Scottish Qualifications Authority

Code of Practice Governance Group

27 March 2020

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 outlines SQA's proposed approach to the development of this appeals service and the associated assumptions, issues and risks which are required to be managed.

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 approach 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.

This evidence could cover both question paper and non-question paper components. There is a recognition that for 2020, some of the assessment evidence against any relevant non-question paper components may be incomplete or not previously marked. The focus of the approach will be a holistic review by a senior subject specialist of a candidate's performance within the evidence presented. The output of this review will be to confirm the original grade awarded to the candidate or to award an alternative grade based on the review of evidence. A candidate's grade could either go up or down. Given the evidence review would be conducted by SQA's most senior subject specialists it is anticipated that the decision taken would be final.

To facilitate the above, a robust operating model would need to be developed that back ends on to the new EEM awarding model.

Management and governance of the development process

A project has been initiated to take forward the development of the appeals service. This involves 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 and management of resources.
- Script management for material transfer.
- Appointee management for release/capacity/appointee availability.
- Systems: E-marking/business systems to explore the adaption of existing systems or development of new systems.
- ADS for managing the output and certification process.

The project team will create appropriate development metrics and report progress to the CPG 2020 group. External stakeholder input and agreement will be sought around the proposed approach and validation model.

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

- 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 were required to have attained a lower grade than their estimate to be eligible for appeal.
- Appeals should be requested by a centre only 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).
- 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.

Risks – the following key risks have been identified:

- The tight timelines will prevent the development an operating system for this appeals process with the necessary and appropriate levels of resilience.
- Centres will find it challenging to be able to access, gather and submit evidence to SQA for a post-results appeals process.
- Access restrictions will prevent the appropriate training, collaboration and support required to ensure valid and reliable assessment judgements.
- The volume of post results appeals will be such that SQA has insufficient appointee and/or staff resource to manage the process effectively.
- The post results appeals process may contribute to an increase in grade inflation.
- Centres and candidates do not accept the outcome of the post results appeals process.

3 Recommendation

The COPGG is asked to note and approve the proposed approach to the development of a post results appeals service for examination diet 2020. The COPGG is also asked to note the key assumptions and risks associated with this development and advise as to any additions or amendments.