

Arrangements for National 3 and National 4 Physics and freestanding units in session 2020–21



As a result of the modifications to the Higher and Advanced Higher course assessments for session 2020–21, we have been exploring the implications for National 3 and National 4 courses.

We are making the following modifications to National 3 and National 4 assessments for session 2020–21 to support the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment. In addition, we are also making modifications to the freestanding units at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7.

National 3

The requirement to complete outcome 1 for the unit assessment is being removed for session 2020–21.

The development of practical skills in physics is a fundamental part of the courses. However, under current restrictions, carrying out practical work safely is an issue for centres.

For the unit assessment, outcome 1 requires candidates to undertake a practical experiment and write a report. There will be difficulty for centres undertaking practical work safely, following the guidelines issued by SSERC.

Teachers and lecturers should still endeavour to develop the practical skills that are a feature of the National 3 course.

National 4

The requirement to complete outcome 1 for the unit assessment is being removed for session 2020–21.

The development of practical skills in physics is a fundamental part of the courses. However, under current restrictions, carrying out practical work safely is an issue for centres.

For the unit assessment, outcome 1 requires candidates to undertake a practical experiment and write a report. There will be difficulty for centres undertaking practical work safely, following the guidelines issued by SSERC.

Teachers and lecturers should still endeavour to develop the practical skills that are a feature of the National 4 course.

Added value unit

The requirement to complete the added value unit is being removed for session 2020–21. This is a temporary modification to support with learning, teaching and assessment this session. For session 2020–21 only, the added value unit results do not need to be evidence-based. For candidates who pass all contributing units for the course, teachers and lecturers need to submit a ‘pass’ result for the added value unit to ensure that the candidates are certificated for the overall course award.

Although the added value unit allows a range of approaches, including literature research rather than practical work, almost all National 4 added value unit evidence seen at verification in physics includes practical work. It is clear that this is the preferred approach of the physics teaching profession. This may be because many centres have multi-level classes and using the same approach for National 5 and National 4 candidates allows a similar experience and easier classroom management. There are also centres that decide later in the academic session that a candidate is struggling with National 5 and should therefore be presented for National 4 instead. With National 5 SQA external assessment not going ahead this session, this will then create problems for centres with multi-level classes having to try to undertake either experimental work or literature research with their National 4 candidates.

Access to IT facilities in session 2020–21 could impede candidates’ ability to undertake literature research.

Freestanding units at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7

The requirement to complete outcome 1 for the unit assessment is being removed for session 2020–21.

For freestanding units that were formerly part of the National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher courses there is a requirement that outcome 1 is completed, which involves carrying out and reporting on a practical experiment. However, under current restrictions, carrying out practical work safely is an issue for centres. There will be difficulty for centres undertaking practical work safely, following the guidelines issued by SSERC.

Teachers and lecturers should still endeavour to develop the practical skills that are a feature of these units.

There are two units, Researching Physics (SCQF level 6) and Investigating Physics (SCQF level 7), that are almost entirely practical based. Centres should not be entering candidates for these units unless candidates are able to undertake all of the necessary practical work.

Centres offering units that were part of Physics courses prior to Curriculum for Excellence

There are a small number of centres that currently present candidates for units that were part of physics courses prior to Curriculum for Excellence (Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher, and Advanced Higher), perhaps as part of a Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP). In these units, outcome 3 involves 'carrying out and reporting on a practical experiment'. **For these units, the requirement to complete outcome 3 is being removed for session 2020–21.**

If you have any questions about these changes, please email NQ2020@sqa.org.uk.