

2016–17 National Qualifications – Post-Results Services Report

On Tuesday 5 December, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) publishes its post-results services report and statistical tables; covering the fourth year that SQA's post-results services has been available to schools and colleges.

The post-results services report and statistical tables provide information on the number of requests made – including clerical checks, marking reviews, and priority marking reviews – following the 2017 National Qualifications examinations diet.

Post-results services allow schools and colleges the opportunity to query results if they are deemed to be unexpected, given their professional knowledge of a candidate's performance throughout the year. The report contains information on the National Courses which are available for post-results services at National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher levels.

It provides data on the number of grade changes that resulted from such requests.

Ungraded, internally assessed National Courses at SCQF levels 1–4 are not eligible for post-results services and therefore not included in this report.

The exceptional circumstances consideration service operates prior to results being published in August. If a school or college believes that a candidate has suffered as the result of exceptional circumstances such as bereavement or illness, staff can inform SQA. If a request is accepted, centres can submit a wide range of evidence of the candidate's attainment from throughout the year which will be considered.

During the 2017 diet, a total of 3,480 exceptional circumstance requests were resulted in August.

Results Services

Post-results services allow schools and colleges to query candidates' results if they are deemed to be unexpected, given their professional knowledge of a learner's performance throughout the year.

Three services are available to schools and colleges:

- ◆ clerical check – ensures all marks were correctly totalled.
- ◆ marking review – exam materials are reviewed by a senior examiner to ensure the original marker followed the agreed marking scheme and the exam paper was marked to the nationally agreed standard. The review includes a clerical check.
- ◆ priority marking review – same as a marking review but is prioritised and is mainly used for candidates who have a university place pending on the outcome of the review.

There is no charge for schools or colleges who submit an exceptional circumstances consideration application on behalf of candidates.

If a candidate's grade increases or decreases, through a priority marking review, a marking review and/or a clerical check, there is no charge. A cost is only incurred when there is no change to the candidate's final grade.

SQA only accepts results services requests from a head of centre. Likewise, SQA only accepts payments for post-results service charges from schools, colleges and local authorities.

SQA has provided schools with full guidance on the process of submitting reviews, while the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) published its own guidance in June 2015, echoing the messages from SQA, advising schools that no pupil should be denied access to this service on the grounds of cost.

Trend Tables

This year we have also published a set of trend tables, showing a summary of the number of requests and changes made through the post-results services process for each qualification level.

Operational changes in 2016 resulted in the number of 'entries' being defined as the number of entries as reported in the Attainment Statistics (August) publication¹. This means that the measures used in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 reports are not directly comparable with the 2013-14 and 2014-15 publications, where the clerical check or marking review procedures were not available for some qualifications. From 2015-16 onwards, entries, as reported in the Attainment Statistics (August) publication, is the standard definition used for 'entries', despite the fact that a very small number of qualifications may not be eligible for the service².

The original statistical summaries, and tables, published in 2013-14 and 2014-15 remain available, unchanged, on the SQA website.

Post-results services - observations

In this fourth year operating the post-results service, we have seen that centres are becoming familiar with the process and following advice provided by ADES and SQA.

There were a total of 14,536 requests for either a clerical check or a marking review of the examination material. The majority of the requests were for a marking review (95.6% of all requests). A smaller number of requests went through the priority marking review (3.8%) and/or the clerical check (0.6%).

The majority of post-results services requests received sought marking reviews, and over the past year, we have seen the overall percentage of marking review requests resulting in a change of grade continue to decrease from 26.0% in 2014, 19.5% in 2015, 19.3% in 2016, and to 16.4% this year (this is inclusive of both upgrades and downgrades).

Throughout the 2016–17 examination and external assessment diet, SQA continued to increase the volume of quality checks that markers' work was subject to, prior to certification, including the increasing use of e-marking.

Schools and colleges will always want to query those results that they deem to be unexpected, and SQA will continue to look to further improve the quality assurance of marking, using the post-results services data, and will share and review best practice with other UK awarding bodies.

¹ Results Services are not available for a very small number of subjects. The total entry figures recorded in this report do include the entries for these subjects.

² Fashion and Textile Technology, Hospitality: Practical Cake Craft, Hospitality: Practical Cookery, Practical Electronics, Practical Metalworking and Practical Woodworking are exempt from PRS.