



Policy: Appeals for National Qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher

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Equality impact assessment (EqIA) approval date	Equality and Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments for this policy were developed in parallel with the decision-making process. The equalities and children's rights impacts, both positive and negative, were considered as far as possible. The impact assessments were published on SQA's website October 2025.

Why do we need the policy?

This document sets out the policy for Appeals for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Courses.

What does it apply to?

This policy applies to National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

Who is it for?

All parts of the organisation involved in the delivery of Appeals.

What support is available?

The NQ Policy Team can provide support on implementing this policy.

1 Policy statement

This document sets out the policy for the Appeals service.

The Appeals service for National Qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher comprises a marking review of SQA-marked assessment components. This service is free of charge.

Learners have the right to request an appeal directly from SQA if they have concerns about their final grade for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher Courses.

The outcome of an appeal is final and can result in no change to a grade, an upgrade, or a downgrade.

A priority appeal can be requested if the learner requires a result to secure a conditional place at university, college, employment and/or training.

Alternative evidence is not reviewed as part of Appeals.

The Appeals service has been designed in parallel with the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) to support learners taking National Courses.

Underpinning the Appeals service is a set of agreed core principles:

1. Fairness to all learners
2. Safe and secure certification of qualifications
3. Maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualification system, by ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners

2 Policy relationship to SQA's governing principles

[SQA's Governing Principles](#) govern how SQA meets its statutory duties and self-regulates its activities. The policy on Appeals supports and is supported by, in particular:

Governing Principle 6

SQA will work in partnership with its appointees and centres to ensure that all assessments used in its qualifications are valid and reliable.

Governing Principle 7

SQA will ensure that all qualifications and assessments are as fair and accessible as possible and that the needs of candidates are met in the management of its assessments.

Governing Principle 11

SQA will work in partnership with centres to ensure that the standards of its qualifications are consistently monitored and maintained.

3 Responsibilities

There are roles and responsibilities in the implementation of Appeals across SQA and centres and learners, and the wider system including local authorities, the Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS) and colleges. Further information is detailed within the *Appeals: Roles and Responsibilities* document published on SQA's website.

4 Overall approach

The purpose of the Appeals service is to provide learners with the opportunity to request a review of their SQA-marked assessment components. Learners can request a marking review of the materials that were submitted to SQA for marking if they have concerns about their final grade for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher Courses.

The Appeals service was developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders, is evidence based and reflects the best balance between a range of competing and highly challenging considerations. It is based on SQA's 2019 post-results services (PRS). Enhancements were made to this in 2023, which continue to apply; these relate to:

- ◆ learners having the right to request an appeal directly from SQA if they have concerns about their final grade for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher Courses
- ◆ the Appeals service being free of charge

Appeals: The marking review

Marking reviews are carried out by experienced markers and subject to quality assurance to ensure that they are in line with national standards.

Senior subject specialists review the learner's responses to all externally marked course components, for example, question papers and assignments. These specialists check that the marks awarded by the marker are in line with the marking standards agreed at the markers briefing and as detailed in the marking instructions. In addition, they also check that:

- ◆ all parts of the externally assessed course components have been marked
- ◆ the marks given for each answer have been totalled correctly
- ◆ the correct mark has been entered

This is not a re-mark service. The key consideration is whether the marking of each component (and overall) has been carried out to national standards and within agreed tolerances.

Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment (IACCA) materials will not be subject to a marking review but the relevant marks will be taken into account in the overall grading.

If, as a result of this review, the learner's grade changes, the learner will be certificated with the revised grade. **Grades can stay the same, go up or go down.**

This service considers potential grade changes only. Band movements (up or down) within the same grade are not valid. A1 band exceptions are detailed below.

Priority appeals: the marking review

A priority appeal can be requested if the learner has a conditional university or college offer for the current year and requires a result to secure their place, or if they require their result early for entry into employment and/or training.

A priority appeal is the same as a standard appeal and takes the form of a marking review. Priority appeals will be considered earlier and the outcome will be released earlier.

For a priority appeal request to be accepted and resulted by the published date, the request must be submitted by the deadline, and contain accurate details of the higher education institution (HEI) that is to be notified. All requests for priority appeals must be validated by the centre, including colleges (non-Scottish HEIs), employers and/or training providers.

- ◆ Priority appeal requests must be submitted as soon as possible after the service opens, in line with the published dates.
- ◆ All priority appeals will be issued directly to the centre. In addition, for Scottish HEIs, the appeal outcome will also be issued directly to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

Any requests submitted without the correct details, or after the deadline date, may be processed as part of the standard appeal procedure.

Materials reviewed

The Appeals service is based solely on a review of the learner's external assessment evidence, marked by SQA. No alternative evidence will be considered.

In Dance, Drama and Music, a recording of the learner's performance during the visiting assessment is made at the discretion of the centre and/or learner. A marking review of these components can only be undertaken if the recording and accompanying documentation (for example, sheet music or choreography review) are submitted to SQA. Otherwise, there will only be a clerical check of the mark sheet completed by the visiting assessor.

Recordings and accompanying documentation must be sent to SQA by the request submission deadline date.

Eligibility

Learners are eligible to submit an appeal if they have been awarded a final grade based on externally assessed components that were submitted to SQA for marking. Learners are not able to apply for an appeal if:

- ◆ A course award has been cancelled as a penalty due to serious candidate malpractice
- ◆ an award has been reached using the EECCS — in these cases, there will have been a full review of all learner materials before certification
- ◆ a learner has been certificated at grade A — a marking review is designed to address situations where the certificated grade result needs to be reviewed and there is no grade higher than an A. **An exception to this rule is where a learner has a conditional offer from university that requires a band A1.** These requests should be submitted via the learner's centre. Centres must notify SQA of band 1 requests at submission.

Submitting an appeals request

The learner has the final decision on whether to submit an appeal request. SQA will consider each appeal individually. An appeal can result in the grade staying the same, going up or going down, and therefore the learner's consent must be provided before a request is submitted.

SQA will only accept requests that have been approved by the learner.

Learners who submit a request for a marking review directly to SQA will need to give their consent as part of this process. Parents and/or carers who are submitting an appeal request on behalf of the learner must also obtain the learner's consent to do this.

If a centre is submitting an appeal on behalf of a learner, the centre must retain the record of their consent. The consent can be written (including email or text) or a record of a verbal discussion.

Centres must hold a record of learner consent for each request until at least December of the same year. Centres must provide a copy of this if SQA requests it.

Results

Results will be made available on SQA Connect. Please note that component marks reports will not be updated or reissued following a marking review. Centres have a responsibility to inform learners of their appeal outcomes.

The return of materials subject to an appeals request

SQA must retain any material subject to an appeals request for at least 12 months from the date of certification.

SQA provides a chargeable service to return non-exam material (that is, coursework) that has been submitted to us for assessment, after the retention period has lapsed. Requests for the return of such material, if it has been subject to a marking review request, must be made by the published deadline. Currently, exam scripts cannot be returned.

Further appeals

Academic decisions reached by SQA that ensure the learner's materials were marked in accordance with agreed national standards are final, and no further review options are available.