

Education, Children and Families Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 24 August, 2021

National Qualifications - Alternative Certification Model

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the assessment arrangements in place, to support the award of National Qualifications, amended to reflect the impact of Covid-19
 - 1.1.2 Approve the next steps detailed in order to support young people in making progress in their learning and in moving to positive destinations.

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Report

National Qualifications - Alternative Certification Model

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Due to the Covid pandemic, arrangements for the award of National qualifications have been amended in sessions 2019-20 and 2020-21. The removal of the exam diet has required schools to deliver ongoing, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, throughout periods of in-school, remote and blended learning, in alignment with SQA and Local Authority Guidance. This has created the need to develop clear assessment plans to support provisional grades, in accordance with subject-specific guidance, known as the Alternative Certification Model(ACM).
- 2.2 School leaders have ensured that these plans have been shared with clarity to their staff teams, ensuring an understanding of standards, providing opportunities for staff to engage in moderation activities which support consistency of these standards to ensure equity for all learners. This includes engagement in local and national practitioner networks, as appropriate. A timely and transparent approach to communicating with young people and their parents & carers about changes and key messages and timescales has been essential in generating confidence in the system.
- 2.3 Quality assurance of approaches has been crucial in ensuring this equity and consistency both at school, local and national levels. The main priority throughout has remained that no young person is disadvantaged as a result of the amended arrangements and is supported throughout the process, and beyond, to enable all young people to progress in their learning and move to sustained positive destinations.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Scottish Government took the decision that National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams would not go ahead in session 2020-21, due to ongoing concerns about the impact of Covid-19 and the need to ensure that there is fairness and equity for all of Scotland's young people. The Alternative Certification Model (ACM) has been implemented to ensure fair and credible results for all learners undertaking National Qualifications.
- 3.2 Provisional results submitted to SQA in June 2021 have been supported by robust quality assurance carried out by each school, City of Edinburgh Council (QICS) and SQA. This will ensure that a National 5 awarded in the north of Scotland is of the

same standard as one which is awarded in the south of Scotland and everywhere in between. The ACM for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher has followed a similar process.

- 3.3 SQA published broad guidance entitled “National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates” in October 2020:
<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95281.html>
- 3.4 More detailed guidance on the roles and responsibilities of teachers, schools and local authorities regarding SQA Quality Assurance for the National Qualifications 2021 is available here: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96762.html>
- 3.5 The National Qualifications 2021 (NQ21) Group was set up to support the development of the ACM nationally. It included representatives from a range of key stakeholders including Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), the National Parent Forum of Scotland, SQA and Schools Leaders Scotland (SLS).
- 3.6 Edinburgh officers have been liaising closely with local authority colleagues across Scotland, via ADES and the SEIC, and have been supported well by our SQA Liaison Manager. The QICS convened working groups with key stakeholders including Secondary school senior and middle leaders, ASL service, parents/carers and teaching unions, to co-produce advice on different aspects of ACM implementation:
 - 3.6.1 Quality Assurance and Assessment approaches
 - 3.6.2 Moderation and Lead Teacher Networks
 - 3.6.3 Assessment Arrangements
 - 3.6.4 Learner & Parent/Carer Communications
- 3.7 Information has been shared via regular updates with the following networks:-
 - 3.7.1 SQA Coordinators
 - 3.7.2 Lead teachers (including Subject and Support for Learning leaders)
 - 3.7.3 Senior Leaders (Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher)
- 3.8 The QICS has worked closely with SQA, School leaders, and practitioner networks to ensure the effective sharing of guidance regarding the Alternative Certification model and to support schools in putting this guidance into assessment plans which ensure clarity for staff, young people and their parents & carers.

4. Main report

4.1 Alternative Certification Model

The QICS issued guidance to Senior leaders in March 2021 (Appendix 1). This provided clear information about preparation and implementation of the model as detailed below.

The revised alternative certification model is based on five key stages:

Stage 1: ongoing until April 2021

Teachers access subject specific guidance, assessment resources and Understanding Standards materials and webinars from SQA.

- 4.1.1 Ensure all staff have engaged with the SQA's alternative certification model documentation including Understanding Standards activity.
- 4.1.2 Provide clarity you young people on what pieces of evidence will inform their Provisional grade for each subject; the weighting of each piece of evidence; and the timeline for assessment.
- 4.1.3 Agree school approach to assessment (this could include subject-specific variances).
- 4.1.4 Share with staff teams the agreed approach for internal verification.
- 4.1.5 HT/DHT engages with QIEO regarding Assessment Strategy and Quality Assurance processes - March/April 2021.

Stage 2: April - May 2021

School and local authority quality assurance continues. During May, SQA requests, reviews and provides feedback on assessment evidence from each school, college and training provider.

- 4.1.6 SQA will determine which subjects/levels are sampled.
- 4.1.7 SQA will liaise with schools to agree how evidence will be submitted (either by post/uplift or by electronic copy).
- 4.1.8 It is accepted that evidence will only be partial at this point.
- 4.1.9 Local Authority Subject Moderation is ongoing, including on **Framework Friday 14 May**.

Stage 3: End of May to 25 June 2021

Schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and SQA work through final stages of local and national quality assurance and feedback, to reach provisional results that are consistent, equitable and fair.

- 4.10 By **Friday 11 June** – Staff agree provisional grades in school
- 4.11 No new timetable for existing Senior Phase prior to Mon 14 June.
- 4.12 From **Mon 14 June** – Final in-school QA and discussions with QIEO/QIM ahead of sign-off.
- 4.14 Week beginning 14 June can still be used to assess pupils who may have been absent etc. if necessary.
- 4.15 Additional Assessment Day for teachers to engage with the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) on **25 May and 9 June**.
- 4.16 Local Authority Subject Moderation is ongoing.

Stage 4: by 25 June 2021

Schools, colleges and training providers submit quality assured provisional results to SQA.

Stage 5: Appeals process for 2020–21

4.17 The deadline for appeals is 24th August, 2021

4.2 Assessment Evidence

Provisional grades are based on teachers' judgements of pupils' demonstrated attainment, based on a range of evidence, supported by local and national quality assurance.

SQA produced subject-specific guidance for a range of qualifications (including NQs, NPA, NCs, Foundation Apprenticeships) taking into account disruption to learning this year that set out the key evidence required for each course. National standards have been applied, based on holistic assessment of this key evidence of demonstrated attainment, to determine provisional results. Schools were required to ensure that families received communication to make them aware how learners were going to be assessed in each subject area and the differences between this, and last year's models e.g. being aware that once the assessment process has been concluded and evidence assessed, it is not possible to undertake additional assessments, reassessments, nor consider additional evidence, in support of a higher grade. Inferred attainment is not a part of the ACM for session 2020-21. Teachers were required to provide effective feedback, at appropriate points, to ensure learners understand progress and next steps in learning.

A range of assessment resources were developed by SQA and at school level to support the gathering of evidence of demonstrated attainment. Schools were able to use previous SQA papers however it was made clear that schools were not expected to fully replicate the exam process or conditions. Where a young person was absent from school e.g. due to self-isolation or illness, alternative assessment opportunities were provided.

4.3 Setting Grade Boundaries

As all National Courses were internally assessed in 2021, schools had the flexibility to adjust their assessments, or marking approaches, to ensure they are consistent with national standards. If, exceptionally, they felt an assessment is more or less challenging than anticipated, they can take this into account when making the overall provision grading decisions for learners.

4.4 Moderation and Quality Assurance

All practitioners involved in the implementation of the ACM were required to engage in collaborative moderation activity to ensure shared understanding of standards and expectations. This took place within, or across, a department or subject area where teachers are familiar with course specifications and approaches to assessment.

Teachers were asked to:-

- 4.4.1 check assessment instruments before they are delivered, where possible, to ensure validity
- 4.4.2 arrange standardisation exercises, including reference to Understanding Standards, and cross marking an appropriate sample of learning evidence, before wholesale marking, to set the standard
- 4.4.3 sample assessment decisions – cross marking a sample of candidate responses to ensure that appropriate action was taken where required
- 4.4.5 sign off the completed ACM Quality Assurance Check-lists
- 4.4.6 maintain assessment and moderation records using Local Authority or SEIC Moderation & Assessment paperwork.

4.7 **Data Analysis Tool**

Schools were provided with a Data Analysis tool, developed by the Senior Data Analyst, to support schools in ensuring rigour in provisional grades whilst providing a tool to support the tracking of attainment over time. The tool provided the following tracking information:-

Highlight similarities or differences in the data; providing a graphical view of the data to help the user better understand how these relate to other features of the data (e.g. number of entries, no awards, etc).

However, the data tool does not say why anticipated grades in 2021 are (or are not) similar to the data for previous years. This should be apparent in the **narrative** for the course in question, developed through moderation activity related to the anticipated grades for 2021.

Senior leaders were asked to work with their staff to analyse the data consider the following key questions:-

- (a) Are there any **similarities** between this year's anticipated Provisional Results and grades in previous years? If so, do I understand why these particular years might be similar?
- (b) I understand why the anticipated Provisional Results might look different from the data for these earlier years?

In particular:

- 4.7.1 Are the grades for 2021 **consistently lower/higher** than these earlier years?
- 4.7.2 Are the grades for 2021 **tending to cluster more around particular grades?**
- 4.7.3 Are differences **related to a lack of No Awards** in 2021 (looking at the graph on the left)?
- 4.7.4 Are differences related to any **changes in entries** over time?

School were provided with a moderation template (See ACM Guidelines Appendix 1) to enable final checks, and sign-off, of provisional grades to be undertaken.

4.8 **National Quality Assurance**

Education Scotland carried out a national review of local authority approaches to quality assurance of the alternative certification model (Appendix 3). CEC engaged in this process in April 2021, by meeting with lead HMIE officers, arranging focus groups of head teachers, SQA coordinators and Lead Teachers. Education Scotland provided CEC with the following feedback:-

Strengths

- 4.8.1 Detailed, effective guidance produced in consultation with schools. Clear roles and responsibilities, clear rationale. Links to key documents and QA checklists.
- 4.8.2 Use of networks and working groups to address challenges. Collaborative approach, including use of SEIC links.
- 4.8.3 Use of Lead Teachers and SQA appointees. Empowered framework of support.
- 4.8.4 Centre officers proactive in responding to needs of schools: “open door” approach.

Areas for Consideration

- 4.8.5 Strategic overview of QA processes: build in earlier “sense checks” and clarify expectations.
- 4.8.6 Consider support for Lead Teachers and SQA appointees, including with workload.
- 4.8.7 Avoid perception of “one-off, high-stakes” assessments. Clarify what can be used as evidence of attainment

In addition to this, Education Scotland identified a sample of schools and courses at a range of qualification levels to form part of their external verification process. Schools were given subject feedback, the authority was given an overview of this feedback, and nationally collated subject reports were made available on the SQA website. Professional dialogue about this feedback was incorporated into the QIEO/HT meetings which formed part of the local approach to the ACM.

4.9 **QICS Quality Assurance**

In response, QIEOs arranged voluntary meetings with Curriculum leaders to discuss the process of ACM in place, forming an important part of the triangulation of evidence for the Local Authority approach to the ACM. The purpose of these short professional conversations was to ascertain the views of CLs as to how we may take what we’ve learned from this year to develop local QA processes for the senior phase in future years, and also gauging how they, as middle leaders, have interpreted our local guidance. Dialogue focused on how assessments were selected and moderated, the faculty assessment schedule, faculty moderation processes (including any engagement with local authority moderation offers and their views on this) and what the local authority could have done better or differently

by way of support for the ACM, in order to inform our practice next year. These conversations illustrated the robust approach to the ACM taken by middle leaders and the positive impact of subject-level collaboration on moderation in the Senior Phase, which middle leaders are keen to retain and enhance in session 21-22.

4.10 **Communication of Provisional Grades**

All young people were notified of their provisional grades, by letter, on Wednesday 23 June. This included further information about how their provisional grade have been arrived at, the appeals process, results day and available support and advice.

4.11 **Results**

Provisional results will be confirmed to young people on Tuesday 10th August. A summary of this results will be made available, following this confirmation process.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 To support young people to progress in their learning and/or to move to positive destinations, following receipt of final grades on 10th August, 2021.
- 5.2 To support young people, and school teams, with appeals submitted (deadline 24th August 2021).
- 5.3 To use quality assurance intelligence gathered to inform the LA Assessment & Moderation strategy.
- 5.4 To analyse attainment data to inform school/Local Authority improvement targets.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no financial implications contained in this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The Edinburgh Learns Empowerment Boards have representation from school leaders and relevant partner agencies. They will continue to engage with stakeholders in a range of ways, for example by inviting presentations and consulting reference groups focusing on the curriculum pathways offered within each early years setting and school. This will include ensuring that learners' views inform the ongoing development of Assessment & Moderation Strategy.
- 7.2 Attainment and positive destination data will be analysed and tracked to ensure progress for all learners.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 “National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates”
<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95281.html>

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Edinburgh Learns Alternative Certification Model Guidance
- 9.2 Appendix 2 - Alternative Certification Model Provisional Grades Letter to Young People
- 9.3 Appendix 3 - Education Quality Assurance of ACM Briefing paper for staff

EDINBURGH LEARNS

Guidance on SQA Alternative Certification Model (ACM)

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Introduction

The Scottish Government has decided that National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams will not go ahead this school session 2020-21. This is due to ongoing concerns about the impact of Covid-19 and the need to ensure that there is fairness and equity for all of Scotland's young people.

The Alternative Certification Model (ACM) aims to ensure fair and credible results for all learners undertaking National Qualifications. Provisional results submitted to SQA in June 2021 will be supported by robust quality assurance carried out by each school, The City of Edinburgh Council and SQA. This will ensure that a National 5 awarded in the north of Scotland is of the same standard as one which is awarded in the south of Scotland and everywhere in between. The ACM for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will follow a similar process.

SQA published broad guidance entitled "National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates" in October 2020: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95281.html>

More detailed guidance on the roles and responsibilities of teachers, schools and local authorities regarding SQA Quality Assurance for the National Qualifications 2021 is available here: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96762.html>

The National Qualifications 2021 (NQ21) Group was set up to support the development of the ACM nationally. It includes representatives from a range of key stakeholders including Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), the National Parent Forum of Scotland, SQA and Schools Leaders Scotland (SLS).

Edinburgh officers have been liaising with local authority colleagues across Scotland, via ADES and the SEIC, and have been supported well by our SQA Liaison Manager. The quality improvement team convened working groups with key stakeholders including, Secondary school senior and middle leaders, ASL service, parents and teaching unions, to co-produce advice on different aspects of ACM implementation:

- Quality Assurance and Assessment approaches
- Moderation and Lead Teacher Networks
- Assessment Arrangements
- Learner & Parent/Carer Communications

Information is shared via regular updates with the following networks:

- SQA Coordinators
- Lead teachers (including Subject and Support for Learning leaders)
- Senior Leaders (HT and DHT)

The following guidance brings together the range of national and local advice shared previously with schools (see Appendix). We wish to acknowledge and thank all those who have contributed to this collaborative process.

ACM Implementation Timeline

The revised alternative certification model is based on five key stages:

Stage 1: ongoing until April 2021

Teachers access subject specific guidance, assessment resources and Understanding Standards materials and webinars from SQA.

- Ensure all staff have engaged with the SQA's alternative certification model documentation, including Understanding Standards activity.
- Provide clarity to young people on what pieces of evidence will inform their provisional grade for each subject; the weighting of each piece of evidence; and the timeline for assessment.
- Agree school approach to assessment (this could include subject-specific variances).
- Share with staff teams the agreed approach for internal verification.
- HT meets with QIEO/QIM to discuss previous patterns of attainment (**by end of March**).

Stage 2: April - May 2021

School and local authority quality assurance continues. During May, SQA requests, reviews and provides feedback on assessment evidence from each school, college and training provider.

- SQA will determine which subjects/levels are sampled.
- SQA will liaise with schools to agree how evidence will be submitted (either by post/uplift or by electronic copy).
- It is accepted that evidence will only be partial at this point.
- Local Authority Subject Moderation is ongoing, including on **Framework Friday 14th May**.

Stage 3: end May to 25 June 2021

Schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and SQA work through final stages of local and national quality assurance and feedback, to reach provisional results that are consistent, equitable and fair.

- By **Friday 11 June** – Staff agree provisional grades in school
- No new timetable for existing Senior Phase prior to Mon 14 June.
- From **Mon 14 June** – Final in-school QA and discussions with QIEO/QIM ahead of sign-off.
- Week beginning 14 June can still be used to assess pupils who may have been absent etc. if necessary.
- Additional Assessment Day for teachers to engage with the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) on **25th May and 9th June**.
- Local Authority Subject Moderation is ongoing.

Stage 4: by 25 June 2021

Schools, colleges and training providers submit quality assured provisional results to SQA.

Stage 5: Appeals process for 2020–21 – To be advised following consultation.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality Assurance documentation for school level, including sign-off by staff at each level (**Appendix One**).

As per the timeline above, QIEOs are meeting with Head Teachers before Easter and will also meet in June for final sign-off.

Support at subject level via Lead Teacher networks is ongoing (this includes support from SEIC for some subjects).

Guidance for Lead Teachers has been shared and can be found in **Appendix Two**.

We will work with schools to develop effective support for moderation at the centre, which will include sharing data on prior attainment and looking at provisional patterns of attainment for this session. More details of this will follow in due course.

SQA Guidance on Key Roles and Responsibilities

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96762.html>

This link takes you to more detailed guidance on the responsibilities of teachers, schools and local authorities regarding SQA Quality Assurance for the National Qualifications 2021.

Education Scotland's support for Digital Quality Assurance of National Qualifications

Using Microsoft Teams and OneNote, learner evidence can be curated and shared with peers. Discussion around learner evidence can be done asynchronously or live, with the results of the discussion recorded in text, video or voice notes. Every member of the team will be able to access the record of quality assurance to enable them to make judgements about their own learners. You can find out more about this process here:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/digilearn/2021/02/19/digital-quality-assurance-of-national-qualifications/>

Assessment Guidelines

This takes account of the national guidance and sets out best practice for the creation and validation of assessment and how schools will undertake moderation to ensure a shared understanding of standards and expectations. It has been agreed by the Scottish Government that two additional in-service days will be set aside for teachers to work on assessments this year.

Assessment evidence

On 8 December the Deputy First Minister outlined to Parliament that National Qualifications in 2020-2021 will be awarded based on **teacher judgement of evidence of demonstrated attainment**, supported by local and national quality assurance processes.

SQA has produced subject-specific guidance for a range of qualifications (including NQs, NPA, NCs, Foundation Apprenticeships) taking into account disruption to learning this year that sets out the key evidence required for each course. National standards will be applied based on a holistic assessment of this key evidence of demonstrated attainment to determine provisional results. (Scottish Government 24 March 2021)

It is important that we communicate to families to make them aware how learners are going to be assessed in each subject area. This should include timings for assessments and weightings.

It is important that families understand that *inferred attainment* is not a part of the ACM for session 2020-21, and the differences between this year's model and the last. This includes being aware

March 2021

that once the assessment process has been concluded and evidence assessed, it is not possible to undertake additional assessments, reassessments, nor consider additional evidence, in support of a higher grade.

Teachers will provide effective feedback, at appropriate points, to ensure learners understand progress and next steps in learning.

Provisional grades cannot be shared until the quality assurance process has been concluded. In practice, this likely means sharing the grades during the final week of term, before submission to SQA. (Note however that this advice may have to be revisited once the SQA reveal final details of the appeals process for this session.)

Schools are best placed to respond to candidate absence on the day a particular piece of assessment is due to take place, as they would for any other internal assessment. All candidates should be afforded an opportunity to complete planned assessments in the same parameters and conditions as their peers to ensure there is demonstrated evidence of their ability.

Use of SQA papers

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher question papers and marking instructions are available on the SQA Secure website. Teachers can use them to support internal assessments when gathering evidence for provisional results in session 2020-21. The question papers can be used in full or in part.

The following link explains how to extract questions from these papers:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95917.html>

There is however no requirement nor expectation that you reproduce an exam in full. **SQA guidance emphasises that there should be a clear focus on quality rather than quantity of the evidence.** It is perfectly acceptable to split an exam into two shorter assessments, and even then the combined length could be reduced by removing some questions if necessary. In such cases, care should be taken to ensure that the overall level of difficulty of any assessment is not reduced. Schools should also carefully consider the content of any assessments to ensure that they meet both SQA requirements and reflect the learning journey of those expected to sit them following periods of blended learning.

See SQA advice here for more details regarding evidence:

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/nq-estimates-guidance-2020-21.pdf

All question papers and marking instructions must be stored securely and treated as confidential. The content must not be shared or discussed online - or in any location where they could be accessed by unauthorised persons.

We should bear in mind that learners currently in S4 and S5 have no experience whatsoever of sitting SQA examinations. Timetabling full length, exam-style assessments may not be the best way to allow these learners to perform to the best of their ability.

Setting Grade Boundaries

We are aware that there appears to be contradictory advice from SQA for different subjects regarding the use of grade boundaries when generating provisional results and have contacted SQA as a matter of urgency to attempt to get clarification. This is an issue that has been raised nationally.

As all National Courses are internally assessed in 2021, centres have the flexibility to adjust their assessments or marking approaches to ensure they are consistent with national standards. If exceptionally they feel an assessment is more or less challenging than anticipated, they can take this into account when making the overall grading decisions for learners.

There is no expectation that a centre must change grade boundaries if an SQA paper is split in order to fit into a school timetable, unless it is felt this considerably changes the level of difficulty.

The SQA ask that equalities, children's rights and wellbeing considerations underpin all decisions and actions within the Alternative Certification Model.

Exam/study leave

The advice remains as set out in earlier communications:

As there are no exams in May/June, there will no longer be any Study Leave. Due to Covid-19 risk mitigations, schools may need to temporarily adjust the timetable to accommodate arrangements for assessments.

(EL Guide for Learners & Parent/Carer January 2021)

Due to Covid-19 risk mitigations, schools may need to temporarily adjust the timetable to accommodate arrangements for assessments.

(EL Guidelines for SQA Qualifications November 2020)

Such adjustments to timetables may be required at times, for example, to allow sufficient space and capacity for key assessments to be delivered in line with SQA requirements for assessment conditions; to ensure effective delivery of Assessment Arrangements; or where there is a desire to ensure that every learner sitting a particular assessment can do so at the same time.

Teachers should use the flexibility to assess learners at times and in ways that are appropriate to their needs to manage the assessment burden on young people during the remainder of the academic session (24 March 2021)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/pages/school-operations/#curriculumandassessment>

Invigilators

We are currently risk-assessing the use of invigilators (other than normal school staff) for assessments in the final term. We recognise that this would free up staff to focus on the marking of assessments, or further moderation activities. Note, however, that current restrictions on gatherings in an area are set at 50 individuals. Note also that any decision made now regarding the deployment of such staff, could be overtaken by subsequent Scottish Government in June, depending on infection rates etc.

Moderation Guidelines

Moderation develops a shared understanding of standards and expectations. It is a collaborative activity, best done within or across a department or subject area where teachers are familiar with course specifications and approaches to assessment.

The main steps in any moderation exercise will involve all of the following:

1. checking assessment instruments before they are delivered, where possible, to ensure validity
2. arranging standardisation exercises, including reference to Understanding Standards, and cross marking an appropriate sample of scripts before bulk marking to set the standard
3. sampling assessment decisions – cross marking a sample of candidate responses (square root of total cohort) – and ensuring that appropriate action is taken before evidence is returned to candidates
4. signing off the completed ACM Quality Assurance Check-lists (Appendix 2)
5. maintaining assessment and moderation records using Education Scotland Digital Quality Assurance Tool, Local Authority or SEIC Moderation & Assessment paperwork.

Appendix One – Quality Assurance Templates

INSERT NAME High School National Qualifications 2021 Alternative Certification Model Quality Assurance Procedures

Internal Assessments

1. Colleagues involved in the delivery and assessment of the NQs have a knowledge and understanding of the national standards.
2. Colleagues are engaging with the most recent SQA Understanding Standards resources and activities as required.
3. Colleagues are working with the most up to date SQA course requirements for 2020-2021.
4. Colleagues are using the 2020-2021 SQA subject specific guidance on assessment.
5. An appropriate number of assessment opportunities are planned, in line with subject-specific guidance from the SQA, to generate the key assessment evidence.
6. Young people have been made aware of these assessments and are aware of how their grades will be calculated based on them.
7. Instruments of assessment are agreed in line with SQA subject specific guidance.
8. Marking instructions are standardised to conform to national standards and are applied consistently.
9. Grade boundaries applied are consistent with national standards.
10. Assessments are carried out in class and under SQA exam conditions.
11. Post assessment, learners' assessment evidence is sampled proportionately, and marking is cross-checked against the national standard. Candidate evidence at grade boundaries is included in the sample.

Provisional Grades

1. All teaching staff involved in the provisional grade process will work through the SQA Academy Estimates module found here:
<https://www.sqaacademy.org.uk/course/view.php?idnumber=estimates>
2. Provisional grades are based on evidence of demonstrated attainment, have been derived in line with SQA guidance and with reference to the national standard.
3. Assessment judgements are moderated within departments/faculties to ensure that provisional grades are a fair representation of a candidate's ability and performance within the subject.
4. In the finalisation of the provisional results, consideration is given to inclusion, equality and the additional support needs of all candidates.
5. A provisional band is provided for all candidates, with the exception of those who have been withdrawn from the course.
6. Provisional results for the 2021 cohort are compared with the attainment data from previous cohorts on a subject by subject basis, with the exception of the 2020 data, using the supplied paperwork.
7. The Curriculum Leader and the DHT attainment/HT meet to review the provisional results compared to historical data. Implications are considered, and adjustments made as appropriate. Justification for any change is recorded.
8. CL and teacher agree and sign off the provisional results.
9. DHT attainment carries out a whole school analysis of provisional results, comparing 2021 provisional attainment with historical attainment patterns, year group potential and prior attainment if available.
10. DHT attainment/HT agree and sign off provisional grades.

Internal Assessments QA Checklist

| | | |
|---|--|--------------------|
| Faculty | | |
| Subject | | |
| Activity | | CL initials |
| Colleagues involved in the delivery and assessment of the NQs have a knowledge and understanding of the national standards. | | |
| Colleagues have engaged with the most recent SQA Understanding Standards resources and activities as required. | | |
| Colleagues have worked with the most up to date SQA course requirements for 2020-2021. | | |
| Colleagues have used the SQA subject specific guidance on assessment. | | |
| An appropriate number of key assessment pieces have been used to generate the provisional grades, in line with the SQA subject-specific guidance. | | |
| Appropriate weight given to each individual piece of evidence in accordance with its predictive value | | |
| Young people have been made aware of these assessments and how they will be used to generate grades. | | |
| Standardised marking instructions, compliant with national standards, have been applied consistently. | | |
| Grade boundaries applied are consistent with national standards. | | |
| The appropriate SQA assessment conditions have been applied. | | |
| Moderation exercises have been carried out internally and externally, including reference to Understanding Standards, cross marking an appropriate sample of scripts before bulk marking to set the standard. | | |
| Teacher signature(s) <i>Please indicate which levels you are presenting for, e.g. Nat5/H etc.</i> | | Date |
| CL signature | | Date |

Provisional Results QA Checklist

| | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| Faculty | | |
| Subject | | |
| Activity | | CL /SLT initials |
| All faculty colleagues involved in the provisional grade process have worked through the SQA Academy Estimates module. | | |
| All curriculum leaders involved in the provisional grade process have attended a Local Authority briefing on Assessment & Moderation Guidelines | | |
| Provisional grades are based on evidence of demonstrated attainment, have been derived in line with SQA guidance and with reference to the national standard. | | |
| Assessment judgements have been moderated internally and externally to ensure that provisional grades are a fair representation of a candidate's ability and performance within the subject. | | |
| In the finalisation of the provisional results, consideration has been given to inclusion, equality and the additional support needs of all candidates. | | |
| A provisional band has been provided for all candidates, with the exception of those who have been withdrawn from the course, by 18 June. | | |
| Provisional results for the 2021 cohort have been compared with the attainment data from previous cohorts, with the exception of the 2020 data. | | |
| Outcomes of the data analysis have been discussed with Faculty Link DHT/HT. Implications have been considered, and adjustments made as appropriate. Justification for any adjustments has been recorded. | | |
| SLT has carried out a whole school analysis of provisional results, comparing 2021 provisional attainment with historical attainment patterns, year group potential and prior attainment if available. | | |
| CL signature | | Date |
| SLT signature | | Date |

Local Authority Quality Assurance checklist

| | | |
|---|--|-------------|
| QIEO will engage with HT/DHT regarding Assessment Strategy and Quality Assurance processes - March/April 2021. | | |
| Guidance on the Alternative Certification Model will be issued. | | |
| Professional Learning on the Assessment and Moderation Guidance will be offered to all faculty leaders/curriculum leaders in April/May 2021. | | |
| Requests for external support with validation and moderation from departments through the Lead Teacher Network will be facilitated. | | |
| Collaboration and collegiate activities across senior and middle leaders and within subject groups to validate assessment instruments and moderate assessment samples will be facilitated. | | |
| Data pack on previous patterns of attainment to compare previous trends on performance for individual subjects and cumulative whole school attainment trends will be provided. | | |
| QIEO will engage with HT/DHT to discuss the submitted provisional results and confirm that the Alternative Certification Model Quality Assurance Procedures have been applied, including Internal Assessment & Provisional Results QA Checklists– May/June 2021 | | |
| QIEO Signature | | Date |
| HT Signature | | Date |

Appendix Two Part (a) – calendar of moderation support

| Local Authority Subject Moderation March-May 2021 | Planned | When is this taking place? |
|---|---------|--|
| Expressive Arts | | |
| Music | Yes | Friday 14 th May Moderation partnerships established and Teams channels set up |
| Dance | Yes | Friday 26 th March – preparation for moderation sessions N5 1:15-2pm H 2-2:45pm Friday 14 th May |
| Drama | Yes | Friday 26 th March Friday 14 th May |
| Art and Design/ Photography | Yes | Friday 26 th March Friday 14 th May |
| PE | Yes | N5 and AH PE Understanding Standards Friday 26 th March H PE Understanding Standards tbc post-Easter N5/H/AH Moderation Events will take place on Friday 14 th May Schools paired up to moderate evidence |
| Technologies | | |
| Business | Yes | Higher Admin Tuesday 20 April Nat 5 Admin Wednesday 21 April Higher BM Tuesday 27 April Nat 5 BM Wednesday 28 April |

| | | |
|-----------|-----|---|
| | | <p>Nat 5 Thursday Accounts 29 April</p> <p>Higher Monday Accounts 26 April</p> <p>Nat 5 Economics Thursday 29 April</p> <p>Higher Economics Monday 26 April</p> |
| CDT | Yes | <p>Friday March 26th: Moderation Plan Launch and outline of the group</p> <p>Week beginning 19th April: meeting of CDT subject/level facilitators.</p> <p>Subject meetings for the following will then be arranged by subject facilitators:</p> <p>N5 Design and Manufacture</p> <p>Higher and Advanced Higher Design and Manufacture</p> <p>N5 Graphic Communication</p> <p>Higher and Advanced Higher Graphic Communication</p> <p>N5 Engineering Science</p> <p>Higher and Advanced Higher Engineering Science</p> <p>N5 Practical Woodwork</p> <p>N5 Practical Metalwork</p> <p>These will be different days and times. We are using Onenote to collect evidence and Microsoft forms to collect evidence. We have planned to group schools into 3 so that everyone can be involved.</p> |
| Computing | TBC | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----|--|
| Health and Food Technology | Yes | <p>4 subjects:</p> <p>Health and Food Technology Nat 5/H</p> <p>Fashion and Textile Technology Nat 5/H</p> <p>Practical Cookery Nat 5</p> <p>Practical Cake Craft Nat 5</p> <p>We are setting up moderation groups on Teams.</p> <p>Next network meeting to decide next steps is 27th April.</p> <p>Moderation events:</p> <p>14th May, 25th May and 9th June.</p> |
| Social Subjects | | |
| RME | TBC | <p>SEIC event on Thursday 27th May, 2021</p> <p>Moderation partnerships being established</p> |
| History | Yes | <p>Friday 26th March</p> <p>Friday 14th May</p> <p>Summer term Subject Network meeting date tbc</p> |
| Geography | TBC | |
| Modern Studies | Yes | <p>AH Thursday 18th March</p> <p>N5 Monday 26th April</p> <p>Framing Additional Qs Workshop 26th April</p> <p>Marking Best Practice AH Thursday 6th May</p> <p>Pre-assessment Moderation Friday 4th June 1-3pm tbc</p> <p>Post-assessment Moderation tbc</p> |
| Philosophy/Psychology | | <p>Cross-authority network is well-established</p> <p>N5/H Psychology Wednesday 10th March</p> <p>End April/May date tbc</p> <p>Higher Philosophy</p> <p>Post-Easter date tbc</p> |
| Literacy/Languages | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----|--|
| English | TBC | |
| Modern Languages | Yes | <p><u>Speaking and Writing</u></p> <p>18th March (AH) 23rd March (H) 25th March (N5)</p> <p>(NB: March events had 50 attendees from across almost all schools)</p> <p><u>Reading and Listening</u></p> <p>May dates tbc</p> |
| Media | TBC | Cross-authority network is well-established. |
| Maths/Sciences | | |
| Maths | Yes | <p>Friday 14th May Tuesday 25th May</p> <p>Moderation partnerships established and times agreed between them</p> |
| Biology | Yes | <p>Friday 14th May</p> <p>Moderation partnerships established for those who expressed interest and work is underway – times agreed by partners</p> |
| Chemistry | Yes | <p>Friday 26th March Friday 14th May</p> <p>Further additional date tbc if required</p> |
| Physics | TBC | |

Appendix Two Part (b) – Lead Teacher Guidance (updated Feb 2021)

SQA Moderation and Quality Assurance 20-21

SQA guidance entitled “National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates” (October 2020) can be found here: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95281.html>.

Subject specific guidance for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher can be found here: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95258.html>

SQA have made question papers available through the SQA Secure website.

New materials and webinars are being posted on the Understanding Standards website: <https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/>

The revised model for delivering National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher results in 2021 (also known as the Alternative Certification Model) was published on 16th February, 2021: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95257.html>

Within the model, the revised date for provisional results is now **25th June, 2021**.

The revised alternative certification model is based on five key stages:

Stage 1: ongoing until April 2021 – Teachers and lecturers access subject specific guidance, assessment resources and Understanding Standards materials and webinars from SQA.

Stage 2: April to May 2021 – School, college, training provider and local authority quality assurance continues. During May, SQA requests, reviews and provides feedback on assessment evidence from each school, college and training provider.

Stage 3: end May to 25 June 2021 – Schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and SQA work through final stages of local and national quality assurance and feedback, to reach provisional results that are consistent, equitable and fair.

Stage 4: by 25 June 2021 – Schools, colleges and training providers submit quality assured provisional results to SQA.

Stage 5: Appeals process for 2020–21 – To be advised following consultation.

The SQA Academy course which all staff can access can be found here:

<https://www.sqaacademy.org.uk/course/view.php?idnumber=estimateqa>

Current Expectations

In CEC, Lead Teachers and their corresponding networks offer a key mechanism to ensure work on moderation continues in line with previous good practice. In particular, we know the support that subject networks provide to smaller departments or single teachers of subjects within departments is invaluable.

We are aware moderation is underway, including within departments and through existing partnership working across presenting centres, and a number of moderation opportunities took place on the Framework Friday on 15th January.

There continues to be an expectation for moderation and quality assurance within the national guidance, although SQA acknowledge that assessment may now take place later in the year. Engaging in school and local authority quality assurance activities is first mentioned in Stage 1 and is mentioned again in Stage 2 guidelines. We are in a strong position with this.

March 2021

Within Stage 2, SQA give some indication of external quality assurance:

“During May, on a proportionate basis, SQA selects courses from each school and college for national quality assurance and provides subject-specific feedback. For national quality assurance, this package of evidence will be less than that used for reaching provisional results. The assessment evidence can be partial or incomplete. For example, it could consist of one or two pieces of key evidence from a small number of learners in the subjects selected. For some practical subjects, where capturing and submitting assessment evidence is not possible, sampling activity will be replaced by a professional discussion held between the school, college or training provider and a SQA senior appointee.”

The First Minister indicated in a recent parliamentary address that 2 Assessment Support Days will be forthcoming. No further details have been given to date.

Next Steps:

To provide further opportunities to work collaboratively, we would ask you to consider the following:

- **Friday 26th March, 2021** has been agreed as an optional/voluntary CEC subject network afternoon. Please consider using this time to create an opportunity for subject specialists to work together on aspects of moderation. In order to support consistency of assessment judgement within your subject area, this may be a good time to use Understanding Standards resources as the SQA guidance above suggests.
- In addition to this, the **Framework Friday on 15th May, 2021** will provide a final opportunity. At this stage, it may be possible for moderation of pupil assessment evidence to take place.
- Subject Network meetings will continue to run remotely, consider when these will be best placed to meet the needs of your network.
- As Lead Teacher, prioritise offers of support to smaller departments or single subject teachers within departments, if you are able to. Encourage smaller departments to buddy up with moderation partners to build their capacity.
- All the above are optional professional learning opportunities and you are best placed to understand what will work best for your own subject and network.

Suggested Quality Assurance and Subject Support Activity February – June 2021

- Following the phased return to school, schools will develop their own QA calendars/moderation guidance to meet the needs of their context and revised assessment opportunities/windows. **NB:** We recognise that questions remain unanswered as to the possibility of a full return to school for our learners and that some SQA subject guidance appears predicated on this assumption.
- Effective formative feedback should continue to be provided to learners during the continuation of learning and teaching, both remotely and during practical activities in school, while working towards course completion.
- Learning and teaching in subjects with highest levels of critical practical work that require in-school facilities and cannot be undertaken remotely is a key priority within the Scottish Government return to school guidance - <https://education.gov.scot/media/ry4bk2eg/returnofseniorphaselearners.pdf>
- This guidance also asks that learners have secure foundation and course coverage prior to formal assessment taking place in the later stages of the 2020/21 academic session
- Subjects updates continue to be released – please check this link: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96037.html>
- CEC and SEIC Subject Networks will continue to meet – please contact Michelle.Moore2@edinburgh.gov.uk if you have any questions about the SEIC networks.
- Link with your subject QIEO for advice and support as appropriate.

- As assessment evidence is built up, moderation activity will allow practitioners and curriculum leaders to review and check the evidence used to make final provisional results decisions.
- The local authority will make a pro-forma available for Senior Leaders to confirm SQA and local guidance has been followed throughout the estimates process. This was done last year and was felt to be supportive.

Suggested Moderation Activity on 26th March, 2021

1:30-3:30pm

It may be more appropriate for a subject's moderation activity in March to focus on consistent application of national standards– this could be done in a locality meeting as opposed to a 1:1 moderation partnership. Discussion on the key features and criteria of each “grade” could be part of this approach.

CLs/Subject Leaders from the locality could use resources from the SQA Understanding Standards website to support this: <https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/>

There may be an opportunity for staff with SQA appointee/verification/marking experience within each subject area to add value to this process or to lead discussion.

It is recognised that any moderation activity at this stage will be supportive, rather than “review and check”. Further opportunities for departmental moderation in line with school quality assurance procedures will be required prior to estimate finalisation.

Suggested Moderation Activity on 15th May, 2021

1:30-3:30pm

Sampling of pupil work **if ready to do so** – with a focus on an appropriate number of candidates on the borderline between grades

Different moderation teams may wish to focus on different levels – National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher.

If using the same assessment instrument (part of an SQA paper from the secure website, for example), you may wish to agree on certain questions that you focus discussion on in order to maximise the time available to dialogue 3 pupils to discuss per “moderation partner” across a range of standards is suggested but it is recognised this may vary across subjects.

Where possible, this sample could be shared in advance between moderation partners and then discussed during an agreed 1:1 Teams meeting on 15th May (or another agreed date as appropriate).

The SQA provide guidance on unconscious bias – samples for discussion can be anonymised, for example, to increase robustness of the agreed judgement of standard – thus: *“Use of blind or cross marking can decrease the potential for bias in grading decisions, and moderation across departments, learning areas and faculties will ensure fairness for all candidates and that robust standards are maintained.”* (From National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates p3).

Single subject teachers within departments should, where possible, retain the moderation partnerships that are currently in place or that emerge as a positive consequence of January's Framework Friday moderation opportunity. There is no requirement for all candidate evidence to be cross-marked. A proportionate, sampling approach will work well.

SQA Guidance on Key Roles and Responsibilities

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96762.html>

This link takes you to more detailed guidance on the responsibilities of teachers, schools and local authorities regarding SQA Quality Assurance for the National Qualifications 2021.

Education Scotland's support for Digital Quality Assurance of National Qualifications

Using Microsoft Teams and OneNote, learner evidence can be curated and shared with peers. Discussion around learner evidence can be done asynchronously or live, with the results of the discussion recorded in text, video or voice notes. Every member of the team will be able to access the record of quality assurance to enable them to make judgements about their own learners. You can find out more about this process here:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/digilearn/2021/02/19/digital-quality-assurance-of-national-qualifications/>

Appendix Three– Curricular and Subject Leader Guidance (March 2021)

The SQA published broad guidance entitled “National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates” in October 2020 – see link: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95281.html>

From P9 of this guidance:

*Moderation across departments, learning areas and faculties will ensure fairness for all candidates and ensure that robust standards are maintained. **It is good practice to extend moderation activity beyond the centre to a local or regional level, where possible.***

Updated materials and webinars to support moderation are being posted on the Understanding Standards website: <https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/>

This link takes you to more detailed guidance on the responsibilities of teachers, schools and local authorities regarding SQA Quality Assurance for the National Qualifications 2021: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96762.html>

We are aware moderation is underway in many subject areas already, both within departments and through existing partnership working across presenting centres – **thank you.**

Your subject Lead Teachers will communicate with you, through your Subject Networks, when any further planned moderation activities are going to take place. Some subject moderation will take place on agreed Framework afternoons; some subjects will have their own agreed times and dates as best suits the needs of their subject area.

At present, moderation across centres will take place remotely using Teams. It is hoped that we may be able to permit some face-to-face subject meetings in May, but this is not yet confirmed.

Each curricular area has a QIEO contact link and a Lead Teacher. Please contact your Lead Teacher in the first instance, should you have any questions about moderation opportunities.

Suggested moderation activity - April – May 2021

Use moderation partnerships to support the verification of adapted SQA papers or other instruments of assessment to ensure they continue to meet national standards so that they remain valid assessments.

Use Subject network meetings to engage in professional dialogue regarding how learners within a subject will be assessed to achieve consistency of opportunity across the authority for pupils to demonstrate their ability and generate assessment evidence.

There is a **Framework Friday on 14th May** – Lead Teachers have been asked to use this afternoon to support the sampling, cross-marking (in a proportionate model) and moderation of learner evidence. This will be a further opportunity to work with colleagues from other centres. Please do make use of this opportunity wherever possible.

If using the same assessment instrument (part of an SQA paper from the secure website, for example), you may wish to agree on certain questions that you focus discussion on in order to maximise the time available to dialogue.

The SQA provide guidance on unconscious bias – samples for discussion can be anonymised, for example, to increase robustness of the agreed judgement of standard – thus: *“Use of blind or cross marking can decrease the potential for bias in grading decisions, and moderation across departments, learning areas and faculties will ensure fairness for all candidates and that robust standards are maintained.”* (From National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates p3)

Single subject teachers within departments should, where possible, retain the moderation partnerships that are currently in place as a positive consequence of the earlier Framework Friday moderation opportunities in January and March (or similar as your Lead Teacher arranged).

CEC Assessment Support Days are on **Tuesday 25th May and Wednesday 9th June, 2021.**

Use of SQA papers

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher question papers and marking instructions are available on the SQA Secure website. Teachers can use them to support internal assessments when gathering evidence for provisional results in session 2020-21. The question papers can be used in full or in part. The following link explains how to extract questions from these papers:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95917.html>

Setting Grade Boundaries

We are aware that there appears to be contradictory advice from SQA for different subjects regarding the use of grade boundaries when generating provisional results and have contacted SQA as a matter of urgency to attempt to get clarification. This is an issue that has been raised nationally.

As all National Courses are internally assessed in 2021, centres have the flexibility to adjust their assessments or marking approaches to ensure they are consistent with national standards. If exceptionally they feel an assessment is more or less challenging than anticipated, they can take this into account when making the overall grading decisions for learners.

There is no expectation that a centre must change grade boundaries if an SQA paper is split in order to fit into a school timetable, unless it is felt this considerably changes the level of difficulty.

The SQA ask that equalities, children’s rights and wellbeing considerations underpin all decisions and actions within the Alternative Certification Model.

Education Scotland’s support for Digital Quality Assurance of National Qualifications

Using Microsoft Teams and OneNote, learner evidence can be curated and shared with peers. Discussion around learner evidence can be done asynchronously or live, with the results of the discussion recorded in text, video or voice notes. Every member of the team will be able to access the record of quality assurance to enable them to make judgements about their own learners. You can find out more about this process here:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/digilearn/2021/02/19/digital-quality-assurance-of-national-qualifications/>

Appendix Four– SQA Qualifications guide for Learners, Parents & Carers (updated March 2021)

Introduction

We understand that you may have a range of questions relating to the changes in SQA exam arrangements this year. This guide provides answers to the most common questions we have been asked. It is dynamic and will be revised to reflect ongoing updates from SQA.

We would encourage our learners to contact their Pupil Support Leader at school if they are feeling unsure or even anxious about the new assessment arrangements as help is available.

Key Messages

- The Scottish Government has decided that **National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams will not go ahead this school session 2020-21**. This is due to ongoing concerns about the impact of Covid-19 and the need to ensure that there is fairness and equity for all of Scotland's young people.
- The **Alternative Certification Model (ACM) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher** will follow a similar process. This means that the teacher or lecturer will decide each learner's provisional result by judging the assessment evidence gathered and checking the results with other staff in your school or college. This also means that coursework will not be marked by SQA, however it can still count towards evidence of your learning.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) mean for me as a learner?

- This year teachers and lecturers will use the assessments you have done as evidence to decide what your results should be. This is referred to as using demonstrated attainment. This will be supported by a robust set of checks (quality assurance) carried out by the child's school (or college), The City of Edinburgh Council and SQA. The results will be finalised following various layers of quality assurance, including sampling by SQA senior subject specialists.
- The ACM aims to ensure fair and credible results for all learners undertaking National Qualifications.

How will I know how I am doing throughout the session?

- Teachers will provide effective feedback, at appropriate points, to ensure you understand your progress and next steps in learning.

How will teachers gather assessment evidence when pupils are in school?

- Schools are aiming to **assess your learning at key points** using appropriate assessment conditions.
- These 'key points' may be **coordinated across the school using an assessment calendar**. Various terms such as 'assessment window' or 'prelim' may be used to describe these formal assessments. Due to Covid-19 risk mitigations, schools may need to temporarily adjust the timetable to accommodate arrangements for assessments.
- This year teachers will use the assessments you have done as evidence to decide what your results should be. This is referred to as using demonstrated attainment. The school will make you aware of:
 - the assessments that will be used as evidence of demonstrated attainment
 - when the assessments will take place
 - the provisional result based on evidence of demonstrated attainment will be shared with young people once the Quality Assurance process is complete.
- The SQA has published subject-specific guidance to advise teachers and lecturers on the types of evidence that can be used to determine a provisional result. This can be found [here](#).

What type of assessment evidence will be gathered?

- SQA has reduced the evidence requirements for each National Course to the minimum necessary to preserve the validity and public confidence in the qualifications.
- SQA has also published subject-specific guidance documents across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.
 - These documents summarise the key pieces of evidence required as the basis for provisional results.

Why is quality assurance necessary?

- Quality assurance is about fairness for you. A robust system of checks (quality assurance) is being put in place to make sure that a National 5/Higher/Advanced Higher awarded in the north of Scotland is of the same standard as one which is awarded in the south of Scotland and everywhere in between.

How will the quality assurance model work in session 2020-21?

- Each school will use SQA guidance and assessment materials to help gather your evidence. This includes ensuring in advance that the **assessments used are valid, reliable, practicable and fair**. Your school and local authority will check your assessment evidence.
- This evidence will be quality assured through a robust process at subject, whole school, local authority and national level.
- SQA will request, review and give feedback on samples of assessment evidence from your school and/or college.
- Sampling ensures that all teachers/lecturers are making consistent and reliable assessment judgements against the national standard. This includes checking that assessment judgements are free from bias and that learners are treated fairly and equitably.

- Your school and local authority will look at SQA feedback and check your provisional results. The deadline by which all gathering of evidence should be completed is 11th June. This is so that there is sufficient time to do this checking of results.
- Local Authority & School Quality assurance will take place from 14th June.
- Once the assessment process has been concluded and evidence assessed, it is not possible to undertake additional assessments, reassessments, nor consider additional evidence.
- Your school and/or college will **send your provisional results to SQA by 25th June 2021.**
- On **16 Feb 2021**, the Scottish Government announced that there will be two exceptional in-service days in all secondary schools across Scotland to provide extra time for teachers to engage with the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). **In Edinburgh, these will be 25th May and 9th June.**

How will I be supported if I have an Additional Support Need? Can I still access Assessment Arrangements (AA)?

- If you have an additional support need and have been identified as needing assessment arrangements (AA), these should, where possible, be in place for each assessment. Please speak to your subject teacher or Support for Learning Leader if you have any concerns about the AA process.
- Assistive features are built into iPad to complement vision, hearing, motor skills, learning and literacy. To look at Accessibility features on iPad, go to Settings > Accessibility
- <https://www.apple.com/uk/accessibility/>
- The Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Service have created a YouTube channel with videos on accessibility features: [Additional Support for Learning Service Edinburgh – YouTube](#).

Due to the loss of 'in-school' learning time, caused by lockdowns, and the absences of some pupils and staff having to self-isolate, will this affect how well I do this year?

- It's important to remember that learners across Scotland are in a similar situation, so the SQA, local authority and school are working hard to ensure you are not disadvantaged.
- SQA have made changes to N5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses to take account of this.
- Ensure that you are engaged in your learning now and maintain this, as much as possible, throughout the session. If you have any concerns, please speak to your teacher or Pupil Support Leader.
- Your school will have procedures in place to support anyone who is absent during the year.

Will there be Study Leave and when will the Timetable changes happen?

- As there are no exams in May/June, there will no longer be any Study Leave. Due to Covid-19 risk mitigations, schools may need to temporarily adjust the timetable to allow sufficient space and capacity for key assessments to be delivered in line with SQA requirements for assessment conditions.

- We are working with schools across the City to develop plans for learning in the summer term once the gathering of evidence for SQA has been completed. The school will confirm these arrangements once agreed.
- There will be no new timetable for the current Senior Phase prior to Mon 14 June.

When will I receive my results?

- Learners will receive their SQA results on **10 August 2021**.

What is the appeals process?

- During March, SQA is asking a range of individuals and groups including learners, parents/carers, teachers and national organisations to share their views on appeals. This will help to develop the appeals process for 2021. More information about this can be found at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96506.html>

How can I find out further information about the Alternative Certification Model?

- To stay up to date on 2021 National Qualifications visit www.sqa.org.uk/NQ2021
- The SQA have also produced a booklet with information on the Alternative Certification Model for learners and parents. This can be found at https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/NQ-2021-what-you-need-to-know.pdf
- SQA Learner & Parent information can be found at <https://blogs.sqa.org.uk/2021/>

Appendix Five – ACM & AA Presentation to SfLL

13 January 2021



ACM & Assessment Arrangements

13 January 2021



Welcome - happy new year!

Agenda

- Assessment Contingency Model (N5, Higher & Advanced Higher) and implications for AA
- SQA NQ2021 Update 120121
- Challenges: resourcing AA (staffing, accommodation, digital); Health & Safety
- Solutions: Digital; Professional Learning – Apps and accessibility features already in use; how remote assessments currently delivered
- Q&A with SQA representative – opportunity to seek clarification from SQA on AA

Assessment Contingency Model (N5, Higher & Advanced Higher) and implications for AA

- SQA NQ2021 Update 120121
- What about Assessment Arrangements?
 - Teachers are using a variety of internal assessments to gather evidence of attainment. Students with disabilities or additional support needs who require support should be provided with suitable Assessment Arrangements^[8]
 - SQA advise that centres should "continue to use the same assessment arrangements processes already in place in your centre to support candidates requiring an assessment arrangement for an internal assessment"^[9]
 - Note that "Centres do *not* need to submit assessment arrangement requests to SQA for National Qualifications in 2020-21".

Challenges: resourcing AA (staffing, accommodation, digital); Health & Safety

- FAQs document to follow based on questions submitted

Solutions:

ASL Service staff can deliver training to school staff so they can upskill in this area and in turn, upskill pupils:

- Accessibility features of Microsoft Office tools e.g. immersive reader. Please note interest for this in the chat. Please note other tools/ areas you need specific input for.
- Accessibility features of iPads – focus for the February SFL Business Meeting on 19.2.21. We can open this up to wider staff – contact Fran Platt (ASLS DHT).

Remote assessments – still relevant for pupils who we predict will not return to their school when they reopen. CEC will produce guidance on this.

Support for Parents:

- ASLS youtube channel with videos on accessibility features: [Additional Support for Learning Service Edinburgh – YouTube](#). There are videos up currently and ICT ASL are looking to add further examples in the coming weeks.

Solutions: iPad – Accessibility Features

"Powerful assistive features are built into iPad to complement your vision, hearing, motor skills, learning and literacy. So you can create, learn, work, play and do pretty much anything you want to do, wherever you want to do it, more easily than ever".

To look at Accessibility features on your iPad, go to **Settings > Accessibility**

<https://www.apple.com/uk/accessibility/>

• Get Started with all Accessibility features:

<https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/ipad/ipad9a2465f9/ipados>

- [Dictation](#)
- [Spoken Content](#)
- [Look Up a word's definition](#)
- [Safari Reader View](#)
- [Colour tint \(overlay\)](#)
- [Magnifier](#)
- [Guided Access](#)

iPadOS



Solutions:

- Gracemount High School: http://www.gracemounthighschool.co.uk/Learning_At_Home/index.html
- <http://www.gracemounthighschool.co.uk/resources/School-Documents/Learning-At-Home/EAL-Secondary-App-Wheel.pdf>
- Call Scotland:
 - <https://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/technology-based-assessment-arrangements-during-lockdown-at-home/>
- Digital Support (Edinburgh Learns @ Home on SharePoint)
- The Digital Support information in the Edinburgh Learns at Home site has been reorganised and updated. You can get direct access to it from this link: <http://tinyurl.com/CECDigital>.

SQA – role in AA

- NO AA requests will be submitted to SQA for 20/21
- Role of SQA is now different as no longer 'reporting' to it
- BUT maintain own Audit Record of all school AA decisions (SfLL & Link SLT, Ed Psych advise on complex cases)
- Follow your existing school AA policy and procedure
- SQA still able to advise:
 - Contact <aarequests@sqa.org.uk> with any specific pupil/subject queries
 - Contact <Susan.Gibb@sqa.org.uk> with any policy/procedure questions

- Use existing SQA guidance documents – based on legislative framework:
- (2019) [Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for centres](#)
 SQA (2020) [About assessment arrangements: Assessment Arrangements for 2020-21.](#)
 SQA (2020) [Using technology to support assessment remotely: questions and answers.](#)
 SQA (2020) [Advice for centres in using technology to support assessment remotely.](#)

SQA Resources

- ? AA FAQs to follow
- 🔑 Await further advice on 'universal' remote assessments – no 'whole cohort' assessments at this stage
- 📄 CEC will produce Guidelines on Remote Assessment if necessary to ensure consistency across schools
- 📋 School to audit AA and maintain Record
- ☎️ Contact Anna Kellner for PL

Next Steps

Acknowledgments

- Susan Gibb – SQA
- Jude Durnan - ASL
- Fran Platt - ASL
- Anna Kellner - ASL
- Annemarie Proctor – Educational Psychologist
- AA Working Group: Roberta Porter, Mike Irving, Alison Fotheringham, Rob Greenaway, Sally MacMillan, Moira Wilson

Appendix Six– SQA Qualification Guidelines 2020-21

November 2020 (note: now out of date, for reference only)

Introduction

This document has been created as a result of the guidelines that have been published recently by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in relation to National Qualifications and other SCQF Awards. It is dynamic and will be revised to reflect the ongoing updates from SQA.

SQA Guidelines so far:

- [SQA support by qualification type](#)
- Adaptations to [Internally-assessed qualifications](#) (**National Progression Awards**, National Certificates, **Skills for Work**, Awards and internally-assessed NQ Unit) with subject-specific guidance
- Information to support delivery of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher course assessments [National Qualifications 2020/21](#)
- There will be **NO** external assessment of **National 5** courses this year – either by an exam or by coursework.
- SQA Exam diet for Higher & Advanced Higher pupils will begin on Monday 10th May and run to Friday 4th June 2021 - [a final decision on whether this exam diet takes place will be made by the February holidays](#). SQA [exam timetable for 2020/21](#).
- SQA published [broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation](#) with a very clear focus on the quality, not quantity, of evidence.
- This is accompanied by an [SQA Academy Course](#) for teaching staff on quality assuring estimates.
- Evidence-based estimates will be used in three ways during 2021:
 - **National 5 qualifications will be awarded on basis of centre estimates**, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. Subject-specific guidance is available on the [NQ subject pages](#).
 - **Higher and Advanced Higher exam diet** will run, and estimates submitted as part of the normal awarding processes.
 - If the public health situation deteriorates and exams at Higher and Advanced Higher are cancelled, **then estimates will be used with appropriate quality assurance to award qualifications at Higher and Advanced Higher levels**, as well as at National 5. The Scottish Government have identified February 2021 as the cut-off date for any change to the current arrangements.

Looking outwards

The City of Edinburgh work closely with SQA regional advisers and school SQA Coordinators to provide support in relation to National and internally-assessed qualifications. A few workstreams, with staff and stakeholders from across the school estate, have been created to lead on arrangements for:

- Evidence gathering, estimates and moderation
- Subject-specific support
- Alternative Assessment Arrangements
- Information and advice for learners, parents and carers

Gathering evidence and producing estimates

Based on SQA and local guidelines, each school can determine the most equitable and efficient means of gathering evidence and producing estimates.

National 5

- Alongside subject-specific guidance on the [NQ subject pages](#) SQA is publishing assessment resources:
 - SQA devised National 5 question papers and marking instructions posted on SQA's secure website.
 - Understanding Standards materials to reinforce practitioners' understanding of the national standard, including guidance on making grading decisions.

- Focus is on gathering **key pieces of evidence that have a high predictive value aligned to the required assessment components.**
- About **quality of evidence** (two to four pieces depending on subject requirements) rather than quantity, managing assessment load for learners and workload for staff.
- Opportunity for **more flexible classroom-based assessment.**
- As there is no National 5 exam, there is no expectation that schools hold a formal diet of prelims. The use of the term “prelim” with regard to National 5 has the potential to be misleading and we would suggest using the phrase **formal assessment.**
- Aiming to **assess candidates at key points in their learning** using appropriate assessment conditions. These key points may be **coordinated across the school in an assessment ‘window’ or block’.**
- **Timelines** for these assessment windows or blocks should be **shared in advance** with learners and parents/carers.
- Due to Covid-19 mitigations, schools may need to temporarily adjust the timetable to accommodate arrangements for assessments.
- For the purposes of estimation, candidate evidence **should be gathered at the later stages of learning.** No-one should lose out because of a poor performance in an assessment early in the session.
- **Assessment resources can be adapted by schools,** such as splitting a question paper component, to **fit delivery within class periods.**
- **Effective feedback** should be provided following each ‘assessment window’ to ensure each learner understands their progress, level of attainment and next steps for learning. Care should be taken with the use of terms such as “target grade” later in the session lest this be misunderstood as a predicted grade.
- Where **candidates are unable to come into the school,** assessments can be conducted remotely, provided appropriate authentication measures are in place, which for some assessments will require online supervision. SQA to issue more guidance shortly.
- [Assessment Arrangements 2020-21](#) **If candidates are have additional support needs and have been identified as needing assessment arrangements, please ensure that these are in place for each assessment and/or assignment.** Where possible, follow your normal internal verification process for requesting assessment arrangements.
The AAR system will not accept requests for National 5 candidates this year, so keep a record of your decisions and any evidence that supports them.
- **Quality assure estimates** using the [SQA Academy Course](#) for teaching staff. A candidate’s final estimate must be realistic and based on the evidence you possess of demonstrated attainment.
- **Procedural information on submitting estimates** to SQA will be published in *Delivering National Qualifications: Guide for SQA Co-ordinators 2020–21.*
- **Robust moderation** of evidence gathering should be based on collaborative approaches to marking, at faculty level, and ideally on a wider scale. Marking should be cross-checked against national standards as exemplified in SQA Understanding Standards materials. There will be an opportunity to conduct cross-centre moderation and sharing of practice on the afternoon of Friday 15 January 2021.

Higher and Advanced Higher

- Link to the SQA website and [exam timetable for 2020/21.](#)
- Please refer to attendance management procedures for authorised absence: **Study leave for pupils participating in national exams, if arranged by the school during the period of the national examination timetable** [Included Engaged Involved Pt 1 - SEEMiS Attendance Codes](#)
- Continue to **enter assessment arrangement requests on the AAR system** for Higher and Advanced Higher examinations. Principles and procedures to follow when providing assessment arrangements: [Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for centres](#)

Good practice zone

- Balerno High School <https://balernochs.files.wordpress.com/2020/10/sqa-changes-to-higher-and-advanced-higher-courses-2020.pdf>
- Queensferry High School 2020-21 SQA MS Sway: <https://queensferryhigh.co.uk/index.php?p=1044>
- The Royal High School: <https://royalhigh.wordpress.com/senior-phase-assessments/>

March 2021

Appendix 2

Dear **Child Name**

Alternative Certification Model (ACM) - Provisional Grades 2020

The Alternative Certification Model (ACM) was developed in response to the Deputy First Minister's announcement regarding the cancellation of exams and covers National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

Following a period of learning, teaching, and assessment, your teachers have used the assessments you have completed as evidence to determine your provisional results. This is referred to as using demonstrated attainment. You have undertaken assessments which have contributed to your overall attainment in the course. Your teachers may also have considered assessment evidence generated earlier in the year which meets the conditions of assessment for the course specified by the SQA, and which demonstrates your attainment against the national standard for your subjects. Your teachers will have discussed with you how your provisional results were determined.

A robust quality assurance process has been put in place at national, local and school level. This means that a set of 'checks' has been carried out at every level to make sure the provisional results you have been awarded have been assessed fairly and are in line with the national standard.

Your teachers have engaged with SQA Understanding Standards resources and ensured they apply SQA subject guidance appropriately. They have also carried out moderation activities. These are activities where teachers will work with other teachers of their subject (both from the same school and other schools) to ensure that provisional grades are a fair representation of a candidate's ability and performance within the subject. Senior leaders in school have also engaged in professional dialogue with your teachers about the process of arriving at your provisional results.

All schools have engaged with a process called SQA Verification – schools were asked to provide a sample of pupil evidence across a number of subjects and levels to the SQA in order that the SQA could verify national standards had been applied and provide feedback.

Appeals 2021

Information on Appeals 2021 can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/appeals.

You have the right to appeal directly to SQA for free and can register that you want to appeal from Friday 25 June. The registration service will open on Friday 25 June and will close on Thursday 12 August. Your appeal will be processed after Results Day on Tuesday 10 August. If you decide that you wish to appeal *after* Thursday 12 August, you can do so by contacting your school directly.

Once your appeal has been completed, SQA will inform your school, college or training provider and they will tell you the outcome.

Results Day – 10th August

You will receive your results by post and text/email if you signed up to MySQA. These results will be the same as the provisional results submitted by your teacher.

Provisional results 2021

| Subject Name | Level | Grade |
|--------------|-------|-------|
| | | |

Please note that results are displayed as a band and the bands relate to grades as follows:

| | | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|--------|------------|
| Band 1 & 2 | Band 3 & 4 | Band 5 & 6 | Band 7 | Band 8 & 9 |
| A | B | C | D | No award |

If you think there has been a clerical error, please contact your school immediately.

Appendix 3

National review of local authority approaches to quality assurance as part of the alternative certification model - National Qualifications 2021

BRIEFING FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY AND SCHOOL STAFF INVOLVED IN MEETINGS AND FOCUS GROUPS

On 24 March 2021, Gayle Gorman, Chief Inspector of Education, Education Scotland wrote to all local authorities with details of a review to be carried out by HM Inspectors of Education. This review is at the request of John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

HM Inspectors will undertake a national review of local authority approaches to quality assurance as part of the alternative certification model - National Qualifications 2021. HM Inspectors will not be reviewing an individual school's or department's approach to quality assurance, or quality assure pieces of assessment evidence gathered for determining learners' provisional grades

HM Inspectors will carry out review activities will take place 12 April to 30 April 2021, with a national report being published by mid-May.

HM Inspectors will ask local authorities to provide a brief summary of their arrangements. They will then have a discussion with local authority staff; a focus group of headteachers; a focus group of teachers and professional association representatives. There will be no ask of you as school staff to provide any documentation in advance of, or as part of, focus group discussions to ensure there is no additional workload for you. Meetings will be take place remotely and will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Focus groups will consist of no more 6-8 people.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this national review.