Scottish Qualifications Authority

Code of Practice Governance Group

23 March 2020

Options for Appeals of Graded National Courses in Diet 2020

1 Context

SQA and Scottish Government have discussed possible options as a result of the impact of the COVD-19 public health emergency on the SQA Annual Examinations Diet. These have included exploring the feasibility of an Enhanced Estimates Model (EEM) in which the Chief Examining Officer would be prepared to certificate in the absence of a 2020 exam diet. A commitment has also been made by the Chief Examining Officer to offer a post results service which would essentially allow an appeal to be made on the grade awarded. This paper explores the issues to be considered in developing such a model and recommends next steps.

2 Status

SQA has a duty to ensure that the standard of its qualifications is credible with learners, their parents, schools, colleges, universities and wider stakeholders.

Developing an appeals process to compliment the EEM

SQA's Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service is an established service that supports candidates who have been unable to attend an examination, or whose performance in the examination may have been affected by a personal circumstance, or an unplanned incident on the day, which is out with their control. This service is based on a senior examiner review of alternative assessment evidence presented by centres, which primarily covers the exam-based assessment component. The review also considers any relevant non-question paper component assessment evidence, which has been submitted and marked. Using their subject knowledge and professional experience, senior appointees will consider all assessment evidence, question paper and non-question paper, against the grade related criteria for the relevant National Course and make a judgment as to the appropriate grade to award.

For 2020, it is possible that this approach could be adapted to deal with the situation whereby a centre wishes to challenge the grade awarded to a candidate via the EEM. Centres would be required to submit relevant alternative assessment evidence which would be reviewed by a senior examiner.

Assumptions and issues to consider in the development of an appeals process for 2020:

- Further clarity is required around the EEM model to be able to work up a viable appeals process.
- The process would be based around the provision and review of alternative evidence – this may include coursework not previously submitted/marked.
- A robust operating model would need to be developed that back ends on to the new EEM awarding model. The timelines to get such a system in place with the necessary and appropriate levels of resilience are extremely tight.
- It is assumed there would be no charge for this service and the financial implications of this would need to be considered.
- Validation criteria would need to be established and agreed with all key stakeholders. For example, under SQA's previous appeals process, candidates where required to have attained a lower grade than their estimate to be eligible for appeal.
- Appeals should be requested by a centre after guidance and consideration by Head of Centre.
- Consideration should be given to taking a priority-based approach to consideration of appeals e.g. UCAS candidates, H/AH, N5 (only identified components or for leavers).

- Consideration should be given to a review of a centre sample to address volume of submissions.
- There is an overarching assumption that the consideration of alternative evidence (in many different formats) will require a significant amount of training, collaboration and discussion in order to achieve a fair and consistent outcome across all subjects. Therefore the success of delivery has an attached dependence on being able to facilitate face to face discussions and meetings in a normal business setting.
- There will likely be some difficulties with certain subject areas in particular – for example Art & Design and Photography where the coursework is bulky and cannot be moved from a central venue. The subjective nature of these components will also mitigate against postal approaches. It is worth noting at this point we have no solution to marking Coursework in these areas under current restrictions.
- Predicting the volume of such appeals will be challenging and therefore our ability to align capacity to handle yet to be determined volumes will be problematic.

3 Recommendation

A project should be quickly initiated to take forward the development of the appeals option. This should involve the following areas of the business:

- Qualifications Development: For input into what requirements are to ensure valid and reliable results. This will include the development of guidance, training and support for senior appointees.
- Logistics: Events Management for planning dates, Appointee Management for release/capacity/appointee availability.
- Systems: E-marking/business systems to see if we can adapt existing systems, ADS for what the output should be, Script Management for material transfer.

The Code of Practice Governance Group is invited to consider the issues raised in this paper and, subject to the further development activities outlined, approve the establishment of a project to move this forward.

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