

Section A

General Questions

Can candidates give an oral rather than a written response to the unit reading and listening assessments?

Yes, but for evidence purposes the teacher is required to keep a written record or checklist to indicate that the candidate has completed the activity satisfactorily.

If a candidate fails to meet the standard required to pass a unit assessment, can the candidate be re-assessed?

The candidate can be re-assessed on one occasion (or two occasions in exceptional circumstances). However, depending on the circumstances, it is not always necessary to use a different instrument of assessment. For example, failure to address the overall purpose question may result in the candidate being re-assessed in that element only.

Will employers understand the standards required for the New Qualifications at National 4 and 5?

Yes, SQA has been engaged with employers to ensure that they understand the requirements of the New Qualifications at each level.

Why was the first Unit Assessment Support pack for National 4 and 5 in English?

The first pack was a generic pack which was created to exemplify the assessment process. However, SQA has translated these materials and provided associated sound files (Autumn 2013).

How long should candidates be given to complete unit assessments?

Time restrictions are not normally a feature of unit assessment. However, assessments should normally be able to be produced in no more than one hour.

Candidates can access audio recordings themselves, and should be allowed to listen to them as often as they require. However teachers should exercise judgement, as it is unlikely that candidates would benefit from more than two or three playings.

In what way will writing be assessed?

According to the SQA, unit assessment should reflect a candidate's ability in that skill. Assessment evidence may come from naturally-occurring evidence in learning and teaching, rather than candidates producing a piece of writing under traditional "exam conditions".

E.g. Success criteria should be negotiated; a first draft written with access to appropriate support materials; the draft annotated by the teacher with comments on areas for improvement; peer evaluation.

Section B

National 4

How many assessments are there at National 4?

There has to be enough evidence to meet assessment standards in at least two of the four contexts.

The Added Value Unit can be used to satisfy the requirements of both the Understanding Language and the Using Language unit assessments:-

Understanding Language – Added Value Unit gives evidence for **one** reading and **one** listening assessment, **provided that both sets of evidence assess overall purpose.**

Using Language – Added Value Unit gives evidence for **one** talking assessment. If writing preparation is done for oral presentation, this could also be used to satisfy **one** of the writing assessments in the Using Language unit.

How many contexts must be covered at National 4?

All four contexts of Society, Learning, Employability and Culture, must be covered.

Could all 4 skills be assessed within one context e.g. culture?

No, evidence must cover at least two of the four contexts.

Do assessments need to be linked thematically?

Assessments do not need to be linked thematically. None of the assessments need to be combined. They can all be done independently of each other. However, teachers may find it helpful to combine assessments, where possible.

How are unit assessments marked?

Unit assessments should be marked according to the *Judging Evidence Tables*, available within Unit Assessment Support packs, on the SQA secure website. Candidates should identify the overall purpose of the reading or listening text and be able to extract the main points of the passage.

Teachers should exercise their professional judgement in determining whether a candidate has written enough detail to satisfy the requirements of the assessment.

How should evidence be recorded?

Detailed notes should be retained for talking (similar to the Grade Related Criteria at Standard Grade). Audio/video recording of each candidate's performance is not mandatory for the unit assessments, but it may be good practice to retain the evidence from each class for verification purposes. However, at National 5 and Higher recordings for the Performance element must be available for verification purposes. Reading, listening and writing scripts should also be retained for verification purposes. Templates have been provided by SQA for this purpose.

Section C

National 4: Added Value Unit

Do schools have to use the SQA Added Value Unit?

For next 2 sessions, schools must follow the SQA **approach** to the Added Value Unit, but teachers are **not** required to use the material which was produced by SQA for this unit. This is merely for exemplification.

No prior verification of school material for this unit is required.

How is the reading for the Added Value Unit assessed?

A minimum of two texts should be used. These can be selected from a range provided by the teacher. Candidates are required to show their understanding of the content of the texts by demonstrating comprehension. Comprehension can be demonstrated in various ways (i.e. gap fill task; questions in English: written or oral summary in English of main points of text).

Candidates should be judged on their ability to extract main points of the passages. There may be evidence of some misunderstanding but it will not be serious.

Candidates may use a dictionary.

How is the talking for the Added Value Unit assessed?

The candidate should make a short presentation, lasting 1 – 2 minutes. The presentation can be supported by brief headings in English OR the foreign language or by visual aids.

The presentation can be delivered to the whole class or to groups of candidates within the class, but candidates should be discouraged from a one-to-one presentation to the teacher.

Should the oral presentation be based on the reading texts?

The presentation does not need to make direct reference to the reading texts, but should be on a related theme. Candidates could be encouraged to incorporate words and phrases from the reading texts into their oral presentation

How is the listening for the Added Value Unit assessed?

On completion of the presentation, the candidate will require to respond to at least **four** questions from the teacher or the class. The section should last about 1 minute.

The candidate should be able to ask for help in the foreign language, where appropriate.

Should the questions for the listening section of the Added Value Unit be prepared in advance?

The questions should not be scripted in advance, but the candidate should be asked questions which have been covered previously in class. For example, a candidate may well be asked questions which he/she has previously practised in class, but will be unaware of exactly which questions he/she will require to answer, or in which order the questions will be asked.

How long do candidates have to complete the Added Value Unit?

There is no stipulated time limit for the completion of the Added Value Unit. The time limit is at the discretion of the centre. The Added Value unit should be part of a series of lessons, and can be done at an appropriate point in the course. It should be part of the on-going classroom work, and not be seen as a stand-alone test.

How much assistance should candidates be given in the preparation for the Added Value Unit?

Assessments should be completed in class time under some supervision and control but not necessarily in traditional “exam conditions”. Part of the assignment can be done outwith the classroom, provided that the teacher can assure the work is the candidate’s own work.

Candidates should be given reasonable assistance and support from the teacher to complete the Added Value Unit, but should be encouraged to work independently.

The amount of support a candidate requires, particularly in the listening/responding section, should be reflected in the teacher’s overall assessment of the candidate.

What evidence is the teacher required to retain?

Teachers should retain copies of candidates’ written responses to the reading texts. If the candidate has given oral feedback on the texts, detailed notes should be retained by the teacher.

For talking, teachers should retain a written summary or detailed checklist of responses or an audio/video recording, if desired. **It is not mandatory to audio or video record the oral presentation.**

Pieces of evidence should be named and dated.

What happens if a candidate does not pass the Added Value Unit?

Candidate should be given one re-assessment opportunity (two in exceptional circumstances).

What if a candidate passes the reading and talking sections of the Added Value Unit, but not the listening part?

The candidate is not required to do the entire Added Value Unit again. The candidate should only be re-assessed in the section he/she did not pass. If the candidate did not secure a pass in listening, he/she would only be required to do that part again, but would need to be asked a different set of questions from the first attempt.

Section D

National 5

How many assessments are there at National 5?

There has to be enough evidence to meet assessment standards in at least one of the four contexts.

How many contexts must be covered at National 5?

All four contexts of Society, Learning, Employability and Culture, must be covered.

Could all 4 skills be assessed within one context e.g. culture?

Yes, in theory, but this would not be deemed to be good practice.

Do assessments need to be linked thematically?

Assessments do not need to be linked thematically. None of the assessments need to be combined. They can all be done independently of each other.

How should evidence be recorded?

Reading, listening and writing scripts should also be retained for verification purposes.

Speaking for the Performance element must be recorded and retained for verification purposes.

Can the talking for the Using Language unit be used for the final talking assessment?

Technically, this is possible. However, it is important to produce evidence which indicates that a candidate has met the assessment standards of the unit and the centre has judged the evidence accordingly. This evidence may originate from preparation for the Performance element, where appropriate.

What percentage of the total mark does a candidate have to achieve in order to pass a unit assessment?

There are no cut-off scores. Teachers will base their decision on whether a candidate has given enough information to show understanding by referring to the *Judging Evidence Tables*. The extraneous rule currently in existence at Standard Grade and Intermediate 1 and 2 no longer applies.

What happens if a candidate is presented for National 5, but subsequently fails the final course assessment?

There will be no automatic fall-back position. Candidates will only gain an award at National 4 if the teacher has retained evidence gathered throughout academic year, and the **candidate has completed the Added Value Unit**. There will be an opportunity for teachers to submit National 4 evidence between August and March after the diet of exams. Candidates will gain National 4 award and unit award at National 5, provided the candidate has completed the National 5 unit assessments.