

Key messages from the 2007 Exam diet of appeals

1. The number of appeals

The number of appeals has risen this year by 32.5% to over 60,000. This represents 5.2% of total entries for National Courses and Standard Grade (for Higher 10% of total entries result in appeals, for Advanced Higher 12%). The number of appeals in 2006 and 2007 is detailed below.

National Qualifications	Number of Appeals				Percentage Difference
	2006		2007		
	No of appeals	% of entries	No of appeals	% of entries	
Standard Grade	20,314	2.3%	33,622	4.0%	65.5%
Intermediate 1	1,844	4.7%	2,590	5.6%	40.5%
Intermediate 2	5,845	6.7%	5,596	5.7%	-4.3%
Higher	15,250	9.7%	16,224	10.1%	6.4%
Advanced Higher	2,195	12.0%	2,201	12.3%	0.3%
Total	45,475	3.9%	60,233	5.2%	32.5%

This increase is due to a number of factors:

- the removal of the Derived Grades procedure
- An increase in Course entry numbers at both Higher and Intermediate 2
- Wider use of the appeals system than originally intended. – the appeals system is intended as a safety net for use only in ‘exceptional’ cases, where a candidate has failed to perform, on the day, to the standard expected, and for whom the centre has convincing alternative evidence.

2. The success rate of appeals

Less than half of all submitted appeals are successful (less than 40% for Higher). While it appears that there is no single dominant reason for appeals being unsuccessful it is noticeable this year that in some subjects centres are basing their estimate on what they think the candidate will achieve in the national examination rather than on demonstrated evidence of attainment. Centres use estimates for reasons other than appeals, such as motivating candidates. However, they should not submit appeals for candidates when they do not have convincing alternative evidence, to support the estimate. At Higher 15% of appeals did not have evidence to support the estimate.

This year SQA has improved the Appeals Feedback Forms and this should provide valuable advice for centres with their appeals submissions in future years. There are national trends in subject areas as to why appeals are unsuccessful – eg. In Languages and English the dominant reason is the leniency of centre marking of prelims. SQA is running a number of events in the new year, to give centres feedback from the appeals process. We will continue to work with centres to improve the success rate of appeals. The success rates are outlined in the table below:

	Appeals Success Rates		
National Qualification	2006	2007	Percentage Point Difference
Standard Grade	54.0%	51.4%	-2.6
Intermediate 1	39.3%	41.9%	2.6
Intermediate 2	40.4%	41.6%	1.2
Higher	41.3%	37.3%	-4.0
Advanced Higher	39.2%	40.4%	1.2
Total	46.7%	45.9%	-0.8

If the majority of appeals are unsuccessful then this highlights again a lost opportunity for both centres and SQA in relation to possible alternative uses of the resources currently channelled into this process

3. The cost of the appeals process

The total direct costs to SQA of appeals in 2007 was £830,836 (2006 - £564,643). This cost does not include centre and SQA staff time in processing appeals and dealing with queries.

Additional costs are being incurred when centres do not adhere to deadlines and specific instructions on appeals, and SQA will address this with the centres.

4. Missing Evidence/Late appeals

A significant number of centres are still submitting appeals where the evidence is incomplete or missing. In addition, a significant number of centres are still making late appeals submissions. The result of the above is that many appeals are being considered outwith the normal allocated timeframe.

If exam teams are spending more time, outwith the set appeals procedure dates looking at appeals, then this is impacting on their work relating to the setting and vetting of new exam papers or on their ability to develop more understanding standards materials and events.

SQA will tighten up on the procedures for late submissions, and will no longer chase missing or incomplete evidence, as this is the centre's responsibility.