Scottish Qualifications Authority

Code of Practice Governance Group

07 April 2020

Determining Entitlement of Graded National Courses in Diet 2020

1 Context

SQA continues to consider a range of options around the determining entitlement of Graded National Courses in Diet 2020 as a result of the impact of the COVD-19 public health emergency.

2 Status

The appendix to this paper outlines two areas of work to support the above and which need to be completed by 20 April 2020: Awarding and Centre-level Adjustments

This will go beyond business-as-usual awarding. The overall process and the participants involved need to be worked through.

However, the basic premise is that many aspects of our current approach (candidate performance in assessments, marking with related quality assurance) can be reduced into a centre Estimate and a decision based on its veracity.

The two areas of work are outlined separately for illustration purposes but – in application – may require more integration. Appendix One is a specification of areas to be considered – it is not a worked through solution to this challenging task.

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken with the same timescales.

3 Recommendation

The Code of Practice Governance Group is invited to consider the issues raised in this paper.

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Appendix One

Overview

An alternative awarding approach is being implemented to allow SQA to result graded National Courses in Diet 2020 with reliability, equity and fairness – over time, across subjects and levels – in the absence of any candidate performance assessment information.

Estimates will be the only source of candidate performance information in Diet 2020. There will be no mechanism for SQA to ascertain the provenance of these Estimates prior to resulting or the internal centre assessments which inform them. As a result, the reliability of Estimates needs to be informed by clear guidance.

This paper acts as a specification to develop and implement the alternative awarding approach based on the following agreed principles[1]:

- Existing bands will be sub-divided;
- Centre estimates will be based on these bands with candidate rankings required within these bands;
- SQA will adjust estimates – where necessary – to ensure consistency across centres and, in comparison with previous years;
- The above process may be informed by previous subject and qualification performance at both national and centre-level;
- Prior attainment may be used – where this available;
- A free post-results service to ensure that schools and colleges continue to have a mechanism to question any result will be available.

Inputs: Estimates based on a more granular scale and candidate rankings within each band; both provided by centres.

Outputs: Grade-only resulting – Band 2, Band 4, Band 6, Band 7 and Band 8

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[1] SQA update on arrangements for quality assurance and the certification of National Courses and Awards – a message to schools and colleges (Thursday 02 April 2020)

Awarding

Based on the above, the assumption is that if a candidate in Centre X is estimated at a band and a candidate in Centre Y is estimated the same band then they will both receive the same resulting band on 04 August 2020.

Our current 'Direct Panel Awarding' contingency will be required for Diet 2020. Essentially, this suspends our business are usual Awarding approach and allows flexibility in the personnel and supporting information involved.

In Diet 2020, a national distribution will be required for each subject and level to support Awarding.

In Diet 2020, awarding decisions will be based on an extended estimate scale which must be linked to the current nine-point band scale to allow subsequent resulting. However, centres will also still use the existing nine-point scale. The extended scale will allow a more nuanced approach to awarding decisions.

Centre ranking within a grade will not be considered in this process but rather will form a part of the post certification offer. Prior attainment – where available – will continue to be used as a general indication of cohort ability.

Key points for consideration in the development of this include:

- What is the appropriate number of bands and should they be of equal size?
- How might the number and size of the bands affect teacher estimation?
- Should the distribution be agreed and fixed; or a more flexible upper and lower limit distribution?
- Should a previous year be selected for the distribution or; an average over several previous years or; the highest or lowest in recent years?
- It is assumed that the criterion for selecting a distribution will be the same across subjects and levels. Could a different criterion be used for different levels, e.g. National 5 v. Higher v. Advanced Higher?

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Centre-level Adjustments

Where necessary, SQA will adjust centre Estimates in Diet 2020 to ensure consistency across centres and, in comparison with previous years. The working assumption is that this will be at the level of individual centre and not centre-type. A 'check' will be undertaken to ascertain whether there is evidence of centre over/under-estimation or centre attainment patterns are significantly different from previous years.

A centre profile will developed. This will outline centre performance in graded National Courses at a subject level over the past three Diets. An indicative tariff scale will be introduced and tested to provide a numerical score in each subject/level, e.g. A = 100pts; B = 75pts, C=50pts. This would support a greater degree of comparison across centres and years but would need to be normalised to account for different cohort sizes over time.

Centre level adjustment of Estimates will consider a combination of two factors – *Consistency of Estimating* and *Outcomes-based.*

Consistency of Estimating	This involves a consideration of how a centre has been historically estimating candidate performance in a qualification over recent or several years (to be determined) and whether the estimates submitted for Diet 2020 are in line with this. This is a measure of centre estimation consistency.
Outcomes-Based	This involves a consideration of centre attainment (including grade distributions) in a subject/level over several years (to be determined), as well as the relationship between estimates and outcomes. This is largely a measure of historical cohort ability.

Centre ranking within a grade will not be considered in this process but rather will form a part of the post certification offer. If SQA were to try to set boundaries or attainment distributions for each combination of centre/subject/level, then there would be 21479 decisions to be made based on Diet 2019 August certification data. This would be challenging if centre-level adjustments 'up' where the rule rather than – as proposed – the exception in Diet 2020.

Key points for consideration in the development of this include:

- What measure(s) will be used to 'trigger' an examination of individual centre estimates?
- How will the examination of individual centre estimates work in practice? What resources will be available to examine individual centre estimates? How many flagged centres can be feasibly assessed?
- What is an appropriate number of years to inform each measure?
- What weighting will be placed on each measure?
- What metrics will be used to calculate centre performance, for example, number of individual grades, A-C rate, or some other form of measure, e.g. based on a tariff score?
- How will new, returning or very low uptake centres be dealt with given that SQA will not have enough information to make any comparisons with? – appropriate estimation in such cases is particularly important?
- How will the cumulative impact of centre level distributions be balanced with target national distributions?

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