Guidance on Alternative Approaches to Assessing Students 2019-2020

From March 2020 onwards awarding bodies provided guidance on alternative approaches to assess students on non-regulated awards and latterly in May/ June for regulated awards. A lot of information has been circulated to staff from different managers. This guidance is provided to consolidate this into one document and place for staff to access this information. Links to awarding bodies can be found in Appendix 4.

1. SQA and Colleges Scotland released joint guidance in April 2020 for non-regulated awards such as HN, NC, NPA, PDA, SfW, NQ qualifications, NQ stand-alone units and also covered the technical elements of a Foundation Apprenticeship (NC and NPAs). The guidance outlined the quality assurance and verification process for student achievement for 2019-20. This guidance was updated throughout April and May to reflect queries raised by the College sector. This is published on the staff section of the college website at https://www.perth.uhi.ac.uk/t4-media/one-web/perth/news/documents/colleges-scotland-covid-19-assessment-guidance-for-colleges.pdf

   The guidance provided staff the opportunity to assist students with a holistic model for internal assessment decisions, which recognised that assessment evidence, for most students, was incomplete, and acknowledged the need for flexibility in approaches to ongoing assessment (where this was possible and practicable). The documentation was communicated out to staff by the Quality Manager to support teams with choosing the most appropriate approach to ongoing assessment. The guidance relates to HNC/HND, NC, NPA, free-standing NQ units and Skills for Work, and also covers the technical elements of a Foundation Apprenticeship (NC and NPAs). Alternative guidance was released by SQA on estimating grades for national qualification awards at SCQF Levels 4, 5 and Highers at Level 6.

   Subject specific guidance was released on the assessment approach for specific awards where the use of a holistic assessment approach was not permitted and gave alternative approaches that could be adopted for these courses. Some courses however were required to be deferred where for example there was an element of risk associated with health and safety and/or licence to practice.

   Wherever possible students were to be encouraged to continue to engage remotely in learning, teaching and assessment until the scheduled end of block/semester, or to the point where the course team considered that sufficient evidence was in place to enable a final assessment judgement to be made. It was recognised that the gathering of additional evidence may not have been possible for all students and where holistic outcome decisions are being used staff should make use of the assessment evidence that was readily available.

   Where students have real and significant barriers to learning, assessor judgement may be utilised to a greater extent. This enables staff to use their professional judgement to assess a broad range of learner evidence, including formative and summative work

completed to date, additional assessment evidence where this can be generated, witnessed work, previous outcomes and part-completed work. Assessment judgements will also be informed by staff knowledge of their students, their engagement, progress and their achievements to date.

By utilising a professionally informed and evidence-based holistic approach, students can be recognised for their hard work and learning, and appropriate academic standards can be maintained.

It is important that a balance was achieved when asking for evidence from students against what is needed to allow course teams to be able to confidently make appropriate decisions and estimates of achievement against the course aims.

Staff were also encouraged to consider where an assessment type was not possible to be completed by students that alternative assessment was devised that still met the conditions of assessment. Any alternative assessments used were to be noted on the spreadsheet 'Changes to SQA Assessment' designed by the Sector Development Directors.

1. SQA /College Scotland Guidance provided specific decision-making guidance and exemplars for colleges to use. This included a decision tree to guide course teams in their judgement making.   The suggested generic decision tree was adapted by the Sector Development Directors to allow a local response based around Perth College needs rather than the general approach outlined by SQA. This is published on the Staff section of the College website https://www.perth.uhi.ac.uk/t4-media/one-web/perth/staff/college-devised-decision-tree.docx and is also shown in Appendix 2.

The Perth College Decision Tree illustrates a process based on Course Teams working together to analyse gaps in evidence for all students and making the best decisions together to ensure appropriate evidence is gathered to make judgments on achievement for all students. It allows for a holistic approach to gathering evidence and make decisions in a number of ways, comprising the use of evidence already gathered, ongoing assessment under normal conditions, new approaches to assessment, combined with being able to make reasonable estimates to satisfy overall course aims and/or specific learning outcomes at unit level. Course teams can also consider evidence requirements outlined within the unit specification, particularly for Graded Units.

The Decision Tree guides Programme Teams to identify what assessment/s has been achieved to date and what is currently underway. Once the current situation has been reviewed, there may be gaps in assessment/achievement. Gaps are defined as what is outstanding in terms of units and assessment outcomes within units. It is not always necessary to gather evidence for every assessment gap, but the Decision Tree encourages a balanced and flexible approach in asking for evidence, which ensures the overall course aims and/or specific learning outcomes at unit level are met. As well as using unit specifications, Course Teams must also make use of information contained in arrangement documents.

Where no overarching arrangement documents exist, for example a college devised NQ, Course Teams were asked to decide what the necessary aims and/or the critical elements of the course were. The original approval documentation may contain this information already on what the overall course aims are. If this is not the case, in determining the key critical aims and elements for such a course and what the benchmark should be for making decisions on student achievement, then course teams must clearly documente and reference their agreed assessment approach to making assessment judgements.

A course meeting record form for use during session 2019–20 was adapted by the Sector Development Directors to be used to document course team professional discussions in capturing their assessment approach, and in considering candidate evidence and reaching assessment/grade judgement and decisions. This is published on the Staff section of the College website https://www.perth.uhi.ac.uk/t4-media/one-web/perth/staff/sqa-course-record-of-discussion.docx and is also shown in Appendix 3.

The natural position for most staff would be to attempt to meet the aims and objectives of individual units, but this may not be achievable given time constraints, assessment loading on students and limited access to certain resources and equipment. A degree of professional judgement will have to be used collectively within course teams to make the best joint decisions on what can be gathered to predict student achievement.

Where full evidence to satisfy the course aims has not yet been generated, course teams were asked to consider, and document, alternative student evidence for the relevant qualification. Staff making assessment judgements based on alternative evidence were asked to consider a range of learner evidence with strong predictive value. They were encouraged where reasonable and possible to seek a range of alternative academic evidence for consideration, and not solely a single assessment piece or source. This may result in making professional decisions, which infer the student's competence, where it is safe to do so and where no risk is posed to health or safety or licence to practice. Each awarding body provided a list of courses which would not be able to use a holistic judgement due to this risk.

Where sufficient evidence to satisfy the course aims had not been generated, or specific elements of the curriculum are deemed by the course team to be critical to the student learning, and these students are continuing study with the college on another course, course teams should consider deferring assessment to a later stage if it is practical to do so.

Where a student has been unable to meet the required course aims and is to be deferred until the next academic year a 'student by exception form' should be used (appendix 5).

Where a cohort has been unable to meet the required course aims due to alternative assessment being unable to be used then a 'cohort by exception form' should be used (appendix 6).

2. All Awarding Bodies are expecting the College to have robust processes in place to verify judgements made on assessment and qualification achievement where an

alternative approach from the normal conditions of assessment has been used and will quality assure these judgements through external verification activity in 2020/21.

A 'Procedure for determining student performance and achievement 2019-2020 v1' has been developed and outlines the process for quality assurance of course team approaches, decision making by teams on judgments, and the verification of student achievement. It states the core responsibilities of the course team, the progression board, and the internal quality assurance panel.

In addition to this the following quality assurance process must take place for National qualification estimates and SfW judgements:

Final judgements to be submitted to Sector Manager for moderation and approval, and then to the Sector Development Director for final verification.

3. The following key dates for submission of results:

NQ Qualification estimates to be submitted to MIS no later than 15 May 2020

Marks entry to SITS no later than 12 noon on 14th June 2020

Core Skills marks entry to the spreadsheet by 8 June 2020

SfW marks entry to the spreadsheet by 11 June 2020

Progression Boards scheduled between 16 – 25 June 2020

Appendix 1

Changes to SQA Assessment: the spreadsheet required the following information to be added and approved by the Sector Manager.

Date
Unit Number
Unit Title
Learning Outcome
Current Arrangement
Proposed Arrangement
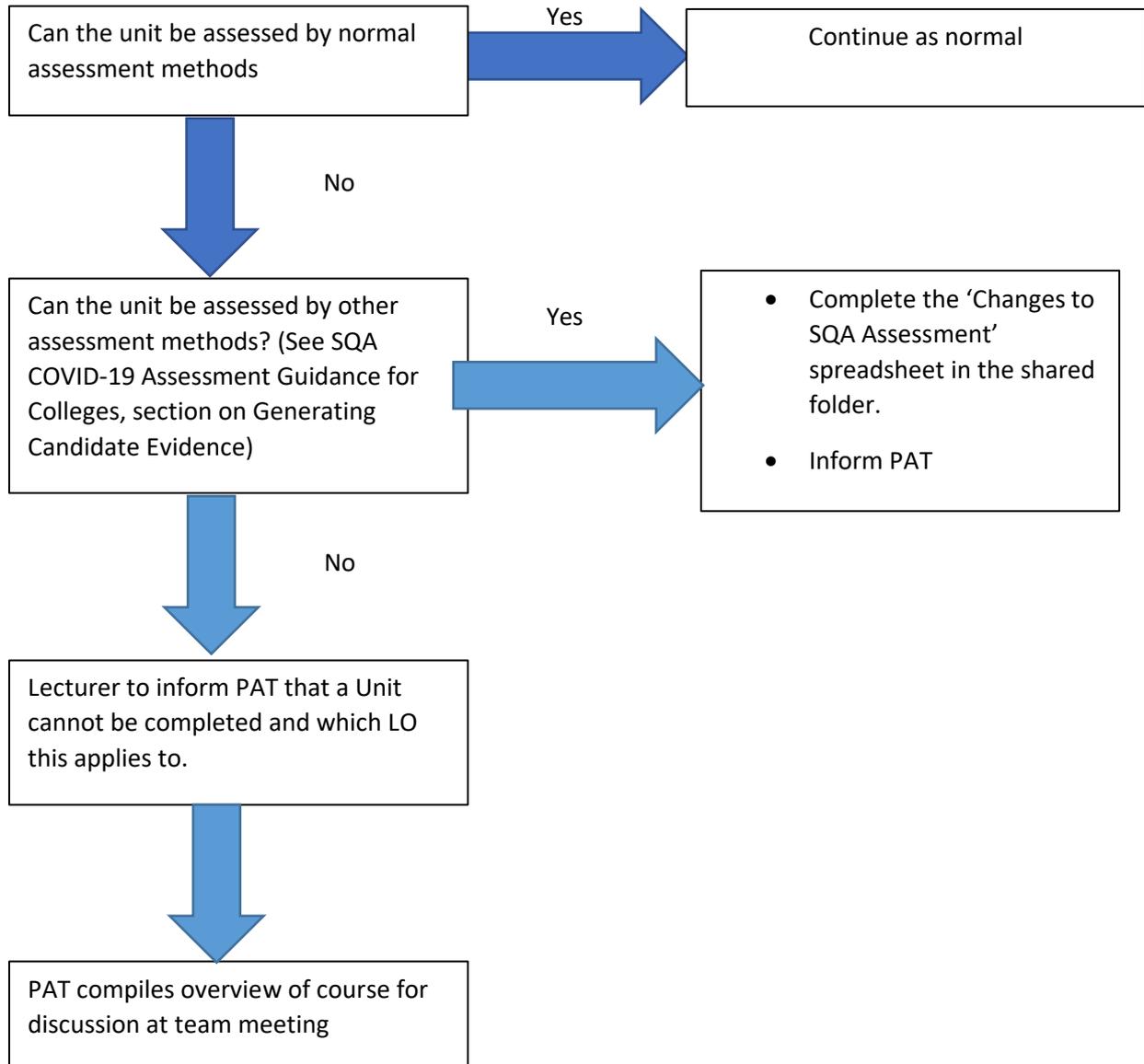Rationale for this specific proposal
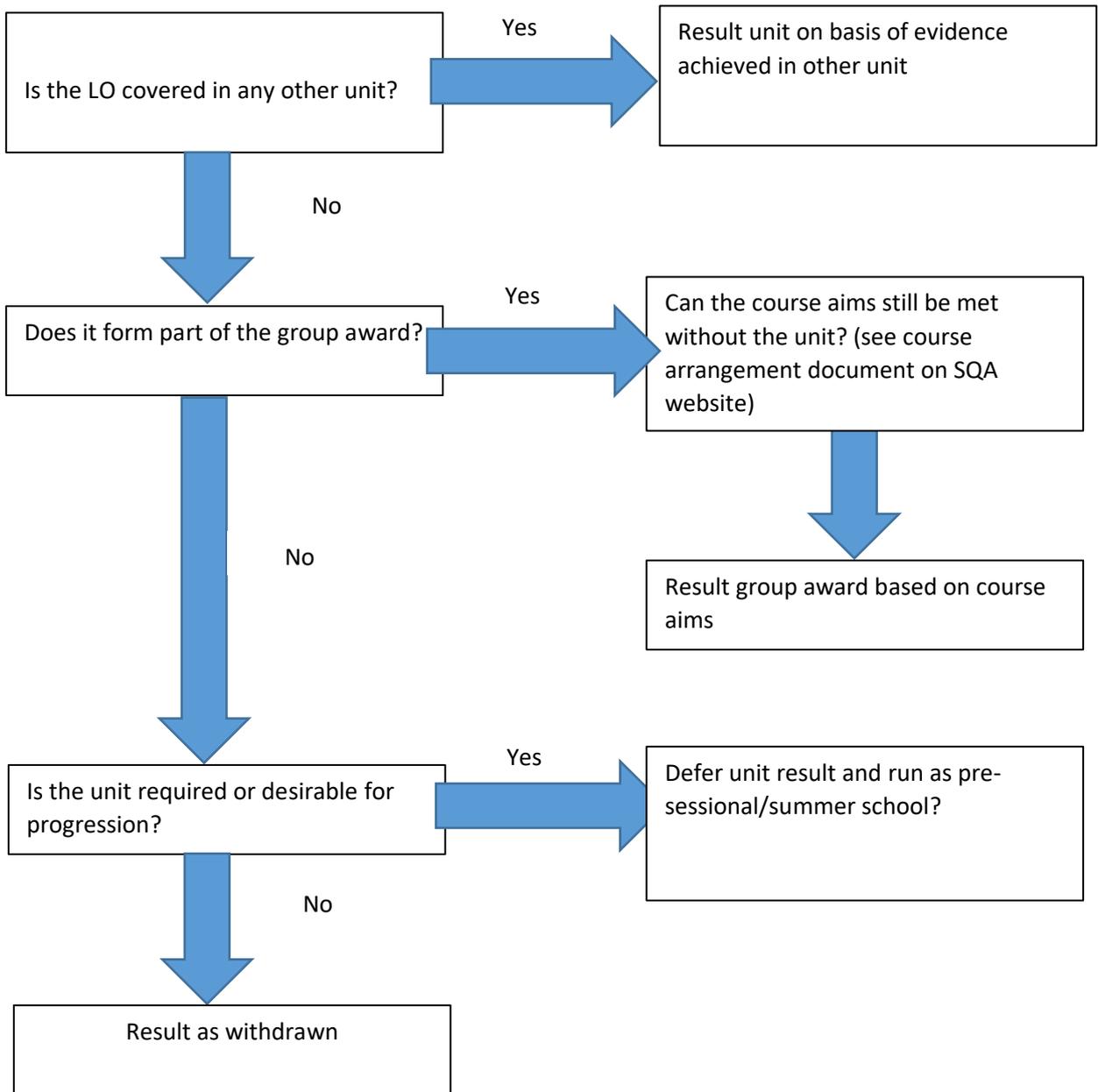Lecturer Name
IV name
SM Name

Appendix 2

Flow chart for assessment

Can the unit be assessed by normal assessment methods	→ Yes →	Continue as normal

No ↓

Can the unit be assessed by other assessment methods? (See SQA COVID-19 Assessment Guidance for Colleges, section on Generating Candidate Evidence)	→ Yes →	• Complete the 'Changes to SQA Assessment' spreadsheet in the shared folder. • Inform PAT

No ↓

Lecturer to inform PAT that a Unit cannot be completed and which LO this applies to.

↓

PAT compiles overview of course for discussion at team meeting

Course Team Meeting Record of Discussion

The PAT should present an overview of the course and any necessary changes that have already been made. The PAT should also identify any units where alternative assessment arrangements are not possible on a unit by unit basis the following should be considered.

A record of all decisions must be recorded using SQA Record of Discussion form. Following the course team meeting the business continuity plan must be updated to reflect the outcomes, both the record of discussion and business continuity plan must be sent to the SL/SM. The SL/SM will then upload to the continuous evaluation folder in the shared drive

Is the LO covered in any other unit? **—Yes→** Result unit on basis of evidence achieved in other unit

No ↓

Does it form part of the group award? **—Yes→** Can the course aims still be met without the unit? (see course arrangement document on SQA website)

↓

Result group award based on course aims

No ↓

Is the unit required or desirable for progression? **—Yes→** Defer unit result and run as pre-sessional/summer school?

No ↓

Result as withdrawn

Appendix 3

COURSE MEETING RECORD
(COVID-19: SESSION 2019–20)

Prepared by:		Approved By:	

THIS FORM MUST BE USED TO DOCUMENT COURSE TEAM PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION IN CONSIDERING CANDIDATE EVIDENCE AND REACHING ASSESSMENT/GRADE JUDGEMENT AND DECISIONS

Qualification Details			
Course Code:		**PAT:**	
Group Award code (if appropriate):		**Graded Unit code (if appropriate):**	
Group Award Title(s)(if appropriate):			
Graded Unit Title (if appropriate):			
Other information:			

In attendance:	
Record of the discussion	
Discussion point/area covered (agenda)	**Outcome of discussion**

PAT: _____ Date: _____

SL/SM: _____ Date: _____

SDD: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4

Links to Awarding Body COVID-19 assessment guidance

Subject specific guidance can also be viewed in the folder on the shared drive: S/Quality Assurance/COVID-19

SQA Accreditation	https://accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/Qualifications/covid-19-sqa-accreditation-advice-accredited-qualifications
SQA	https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93778.9771.html
City and Guilds	https://www.cityandguilds.com/-/media/cityandguilds-site/documents/covid-19/scottish-qualifications-mitigation-guide-pdf.ashx?la=en&hash=799F26459BB47491C6992E8E325BDF987E6653A8
EAL	https://eal.org.uk/news/2761-communication-to-customers-coronavirus-covid-19
Active IQ	https://www.activeiq.co.uk/news/covid-19-advice-for-our-centres-learners-epa-providers-and-apprentices
BCS	https://www.bcs.org/
Cambridge English	https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/cmp/novel-coronavirus-2019/
CMI	https://www.managers.org.uk/

Appendix 5

THIS FORM MUST BE USED TO RECORD A STUDENT WHO IS REQUIRED TO BE DEFERRED UNTIL NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR DUE TO INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO MAKE A JUDGEMENT AGAINST SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT OF COURSE AIMS IN 2019/2020

Student Name:	
Date:	
PE Course Code:	

Assessment Details	
Group Award Code:	
Group Award title:	
Course aim(s) not met:	

Detail of outstanding work to be completed in 2020/12

Detail of support to be provided to student to help them achieve successful outcome of their course aims:

Assessor: _____ Date: _____

Internal verifier: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6

THIS FORM MUST BE USED TO RECORD A COHORT WHO IS REQUIRED TO BE DEFERRED UNTIL NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR DUE TO INSUFFICIDENT EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO MAKE A JUDGEMENT AGAINST SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT OF COURSE AIMS IN 2019/2020

Cohort/Group	
Date:	
PE Course Code:	

Assessment Details	
Group Award Code:	
Group Award title:	
Course aim(s) not met:	

Detail of outstanding work to be completed in 2020/12

Detail of support to be provided to students to help them achieve successful outcome of their course aims:

Assessor: _____ Date: _____

Internal verifier: _____ Date: _____