

Dear Parents/Carers

Latest from SQA

Following the First Minister's announcement earlier this afternoon, the National Qualifications Group* is sharing revised arrangements for the Alternative Certification Model and the timeline for delivering National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher results in session 2020-21. Further information about the Appeals service for 2021 will be available following consultation.

The Group appreciates that teachers and lecturers are working hard to ensure the best remote learning experience possible for their learners and that time will be needed to consolidate learning once they are back in the classroom. The final date for submitting provisional results has therefore been extended to **Friday 25 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.* Further details on the [alternative certification model](#), as well as the [key roles and responsibilities](#) across the system, are available on the SQA website.

Minimising disruption to learning

Having anticipated significant disruption to learning this session, actions have been taken across the Scottish education system to ensure demonstrated learner evidence can be gathered. For example, SQA has already reduced the evidence requirements for each National Course to the minimum to preserve the validity and public confidence in the qualifications. In many subjects, assessment components have been removed and content and contexts have been reduced to enable a narrower focus for this session. In addition, planned National Qualification verification activity has been reduced to support learning and teaching.

Published guidance and assessment support

Provisional results must be based on demonstrated learner attainment consistent with the requirements set out in the subject-specific guidance.

SQA has published 116 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. They also highlight the option of separating and adapting assessments so that teachers and lecturers have the flexibility to assess learners at times and in ways that are appropriate to their needs. For example, in English, flexibility is offered in the assessment of Critical Reading. The Scottish Text element can be assessed at a separate point in time from the Critical Essay in a way that suits the needs of learners, and the circumstances of their learning.

In Music, rather than learners performing all their pieces in one sitting, it is acceptable for evidence to be generated and assessed on a piece-by-piece basis.

In addition, 134 individual assessment resources have been published on the SQA secure website for supporting teachers and lecturers. These include new assessments that can be used, in part or in full, this session. For example, in the sciences and Mathematics, SQA has provided whole question papers that can be separated and used flexibly by centres. This allows teachers and lecturers to take a pragmatic approach to delivery and focus their learning and teaching on the contexts/content required for assessment. The subject-specific guidance also highlights assessment conditions for generating evidence.

Examples of how to use the assessment resources can be found on the [SQA website](#).

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is at the heart of fair and credible certification this year. Schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities, regional improvement collaboratives (RICs), Education Scotland and SQA all have a part to play in making the model work.

Local quality assurance ensures consistency and fairness within schools, colleges and training providers. It is carried out in schools (with support from local authorities where appropriate), colleges and training providers.

National quality assurance is carried out by SQA. The aim of national quality assurance is to provide an evidenced based assurance to teachers, lecturers, learners, parents, carers and the wider public that the application of national standards when assessing learner evidence this session, is accurate and consistent across the country.

In carrying out national quality assurance SQA does not need to see the final evidence gathered for determining learners' provisional grades. One or two pieces of key evidence from a small number of learners in the subjects selected is sufficient for

SQA's national quality assurance exercise. Therefore, for the purposes of national quality assurance, assessment evidence can be partial or incomplete.

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.

Fairness for learners

The [equality impact assessment](#) and [children's rights and wellbeing impact assessment](#) underpin this alternative certification model. They will continue to be developed as we progress with the Appeals service.

The alternative certification model aims to ensure fair and credible results for all National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher learners. Schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and SQA are committed to working together to support teachers and lecturers in providing their provisional results in 2020-21.

The Group also acknowledges today's announcement by the Scottish Government regarding teacher and lecturer payments as well as additional assessment support days to support quality assurance activities. All partners are working as quickly as possible in an evolving situation to provide answers to your questions.

Stay up to date on [2021 National Qualifications](#).

National Qualifications 2021 Group

**The National Qualifications 2021 Group is represented by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Colleges Scotland, Education Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), School Leaders Scotland (SLS), the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the Scottish Government, National Parent Forum of Scotland, and the Scottish Youth Parliament.*