

Appeals Service for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Courses at SCQF Levels 5 to 7 Policy

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Why do we need this policy?

It sets out the policy for the Appeals Service for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses at SCQF levels 5 to 7.

Who is it for?

This policy is for anyone in Qualifications Scotland involved in the Appeals Service. It's also a reference document for centres, parents, learners and other key stakeholder organisations interested in appeals.

What support is available?

Our National Qualifications Policy Teams can provide support on how to implement this policy.

Policy

1 Policy statement

This document sets out the policy for the Appeals Service for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. The main points are as follows:

- The Appeals Service is for course components externally marked by Qualifications Scotland. This includes question papers and coursework components, such as assignments, projects, and practical activities.
- An appeal is a review of marking — we do not review any alternative evidence.
- A learner can request an appeal directly if they have concerns about their final grade.
- A learner can request a priority appeal if they need a result to secure a conditional place at university, college, employment and/or training.
- The outcome of an appeal is final; it can result in no change to a grade, an upgrade, or a downgrade.
- The Appeals Service is free.

We designed both the Appeals Service and the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) to support learners taking National Courses. A set of agreed core principles underpin the Appeals Service:

- fairness to all learners
- safe and secure certification of qualifications
- maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualification system by ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners

We are committed to equality of opportunity and to a culture that respects difference. We believe that, as an employer and public body, we can play a leading part in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion by making them an integral part of our decision making. At the development stage, we completed an Equality Impact Assessment to assess how this policy might impact on equality groups, and the findings are reflected in this policy.

2 Policy relationship to our Governing Principles

Qualifications Scotland's Governing Principles govern how we meet our statutory duties and self-regulate our activities. This policy supports and is supported by:

Governing Principle 6

Qualifications Scotland 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

Qualifications Scotland 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

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

3 Responsibilities

Many people and organisations can be involved in appeals, such as Qualifications Scotland, learners, centres, colleges, local authorities and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools. You can find more information in the *Appeals: Roles and Responsibilities* document.

4 Policy requirements

The Appeals Service gives learners the opportunity to request a review of course components externally marked by Qualifications Scotland. If they have concerns about their final grade for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher courses, learners can request a marking review of the materials submitted to Qualifications Scotland.

We developed the Appeals Service through extensive consultation with stakeholders, and it is modelled on the Scottish Qualifications Authority's 2019 Post-results

Services. It is evidence-based and reflects a balance between a range of competing and highly challenging considerations.

We made the following enhancements in 2023, and these continue to apply:

- A learner has the right to appeal directly to Qualifications Scotland if they have concerns about their final grade for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher courses.
- The Appeals Service is free.

4.1 Appeals

Experienced markers carry out marking reviews. We quality-assure these reviews to make sure they meet national standards.

These subject specialists review a learner's externally marked course components. They check that the marks are in line with the marking standards agreed at the markers briefing, and as detailed in the marking instructions. They also check that:

- all parts of the components were marked
- the marks given for each answer were totalled correctly
- the correct marks were entered

A marking review is not a re-mark. The marking review checks that each component was marked to national standards and within the agreed tolerances, and that the overall marks are correct.

We do not include internally assessed components (those that have been marked in centres) in the marking review, but we include the marks from these components in the overall grading decision.

Following the review, if a learner's grade changes, we will issue a new certificate showing their revised grade. **Grades can stay the same, go up or go down.**

The Appeals Service is only for potential grade changes — we do not consider band movements (up or down) within the same grade. However, there are exceptions for A1 band (see section '4.4: Eligibility').

4.2 Priority appeals

A learner can request a priority appeal if:

- they have a conditional university or college offer for the current year, and require a result to secure their place
- they need their result early for entry into employment and/or training

A priority appeal is the same as a standard appeal. The only difference is that for priority appeals, we consider them earlier and release the outcome earlier.

To accept and process a priority appeal in time, we must receive the request by the published deadline. Priority appeal requests must also contain accurate details of the higher education institution (HEI) that is to be notified. Centres must validate all requests for priority appeals — this includes schools, colleges, non-Scottish HEIs, employers and/or training providers.

Learners must submit priority appeal requests as soon as possible after the service opens, in line with the published dates.

We issue outcomes of priority appeals directly to the centre. For Scottish HEIs, the appeal outcome is also issued directly to UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service).

If we receive priority requests without the correct details or after the deadline date, we may process them as part of the standard appeals procedures.

4.3 Reviewing materials

Appeals are based on a review of the **original** evidence for components marked by Qualifications Scotland. We do not consider alternative evidence.

In Dance, Drama and Music subjects, a recording of the learner's performance during the visiting assessment is made at the discretion of the centre and/or learner. For these subjects, we can only carry out a marking review if we have the recording and the accompanying documentation (for example, sheet music or choreography

review). Otherwise, we will carry out a clerical check of the marking sheet that the visiting assessor completed.

We must receive recordings and accompanying documentation by the submission deadline date.

4.4 Eligibility

A learner can request an appeal for components marked by Qualifications Scotland.

They cannot appeal if:

- their course award is cancelled as a penalty due to serious candidate malpractice
- they have already used the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service to attain a grade — in such cases, their materials have already been fully reviewed before certification
- their result is a grade A — a marking review is designed to address situations where there is a concern with the grade awarded. There is no grade higher than an A

An exception to this is where a learner has a conditional university offer that requires a band A1; they can appeal a lower-band grade A result. Grade A appeals must come from centres, and they must be clearly labelled as **band 1 requests**.

4.5 Submitting an appeal

We only accept requests that the learner has approved, as an appeal can result in grades staying the same, going up or going down.

- Parents and/or carers submitting a request on behalf of a learner must get their consent.
- If a centre is submitting an appeal on behalf of a learner, the centre must keep a record of their consent:
 - This can be written (including email or text) or a record of a verbal discussion.
 - Centres must retain a record of consent for each request until at least December of the same year and must be able to provide a copy if requested.

4.6 Appeals results

We issue results on Connect, Qualifications Scotland's secure portal for centres. We do not update or re-issue component marks reports. Centres are responsible for informing the learner about the outcome of their appeal.

Returning materials

Qualifications Scotland must retain any material subject to an appeals request for at least 12 months from the date of certification. We provide a chargeable service to return non-exam material submitted to us for assessment after the retention period has lapsed. If this material has been subject to a marking review, requests for return must be made by the published deadline. We cannot return marked question papers.

4.7 Further appeals

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

5 Associated policies and legislation

- Qualifications Scotland's *Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service*