to conclude that action was required to make assessment, and its administration, more manageable. A number of issues were identified that affected individual subjects. National Assessment Bank items were generally considered to be of good quality, but there were concerns about: availability and quality of some NABs, and about the extent to which there was confusion and uncertainty over the extent to which NABs could be used for purposes other than assessing achievement in individual Units. Concerns were raised about the design and content of the final certificate. A number of issues were raised about appeals: mainly concern about the large number of unsuccessful appeals in 2000, and about the extent to which it was clear to Centres what evidence should be provided to support appeals. The recruitment of markers, and the release of staff to undertake appeals activity, placed significant demands on Centres in terms of staff release, and the Group concluded that these pressures were likely to intensify rather than reduce.

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On the basis of the above evidence and conclusions, the Group decided that there are three key areas for improvement:

- › To make assessment more effective and efficient – by making purposes clearer and instruments sharper, and by spreading good practice.
- › To reduce unnecessary duplication of effort – by avoiding assessing the same skills and knowledge more often than necessary.
- › To reduce the burden of administration associated with assessment – by streamlining processes.

The Group makes six recommendations to Ministers for immediate action:

- › To carry out a revision of assessment arrangements on a course by course basis, in particular to reduce the complexity, variety and total volume of assessment. It is proposed that these reviews: should aim to minimise the amount of assessment (ideally to one assessment per Unit); should be completed as quickly as possible (ideally before the end of 2001); and should be initially focused on the subjects with the largest uptake.
- › To provide advice and exemplification on assessment in order to establish a clearer understanding of the volume and type of assessment required.
- › To take a series of actions designed to establish better common understanding of standards.
- › To clarify the purpose of National Assessment Banks items, where possible increasing consistency of purpose across NABs, and improve quality assurance and availability.
- › To consider the need for redesign of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate in the light of experience in 2001.
- › To undertake a thorough review of the basis on which markers are appointed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Group considered that these steps would each have a positive impact, but that they might not be sufficient to resolve the key issue of the total burden of assessment. A number of further options were considered, designed to reduce the burden of assessment. The group agreed that these would require a change to one or other of the underlying design principles of new National Qualifications, and therefore recommend that Ministers consult before making any firm decision to introduce such a change.

From the range of models considered by the Group, two emerged as encapsulating the key options for change. Both options assume that Courses would continue to comprise a number of Units, that graded awards would continue to be given on the basis of external assessment, and that internal assessment would continue to be used to give feedback to students and teachers during the course.

Option A

- ▶ Candidates could achieve a course award by success in the external assessment, with Unit Certification available as an option. This would enable a reduction in internal assessment for candidates who did not wish to acquire Unit certification.

Option B

- ▶ Candidates could achieve an ungraded course award by demonstrating they had achieved the full range of Unit learning outcomes, with an optional external examination available for candidates who wished to achieve a graded award. This would enable a reduction in external assessment, and in related internal assessment (such as production of evidence for appeals).

The Group considers that, if a significant further reduction in the burden of assessment is to be achieved, at least one of the above options would need to be implemented.

- 1 Background to the introduction of National Qualifications
- 2 Extent of implementation in 1999-2000 and 2000-01
- 3 Background to the Review

- 1.1** Paragraphs 1.2 to 1.14 in this Chapter set out the key stages of the process that led to the introduction of the new National Qualifications. They are not intended to be a full summary of the Higher Still reforms.

Why change?

- 1.2** In 1990 the Secretary of State for Scotland established a Committee, chaired by Professor John Howie, then Regius Professor of Mathematics at St Andrews University, to:

review the aims and purposes of courses and of assessment certification in the fifth and sixth years of secondary school education in Scotland;

consider what structure of courses and what forms of assessment best satisfied these aims and purposes; and

recommend necessary changes.

- 1.3** The Howie Committee's report, published on 5 March 1992, identified certain weaknesses in the existing arrangements. These included:

a “two term dash” for Highers, which did not give many students enough time to reach the required level of achievement;

low overall standards and inadequate breadth of attainment;

poor preparation for higher education; and

no coherent provision for vocational education in schools.

- 1.4** The Committee also found support for a number of characteristics of the “old” system, for example its flexibility and encouragement to continue into post-compulsory education.

- 1.5** The Committee proposed radical changes to the structure of courses and exams which also retained much of the course content. Two distinct types of qualification were proposed – the 1 or 2 year Scottish Certificate (SCOTCERT) and the 3 year Scottish Baccalaureate (SCOTBAC). These would begin in S4, and as a result it was proposed that Standard Grade exams would be taken in S3 rather than S4.

- 1.6** The Scottish Office consulted on Howie's proposals and also conducted a number of feasibility studies. The consultation period ended on 31 December 1992, and over 300 responses were received.

- 1.7** There was general agreement with the Howie Committee's definition of the characteristics of a good upper secondary education and support for their analysis of the weakness in the education system. The consultation supported the need for change but rejected two key aspects of the proposals. There was widespread opposition to the proposal to move Standard Grade to S3. This would have required courses to be re-written and the curriculum re-organised which would have significantly delayed the upper secondary reforms. It was claimed that the Howie Report had not made a case for changing Standard Grade and the implications of this had not be fully thought out.
- 1.8** The proposals for the SCOTCERT and SCOTBAC were overwhelmingly rejected. The main criticisms were:
- the two qualifications would not be held in equal regard;
 - there would be parental pressure on students to take the SCOTBAC, leading to high drop-out and failure rates;
 - few schools could offer both courses;
 - students should be able to keep their options open for as long as possible.
- 1.9** Other areas of the Committee's proposals were supported or not opposed. These included the need to encourage breadth of attainment, the extension of opportunities for vocational education; the promotion of core skills competencies; the use of a combination of internal and external assessment; and the creation of a framework of levels.
- 1.10** In March 1994, the Government announced its response to the Howie Report. "Higher Still – Opportunity for All" set out the key features of the new upper secondary curriculum. A new unified curriculum and assessment system would be developed which would bring together the school and post-16 further education curricula leading to the availability of both academic and vocational subjects. The new courses would be based on features of existing policy: further education contributing the unitisation of courses and schools contributing external assessment. National Certificate courses were also brought within the National Qualifications framework and led to the length of units being set at 40 hours or multiples of 40 hours. The decision to have units internally assessed and courses externally assessed was an early decision of the reform, and was not consulted upon.

INTRODUCTION



- 1.11** There would also be a framework of levels to assist students to progress to the highest qualification that they were able to reach. Students would have a choice of 5 levels of qualification for study after Standard Grade – Foundation, General, Credit, Higher and Advanced Higher. These lower qualifications were later changed in name to Access, Intermediate 1, and Intermediate 2. Intermediate 1 and 2 courses are broadly equivalent to Standard Grade General and Credit courses respectively.
- 1.12** As a result of these decisions, the Higher Still Development Programme was established and an extensive period of development work ensued. From an early stage in the Development Programme it was decided that it should encompass the further education sector as well as schools.

Timetable for introduction

- 1.13** In December 1998, Ministers agreed criteria under which schools or colleges could delay the introduction of new Higher courses where teachers or lecturers were genuinely unable to implement them in 1999. These criteria related to significant change in the course syllabus, technical reasons or local difficulties such as local availability of materials. A survey conducted by the Executive in January 1999 found that 80% of new Highers were likely to be offered by schools.
- 1.14** New courses were available for the first time in session 1999-2000, except for Advanced Higher which was available from 2000-01. SCE Higher and CSYS courses were available for the last time in session 2000-01, with the exception of English which was available for an additional year.

Extent of Implementation in 1999-2000 and 2000-01

- 1.15** Although schools and colleges were only required to introduce new Higher level courses in 1999-2000, many also introduced Access and Intermediate courses. In 1999-2000 there were 117,045 entries at Higher level, 34,590 and 8,096 entries at Intermediate 2 and Intermediate 1 respectively. Just over 1,000 entries were also made at Access level. SCE Highers were still available in 1999-2000 and there were 46,112 entries for these.
- 1.16** Provisional data from SQA show a substantial increase in each of these figures in 2000-01. At Higher there are around 155,000 entries. Entries at Intermediate 2 and 1 have also grown with entries for Intermediate 2 increased to around 66,000 and Intermediate 1 to around 20,000. The number of

Access Cluster entries also increased significantly to around 4,000. As expected the number of SCE Higher entries has dropped considerably to 14,047. This is because SCE Higher is only available to re-sit candidates or students taking SCE English. Overall, there has been a growth in the total number of course entries in session 2000-01 at every level (taking account of Standard Grade, SCE Higher and CSYS as well as new National Qualifications).

Review

- 1.17** The implementation of a complex new system of qualifications is demanding for all who are involved in the process. The high take-up of the new qualifications, particularly at Intermediate and Access levels, which were optional and had no previous parallel, is encouraging in suggesting that a fundamental need is being addressed. However, a great deal of concern has been expressed publicly about the implementation, and it is important in any project of this kind that the views of the users – both those teaching and those undertaking the new courses – are taken fully into account. Scottish Ministers announced in March 2000 that the Executive would undertake a review of the first year of implementation of new National Qualifications introduced under the Higher Still reforms.
- 1.18** Details of the review were announced in June 2000. Ministers confirmed then that they were committed to a full and open review being conducted. This report sets out the findings of the review and makes recommendations for further action. Where action has already been taken this is noted in the text.
- 1.19** The review has been undertaken separately from the inquiries into the problems associated with the issue of Diet 2000 results. An independent inquiry into the difficulties of Diet 2000 was commissioned by the Scottish Executive and carried out by Deloitte & Touche. Their final report contained a number of recommendations, principally for SQA, to avoid the events of Diet 2000 being repeated. This report does not rehearse the issues covered in that document.
- 1.20** The National Qualifications Steering Group (NQSG) recognised that the introduction of National Qualifications did increase the amount of data that was submitted to SQA. However, it was accepted that the problems associated with Diet 2000 were not a direct result of this increase.
- 1.21** In making the recommendations in this report, consideration has been given to the feasibility as well as the educational desirability of the proposals.

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- 1.22** Evidence was gathered from a number of sources. The Scottish Executive conducted a survey of teaching staff in schools and FE colleges. Around 1,750 teachers and lecturers across Scotland were interviewed by System 3 Social Research during November and December 2000. The topics covered included views on workload, staff development, and the curriculum. This complemented surveys of parents and of students and teachers conducted by the Scottish Parent Teacher Council and the Scottish Qualifications Authority respectively.
- 1.23** Evidence was also obtained from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) reports on implementation in schools, a joint Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, Association of Directors of Education (Scotland) and Association of Scottish Colleges investigation into assessment. Further evidence was obtained from a MORI survey on assessment carried out on behalf of the EIS and SSTA and also the Scottish Further Education Unit/Higher Still Development Unit survey of implementation in further education.
- 1.24** A Review Working Group comprising representatives of schools, further education, education authorities and parents was established in January 2001 to take forward the review and develop recommendations for remedial action.
- 1.25** The Working Group identified two distinct types of issues. First, there were issues associated with the process of introducing and supporting the new courses. Second, there were issues associated with the design of the new courses and their assessment.
- 1.26** This report is structured round three broad topics: assessment and certification; learning and teaching; and staff development and support; but it begins with consideration of the underlying principles.
- 1.27** The sub-group's draft report was submitted to NQSG for clearance and this report and its recommendations have been agreed by NQSG. While most of the recommendations could be implemented fairly quickly, others need further work and could only be introduced in the longer term. The report will be submitted to Ministers who will decide what action should be taken.

- 1 Definitions of terms used within National Qualifications
- 2 Principles underpinning National Qualifications
- 3 Design Features



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- 2.1** The Working Group identified an overall aim and a number of principles that underpin National Qualifications. These are drawn from the principles underlying the development of Higher Still and from wider policy considerations, and are set out below.
- 2.2** NQs refer to Standard Grade as well as to all qualifications introduced as part of the Higher Still Development Programme – Units, Courses and Group Awards. While the review has primarily focused on the new National Qualifications introduced under the Higher Still reforms, the principles identified are relevant to all National Qualifications.

Definitions

- 2.3** The following definitions are used in this report.
- 2.4** **Internal Assessment** involves a professional judgement about the candidate's performance by the Centre (generally subject to internal and/or external moderation). **External assessment** is where a professional judgement about the candidate's performance is made by staff based outside the Centre.
- 2.5** Internal assessment has traditionally used internally devised and administered assessment instruments; external assessment has traditionally used externally devised and administered assessment instruments. These distinctions have become blurred within new National Qualifications through:
- ▶ The use of external moderation of internal assessment to check the reliability of such assessment,
 - ▶ The introduction of the National Assessment Bank to support internal assessment,
 - ▶ The use of internal assessment to support pre-appeals and appeals procedures within external assessment,
 - ▶ The use of internally generated evidence (eg folios, artwork) in external assessment,
 - ▶ The use of centre invigilation for write-ups of project-based National Courses.

- 2.6 Within these qualifications simple distinctions between internal and external assessment are further blurred by the need to:
- › Accredit prior learning,
 - › Support progression as students move from one environment to another,
 - › Assess validly an outcome which is ephemeral,
 - › Assess processes.
- 2.7 **A Unit** is an individual qualification that cannot be subdivided. Units are assessed solely through internal assessment.
- 2.8 **National Assessment Bank items (NABs)** are assessment instruments used to assess performance in a Unit. The National Assessment Bank contains a number of versions of unit assessment instruments. The Bank itself is a major achievement of the Higher Still reforms and contains over 2100 assessment instruments which have been published between November 1999 and April 2001. An additional 1300 packs will be provided over the next two years.
- 2.9 Centres are not required to use NABs but may develop their own instruments which may be subject to prior moderation from SQA. Few school centres have done so. NABs are not graded but assessed solely on a pass or fail basis. NABs developed by centres could be designed to include additional evidence of performance.
- 2.10 **A Course** is a qualification that is gained by demonstrating performance in each of a number of Units or elements, and the ability to retain, consolidate and where appropriate integrate skills and knowledge gained across all of these Units.
- 2.11 **A Group Award** is gained on the basis of holding a defined set of Units and/or Courses which often form a coherent package, for example Modern Languages or Care.

Principles underpinning National Qualifications (NQs)

- 2.12 The overall aim identified was that:
- › NQs should meet the needs of all categories of candidates.

PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS



2.13 Care must be taken to ensure that any changes intended to meet the needs of one group of candidates do not have an adverse impact on other candidates. The Steering Group recognised that there are differences between the needs of school students and of college students but agreed that the more important distinctions could be summarised as those:

- › Between candidates studying one or more courses with final examinations and those studying only individual units;
- › Between candidates studying by open learning, including in particular distance learning and home education, and those studying with a teacher or lecturer in an institution; and
- › Between candidates studying for a course in one year and those building up qualifications over time.

2.14 The principles agreed by the group are that National Qualifications

- › contribute to the delivery of National Priorities – specifically:
- › improve attainment across the curriculum
- › enable the acquisition and recognition of core skills
- › support equality of opportunity and attainment
- › are compatible with national advice on the curriculum, and on the use of assessment to support learning;
- › enable, and promote, the delivery of a high quality learning experience that attracts, motivates and retains students;
- › provide an integrated system of nationally recognised qualifications for all learners below Higher Education level;
- › provide qualifications matched to student abilities and the requirements of users eg employers, students, universities;
- › enable step-by-step progress;
- › can be built up over time;
- › enable appropriate credit transfer – to avoid unnecessary duplication of work;
- › promote wider access, encourage learners to engage in lifelong learning, and enable learners to progress to the highest level of qualification that they can achieve;

- › are subject to published standards which are defined and maintained across all levels. This enables parity of esteem to be established within levels across all subject areas, especially between vocational and academic areas;
- › are certificated through an appropriate combination of external assessment and/or internal assessment. Where certification is based solely on internal assessment, there is a need to ensure that there are mechanisms, ie moderation, to maintain standards;
- › are subject to the minimum level of assessment necessary to meet the requirements of supporting learning, informing candidates and parents, reliably measuring attainment and demonstrating achievement.

Design features

- 2.15** The Group also identified a number of very important design features of new NQs. These include the following:
- › Courses generally comprise three 40 hour units;
 - › All units and courses are assigned to one of five levels;
 - › Certification of core skills includes derived information;
 - › Candidates who fail a unit assessment are provided with an opportunity to be re-assessed.
- 2.16** The Group did not regard any of these design features as central principles in the same sense as in paragraph 2.14. However, they recognised that the design features had not been arbitrarily determined but had been based on central features of the prior certification system and helped ensure the maintenance and development of a coherent qualifications system. The Group felt these design features should be retained if possible.

PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS



- 1 Purpose of assessment
- 2 Features of National Qualifications
- 3 Outline of Evidence
- 4 Issues and Recommendations



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Purpose of assessment

- 3.1** One of the key issues raised during the review has been the interaction between internal and external assessment. It is important to recognise that each approach has a number of features and purposes, and contributes in different ways to the assessment of candidate performance, but that there is also a potential for duplication where both are used. This chapter considers how to minimise duplication of effort, while adhering to the principles identified in the previous chapter.
- 3.2** Internal assessments require students to demonstrate competence or an acceptable level of understanding in all the learning outcomes of course units and ensure that the skills and learning within the units have been covered. Internal assessment is also seen to be an aid to student learning as it can provide positive motivation when the unit is passed and it also allows for credit for individual units to be awarded. Within centres, internal assessment can allow for better monitoring of progress through regular feedback to students and prompt, focused attention to areas of misunderstandings and difficulties.
- 3.3** National Assessment Bank (NAB) items are available to centres for end-of-unit assessments. Some units have headroom, i.e. can provide evidence of attainment of course outcomes at grades A, B and C. Others provide evidence of attainment only in that unit at Grade C. In these cases schools and colleges have to collect other evidence of higher performance in the course outcomes, for example through a prelim. Internal Assessment of units will not necessarily generate sufficient appeal evidence where courses involve integration and application of knowledge, understanding and skills across units.
- 3.4** The main distinction between internal and external assessment is that external assessment requires students to demonstrate the ability to retain, consolidate and where appropriate integrate skills and knowledge acquired in the units, usually under controlled and/or timed conditions at the end of the course. External assessment also provides students with a final grade on a scale of A to C. On a national scale, quality assurance of external assessment is stronger and national standards can be demonstrated. External assessment also ensures that end qualifications are fully comparable and that publicly defined standards are maintained. As with internal assessment students can obtain a sense of achievement, as they have not only obtained individual units but also gained the full course. External assessment does not, however, have the same potential as internal assessment for providing students with prompt feedback and support for learning during the course.

- 3.5 There are clear links between the principles set out in Chapter 2 and the assessment of new NQs. A key link is that internal assessment supports equality of opportunity and inclusion through allowing those students who have been unsuccessful in external examination to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have attained. Both internal and external assessment are possible vehicles for assessing certain core skills.

Features of NQs

Relationship between internal and external assessment:

- 3.6 NQs rely on both internal and external assessment. It is necessary to ensure that the combination of these does not place too great a burden on students or teaching staff.
- 3.7 During the review, it became apparent that there was some misunderstanding over the relationship between performance standards in internal and external assessment. Good performance in internal assessment (during the course) does not automatically guarantee a similar result in external assessment (at the end of the course). A student may be able to demonstrate achievement in individual tasks at a particular time during the course but this does not necessarily mean that s/he can demonstrate the required retention and integration of knowledge on completion of the course.

Principles of unitisation

- 3.8 Unitisation is a key feature of the new National Qualifications. New National Qualifications are available in colleges as well as schools and are intended to make qualifications accessible for all learners. Unitisation allows learners to take courses gradually and build up qualifications over time. Adult returners, for example, are able to ease their way into learning by taking a course on a unit-by-unit basis taking as much time as they need. Unitisation also allows for appropriate credit transfer, for example a student may complete in college a course that they started at school. This also avoids the need to repeat work. Generally courses are divided into three 40 hour units. Units may be studied in sequence, one after the other in any order, or in parallel so that all are completed at about the same time. Students who have accumulated units over a longer period may need support to review units and integrate and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills before undertaking a course assessment.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION



- 3.9** The Scottish Qualifications Certificate was used for the first time in 2000, and is a cumulative record of a candidate's success in SQA qualifications since 1994. The SQC also sets out the core skills gained by the candidate. The SQC is updated each time a candidate obtains a new qualification which means candidates no longer need to retain each certificate gained.

Outline of Evidence

Evidence base

- 3.10** The evidence available to the review team was drawn from several sources:
- ▶ The surveys of views listed in Annex A;
 - ▶ Evidence from HMIE inspections carried out during 1999-2000 and 2000-01;
 - ▶ Information provided by SQA about the volume of activity associated with external assessment; and
 - ▶ Evidence emerging during the run-up to Diet 2001 about both internal and external assessment.
- 3.11** Partly because of the focus of the questions, the survey evidence was mainly focused on assessment and workload issues, but it also covered the design of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate and the appeals process.

Findings

- 3.12** While the surveys showed general support for the retention of internal assessment there were concerns over its volume and timing. Both staff and students considered that there were too many assessments taking place at the same time for different subjects and that internal assessments were often completed too close to the final exam. However, see 3.21 below about more recent inspection evidence.
- 3.13** The wording of the survey prompts and responses do not always make it clear whether the concern was specifically with internal assessment, or with the combination of internal and external assessment.
- 3.14** Subjects are assessed in different ways, reflecting the nature of the subject and the nature of the arrangements for that subject. In some subjects, unit assessments tend to cluster towards the end of the course. The arrangements for a number of subjects are particularly complex, leading to difficulties for Centres and SQA in managing learning, and ensuring correct marks/grades are credited and recorded for individual candidates.

- 3.15** Internal assessment is supported by the National Assessment Bank. Overall NAB instruments were considered to be useful but the timing of their receipt was problematic. A significant number of senior management teams from both schools and colleges considered that the late arrival of NABs had hindered the preparations for, or the implementation of, internal assessment. There were also some concerns over the quality of the NABs, primarily relating to errors within NABs and misleading language. Many of the problems had been addressed in time for session 2000-2001, although there are still some gaps in provision.
- 3.16** There had been concern and confusion over the purpose and function of NABs. NABs are designed to check that the candidate has achieved at least a minimum level of attainment in the content/skills of the Unit. The majority of staff considered that NABs fulfilled this purpose, and did cover the syllabus. However, there is significant variation across subjects in the extent to which NABs can be used for other purposes, such as supporting appeals, and advice to Centres was regarded as both complex and unclear. This had led to uncertainty over the volume and nature of evidence required to support appeals. (See 3.37 below)
- 3.17** The surveys also produced evidence relating to the design of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate. The majority of respondents considered that the design in 2000 had been difficult to understand.
- 3.18** Issues were raised about the appeals process. Some staff were uncertain about the detail of the appeals procedures and SQA advice was found to be difficult to interpret. There were concerns over why some appeals were granted and others not, when the evidence submitted was similar. The total volume of appeals activity (around 175,000 cases) led to a substantial requirement for teacher release to consider appeals, and an extended appeals round. Concerns about the outcome led to the Independent Review of Appeals. This required the further release from school and significantly delayed the final settlement of the 4000 cases that were submitted for Review.
- 3.19** A number of Directors of Education have indicated that while they fully support the principle of allowing appeals, they would find it very difficult to support the same volume of teacher release from school in autumn 2001. The views expressed by Headteachers and school SQA co-ordinators have been mixed, balancing a recognition that the demand on schools needs to be reduced with a concern to ensure any legitimate appeal is considered.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION



- 3.20** The majority of all appeals were unsuccessful, including appeals for established SCE courses. There was a very low success rate in the Independent Review: around 8% of the cases where Centres found the original appeals result hardest to accept. This is equivalent to a changed outcome for 0.2% of all appeals. The Independent Review was carried out by a separate team of experienced markers. This indicates that the standards applied by the original appeals teams, and hence candidates' final grades, were accurate. The reports from the Independent Review panels show that, in many cases, candidates' work was well below the required standard for the estimate grade. While some of these may have been submitted following intense parental pressure, it is likely that most were supported by the Centre. It seems likely that many of the failed appeals that were not submitted for review were also of a low standard. This evidence points to a need for an improved common understanding of standards across courses.
- 3.21** HMIE inspection evidence showed that internal assessment or issues relating to internal assessment was identified as causing difficulties in about 40% of departments. Half of the departments inspected in year 2 had made significant changes to internal assessment arrangements compared with year 1. Around half of the departments offering new NQs for a second year felt that internal assessment was more manageable in comparison with year 1. Over three quarters of departmental staff felt more confident about successfully implementing new NQs in their second year, compared with their first year. The most commonly noted negative features of new NQs related to the burden of internal assessment for both staff and students and the management of assessment and re-assessment. The latter was particularly noted in departments offering new NQs for the first time in 2000-01 and was generally felt to be less of a problem for more experienced departments. Departments with the fewest problems were those where the school had a good overall policy strategy for managing assessment for new NQs.
- 3.22** The total number of markers, and other SQA appointments, has increased very substantially in the last two years, for various reasons. SQA have indicated that the number of markers increased by 50% between 1999 and 2000, and by another 26% between 2000 and 2001. A total of 9420 were required in 2001. The total number of appointments in 2001 will be over 19,000, compared with an active secondary school teaching force of around 25,000. A number of these appointments will not be teachers, and in some cases one person may be appointed for a number of roles.

- 3.23** The nature of SQA related work is such that appointees require many short blocks of time out of school, and a substantial volume of work is undertaken in their own time. The total amount of appointee release requested this year may be as high as 100,000 days. While not all appointees will be teachers, this is equivalent to 500 full time equivalent teachers/lecturers. In addition, most appointees devote a considerable amount of their own time to SQA work. Markers, for example, will probably spend up to 40,000 days marking in their own time. This is recognised through the payment system, although there has been concern about the level of payments and a review is under way.
- 3.24** Despite an earlier and better publicised recruitment campaign, SQA had failed to recruit sufficient markers before the exam Diet began, with around 1,250 still required at the start of the first week of exams. Contingencies to resolve that shortage caused significant disruption in many schools. Where staff have to come out of school to support the Diet, frequent comments include: lack of supply cover; teacher needs to prepare classwork for day out of school, as well as prepare for external meetings; heaviest demands often placed on most experienced staff.
- 3.25** As well as the level of demand placed on staff and establishments, there is concern over the scheduling of work related to external assessment and certification.
- ▶ A reduced marking window (now only a fortnight) to allow more teaching time in the summer term. This makes it harder to balance marking with other out-of-school activities.
 - ▶ A 'winter diet' is being introduced in 2002 to provide greater flexibility for candidates. This has led to anxiety, especially in the school sector, that staff will be called out of school for even more days to support a second round of examinations.
- 3.26** Anecdotal evidence suggests that, unless there are significant changes, marker recruitment will continue to be problematic in the future. Any increase in marker numbers caused by the combination of more efficient recruitment procedures and any increase in fees may be offset by the number of teachers who drop out of marking National Qualifications after they have gained some valuable marking experience. There has been a concern in the past that moves towards greater openness, for example through provision of marking schemes or feedback on appeals, would reduce the professional incentive to teachers to act as markers (because they would no longer gain privileged information



through acting as markers). This concern should be balanced against the major benefits that would accrue from a more open system where standards were widely shared.

Issues and Recommendations

3.27 From the above evidence it is possible to identify the following key issues:

- › Subject specific issues
- › Securing a common understanding of standards
- › Quality, delivery and purpose of National Assessment Bank items
- › Design of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate
- › Volume of assessment
- › Issues associated with final diet

3.28 As explained in Chapter 2, unit assessment has a number of purposes – the key being to support learning by checking that the candidate has achieved at least a minimum level of attainment on the content/skills of the Unit; and to provide feedback to the learner and teacher/lecturer. Other purposes include for example, contributing to Course estimates, providing some evidence for an appeal and providing experience in examination/test technique. However, evidence indicates a widely held view that the volume and intensity of assessment activity during NQ courses – especially at the end, and in cases where significant reassessment is necessary – interfere with learning and teaching.

3.29 There appears to have been some confusion over the purpose and function of NABs. Many teachers initially understood that NABs could be used on their own as the basis of evidence to support appeals. While this might be the case in a few subjects, not all NABs have the necessary headroom. Supplementary published material providing more challenging tasks at higher grade levels was not widely used. In some cases, NABs were used instead of other assessments with the result that there was insufficient evidence to support appeals. At the other extreme, NABs were sometimes used in addition to all previous assessment and testing activity.

- 3.30** While the need to reduce the level of assessment is widely accepted, there is considerable debate about how best to achieve a reduction. Some have argued for a reduction in Unit assessment, mainly on the grounds that Unit passes do not contribute to the final Course award. Others have argued passionately in favour of retaining the requirement to pass individual Units on the basis that this is essential to support the principles of inclusion, lifelong learning and parity of esteem. Some argue for the retention of both unit assessment and the final exam on the grounds that each contributes something distinctive to the process of demonstrating competence. The common ground across these views is that effort must be made to reduce unnecessary duplication. This may arise because of an over-cautious approach to the production and retention of evidence. It may arise because the arrangements lead to the internal assessment testing things that would be better assessed externally (ie more efficiently and effectively, without detriment to those only wishing to sit Unit assessments). Or it may arise because the external assessment re-tests competences already demonstrated through internal assessment.
- 3.31** In general terms, the solution to all of these is to minimise duplication of effort, so the candidate undergoes the least assessment necessary to support learning and teaching and demonstrates the competence necessary for certification. It is clear that there would be no general support for the complete elimination of Unit assessment, or of the final examinations.
- 3.32** The Group considered that there were a number of actions that could be taken quickly which would address most of the issues identified above. These would focus on:
- ▶ trying to make assessment more effective and efficient
 - ▶ trying to reduce unnecessary duplication of effort, by avoiding assessing the same skills and knowledge more often than necessary
 - ▶ trying to reduce the burden of administration by streamlining processes.
- 3.33** The Group agreed that Ministers should consider immediate implementation of recommendations 1 to 6, and concentrate on the need to:
- ▶ minimise assessment as far as possible, and ideally to one assessment per unit;
 - ▶ conduct all reviews as quickly as possible, and where feasible by Christmas 2001;
 - ▶ focus on those subjects with the highest number of entries.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION



Key Issue 1: Subject specific issues

- 3.34** HMIE implementation evidence identified that the main areas where changes were made by departments between year 1 and year 2 were: changes to timings of assessments; changes to the number of internal assessment “episodes”; and changes in the order of teaching units/topics. Many departments felt that these changes had reduced pressures on teachers and candidates.
- 3.35** There are some courses/subjects that lend themselves to the sequential study of units, with unit assessments held at different times during the course. There are others which, for students in full-time education, are more logically studied as a series of parallel units, or as an integrated course, with all units assessed towards the end of the course. For that second group of subjects, it is likely that all three end-of-unit assessments will be completed immediately before the final examination. For these subjects, pressure of assessment at the end of the course can be alleviated, but is unlikely to be eliminated, by improved management of assessment within the department.
- 3.36** Differences between subjects are not confined to the sequencing of units. The arrangements for some subjects are complex, especially but not exclusively the 'performance subjects' such as Music, PE and Art and Design. More generally, there is a wide variety across the arrangements for assessment. Some of this variety is inevitable, given the differences among subjects. However there is a widely held view, especially among headteachers and SQA co-ordinators, that some of these differences and complexities lead to confusion and errors and could be reduced without threat to the essence of the subjects concerned.
- 3.37** The remit given to teams who prepared subject arrangements allowed them significant discretion within a set of general principles and design rules. The extent of optional provision in some subjects causes problems for those trying to manage assessment. Little attempt was made to ensure that the subject arrangements were consistent, beyond adherence to these very general rules. The outcome was a series of documents that are perceived by many to vary more widely than required to reflect important and intrinsic differences among subjects.
- 3.38** A specific issue that arose this year was the confusion over the evidence required to support appeals, where the application of simple common principles to the various subject arrangements led to a series of very different subject specific rules, considerable confusion, and possible misunderstanding by

teachers about what was required. The advisory document produced for 2001 Appeals was intended to be simpler, but still required a very large number of subject specific statements to cover the variation across courses.

- 3.39** Dealing with subject specific differences imposes a burden on SQA co-ordinators in schools, and staff responsible for preparing and processing data in Centres and in SQA. This is discussed in the final chapter under 'workload issues'.
- 3.40** As departments become used to teaching new courses, they are likely to adapt their sequencing of units, and the time allocated to each. As was the case with NC modules, there is no formal requirement to devote precisely 40 hours to each Unit. There is no intrinsic reason to retain the requirement for each Unit to be valued at 40 hours. It may be possible to reduce internal assessment if some courses were redesigned as two teaching Units, rather than as 3 x 40 hours. The Review Group was divided on this issue. Some felt the design principle of 40 hour Units was embedded too firmly to be changed now. Others were willing to contemplate a more flexible approach to Unit length if this made assessment and teaching easier and more logical, provided students could still study the course in manageable chunks.

Recommendation 1 – Carry out a revision of assessment arrangements on a course by course basis

- 3.41** There are some subject specific issues, and some variations across subjects, that cause problems for those delivering and managing the subjects. SQA have a programme of continuous review of subject arrangements.
- 3.42** It is proposed that SQA, working with other stakeholders, should continue to identify those courses affected by severe subject specific issues, review the relevant arrangements, and provide advice and information to Centres.
- 3.43** Issues to be addressed include:
- ▶ minimising the complexity and variety of assessment arrangements;
 - ▶ minimising the need for subject specific statements about appeals; and
 - ▶ identifying, and where possible reducing, problems caused by structure and length of Units.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION



- 3.44 It is recommended that those carrying out these reviews are given a clear specification about the task to be undertaken, to help maximise consistency across subjects. It is also recommended that steps are taken to ensure the resulting arrangements adhere to that specification.
- 3.45 It is not proposed that these reviews involve changes to subject content, unless it is decided that content should also be reconsidered in respect of a specific subject.
- 3.46 Outcomes might include changes to assessment arrangements, changes to NABs, changes to advice about appeals evidence, and provision of subject specific advice and exemplification.

Key Issue 2: Securing a common understanding of standards

- 3.47 As indicated above, the evidence submitted to support appeals, and the high proportion of unsuccessful appeals, points to the need to develop a better understanding of standards among teachers. This will develop as teachers gain experience of teaching new courses, especially for those who are also engaged in marking and the work of examining teams. The recommendation below is intended to accelerate that process.

Recommendation 2 – Establish better common understanding of standards

- 3.48 This process has already begun through the provision of feedback to centres through the Appeals Review and SQA's consultation on openness.
- 3.49 There are a number of steps that could be taken which would bring about a better common understanding of standards. These primarily relate to the sharing of information.
- 3.50 Securing common high standards is equally important to internal and external assessment. Possible support/changes might include:
 - ▶ issuing detailed marking schemes and examples of marked scripts;
 - ▶ extending the National Assessment Bank to include exemplification of outcomes at different levels or bands;
 - ▶ providing information about standardisation and other aspects of examining process so people understand how the standard is set;
 - ▶ providing feedback on the reasons for appeals outcomes;

- › providing more detailed feedback to Centres on 'concordancy';
- › the involvement of more teachers in marking;
- › providing training for new/prospective markers;
- › feedback to markers on their own performance;
- › greater use of central marking to share experiences;
- › staff development events focusing specifically on standards within NQs; and
- › introduction of local moderation exercises.

Benefits:

- › Improved feedback to candidates and teachers about performance, leading to better learning and teaching and hence higher achievement.
- › Better estimates of performance leading to more 'concordant' centres, resulting in more automatic upgrades prior to certification and a need for fewer appeals.
- › Reduced need for adjustments to take account of marker variation.
- › Better understanding of candidate performance leading to fewer 'no hope' appeals.
- › Reduction in appeals leading to reduced costs, less disruption for centres who have to release markers to conduct appeal, and a shorter period of uncertainty about the outcomes.

Caveats:

- › May be costs to centres/SQA of providing information
- › Long lead in time to producing additional exemplifications
- › Possible impact on students of more teaching staff being taken out of school to be involved in marking, moderation etc.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION



Key Issue 3: Quality, delivery and purpose of National Assessment Bank instruments (NABs)

- 3.51** NABs are a key part of the internal assessment process. They are designed to enable teaching staff to assess a candidate's performance within the Unit, although it is open to Centres to develop alternative instruments which may be subject to moderation. In addition to this standard purpose, some NABs also provide one or all of the following:
- ▶ provision of full or partial evidence to support an appeal for a C pass;
 - ▶ provision of full or partial evidence to support an appeal for Grades A or B;
- or
- ▶ practice in exam techniques.
- 3.52** In the first year of their use, there was widespread misunderstanding about the extent to which NABs could be used for these other purposes.
- 3.53** While the evidence demonstrated that the quality of NABs was generally considered to be good, there was criticism of their late arrival, variable quality and the need for in session changes. A number of changes to NABs have already been made as a result of feedback from centres following session 1999-2000.

Recommendation 3.1 – Clarify purpose of NABs

- 3.54** Centres need unambiguous information about the extent to which each NAB can provide evidence to support an appeal. In simple terms, Centres need clearer advice about what else is required to support an appeal in addition to evidence of performance in the NABs.
- 3.55** It would be much easier for those managing assessment across departments if all NABs made the same type of contribution towards supporting an appeal. Ideally, successful performance in all necessary NABs, together with some limited evidence of the ability to integrate across the course, should be sufficient to support an appeal for a C pass. While this may not be technically possible in every subject, it is recommended that the differences across subjects are minimised, if necessary by adjusting some of the NABs to increase consistency.

Recommendation 3.2 – Improve quality assurance of NABs

- 3.56** While NABs are subject to quality assurance prior to publication, it is recognised that in some cases errors have not been picked up. Where these have been brought to the attention of SQA or the National Qualifications Support Team (formerly HSDU) changes have been made as necessary. It is recommended that mechanisms for improving quality assurance should be considered. These could include mechanisms to allow faster response to comments on NABs and errors being highlighted, and to ensure better proof-reading prior to publication. SQA in association with LTS and SFEU should also give consideration to the need to extend post-hoc studies of quality and performance of NABs.

Recommendation 3.3 – Improve availability of NABs.

- 3.57** It is recognised that deadlines for publishing some NABs have not been met. To remedy this, it is recommended the Scottish Executive should make funds available to bring the National Assessment Bank up to date and ensure NABs are available as required.
- 3.58** It is open to centres to develop their own end-of-unit assessment instruments. However, these tend to be retained by the Centre and are not usually made more widely available. It is recommended that the SQA review the management of the National Assessment Bank to establish mechanisms for centres to “bank” their own successful assessments, thus disseminating good practice.
- 3.59** The Group recognised that the ability to produce NABs was limited by a number of factors, including the availability of authors and also accepted that there was a need to balance the review of existing NABs with the need to develop NABs to support new courses.

Key Issue 4: Scottish Qualifications Certificate design

- 3.60** The Scottish Qualifications Certificate has been re-designed for the 2001 exams following feedback on 2000 design. This work was initially taken forward by the Ministerial Review Group, which includes representatives of parents, teachers and students. MRG suggested areas which could be changed and SQA carried out a consultation on the new format. Only limited changes were proposed for 2001 because of the need to ensure that software could be developed in good time. These included the introduction of a summary of the new qualifications gained, the movement of Core Skills information to the Supplementary Information section, and a list of national units appearing on



a separate page from Course achievements. In addition, candidates will also be issued with information on course fails and fallback awards in the letter which accompanies the SQC. SQA recognise that further changes may be required.

Recommendation 4 – Consider re-design of SQC

- 3.61** It is proposed that the National Qualifications Steering Group evaluates reaction to the new SQC format, and makes subsequent recommendations to SQA about the need for any major changes. The Group recognised that the SQC was used for a wide range of SQA qualifications and there was a need to balance the needs of school students for example with the needs of other candidates.

Key Issue 5: Issues associated with Examination Diet

- 3.62** A final Diet provides a common, unseen, examination of all candidates under standard exam conditions, with quality assurance of marking. As highlighted in paragraph 3.22, it absorbs a substantial amount of teacher time, leads to major disruption of the summer term, imposes a series of mission critical deadlines on centres and SQA, and forces candidates to wait until May before they can enter for final certification. The introduction of the second Diet allows more flexibility for candidates, but adds to the costs and disruption.
- 3.63** Issues associated with the final diet can be split into two broad headings:
- ▶ Structure of the diet; and
 - ▶ Recruitment of markers.
- 3.64** The introduction of National Qualifications has had an impact on the structure of the examination timetable. NQ courses were extended to 160 hours and at the same time exams were shortened to take account of the introduction of internal assessment. The Examination Diet starts later in the summer term to maximise teaching time. This led to a reduction in the time available to teachers for the marking of papers. SQA have recently consulted on the design of the exam timetable for the summer diet in 2002 and beyond to enable teachers concerns to be taken into account. This will see the introduction of a 6 week examination timetable from Summer 2002.
- 3.65** Recent experience indicates that the annual recruitment of all markers is a very time consuming and bureaucratic exercise, and that it cannot be completed by the start of the exam diet. Many teachers who offered to mark this year did not have their applications processed before the exam Diet began. The Executive is currently undertaking a review of marker fees. However, as indicated in 3.24 and 3.25 above, marker recruitment and deployment is likely to remain a problem. The process needs to be thoroughly reviewed.

Recommendation 5 – Review the basis on which markers are appointed

- 3.66** It is suggested that SQA undertake a thorough review of their internal procedures to ensure the marker recruitment and appointment process is effective and efficient.
- 3.67** It is also proposed that a more wide ranging review is carried out into the basis on which the need for markers is identified and met, to ensure that high quality markers (and other SQA appointees) can be recruited and deployed with minimum disruption to learning and teaching.
- 3.68** The group gave some initial consideration to possible changes. It might be possible to extend marker appointments from one year to three, to reduce the associated administration. It might be possible to increase the use of 'central marking' although it was recognised there were strong views for and against this option. A more radical option considered by the group was the introduction of 'local centralised marking' where all (experienced) teachers of a subject were automatically involved in marking, perhaps during the school day, immediately following the relevant examination. This would enable a better understanding of standards to be developed across the entire pool of subject teachers. This would represent a fundamental change in the arrangements for marking, and would required very careful consideration, but it may need to be considered if more conventional approaches are unsuccessful.

Key Issue 6: Volume of assessment**Recommendation 6 – Establish a clearer understanding of the volume and type of assessment evidence that is required**

- 3.69** The Group proposes that SQA, working with LTS, SFEU and other bodies should provide clear advice to centres, complete with exemplification, showing how the various purposes of assessment can be met effectively, using the minimum amount of teacher and student time. For example, it may be helpful to remind teaching staff (supported by exemplification) that where a student fails a NAB, they are only required to be re-assessed on the failed outcomes and not the full NAB.
- 3.70** As part of this process, it is proposed that SQA keep Units and NABs under review, to determine whether there can be a reduction in the number of learning outcomes and/or of discrete internal assessments. This could be conducted in the review suggested in paragraph 3.53.
- 3.71** HMIE have found prelims were used in two-thirds of departments to support internal assessment, generation of estimates and as evidence for appeals.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION



A few teachers commented that they found a prelim useful for re-assessment and a positive means of reducing re-assessment “episodes” in class time. It would be helpful if “good practice” on the use of prelims was disseminated to centres by LTS working in consultation with SQA.

It is proposed that Ministers immediately implement Recommendations 1 to 6 above.

3.72 However, there was concern within the group that these changes may not be sufficient to fully resolve concerns over the volume of assessment. The group considered that more radical changes would be needed if a further reduction in assessment burdens was required. It was recognised that there should be wider consultation with stakeholders before any such change was implemented.

3.73 The Group considered a wide range of options for reducing the burden of assessment associated with NQ Courses, based on the Principles outlined in chapter 2 above. A number of these options are described in Annex E. However, the group considered that in order to make a significant reduction in that burden, beyond what could be achieved through recommendations 1 to 6, it would be necessary to remove the existing dual requirement to demonstrate successful performance in every Unit Outcome through internal assessment **and** to succeed in the final examination.

3.74 Two options were identified by the Group that encapsulated the key ideas. It was agreed that there were a number of possible variants of each, although it would be important to ensure the rules were clear, and did not introduce unnecessary new complications.

3.75 Option A: Candidates who were successful in the external assessment would be given a course award. Candidates could also be assessed and certificated for each Unit, but this was not necessary. It would need to be agreed whether the external assessment would have to test every outcome, or sample across outcomes.

3.76 Option B: Candidates who demonstrated successful achievement of all Unit outcomes would receive an ungraded course award. A Grade would be awarded on the basis of an optional external assessment. It was agreed that the ungraded course award might, in theory, be based on internal or external assessment.

3.77 In relation to both options, decisions would have to be taken about the extent to which the external assessments, or the NABs, would need to be developed to meet the new requirements.

It is proposed that Ministers consult on whether more fundamental changes, such as those outlined in Option A and Option B, are required to achieve a sufficient reduction in the burden of assessment

- 1 Curriculum, Guidance, Core Skills and Workload
- 2 Outline of Evidence
- 3 Issues and Recommendations



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Curriculum

- 4.1** The introduction of National Qualifications considerably changed the S5 and S6 curriculum. Many of the traditional “academic” courses were subjected to syllabus changes, although in some cases these were updating changes. In addition, with the bringing together of academic and vocational courses an increased range of subjects was available, although there was no requirement to offer every subject. Not only was an increased range of subjects available but it was possible for each subject to be available at more than one level. As said earlier, centres offered many Intermediate courses in 1999 despite only being required to introduce the new NQ Higher.
- 4.2** National Qualifications also introduced easier progression from one level to the next. The Intermediate levels are intended to make the jump from Standard Grade to Higher easier, and thus allow more students to progress to higher levels of qualification.
- 4.3** In principle, the assessment system allows for early decisions to be made about the need to change level where necessary to ensure that candidates are attempting the course at an appropriate level.

Guidance

- 4.4** Guidance has also been affected by National Qualifications. As a result of the new levels of qualifications being introduced Guidance teachers have had to become aware of the various progression routes through National Qualifications as well as assessment arrangements for each subject. This has also had the knock on effect of more time being spent on NQ level students than other students. However, NQs have had the benefit of providing more detailed information on student's progress.

Core Skills

- 4.5** Core Skills are not a new area within qualifications. Most have been taught in some form for many years. However, the certification of Core Skills was new for 2000. National Qualifications certificate achievement in 5 Core Skills – Communication, Numeracy, Working With Others, Problem Solving and Using Information Technology. Core Skills are embedded within many courses, for example numeracy within Maths, communication within English and Communication. They are also available as stand alone 40 hour units, which allow students to certify skills that they have not been able to demonstrate through their course options.

Bi-level and Multi-level teaching

- 4.6** Bi-level or Multi-level teaching occurs where a class contains students undertaking units or courses at more than one level simultaneously, for instance, a class with one teacher covering Higher and Intermediate levels at the same time. Bi-level teaching is offered in a number of school departments. Multi-level teaching would appear to be more common in colleges than in schools.

Workload

- 4.7** The introduction of National Qualifications has had an impact on the workload of both teachers and students, primarily as a result of internal assessment. Teachers' workloads have been affected by the need to prepare for and mark internal assessments and report the outcome of these to SQA. Students have also had additional work relating to preparing for and taking assessments and re-assessments.

Resources

- 4.8** HMIE inspection evidence reported that resources for learning and teaching were good or very good in over 90% of the departments inspected. Most subject departments reported that they had been well supported through additional funding to support the implementation of new NQs. In the main this funding was used to purchase new text books or to photocopy sets of centrally prepared materials. Lack of resources restricted the implementation of new NQs in only a few cases. These usually related to ICT hardware and software and guidance.

Outline of Evidence

- 4.9** Around three-quarters of teachers and lecturers considered that NQs had been successful in providing levels of study for all abilities and over half of lecturers thought the new structure was better than previously available. Over 80% of teachers and lecturers supported widening the range of courses, but around 65%, thought that the first year had been successful in this area.
- 4.10** There was also widespread support for breaking down the barriers between vocational and academic courses. However, the first year was not considered to have been very successful in this area with only one-third of teachers and around half of lecturers assessing this as being very or fairly successful.

LEARNING AND TEACHING



- 4.11** There was considerable support from teachers for Access and Intermediate courses. Opinion on whether provision at Higher and Advanced Higher was improved was fairly evenly balanced with similar percentages agreeing and disagreeing with this statement.
- 4.12** Teachers and lecturers were also asked to give their opinion on how easy the new curriculum was for themselves and students to understand. A minority of teaching staff considered that the curriculum was either easy for them or easy for students to understand.
- 4.13** Guidance provision and monitoring arrangements were considered to have improved under National Qualifications. However, concern was expressed about insufficient time for staff to become well informed of the details of the qualifications and their assessment arrangements. Schools and colleges also referred to the issue of too much time being spent on NQ students which meant limited time was available for other students.
- 4.14** The majority of teachers and lecturers supported the principle of promoting core skills although smaller numbers considered the first year of implementation had been successful at this. The surveys also identified a gap in knowledge in that over half of parents were either not aware or only vaguely aware of core skills.
- 4.15** Colleges did not appear to be concerned over multi-level teaching. Around a quarter of colleges expected this to increase under National Qualification and where colleges had little or no multilevel teaching there were often plans to develop this. HMIE inspection evidence reported that around one-quarter of subject departments in schools investigated offered bi-level teaching. This was most commonly available at Intermediate 2 and Higher levels and most frequently found in French, accounting and finance and history. A few departments reported problems with bi-level teaching. These were most apparent in history where poor overlap between Intermediate 2 and Higher were identified as the issues. Difficulties were also reported in Intermediate French and Spanish where planning for internal assessment caused difficulties.
- 4.16** The most decisive views were often gained in response to questions on workload. A substantial majority of teachers and lecturers considered their course planning and management workload, their workload on lesson preparation and their workload on assessing students work had increased.

Issues and Recommendations

Key Issue 7: Impact on Guidance

- 4.17** The Executive was aware of concerns over Guidance and as a result the Higher Still Liaison Group (now replaced by the National Qualifications Steering Group) established a Guidance sub-group. The sub-group was set up to address and resolve issues of concern relating to NQ implementation. In its report of January 2001 the sub-group recognised that extensive good quality support and advice had been provided. However, it went on to identify a number of issues such as the consistency of practice within guidance, the establishment of a PSE teaching qualification, the need for greater ICT training for staff and the need for a nationally defined baseline for Guidance provision.
- 4.18** The sub-group report was considered by the National Qualifications Steering Group. Many of the issues identified are not solely relating to National Qualifications and NQSG agreed that the Executive should take these forward primarily through other forums.
- 4.19** **Recommendation 7 – The Scottish Executive should consider the issues raised by the Guidance Sub-Group and take action in partnership with other bodies and organisations.**

Key Issue 8: Awareness and recognition of core skills

- 4.20** The lack of awareness of core skills is of concern and action needs to be taken to resolve this. SQA have already available a leaflet explaining Core Skills which could be used to increase awareness.
- 4.21** Feedback has also suggested that free standing core skills units are not easy to deliver and do not readily have the facility for taking account of a candidate's outside interests, e.g. playing in an orchestra.

Recommendation 8.1 – Increase awareness of core skills

- 4.22** The SQA should attempt to raise candidates', parents' and employers' awareness of Core Skills. This could involve a wide distribution of SQA's Core Skills leaflet through other channels, for example SPTC and school boards, CBI and Chambers of Commerce. However, it is recognised that centres also have a part to play in increasing awareness and visibility of core skills. LTS could help raise awareness and understanding of core skills as a generic aspect of education at all stages, including stages leading to NQs.



Recommendation 8.2 – Allow recognition of outside interests

- 4.23** Core Skills profiles should fully reflect the skills held by students. The Group recommends that SQA reviews the arrangements documents for Core Skills units and, if necessary, amend these, in order that outside interests and activities can be considered when achievement evidence is gathered. However, the Group recognises that there may be practical issues associated with this and it may not be possible to implement this recommendation fully.

Key Issue 9: Reducing workload

- 4.24** The main concerns over workload primarily related directly and indirectly to assessment. Chapter 3 contains a number of recommendations and options; while some, if accepted, could only be introduced over a longer term, others could be implemented in the comparatively near future. Such recommendations should be implemented as rapidly as possible while ensuring that stakeholders are informed and prepared for revisions of units, courses and assessment instruments. However, other short term measures to reduce workload also need to be introduced; it may be possible to replace burdens other than those arising from the exercise of assessment, through for example the reporting of internal assessment.
- 4.25** SQA has investigated the benefits of introducing a 'default pass' system but this was not implemented for Diet 2001 due to the potential risks to certification. Under this system, centres would only advise SQA of students who had failed, deferred or withdrawn from units. This would reduce the amount of data to be recorded and processed by centres and also transferred to and processed by SQA.

Recommendation 9 – Improve system for data transmission

- 4.26** The Group recommend that SQA should give further consideration to how best to streamline the reporting of registration, entry and results information for the 2001/02 school session.
- 4.27** In particular, there should be continuing investigations of the ways in which the use of ICT can support and simplify assessment and the recording of assessment results.

- 1 Staff development events and issue of support materials
- 2 Outline of Evidence
- 3 Issues and Recommendations



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Staff Development events

- 5.1 Staff Development events were provided either locally through the school or college or nationally through the Higher Still Development Unit or the Scottish Further Education Unit. Previous seminars have been specific to subjects and also on general topics such as assessment.
- 5.2 Local staff development through the school was often delivered by a member of staff who has attended a “national” event. HMIE found that effective cascading to staff had taken place after attendance at national courses.

Support Materials

- 5.3 Support materials have been developed by the Higher Still Development Unit, the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (now LTS) and others including local authorities. Support materials could be split between two categories – general and subject specific. For example, general materials relate to assessment and information packs and subject specific materials include subject guides, arrangement documents and exemplar assessment material.

Outline of Evidence

- 5.4 There was general support for the amount of staff development. The majority of teaching staff rated the timeliness of national and local training as fairly or very good. Lecturers were more positive over the usefulness of national staff development events than teachers.
- 5.5 HMIE evidence stated that all staff in 73% of departments inspected had been trained to support the delivery of new NQs and most of this training was well received. In a few subject areas, NQ implementation had been supported by staff development provided by institutions of higher education, for example through summer schools. The need for further staff development was most frequently noted in mathematics, modern languages, history, English and physical education.
- 5.6 As part of the Scottish Executive's survey, teaching staff were asked to give their opinion on the quality of both general materials and subject specific materials. The majority of teaching staff were satisfied with the quality of subject materials, although only a minority were satisfied with the quality of general materials. This is slightly contradicted by feedback from more recent HMIE where 90% of departments evaluated nationally provided curriculum support materials to be good or very good. The key reason for materials being poorly received was inconsistency, but others were also considered to be dull with too much text.

- 5.7** While nearly all teachers had seen support materials on assessment, under three-quarters had seen materials on core skills. School Senior Management Teams were fairly evenly split over the accessibility of assessment and support materials. Around half of college Heads of Departments thought materials were easy to obtain.
- 5.8** Staff were also split over the amount of material that was available. While just over half of teachers and lecturers were satisfied with the amount of materials for their own subject, a significant number would have found more course material useful. Around one quarter of teachers and lecturers also stated that they would have found more materials on assessment useful. College staff also expressed the need for more materials on Scottish Group Awards and Phase 2 courses.
- 5.9** Although not identified from the surveys, the Executive is also aware of the need for materials suitable for Open Learning courses.
- 5.10** The area of most concern relating to support materials was the method and timing of distribution. A substantial number of teachers and lecturers were dissatisfied with the timeliness of both subject materials and general materials.

Issues and Recommendations

Key Issue 10: Levels and timing of training, particularly local

- 5.11** It is recognised that while training across the programme as a whole has generally been adequate there remain areas for further action, particularly in relation to the new project-based and Advanced Higher courses.

Recommendation 10

- 5.12** The Executive, in conjunction with LTS and SFEU should consider need for and funding of further staff development events. However, the Group noted that there was not solely a role for national bodies but also a role for local authorities and centres.

Key Issue 11: Need for materials for special needs students

- 5.13** HSDU had begun preparatory work on developing NABs to take account of special needs.

Recommendation 11

- 5.14** The Executive, LTS and SQA in partnership with interested parties, should consider the need for and funding of further materials adapted for special needs.



Key Issue 12: Need for materials for open learning students

- 5.15** At the current time, open learning materials are primarily available for selected Advanced Higher courses. These are through the Open, Flexible and Distance Learning Project which is funded by the Executive and led by LTS in partnership with other bodies. This project has also been enhanced by National Grid for Learning funding to enable e-versions of flexible learning materials/units to be developed. Other materials are available through the SCHOLAR project led by Heriot Watt University. Guidance on assessment and quality assurance for open and distance learning is also available from SQA.

Recommendation 12

- 5.16** The Group recommends that LTS, in association with SQA and other interested parties, gives consideration to the need for further open and distance learning materials for all levels of new National Qualifications.

Key Issue 13: Need to make support materials more accessible

- 5.17** SQA have recently published a document “SQA Information” which lists all materials available for courses. Although the separate National Qualifications Support Team ends in June 2001, responsibility for the provision of support materials will pass to LTS. LTS is planning to issue a number of subject support packs over the coming months.

Key Issue 14: Need for additional material on subjects and assessment

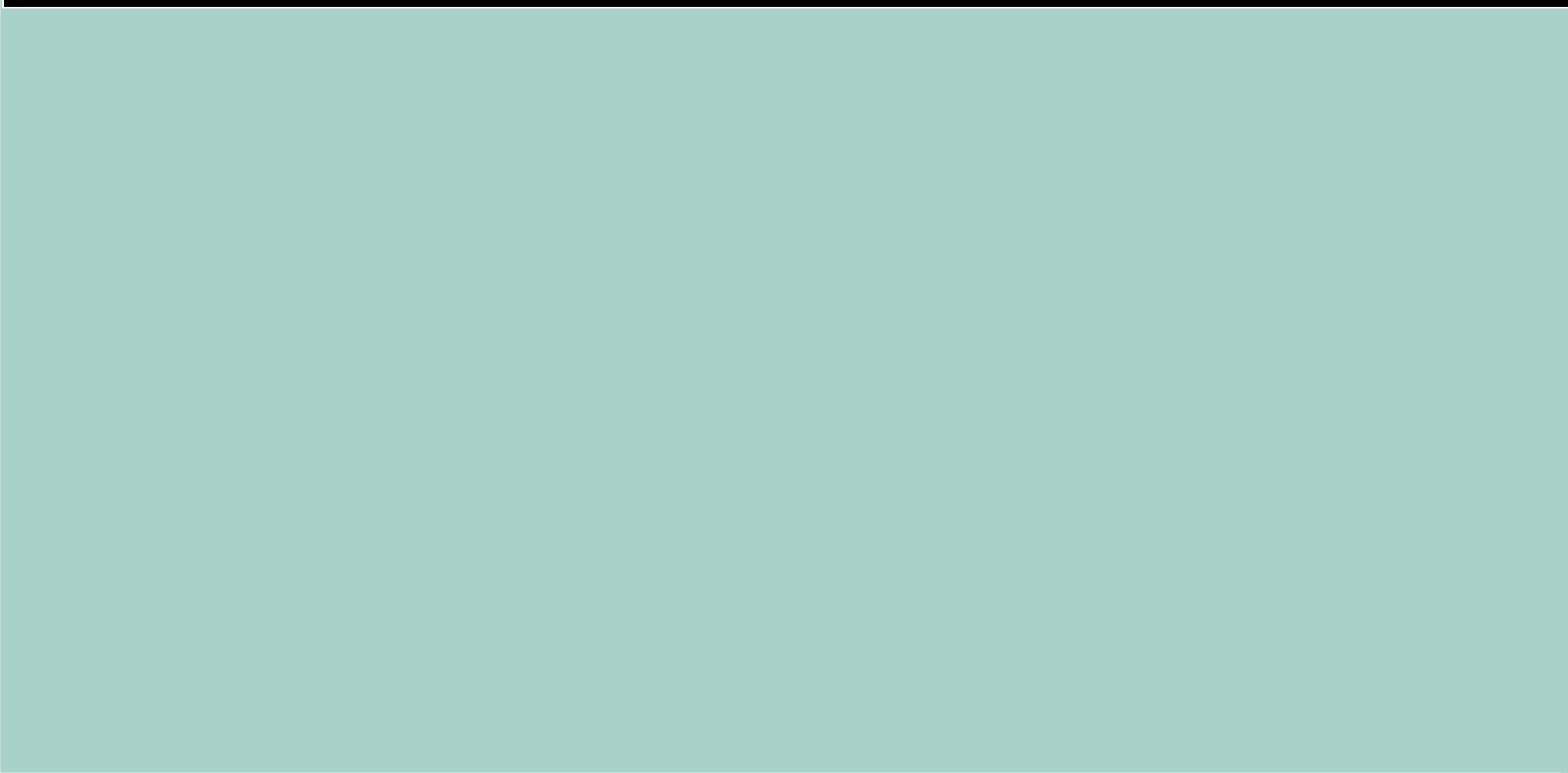
- 5.18** Much of the guidance on assessment was written at earlier stages of the Development Programme and may need updating to take account of experience. The HMI survey identified the need for good practice guidance to be disseminated.

Key Issue 15: Need for more material for project-based courses

- 5.19** The need for additional support for Project based courses is recognised and discussions with key parties are on-going.

Key Issue 16: Poor timing of distribution

- 5.20** Most concerns were expressed about the timing of the distribution of materials. The Executive recognises that timing has been poor and materials were often delivered after they were needed. In future steps will be put in place to ensure prompt delivery.



ANNEX A



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SUMMARY OF SURVEY EVIDENCE

The Review has been conducted using a number of sources of evidence covering teachers, lecturers, parents and students. The main sources are:

SFEU/HSDU Report “Higher Still in Practice”

SQA Surveys of students, teachers and National Assessment Bank instruments

SPTC parents survey

HMI/ASC/ADES National Investigation into internal assessment

EIS/SSTA survey of assessment, conducted by MORI

Scottish Executive survey on NQ implementation, conducted by System 3 Social Research

The dates of the surveys range from May 2000 to February 2001.

The evidence referred to in the earlier chapters is set out below. The source of the comments and figures is referred to at the beginning of the line.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

Relationship between internal and external assessment

HMI/ADES/ASC – 50% of Heads of Departments visited referred to differences between demands of both types of assessment

HMI/ADES/ASC – 50% of schools would prefer a system which could give credit for very good performance in internal assessments

HMI/ADES/ASC – some staff felt unfair that internal assessments did not contribute to final grade

HMI/ADES/ASC – some students suggested internal assessments be graded rather than pass/fail

External Assessment

› exam timetable

HMI/ADES/ASC – shorter exam timetable meant that students sit too many exams in short space of time

› length of exam papers

HMI/ADES/ASC – some schools concerned that shorter exams less reliable

HMI/ADES/ASC – particular worry that poor performance could have greater impact on final grade than previously

Internal Assessment

- ▶ provide positive motivation

HMI/ADES/ASC – 30%+ of Senior Management Team identified the motivating effect of internal assessment as a positive feature

- ▶ Monitor and feedback on progress

HMI/ADES/ASC – over 50% of visits was identified as the main benefits of unit assessment arrangements

- ▶ General

HMI/ADES/ASC – 50%+ of Senior Management Team indicated that overall internal assessment successfully implemented

EIS/SSTA – 59% of respondents thought internal assessment not worked, although 41% think it did work fairly or very well

SPTC – 49% of parents found internal assessments generally helpful

- ▶ NABs (quality and timing of distribution)

HMI/ADES/ASC – 70%+ of school and college departments found NABs very helpful or helpful

HMI/ADES/ASC – 25% of Heads of Departments commented NABs very useful or essential

HMI/ADES/ASC – 30%+ of school and college Senior Management Teams referred to variable or poor quality NABs

HMI/ADES/ASC – about 50% of Senior Management Team indicated that late arrival of NABs had hindered preparations for or implementation of internal assessment

HMI/ADES/ASC – 20% of Heads of Departments and a few Senior Management Teams thought arrangements had not been very successful or unsuccessful

HMI/ADES/ASC – 65% of students considered NABs did not stretch able students

EIS/SSTA – 54% of teachers thought overall quality of NABs was good or very good, 22% considered them as poor

EIS/SSTA – 54% thought NABs easy to understand and 51% thought good layout of questions/tasks

EIS/SSTA – 32% thought language misleading, 22% poorly written, 31% not relevant to the external assessment

EIS/SSTA – 50% teachers consider NABs do not adequately prepare students for external assessment

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SQA Teachers – 88% thought NABs covered syllabus fully or adequately

SQA Teachers – 75% thought level of demand was about right

SQA teachers – about one third thought the amount of assessment was excessive, one third thought was about right

SQA Teachers – 43% of teachers made comments about problems/errors in NABs

SQA Teachers – 22% of comments related to inconsistencies in demand within and between subjects and between NABs for the same unit

▸ volume of assessment

Scottish Executive – 69% of teachers too much internal assessment (varies by subject)

Scottish Executive – 48% of college lecturers too much internal assessment

Scottish Executive – 28% of teachers though balance between internal and external assess was right compared with 48% of lecturers

HMI/ADES/ASC – around 50% staff and students expressed concern over volume of assessment – too many taking place at same time for different subjects, completing internal assessment close to external assessment

HMI/ADES/ASC – some students found prospect of reassessment reassuring

HMI/ADES/ASC – staff and students at 50% of visits suggested volume of assessment be reduced

HMI/ADES/ASC – students indicated need for more time between assessments

HMI/ADES/ASC – most responses related to reduction of internal assessment rather than entire removal

HMI/ADES/ASC – around 50% of staff and students suggested changes – introducing grading system, use similar format to exams, review need to pass all units before gaining award, more use of NABs for estimates and appeals, consistent approach across subjects

EIS/SSTA – 34% of teachers and 47% of students thought far too many Unit Assessments, 28% and 23% said slightly too many. 35% and 28% though number was about right

EIS/SSTA – around 55% of teachers thought assessments were at right level

EIS/SSTA – 60% of teachers consider internal assessments should continue in revised format, 30% discontinued

EIS/SSTA – 52% suggest remove requirement to pass all units, 35% reschedule assessments, 32% option of additional exam paper, 30% Internal Assessments for Access and Intermediate 1 and 2 courses only

REVIEW OF INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

EIS/SSTA – 25% suggest fewer Internal Assessments as improvement to NQs

SPTC – 36% of parents too much internal assessments and 46% thought too close together

SPTC – 36% internal assessments poor indicator of final exam

SPTC – 29% internal assessments very stressful

SQA Teacher – 22 out of 29 school raised serious concerns about the weight/burden of assessment

› timing of assessments

HMI/ADES/ASC – around 50% of departments concerned about time required for reassessment

HMI/ADES/ASC – 1/3 of Senior Management Team pointed to difficulties with timing

HMI/ADES/ASC – 30%+ of staff and students visited said internal assessments helped students work at a steady pace

SQA Pupils – 75% of candidates agreed it was good to know units passed before exam taken

SQA Pupils – 63% thought there were too many assessments happening at the same time

SQA Pupils – 38% thought they were rushed through assessments before they were ready

SQA Pupils 90% thought it was good to have reassessment but 40%+ thought they took up too much class time

› consistency

HMI/ADES/ASC around 50% of visits raised variation between subjects in volume and difficulty of assessment as an issue

HMI/ADES/ASC – students often commented too much assessment in some subjects eg accounting, modern studies, and geography.

HMI/ADES/ASC – students referred to differences in level of difficulty – accounting and finance and computing too difficult

› Design of Scottish Qualifications Certificate

Scottish Executive – 72% of teachers said difficult for students to understand

Scottish Executive – 67% of lecturers said same

Scottish Executive – 6% teachers and 10% of lecturers thought easy to understand

Scottish Executive – 54% of teachers said difficult for them to understand

HMI/ADES/ASC – some students and parents stated that they found the format of the SQC over complicated

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› Appeals

HMI/ADES/ASC – some staff concerned that unit assessment could not be used to estimate course performance or provide evidence for appeals

HMI/ADES/ASC – investigation revealed considerable uncertainties over appeals process, staff unsure of procedures, found SQA advice difficult to interpret, process not transparent

HMI/ADES/ASC – reports from departments about lack of understanding on why some appeals were given and others not based on similar evidence

LEARNING AND TEACHING

› Core skills

Scottish Executive – 70% teachers and 87% lecturers support principle of promoting core skills

Scottish Executive – 46% teachers and 66% lecturers thought year 1 had been very or fairly successful at this

SPTC – 37% parents not aware of Core skills, 27% were vaguely aware

SFEU – around 60% of colleges had formal core skills policy, around $\frac{1}{3}$ of these stated CS development was available for all students

SFEU – student reaction to NQ emphasis on Core Skills was generally positive and there were favourable reports from staff

› Guidance

Scottish Executive – 20% teachers thought NQs had resulted in better guidance being provided to pupils (42% no response given)

HMI/ADES/ASC – overall NQs were thought to have had a positive impact on guidance provision although there were difficulties

HMI/ADES/ASC – 30%+ of schools visited expressed concern – not enough time to acquaint themselves with details of NQs, not well informed about assessment arrangements for different subjects

HMI/ADES/ASC – 50% visits arrangements for monitoring progress improves as a result of NQs

HMI/ADES/ASC – 30%+ schools drew attention to difficulties – insufficient time, too much time spent on NQs and not other year groups

HMI/ADES/ASC – college tutors also referred to limited time for contact with certain students

SFEU – Progress, Plan-IT and Core Skills checklist were appreciated though colleges have many suggestions for improvements

REVIEW OF INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

› Management and Planning of courses

SFEU – Number of colleges had made changes to timetabling to enable introduction of NQs, most commonly to pattern of blocks but also length of teaching year, week and day

SFEU – impact on management and administration time was considerable

› Multi-level teaching

SFEU – around a quarter of colleges had experience of bi-level teaching prior to introduction of NQs, expected to increase under NQs

SFEU – in colleges with little or no bi-level teaching there are usually plans to develop this

› Levels of study for all abilities

Scottish Executive – 76% teachers and 74% lecturers thought NQs had been successful in providing levels of study to suit all abilities

Scottish Executive – 54% lecturers thought new structure better than previous (23% worse)

Scottish Executive – 66% teachers said levels linked well

Scottish Executive – 53% teachers 63% lecturers said overall system of units, courses and SGAs fitted well

› Providing appropriate and relevant teaching

Scottish Executive – 69% teachers and 72% lecturers considered curriculum successful in terms of providing appropriate and relevant teaching

Scottish Executive – 75% teachers and lecturers considered curriculum successful at delivering appropriate and relevant learning

Scottish Executive – 28% English teachers considered new course unsuccessful, compared with 11% teachers and lecturers generally

› Increased range of subjects

Scottish Executive – 89% teachers and 83% lecturers support widening range of courses

Scottish Executive – 65% teachers and 64% lecturers considered year 1 had been very or fairly successful at this.

› Vocational and academic

Scottish Executive – 70% teachers and 79% lecturers support breaking down barrier between vocational and academic courses

Scottish Executive – 34% teachers and 48 lecturers consider year 1 been very or fairly successful at this

ANNEX A



› NQ provision better than previous?

EIS/SSTA – 65% Access and Intermediate teachers consider new provision better, 19% worse

EIS/SSTA – 36% Higher and AH teachers consider new provision better, 34% think worse

› Smooth transition into FE, HE or employment

Scottish Executive – 31% teachers felt NQs had been successful in providing a smooth transition into FE/HE/employment (22% unsuccessful)

Scottish Executive – 44% lecturers considered NQs had been successful at providing a smooth transition to higher qualifications eg HNC/Ds

Scottish Executive – 21% lecturers considered NQs had been successful at providing a smooth transition into employment

› Course arrangements/mode of delivery

Scottish Executive – 34% lecturers thought NQ course arrangements were better than those used previously (38% worse)

Scottish Executive – 32% lecturers thought mode of delivery better, (24% worse)

› Understanding

Scottish Executive – 37% teachers and 45% lecturers thought new curriculum was easy for them to understand

Scottish Executive – 20% teachers and 26% lecturers thought new curriculum was easy for students to understand (55% teachers, 60% lecturers thought difficult)

› Course Content

SPTC – 77% parents rated course content as satisfactory, 13% excellent

SFEU – in general staff and students have reacted well, difficulties were greater than expected. Most related to programme design and delivery in the face of insufficient material

› Workload of teaching staff

Scottish Executive – 93% teachers considered course planning and management workload increased (70% a lot, 23% a bit)

Scottish Executive – 79% teachers reported lesson preparation had increased (51% a lot, 28% a bit) 20% said stayed the same

Scottish Executive – 95% teachers reported that workload on assessing students work increased (77% a lot)

Scottish Executive – 76% lecturers considered unit and course planning and management had increased (55% a lot, 21% a bit)

REVIEW OF INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Scottish Executive – 62% lecturers considered workload on preparing teaching and assessment material had increased, 16% thought decreased

Scottish Executive – 64% lecturers considered assessment workload had increased

› Workload of students

SPTC – 80% parents considered amount of hand-in work was reasonable, 14% excessive

SFEU – reports on student workload varied with both favourable comments and concern that workload had unduly increased

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Staff Development Events

› Amount

Scottish Executive – 61% teachers rated amount of training and support provided by HSDU as fairly or very good (fairly or very poor 28%)

Scottish Executive – 70% lecturers rated amount of training and support from HSDU/SFEU as fairly or very good

Scottish Executive – 52% teachers rated amount of local training/support as fairly or very good (27% fairly or very poor)

Scottish Executive – 57% lecturers rated amount of local training/support as fairly/very good (22% fairly or very poor)

› Timing

Scottish Executive – 59% teachers, 70% lecturers rated timeliness of HSDU/SFEU training/support as fairly or very good.

Scottish Executive – 53% teachers, 68% lecturers rated timeliness of local training/support as good (23% and 17% poor) Subject differences – only 40% of technical rated this as good

› Quality/Usefulness

Scottish Executive – 52% teachers, 72% lecturers rated usefulness of HSDU/SFEU as either fairly or very good. Difference in grade 54% unpromoted, 53% promoted, 34% Senior Management Team

Scottish Executive – 53% teachers, 63% lecturers rated usefulness of local training/support as good

ANNEX A



Support materials

Scottish Executive – 98% of teachers and 96% lecturers had seen assessment materials, under three quarters of teachers and lecturers had seen materials on core skills

› Quality/Usefulness

Scottish Executive – number of comments received on need for pupil notes and exercises and need to be user friendly

Scottish Executive – 57% of teachers were fairly or very satisfied with the quality of subject material (34% fairly or very dissatisfied)

Scottish Executive – 61% of lecturers were satisfied with quality of subject material (27% fairly/very dissatisfied)

Scottish Executive – 40% of teachers and 47% of lecturers satisfied with quality of general material (39% and 34% dissatisfied)

HMI/ADES/ASC – generally staff thought info from HSDU/SQA had helped prepare for NQs

HMI/ADES/ASC – majority of Senior Management Team indicated information was helpful or very helpful

HMI/ADES/ASC – dissemination of good practice guidance, development of more materials for students with special needs

HMI/ADES/ASC – some college staff asked that difficulties associated with students on open/remote learning schemes be addressed, especially for practical subjects.

HSDU/SFEU – positive response to the materials, although generally good, materials need to be carefully checked for errors

› Availability

Scottish Executive – 45% of Senior Management Team in schools thought been fairly or very easy to obtain assessment and support materials

Scottish Executive – 42% of Senior Management Team thought been difficult to obtain assessment and support materials

Scottish Executive – 17 /30 Heads of Departments for college thought materials easy to obtain

36% of teachers and 33% of lecturers thought no additional materials were needed

REVIEW OF INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Scottish Executive – 55% teachers and 56% lecturers were satisfied with amount of material for their subject

Scottish Executive – 43% of both teachers and lecturers would have found more course material useful

Scottish Executive – 21% teachers and 25% lecturers would find more materials on assessment useful

Scottish Executive – 40% of teachers and 44% of lecturers were satisfied with amount of general materials

HSDU/SFEU – perception that needs of schools had precedence and most fully developed resources relate to needs of schools

HSDU/SFEU – need coverage for all subjects and more material for SGAs, especially Phase 2 courses

HSDU/SFEU – materials will have to be expanded and tailored to meet college needs and add greater appeal for adults

► **Timing and method of distribution**

Scottish Executive – 43% of teachers were satisfied with the method of dissemination of materials for their own subject, 48% said they were fairly or very dissatisfied

Scottish Executive – 24% of teachers satisfied with timeliness of receipt of subject materials, 70% dissatisfied

Scottish Executive – 34% of lecturers satisfied with timeliness of subject materials, 58% expressed dissatisfaction

Scottish Executive – 36% of teachers satisfied with dissemination of general materials, 45% fairly or very dissatisfied

Scottish Executive – 52% of lecturers satisfied with dissemination of general materials, 36% dissatisfied

Scottish Executive – 21% of teachers satisfied with timeliness of materials, 63% dissatisfied

Scottish Executive – 30% of lecturers satisfied with timeliness of general materials, 58% dissatisfied

HSDU/SFEU – lack of or late arrival of support materials was main issue for colleges

ANNEX B



GLOSSARY

ADES	Association of Directors of Education (Scotland)
ASC	Association of Scottish Colleges
CoSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
EIS	Educational Institute of Scotland
HMIE	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
HSDU	Higher Still Development Unit
LTS	Learning and Teaching Scotland
MRG	Ministerial Review Group
NAB	National Assessment Bank
NABs	End-of-unit assessment tests
NC	National Certificate
NQ(s)	National Qualification(s)
NQSG	National Qualifications Steering Group
PSE	Personal and Social Education
SE	Scottish Executive
SFEU	Scottish Further Education Unit
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPTC	Scottish Parent Teacher Council
SSTA	Scottish Secondary Teachers Association
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SQC	Scottish Qualifications Certificate

ANNEX C

REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Remit

“To consider the range of evidence relating to the introduction of new National qualifications, highlight key areas of concern and make recommendations for remedial action. In addition, to consider draft chapters of the review report and make any necessary changes to ensure that a reader friendly report is published.”

Chair Colin MacLean (SEED)

Members George MacBride (EIS)
Margaret Doran (ADES/CoSLA)
Judith Gillespie (SPTC)
Iain Ovens (SFEU)
Tom Kelly (ASC)
Denis Stewart (LTS)
Christine De Luca (SQA)
Fiona Campbell (SEED)

ANNEX D



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ANNEX E

OTHER OPTIONS FOR REDUCING VOLUME OF ASSESSMENT

This Annex sets out other options for reducing the volume of assessment considered by the Group. They can be split into two distinct sections:

- options which are contained within or related to the recommendations in Paragraph 3.75; or
- options unrelated to these recommendations.

This latter group were considered by the Group but not recommended in favour of the options contained in the main report.

Related Recommendations

Assume Units have been passed if candidate obtains Grade A

During the early stages of the Higher Still reforms it was proposed that where a student achieves a pass at Grade A they are deemed to have passed all component units within their course regardless of a failure to achieve a pass in an internal assessment for a unit. This recommendation was not accepted at the time, but has been raised again as means of reducing assessment.

Centres could apply this in two ways:

- students would take all unit assessments, but if they failed, would not be re-assessed until after the exam. If the candidate obtained a Grade A, the high Grade would be considered to have validated the failed assessment. If the candidate achieved only a Grade B or C, then they would have to be re-assessed.
- teaching staff would identify those students likely to obtain Grade As in the external assessment and these students would be permitted to by-pass the unit assessments.

Offer alternative internal exam paper in place of unit assessments

An internally assessed paper could be introduced to test those outcomes which are currently assessed through internal assessment but not through external assessment. Candidates would be able to choose whether to opt for unit assessments or for the additional paper. In order to reduce the impact of reassessment on teaching and learning, it would also be possible to use such a paper as a means of reassessing units which the candidate had failed to pass at first assessment. To prevent any questioning of the concept of parity of esteem, whatever the means by which attainment in individual units had been determined, the same form of certification should be employed.

NOTE: would allow Unit assessments to be by-passed, but would required full reassessment of all units if either this paper or the final exam was failed.

ANNEX E



Develop NABs to test the full range of competences at level C, and give a course award (at level C) for successful completion of all three Units.

This would be a long term exercise. It would require NABs to be developed technically to cover the full range of competence. A 'final NAB' might need to be developed in some subjects to test integration across units. Quality Assurance and moderation would need to be developed very significantly to develop widespread confidence in the reliability of a system that gave course awards on the basis of internal assessment. However, the benefits could be significant:

- › very substantial reduction in external assessment and appeals;
- › entirely flexible scheduling of courses; no need for a second Diet of exams (if candidates were willing to wait until summer for an A/B exam);
- › more robust and consistent standards across all schools;
- › much less disruption to teaching and learning caused by examinations;
- › teacher release focused on activity aimed at developing professional standards rather than marking and exam administration.

It may be some time before stakeholders are willing to contemplate such a change. This situation would only arise if there was much greater confidence in the rigour and reliability of internal assessment.

Unrelated Options

Each NAB contributes towards the overall grade, through the award of a mark.

There are two variants of this approach:

- › The candidate has to pass all three Unit assessments and the final exam, with each contributing a mark towards the final total.
- › The candidate has to achieve the overall pass mark, but can fail one or more of the assessments. (Thereby giving Unit assessments a similar status to projects, folios and practical work that contribute marks towards external assessment).

Both would increase the contribution made by Unit assessments to the final award.

The first would retain the requirement to pass all four components, thereby demonstrating competence in each aspect of the course. It would not reduce the need for assessment activity, and might lead to more re-assessment as candidates sought to enhance the internal contribution to the final grade. It would add to the volume of data that had to be submitted by Centres.

The second variant would remove the absolute need to re-assess failed units, although many candidates would still want to maximise the internal contribution through re-assessment. Candidates who failed overall would only receive credit for Units that had been passed, and this might lead to re-assessment to secure the Unit passes. Candidates could pass overall without demonstrating competence in key aspects of the course. (That, of course, applies to all systems that merely require a pass mark). This variant would change, and perhaps add to the complexity of, data that was to be submitted to SQA.

Redesign the final examination into Part 1 (testing Grade C only) and Part 2 (testing Grades A and B). Candidates can opt to sit Part 1 only.

For many candidates, a C pass is all they expect to achieve. If they could sit only that part of the exam, then the pressure on them would be reduced (no need to tackle very hard questions), and the total volume of marking would be reduced.

This may not be technically possible, or beneficial, in some subjects, for example those where the grade is determined by candidate response to a relatively open ended task.

Only take final external assessment when exiting subject

It has always been possible for candidates to by-pass external exams en route to an exam at a higher level. Thus O Grades were originally intended to be by-passed by candidates intending to sit Higher Grade. However, this has rarely happened, since candidates and schools prefer to secure a qualification in case of later failure.

Under the National Qualifications system, candidates could obtain a full set of Units at a lower level, and not bother sitting the external exam if they intended to proceed to the next level and were reasonably confident of success.

If adopted on a widespread basis, this would reduce external assessment, marking and appeals. However, there has been a general reluctance to by-pass unnecessary exams, and candidates would need an incentive to adopt this approach.

The new 'fall back' arrangements would guarantee an A pass at the lower level for a near miss at the next level. The acquisition of Units would provide certification for the work done, although there would be no way of distinguishing the candidate who sat and failed the external exam from the one who by-passed: both would have a set of Units and no final award.

An alternative approach, also allowed under the current system, would be for candidates to avoid sitting either the Unit assessments or the final exam at the lower level. That would leave candidates with no credit for work done.

ANNEX E



Reduce the need for candidates to sit two Standard Grade papers in each subject

Currently, most Standard Grade students sit two final exams, either Credit and General or General and Foundation. If the 'fallback award' system was extended to Standard Grade so that, for example, students who just failed the Credit paper would gain a General Award, then the total amount of external assessment could be reduced, while retaining the principle of external final assessment. The uptake of that option would depend on the amount by which a candidate could fail and still be given an award at the lower level.

Reduce the length of the final exam

The final exam has three purposes: to provide external quality assurance and standardisation; to test those competences not demonstrated through success in the Unit assessments; to establish the grade of award.

The length of final exams has already been reduced because they do not need to test a wide range of content already tested in Unit assessments. It is suggested that SQA review the scope for further reduction in length, subject to meeting the above three purposes, although it is recognised this may not be possible.

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ISBN 0-7559-0140-1



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