Information for Centres
Producing Estimates

Session 2019–20

Context

Following the decision that the 2020 exam diet can no longer go ahead, it is important that the entire Scottish education system works in partnership to achieve our common goal, of ensuring that learners' hard work is rightly and fairly recognised. We have been working with other national education organisations to ensure that our approach, and the new processes that we need to introduce, are as robust and fair as possible.

Given the rapidly changing circumstances, we are in the unique position of being unable to collect national performance data on question-paper and non-question-paper components.

For session 2019–20, therefore, we are asking you to submit estimated grades for all your candidates, based on their demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. The integrity of these estimates is critical, because they will provide the core element of the certification process.

Please note that any estimates that you have already submitted to SQA will be processed and returned to you for reference, to help you complete a revised submission.

To provide additional reassurance to the system, SQA will moderate estimates, to ensure consistency across centres and fairness to candidates. This will include analyses of centres' estimates and outcomes, prior attainment, progression statistics, and grade distributions. These measures are intended as further validation of teachers' and lecturers' professional judgements.

In order to do this, we have refined the existing SQA estimate process, as follows:

♦ Firstly, each existing band has been subdivided and you are asked to place your candidates within these refined bands.
♦ Secondly, again to support broad statistical analyses, you are asked to rank order your candidates within each of the new, refined bands.

The information in this document will help you to determine your estimates and ranking decisions and submit them by the deadline of **Friday 29 May**.

Thank you for your support and patience during this exceptionally difficult time.

Estimates

An estimate is a judgement of a grade and band based on a holistic review of a candidate's performance as indicated by the available assessment evidence.

For session 2019−20, you must submit estimates for every candidate entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

SQA will use your estimates to:

♦ help make decisions about certification — estimates indicate the grades that centres expect their candidates to attain
♦ check that awarding outcomes are as fair as possible to candidates
♦ ascertain whether a centre's estimates this session are consistent with outcomes in previous years

Your role has three stages:

1 Determine the grade and band as you normally do.
2 Refine your judgement and place your candidates into subdivisions of the existing bands to give refined bands.
3 Rank order your candidates within each refined band.

It is imperative that each estimate is a realistic evidence-based prediction of the candidate's final attainment in the course assessment.

Producing estimates

An estimate is a holistic professional judgement based on a candidate's attainment in all aspects of the course (ie all course components) and should reflect the candidate's demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for the predicted grade and band estimated.

To make accurate estimates, you need to have a clear understanding of:

♦ the range of skills, knowledge and understanding covered by the course
♦ the structure and the assessment requirements of the course
♦ the components that contribute to the course award, including weightings where appropriate
♦ the grade descriptors for the course

Information on these aspects of each course can be obtained from the course specification, specimen question papers and coursework assessment tasks. The course specifications for National Courses give detailed information on the purpose of each course component. This includes the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding that each component assesses, and the structure and broad mark allocations for each component.

Course assessment may feature integration, challenge and/or application, since it assesses the added value of the course. Estimates that are based on performance in tasks that are similar to those used for course assessment are more likely to give an accurate prediction of a candidate's final attainment in the course assessment. Questions and tasks that are suitable for course assessment are exemplified in the specimen question paper(s) and coursework assessment task for each course.

SQA's Understanding Standards resource also provides examples of candidate responses with associated commentaries for most National Courses. This can be useful benchmark evidence for you when determining estimated grades and bands.

For session 2019−20, there is no requirement to set additional mock or prelim exams or homework tasks for the purpose of determining a candidate estimate. You are not required to mark non-question-paper components that would have been externally marked by SQA, but you may use any work completed by candidates as evidence to help inform your estimates.

Given the timing of the announcement to cancel the 2020 exam diet, we recognise that centres will have incomplete evidence and that the range and amount of evidence will vary between different subjects. Judgements should be made on the available evidence. No candidate should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after centres were closed. Where candidates have completed additional work after school and college closures, teachers and lecturers should exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases, it is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work was done.

When determining an estimate, you should firstly gather and review the key evidence you have for each candidate. For example, prelim or mock papers, additional tasks or assignments, performance or practical evidence.

You should then focus on the predictive value of the evidence reviewed (in other words, how much it tells you), as measured against the requirements of the course assessment. For example, this could be the consistency of a candidate's practical or performance evidence or the depth of treatment in relation to questions on key topics, or their quality of responses to discriminating questions or tasks.

Not every topic in every area needs to be assessed exhaustively — a selection of important and representative questions and tasks evidenced under the appropriate conditions can give a good indication of likely performance in the final course assessment. This will be particularly important this session when some of the evidence may be incomplete or coursework evidence is not available to centres.

Where candidates would have reasonable adjustments or access arrangements (for example, a reader or scribe), the judgement should take account of likely achievement with the reasonable adjustment/access arrangement in place.

Where illness or other personal circumstances might have affected performance in prelim exams, centres should review candidate performance in alternative assessments when making their judgements.

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher refined bands

This session, a key aspect of producing accurate and fair results will be your support in converting your estimates into new refined bands as indicated in the table below. Once you have identified a candidate's estimated grade and band, you should revisit all candidates in line with the refined bands, with the exception of band 9.

For larger cohorts, we would expect candidates estimated to achieve a particular band to be distributed across the refined bands.

Centres are strongly advised to focus on making holistic professional judgements when determining the refined band for each candidate and to not over-focus on the notional percentage range.

Grade	Band	Refined band		Notional % range
A	1	1 Upper	1	93–100
A	1	1 Lower	2	85 – 92
A	2	2 Upper	3	80–84
A	2	2 Middle	4	75–79
A	2	2 Lower	5	70–74
B	3	3 Upper	6	67–69
B	3	3 Lower	7	65–66
B	4	4 Upper	8	62–64
B	4	4 Lower	9	60–61
C	5	5 Upper	10	57–59
C	5	5 Lower	11	55–56
C	6	6 Upper	12	52–54
C	6	6 Lower	13	50–51
D	7	7 Upper	14	47–49
D	7	7 Middle	15	44–46
D	7	7 Lower	16	40–43
No Award	8	8 Upper	17	35–39
No Award	8	8 Lower	18	30–34
No Award	9	9	19	0–29

Where a candidate is currently estimated to be in band 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 8

If the overall estimate suggests that the candidate is closer to the band above, they should be placed in the upper refined band and **this should be converted into the appropriate refined band.**

If the evidence suggests that the candidate just meets the required standard, they should be placed in the lower refined band and **this should be converted into the appropriate refined band.**

Example

If a candidate is estimated to achieve a grade C, band 5 and the evidence suggests that performance is closer to band 4, then place them in band 5 upper and convert to refined band 10. If the evidence just meets the original band 5, you should place the candidate in band 5 lower and convert to refined band 11.

Where a candidate is currently estimated to be in band 2 or band 7

The corresponding refined bands are now divided into three categories (upper, middle and lower): if the overall estimate suggests the candidate performance is closer to the band above, the candidate should be placed in the upper refined band and **this should be converted to the appropriate refined band**.

If the overall estimate suggests that the candidate just meets the required standard, the candidate should be placed in the lower refined band and **this should be converted to the appropriate refined band**.

The middle refined band should be used where the overall estimate solidly conforms to the required standard and **this should be converted to the appropriate refined band**.

Example

If a candidate is estimated to achieve a grade A, band 2 and the evidence suggests performance is closer to band 1 you should place them in band 2 upper and convert to refined band 3. If the evidence just meets the original band 2 you should place them in band 2 lower and convert to refined band 5. If they are solidly within the original band 2, you should then place them in band 2 middle and convert to refined band 4.

Rank ordering your candidates

In addition to providing estimates within the refined bands discussed above, you also need to provide a rank order for each of your candidates within each refined band.

For example, if you have 15 candidates for National 5 Mathematics for whom you have given an estimate of refined band 6, you should then rank them from 1 to 15, where 1 is the most secure and/or highest attaining, 2 is the next most secure and so on.

Unique rankings with no ties are expected within each refined band for most courses. This will help SQA make differentiated adjustments where appropriate to the estimates for the benefit of candidates. For large multi-class cohorts, we recognise that it may be extremely difficult to distinguish between every candidate and strongly advise minimising the number of ties, and the number of candidates who are tied, within any refined band.

Where there is more than one teacher/lecturer delivering a course, collectively you will need to agree the rank order for all candidates within your centre.

Within your subject departments you will need to discuss the rank order and come to a shared view of the standard being applied within your centre. We recognise that this will be challenging for some centres and in some subjects, given the current circumstances.

One approach to rank ordering your candidates is:

♦ Each teacher or lecturer could start off by estimating bands and rank orders for their candidates
♦ Working with the subject lead, teachers or lecturers could discuss and compare the evidence of candidates at the top and bottom of the rank order within each grade, ensuring that a consistent standard is being applied and adjusting the bands accordingly.
♦ Teachers or lecturers could integrate the ranking of candidates by discussing individual candidates, beginning at the top of the rank order and working down.

How to submit your estimates

During the week beginning 11 May, SQA will deliver a new service within our existing centre portal, SQA Connect. This service is designed to support you in the submission of the refined bands and, within each refined band, a rank order of candidates. The service covers your course entries of candidates at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

For each course you will be presented with a list of candidates for which SQA has accepted entries from your centre. The display will be a real-time reflection of the entry information on our database. This will be the key input screen for the collection of the required estimate information.

It is vital that you ensure that the entry information you have provided to us is fully up to date in advance of the service opening.

The software is designed to support you in the process of moving through from the original band to the refined band and in turn the rank order. You will have the opportunity to 'save as you go' prior to making a final submission for each course.

As with other secure services running on SQA Connect, your data input and collection should be done in line with your centre's data security procedures.

All submissions must be with SQA by **Friday 29 May**, to ensure inclusion in the 2020 Awarding Model.

A detailed User Guide will be issued in advance of the service opening.

Quality assurance

SQA co-ordinators and senior management teams have a key role in ensuring a consistent approach within subjects and across their centres. Working together with their subject lead, teachers and lecturers delivering the same course are encouraged to moderate their estimates and ensure a coherent rank order across the entire cohort. Schools and colleges will have their own established protocols for quality assuring estimates and these should be applied as normal.

Internal sign-off within the centre

Given the unique position that we all find ourselves in, we recommend adopting a formal sign-off for the predicted grades, bands and rank orders that you submit to SQA. A suggested approach is offered below:

Course sign-off

Each set of centre estimates for a course is signed off by at least two teachers or lecturers in that subject, one of whom is the subject lead (where there is only one teacher or lecturer, or only one is available, the SQA co-ordinator or their representative, signs it off also).

Head of centre sign-off

The head of centre or their representative confirms that the centre assessment grades, bands and the rank order of candidates are a true representation of candidate performance.

In reviewing centre estimates, the head of centre could consider how the distribution of centre estimates compares with the performance of the previous three years' cohorts within the centre, especially for subjects with larger cohorts.

Thank you

Thank you for your assistance and support.

Your professional judgement, valued expertise and knowledge of your candidates are vital in ensuring that the certification process recognises learner achievement in as fair a way as possible in the present circumstances.

Any queries?

If you have any questions, please contact: NQ2020@sqa.org.uk