

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/>