Scottish Qualifications Authority

Code of Practice Governance Group

14 April 2020

Update on refreshing guidance for generating Estimates - for examination diet 2020

1 Context

On Thursday 2 April 2020, SQA issued an update to schools and colleges around the evidence-based judgements we need teachers and lecturers to make about their learners' predicted grades to help inform certification at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

For this session, teachers and lecturers should continue to exercise their professional judgement and estimate a learner's grade and band based on their demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for each National Course.

However, to assist SQA in the awarding and certification process for 2020, we are taking steps to refine the existing system and ensure it is as fair and robust as possible. Firstly, we will be subdividing each existing band and asking teachers and lecturers to place their learners within these band categories. Secondly, we will be asking teachers and lecturers to rank order their learners within each estimated band.

This paper updates on SQA's proposed approach to development of revised guidance on generating estimates. The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that Heads of Centres, SQA coordinators, curriculum leaders, and teachers and lecturers are aware of the enhanced requirements for 2020 and can generate and submit the required information to SQA.

2 Status

SQA's existing Guidance to Producing Estimates document was published in January 2020. It is a generic document and consists of the following headings:

- Estimates – what they are and their uses for SQA
- Guidance on producing estimates
- Reviewing accuracy
- Band descriptions for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher

There is a requirement to update this guidance to cover the requirement for teachers and lecturers in 2020 to use an refined band scale, linked to the existing scale and to rank order their learners within each band. The refreshed guidance will retain a similar format to the existing and the following headings are planned.

- Context
- Estimates – what they are and their revised uses for SQA in 2020
- Guidance on producing estimates – with an enhanced focus on the predictive value of evidence
- Refined band descriptions for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher
- Rank order
- Reviewing accuracy and quality assurance
- Internal verification and Head of Centre sign off

A draft of this guidance was shared with QMs and senior appointees on Thursday 9 April, and by 0900 on 14 April feedback had been received from over 50 people, including many practising

teachers. The latest version of the guidance that we intend to share with key external stakeholders is included in Appendix 1.

Consultation with external stakeholders –14-16 April 2020
Publication – 20 April 2020

In parallel with this work, an operational process following the same timeline, is being developed for the submission by centres of refined bands and rankings.

Assumptions and points for consideration

The above work has a dependency on agreement being reached on the refined band scale to be used for 2020, as well as the approach to rank order.
Should centres be subject to malpractice investigation if they do not comply with this guidance?

3 Recommendation

The CoPGG is asked to note and approve the progress on the development of refreshed guidance for producing estimates for examination diet 2020.

Appendix one

Instructional Guidance for Producing Estimates for session 2019-20

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Context

Following the Deputy First Minister's decision that the 2020 exam timetable can no longer go ahead, SQA has been working on an alternative certification model, to ensure that candidates' hard work is rightly and fairly recognised.

Given the rapidly changing circumstances, we are in the unique position of not being able to collect national performance data such as marked question paper and non-question paper components.

Therefore, we need your help to continue to provide us with estimated grades and bands 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 the estimates we receive this year is critical as they will provide the core element of the certification process and help ensure the best and fairest results for candidates.

As a result of the importance of the estimate data, we have refined the existing system to ensure it is as fair and robust as possible. Firstly, we are subdividing each existing band and asking you to place your candidates within these band categories. Secondly, we are asking you to rank order your candidates within each estimated band.

The instructional guidance given in this document will help you to determine and submit this refined estimate information, to meet our extended deadline of **Friday 29 May**.

Please note that any estimates data that you have already submitted will be processed and shared back to you for reference, to help you complete the information we now require.

Thank you for your support and your patience during this exceptionally difficult time. By working together, we can ensure that candidates' hard work is rightly and fairly recognised through our qualifications system.

Estimates

An estimate is a judgement of a grade and band based on a holistic review of a candidate's performance in the available assessment evidence.
For 2020, you must submit estimates for every candidate entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

SQA will use estimates for the following purposes:

- To help make decisions about certification — the estimates indicate the grades that centres expect their candidates to attain.
- To check that awarding outcomes are as fair as possible for candidates and centres.

- To ascertain whether a centre's estimates are consistent with their previous years' estimates and outcomes.

Having determined the grade and band as normal, you will need to refine your judgement and place your candidates into subdivisions of the existing bands. In addition, you will need to rank order your candidates within each refined band.

It is imperative that each estimate is your best realistic prediction of the candidate's final attainment in the course assessment.

You should not share, under any circumstances, your estimates with candidates, parents or carers, until after SQA has published the results. This is to protect the integrity of teachers' judgements, and to avoid anyone being put under pressure to submit a grade that is not supported by the evidence. Since the final grades for some or all candidates could be different from those submitted, it also helps to manage expectations.

Instructional guidance on producing estimates

An estimate is a holistic professional judgement based on the candidate's attainment in all aspects of the course (ie all course components) and should reflect the candidate's demonstration and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for the 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 descriptions 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 assesses the added value of the course, so may require integration, challenge or application. 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 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 2020, there is no requirement to set additional mock or prelim exams or homework tasks for the purpose of determining a candidate estimate. You are also not required to mark non-question paper components that would have been externally marked by SQA.

Given the timing of the announcement, 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 closures, Heads of Centre 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, the predictive value of the evidence reviewed, as measured against the requirements of the course assessment is the key consideration. This will be particularly important this year when some of the evidence may be incomplete or coursework evidence is not available to centres.

You should focus on the predictive value when reviewing the assessment evidence that you have for each candidate. For example, this could be the consistency of a candidate's practical or performance evidence or the depth of treatment to questions on key topics, or their 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.

Where candidates have agreed 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 other/alternative assessments when making their judgements.

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Refined Estimate bands

Once you have identified a candidate's estimated grade and band, you should revisit all candidates within each specific band, except band 9.

For all bands except 2 and 7, if the overall review of evidence suggests that the learner is closer to the level above, they should be placed in the upper refined band. If the evidence suggests that the candidate just meets the required standard, the lower refined band should be used.

For example, if a candidate is estimated a grade C, band 5 and the evidence is close to band 4, then place them in band 5 upper (refined band 10 above). If the evidence just meets the original band 5 then place them in band 5 lower (refined band 11 above).

For bands 2 and 7, a three-way split is required: where the evidence is closer to the level above, the learner should be placed in the upper refined band, where the evidence just

meets the required standard, the lower refined band should be used; otherwise the middle refined band should be used.

For example, if a candidate is originally estimated as grade A, band 2 and the evidence is close to band 1 then place them in band 2 upper (refined band 3 above). If the evidence just meets the original band 2 then place them in band 2 lower (refined band 5 above). If they are solidly within the original band 2 then place them in band 2 middle (refined band 4).

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

Rank order

In addition to estimated and refined bands, you also need to provide rank orders for candidates within each refined band for each course.

For example, if you have 15 candidates for National 5 Mathematics for whom you have given an estimate of band 3, you should then rank them from 1 to 15, where 1 is the most secure/highest attaining, 2 is the next most secure and so on.

If two or more candidates are almost indistinguishable in terms of their subject performance then tied ranking may be used.

Where there is more than one course teacher or lecturer, you will all need to agree one rank order for all candidates within your centre who are taking that course.

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.

Where a centre has a large entry for a subject, with many different teachers and lecturers, we recognise that this will be particularly challenging. There are a number of ways in which this could be done, including for example, each teacher or lecturer initially estimating bands and rank orders for their candidates; working with the curriculum leader, the teachers or lecturers discuss and compare the qualities of candidates at the top and bottom of the rank order within each grade to ensure that a consistent standard is being applied; adjust the bands accordingly; integrate the rank orders by discussing individual candidates beginning at the top of the rank order and working down.

Reviewing accuracy and quality assurance

Your SQA Co-ordinator or their representative from the senior management team has a key role in ensuring a consistent approach across their centre to determining candidate estimates and rank orders. Working with their curriculum leader, teachers and lecturers of the same course are encouraged to moderate their estimates and ensure a coherent rank order across the entire cohort.

Internal sign-off within the centre

Given the unique position that we all find ourselves in, you will need to sign-off the predicted grades, bands and rank orders that you submit to SQA.

Department sign-off

Each set of your centre estimates for a subject must be signed off by at least two teachers or lecturers in that subject, one of whom should be the curriculum lead (where there is only one teacher or lecturer, or only one is available, the Head of Centre or their representative, should sign it off). Where a staff member might have a personal connection to a candidate (for example as a relative), Heads of Centre should make sure that additional controls are put in place, as appropriate.

Head of Centre sign-off

The Head of Centre will be required to confirm that the centre assessment grades, bands and the rank order of candidates are a true representation of candidate performance. If the Head of Centre is not available to do this, it may be delegated to the SQA Coordinator.

In reviewing these centre estimates, the Head of Centre should consider:

- how the distribution of centre estimates compares with grades achieved by the centre in previous years;

- how the distribution of centre estimates compares with the performance of the previous three cohorts within the centre;

The Head of Centre will be required to confirm compliance with the following declaration when the data is submitted:

> *I confirm that these centre estimates, and the rank order of candidates are accurate and represent the professional judgements made by my staff, and that entries were appropriate for each candidate. Having reviewed the relevant processes and data, I am confident that they honestly and fairly represent the grades that these candidates would have been most likely to achieve if they had sat their exams as planned, and that they have not been disclosed to either the candidate or their parent/carer.*
>
> *I understand that SQA will conduct a statistical standardisation exercise and that, if the profile of grades submitted is substantially different from what might be expected based on my centre's historic results and the prior attainment of this year's candidates, the grades for my centre will be adjusted to bring them into line with national standards.*
>
> *SQA may investigate any attempts to undermine this system and will consider these as potential malpractice*.