Information for centres about Producing Estimates for session 2019-20

Please note this document was provided on 15th April to allow the edit and consultation process to proceed

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Context

Following the decision that the 2020 exam diet 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 being unable to collect national performance data on question paper and non-question paper components.

Therefore, we need your help by continuing to provide SQA 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 is critical, and, this session your estimates will provide the core element of the certification process

As a result of the specific use of your estimate data this session, we have refined the existing process to ensure it is as fair and robust as possible. Firstly, SQA has subdivided each existing band and now requires you to place your candidates within these refined bands. Secondly, you are required to rank order your candidates within each of the new, refined bands.

The instructional guidance in this document will help you to determine and submit your estimates and ranking decisions by, the deadline of **Friday 29 May**.

Please note that any estimates data that you have already submitted to SQA will be processed and shared back to you for reference in order to help complete a revised submission.

Thank you for your support and your patience during this exceptionally difficult time.

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 session 2019-2020, you must submit estimates for every candidate entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

SQA will use your estimates for the following purposes:

- To help make decisions about certification — estimates indicate the grades that centres expect their candidates to attain.
- To check that awarding outcomes are as fair as possible to candidates.
- To ascertain whether a centre's estimates this session are consistent with estimates and outcomes in previous years.

Having determined the grade and band as you normally do, 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.

It is for the centre to decide whether or not to share estimates with candidates, parents or carers prior to publication of the results. It is important to note that the final grades for some or all candidates could be different from those submitted to SQA.

Producing estimates

An estimate is a holistic professional judgement based on your candidates'attainment in all aspects of the course (ie all course components) and should reflect each candidate's demonstrated 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 descriptors 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 feature integration, challenge and/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

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course assessment. Questions and tasks that are suitable for course assessment are exemplified in the specimen question paper(s) 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 session 2019-2020, 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 session 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 in relation to questions on key topics, or their quality of 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

A key aspect of producing accurate and fair results this session will involve you in converting your existing estimates into new *refined* bands as indicated in the table below. Once you have identified a candidate's estimated grade and band, you should revisit all candidates in line with the *refined* bands, with the exception of band 9.

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For larger cohorts, we would expect candidates estimated to achieve a particular band to be split evenly across the refined bands.

Centres are strongly advised to focus on making holistic professional judgements when determining the refined band for each candidate and to not over focus on the notional percentage range.

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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

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Where a candidate is currently estimated to be in band 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 8 if the overall estimate suggests that the learner is closer to the level above, they should be placed in the *upper* refined band **and this should be converted into the appropriate refined band.** If the evidence suggests that the candidate just meets the required standard, they should be placed in the *lower* refined band and **this should be converted into the appropriate refined band.**

For example, if a candidate is estimated to achieve a grade C, band 5 and the evidence suggests that performance is closer to band 4, then place them in band 5 upper and convert to refined band 10. If the evidence just meets the original band 5, you should place the candidate in band 5 lower and convert to refined band 11.

Where a candidate is currently estimated to be in band 2 or band 7, the corresponding refined bands are now divided into three categories (*upper, middle and lower*): if the overall estimate suggests the candidate performance is closer to the level above, the learner should be placed in the upper refined band and this should be converted to the appropriate refined band, if the overall estimate suggests that the candidate just meets the required standard, the learner should

be placed in the lower refined band and this should be converted to the appropriate refined band. The middle refined band should be used where the overall estimate solidly conforms to the required standard and this should be converted to the appropriate refined band.

For example, if a candidate is estimated to achieve a grade A, band 2 and the evidence suggests performance is closer to band 1 you should place them in band 2 upper and convert to refined band 3. If the evidence just meets the original band 2 you should place them in band 2 lower and convert to refined band 5. If they are solidly within the original band 2, you should then place them in band 2 middle and convert to refined band 4.

Rank ordering your candidates

In addition to providing estimates within the refined bands discussed above, you also need to provide a rank order for each of your candidates within each refined band.

For example, if you have 15 candidates for National 5 Mathematics for whom you have given an estimate of refined estimate band 6, 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. You will not be able to enter tied rankings into the system.

Where there is more than one teacher/lecturer delivering a course, collectively you will need to agree the rank order for all candidates within your centre.

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.

There are a number of suggested approaches to rank ordering your candidates:

- each teacher/lecturer could start off by estimating bands and rank orders for their candidates;
- working with the subject lead, teachers/lecturers could discuss and compare the evidence of candidates at the top and bottom of the rank order within each grade, ensuring that a consistent standard is being applied and adjusting the bands accordingly;
- teachers/lecturers could integrate the ranking of candidates by discussing individual candidates, beginning at the top of the rank order and working down.

Reviewing accuracy and quality assurance

SQA Co-ordinators and senior management teams have a key role in ensuring a consistent approach within subjects and across their centre. Working together with their subject lead, teachers/lecturers delivering the same course are encouraged to moderate their estimates and ensure a coherent rank order across the entire cohort.

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Internal sign-off within the centre

Given the unique position that we all find ourselves in, we recommend adopting a formal sign-off for the predicted grades, bands and rank orders that you submit to SQA. A suggested approach is offered below:

Course sign-off

Each set of centre estimates for a course is signed off by at least two teachers /lecturers in that subject, one of whom is the subject lead (where there is only one teacher or lecturer, or only one is available, the SQA coordinator or their representative, signs it off).

Head of Centre sign-off

The Head of Centre or their representative confirms that the centre assessment grades, bands and the rank order of candidates are a true representation of candidate performance.

In reviewing centre estimates, the Head of Centre could 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.

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