

SQA Alternative Assessment Model 2020-21

The following provides guidance on the college quality assurance process for the verification and validation of student achievement for 2020-21 academic year.

SQA released several guidance papers since August 2020 on changes to assessment conditions, such as combined assessment and/or adapting conditions of assessment, which have been circulated via email, and which are referred and linked to in the Appendices to this guidance. Full guidance and updates can be found and followed on the SQA website ([Qualifications guidance 2020-21 - SQA](#)), however the key guidance is summarised below.

Guidance is provided for the following:

1. HNVQ
2. SVQ
3. National Qualifications (SCQF 5 & 6 (Highers))
4. Assessment Support

Appendix 1: SQA Alternative Assessment Guidance

1. HNVQ

The most recent guidance '[HNVQ modification parameters](#)' issued on 21 January 2021 refers to this previous guidance and provides additional solutions where the normal practice is not clear. It is important for all staff delivering the following SQA awards to read all the guidance issued.

- Skills for Work
- Awards
- National Progression Awards
- National Certificates
- Higher National Certificates/Diplomas (including Graded Units)
- Advanced Certificates/Diplomas
- Professional Development Awards

In essence, a course's assessment strategy may currently allow one or a combination of the following:

1. Unit by unit assessment
2. Combined assessment
3. Alternative conditions of assessment

The focus now therefore needs to be on qualifications where the existing arrangements (for unit by unit assessment, combining assessment, and/or adapting

conditions of assessment) are still not allowing sufficient flexibility to enable assessors to judge competence.

If as a course team you have not yet reflected on changes to the course assessment strategy as you have up to this point been able to use unit by unit assessment, but from this point forward are unable to continue with this strategy alone then the [Decision Tree 2020/21](#), shown in the SQA guidance, will be a useful tool to help with that decision making. Please note that this new decision tree differs from that used in 2019/20.

To help SQA prioritise the development and release of the critical evidence / competencies SQA are gathering information from colleagues across the sector on strategies and proposals put forward by course teams to support specific assessment challenges. They will be taking this into account when preparing the subject-specific critical competency information, to be released as from 1 February 2021. Some UHI course teams have been involved in this activity for the HN provision.

2. SVQ

We are currently awaiting guidance on the alternative assessment approach and the verification activity scheduled for this academic year.

3 National Qualifications:

National 3 & 4

For session 2020–21 only, the added value unit results for these courses do not need to be evidence-based. For candidates who pass all contributing units for the course, you need to submit a ‘pass’ result for the added value unit to ensure that they are certificated for the overall course award.

National 5

For 2020-21, National 5 will be based on lecturer judgement supported by quality assurance.

The National Qualifications 2021 Group developed a quality assurance model which will support teachers and lecturers in providing provisional results for National 5 candidates in session 2020-21. Provisional results will be based on teacher and lecturer professional judgement of learner evidence. The model also confirms how provisional results will become final results.

To support you with gathering evidence for producing estimates in session 2020–21, SQA have published National 5 coursework assessment tasks for some subjects here

they normally issue a new assessment task each year. These are available from the subject pages of our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nqsubjects.

SQA are providing National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher question papers that teachers and lecturers can use 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, when appropriate. [Assessment resources - National Qualifications 2020-21 - SQA](#)

While existing Understanding Standards materials remain relevant for session 2020-21, SQA is supplementing existing resources with additional material to support teachers and lecturers with this session's changes to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher assessment, where a need has been identified. So far, this has included new candidate evidence and commentary materials, webinar recordings, audio presentations and video resources that demonstrate how teachers and lecturers can reduce the time required for specific assessment activities.

Understanding Standards materials are available from SQA's [NQ subject pages](#) and their [Understanding Standards website](#).

National 6 – Highers

For 2020-21 session no external assessments of Higher courses will take place. On this basis, the 2021 National Qualifications examination diet was cancelled.

The requirements for assessment conditions are laid out in the subject specific guidance documents that have been published by SQA. Some subjects do specify supervised, closed book as the condition for assessment. It is for teams to decide how best to manage this type of assessment, taking into account student's individual circumstances. See below for further SQA guidance on remote invigilation.

Centres will start to receive printed copies of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher question papers, where relevant, for use in session 2020–21, for subjects where the question paper includes high resolution images. If you have queries on this please contact Scott Robertson, Exams Officer

4 Assessment Support

Assessment arrangements

The Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system is closed due to the cancellation of the 2021 National Qualification examinations. There is no need for centres to submit assessment arrangement requests to SQA for National Qualifications in 2020–21. However tutors are still required to support students with assessment support arrangement where this is identified in a PLSP. If you have any queries about how to continue to support a student then please contact the student support team.

Remote Invigilation

SQA updated their general guidance for centres who are using, or considering using, technology to support remote invigilation of assessment. Remote invigilation is where candidates undertake an assessment in a separate location from the invigilator, and where standard invigilation procedures therefore cannot be applied. This is accompanied by a Q&A document to provide answers to common questions. They have published additional guidance on using technology to support remote assessment approaches in National Qualifications.

The guidance is not prescriptive. It intended to support centres in making their own informed judgements about how they could use technology to meet their needs, and it explores the different aspects of remote invigilation that centres need to consider. Please note that this guidance only applies to qualifications where remote invigilation of assessment is possible and permissible, and in keeping with the requirements of any corresponding assessment strategies, as appropriate.

SQA SOLAR

From January 2021, you will no longer be able to access SQA SOLAR assessments from your internet browser. Instead, you will be able to access them through Surpass Viewer, an app which will allow you to run the software that SOLAR is based on. Guidance on how to access this can be found on [S:\Quality Assurance\COVID Assessment Guidance\2020-21 guidance](#)

5 SQA Conditions of Assessment

SQA released guidance in August 2020 that promoted the use of changes to the conditions of assessment and/or the combining of assessment methodology across units. For reference, the guidance ‘*SQA Colleges Scotland Joint message*’ and ‘*SQA Supporting-the-delivery-and-assessment-of-HNVQ-in-2020-21*’ are located on [S:\Quality Assurance\COVID Assessment Guidance\2020-21 guidance](#)

SQA revised the prior verification form and split it into 3 separate forms – normal PV request, combined assessment, and adaptations to conditions of assessment. These forms are located on [S:\Quality Assurance\Assessment & Verification\Prior Verification\PV Request Forms](#)

Where circumstances do not allow a face-to-face exam, SQA allowed a change to the condition of assessment, from closed book to an online open book exam. However, please note where this is the case the secure closed book assessment must not be used as an open book assessment as this would undermine the security of the assessment instrument.

All new assessment must be IV'd prior to use and if you are new to writing assessments, this must also be Prior Verified by SQA using the 'adaptations to condition of assessment' prior verification request form (as above).

Any SQA assessments that have been combined or amended must be noted on the Sector Area 'changes to SQA Assessment spreadsheet' and held on the continuous evaluation folder.

If any secure assessment material has been used in a way that compromises the integrity of the assessment the Quality Manager must be informed, and evidence of internal verification of the assessment be held in the Master Folder and it be noted on the Sector Change to Assessment Spreadsheet with a rationale for its use.