



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

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<b>Business area</b>	NQ Policy
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<b>Policy approval date</b>	6 March 2024
<b>Equality impact assessment (EqIA) date</b>	Equality and Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments for <i>Appeals</i> 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 on 7 March 2024 and can be found <a href="#">here</a> .

**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 Appeals.

The Appeals service for National Qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will comprise of a marking review of SQA-marked assessment components which will include a clerical check where appropriate.

Learners have the right to request an appeal directly from SQA should they have concerns about their final grade for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher courses. This is a free of charge marking review service, which will include a clerical check where appropriate.

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.

There will be no provision for the review of alternative evidence as part of Appeals.

The Appeals service has been designed in parallel with the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service, both are services designed to support learners taking National Courses.

Underpinning Appeals 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, 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 learners 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, Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS) and colleges. Further information is detailed within the Appeals Roles and Responsibilities document published on the SQA 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 should 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. The Appeals service is based on SQA's 2019 post-results services (PRS) which offered a marking review service and a clerical check service. Enhancements were made to this in 2023, which will continue to apply, these relate to:

- Learners having the right to request an appeal directly from SQA should they have concerns about their final grade for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher courses.
- The introduction of a free of charge marking review service, which will include a clerical check where appropriate.

### **Appeals: The marking review (including a clerical check, where appropriate)**

The marking review is carried out by an experienced marker. Marking reviews are subject to quality assurance to ensure that they are carried out in line with the National standard.

The marking review makes sure that:

- all parts of the externally assessed course components have been marked
- the marking is in line with the national standard
- the marks given for each answer have been totalled correctly, where appropriate
- 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 Course Components (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 (including a clerical check, where appropriate)**

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

A priority appeal is the same as a standard appeal and will consist of a marking review, including a clerical check, where appropriate. Priority appeals will be considered earlier and the outcome will be released earlier. Priority appeals are for learners with a conditional

university/college offer, for the current year, or who require their result early to secure employment and/or training.

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-SHEIs), 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 higher education institutions (SHEIs) 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 (eg music sheet or choreography review) are submitted to SQA. Otherwise, only a clerical check of the marking sheet completed by the visiting assessor will be undertaken.

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

### **Eligibility**

Learners are eligible to apply for 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 penalty has been applied due to established learner malpractice
- an award has been reached using the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) - in these cases, a full review of all learner materials will have been undertaken before certification
- a learner has been certificated at grade A - a marking review is designed to address situations where the certificated grade result requires to be reviewed and there is no grade higher than an A. **An exception to this rule, is where a learner is in receipt of 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 final decision on whether to submit an appeal request lies with the learner. Only requests that have been approved by the learner will be accepted by SQA. Requests will be accepted from parents/carers, but the learner must also consent to this.

Learners are encouraged to ask their centre for support in submitting an appeal request. SQA will also accept marking review requests directly from learners or their representatives. Each appeal will be considered individually by SQA.

## **Learner consent**

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. If a centre is submitting an appeal on behalf of a learner, the record of this consent must be retained by the centre. 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.

Learners who submit a request for a marking review directly to SQA will be required 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.

## **Submission deadlines**

Cases are considered by SQA markers who are practising teachers and lecturers. To minimise any impact on teaching time, and to ensure that all cases can be considered and resulted on time, a detailed programme of activity needs to be planned and executed. Submission deadlines must be adhered to. Late requests may not be accepted.

## **Results**

Results will be available on SQA Connect. Please note that component marks reports will not be updated/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**

Material which is subject to appeal request must be retained by SQA for at least 12 months from the date of certification.

SQA provides a service to return non-examination material (ie coursework) that has been submitted to us for assessment, after the retention period has lapsed. This is a chargeable service. Requests for the return of such material, if it has been subject to a marking review request, must be made by the published deadline. Examination 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.