Scottish Qualifications Authority

Code of Practice Governance Group

14 April 2020

Refined bands for centre 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, estimates will be the main basis for awards in the absence of any evidence generated by candidates through coursework or examinations. 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. We are doing this by subdividing each existing band and asking teachers and lecturers to place their learners within these band categories.

This paper summarises the thinking behind the proposed refined band structure.

2 Status

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Estimate Bands

Due to changes in the grade scale introduced progressively from 2017-18, the following bands / percentage mark ranges apply to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher from 2019-20 onwards.

The valid estimate bands are 1-9:

Band	Estimated Performance	Notional % Range
1	Band A (upper) range	85 – 100
2	Band A (lower) range	70 – 84
3	Band B (upper)	65 – 69
4	Band B (lower)	60 – 64
5	Band C (upper)	55 – 59
6	Band C (lower)	50 – 54
7	Band D	40 – 49
8	No Award	30 – 39
9	No Award	0 – 29

Refined Estimate bands

The refined estimate bands need to have sufficient granularity to enable certification at grades A, B, C and D. In particular determining the threshold for grades A and C requires nuanced information at these boundaries. One of the challenges is that the existing bands are of unequal size. Bands 1 and 2 each account for 15 notional percentage points (npp) while bands 3, 4, 5, and 6 account for just 5npp, and bands 7 and 8 account for 10npp.
The refined estimate bands also need to be easily articulated to and applied by practitioners, so a consistent approach to determining estimates is adopted.

Model 1 – 18 refined estimate bands

Split each Estimate band into two and ask teachers to make a judgement about higher/lower attainment. Whilst this would be easy to describe, it would not provide sufficient granularity at the critical A and C thresholds, because band 2 is three times larger than band 3, and band 7 is twice as large as band 6.

Model 2 – 20 refined estimate bands

Introduce new bands of equal width of 5npp. This would mean the Estimate bands 3, 4, 5 and 6 would not be subdivided, despite representing the majority of the candidature. There would be very sparsely populated refined bands at the extremes of the estimate distribution. There would be insufficient granularity at the A and C thresholds.

Model 3 – 19 refined estimate bands

This model does not split Estimate band 9 since relatively few candidates are in this band and evidence suggests that this Estimate is most probably correct. Bands 2 and 7 are split three ways, and all other bands are split in two. This approach ensures that there is granularity around the C and A grade thresholds but does not require practitioners to provide refined estimate bands where it is not necessary.

The draft guidance for practitioners is below:

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

Assumptions and points for consideration

Model 3 is recommended as the refined band estimate model for diet 2020 to allow sufficient granularity for awarding.
The main point for consideration is whether the subdivision of Band 1 is necessary. At grade A, 80% of Estimates are consistent with the final outcome, which is much higher than at all other grades.

3 Recommendation

The CoPGG is asked to note and approve the refined estimate bands for 2020. The CoPGG is also asked to discuss the above point for consideration.