Scottish Qualifications Authority

Code of Practice Governance Group (CoPGG)

14 April 2020

Post Certification Review of results for Graded National Courses in Examination Diet 2020

1 Context

At the CoPGG meeting of 27th March 2020 it was agreed this project can commence based on the recommendations in the paper – see appendix one for an updated paper. On the 7th April, details of the project set up and four strands of work were shared with the CoPGG. This paper now sets out the proposed policy framework from which this service will operate. It will consider the grounds for review, the validation/eligibility criteria, the proposed approach for both centres and SQA and the further appeal of reviews.

2 Status

Grounds for review

The application of a local moderation approach to centre estimates and the awarding model itself, may result in a candidate, or groups of candidates, being certificated with a lower grade than their estimated grade. The above awarding processes do not involve SQA subject specialist appointees in the scrutiny of candidate assessment evidence.

Therefore, in order to be fair to candidates and to provide an appropriate safety valve, it is proposed to supplement the awarding model with a post certification review process which allows centres to request a review of the grade awarded for a candidate or group of candidates. The basis of this review will be that the centre believes the wrong grade has been awarded and that they have assessment evidence which validates their original estimated grade.

Given that the awarding model for 2020 is not based on the use of a standardised, externally set assessment, there is an expectation that review requests, as outlined above, may be for multiple candidates per centre per subject who have not been awarded their estimated grade.

Validation/eligibility criteria

SQA works in partnership with approved, delivering centres rather than direct to candidates. Requests for use of all SQA services come via heads of centre and it is proposed that this remains the case for all requests for post certification review of grades. Given that such centres have previously estimated candidate grades via their review of assessment evidence, then it is proposed that only candidates who are awarded a grade lower than their estimated grade are eligible for their centre to consider requesting a post certification review.

Approach by centre

It is proposed that centres will engage with this service in four stages:

- Identify candidates who meet the eligibility criteria.
- Check the assessment evidence for each candidate – does it convincingly demonstrate performance at the estimated grade?
- Determine candidates to request reviews for.
- Submit to SQA review requests for each candidate with associated assessment evidence.

The assessment evidence to be submitted will be similar to that which is currently required under SQA's Exceptional Circumstances Consideration service and should cover the knowledge and skills of both question paper and non-question paper components. There is a recognition that for 2020, some of the assessment evidence may be incomplete or not previously marked.

As noted above, it is likely that centres could submit review requests for several candidates. A recheck of evidence by the centre may reduce this number with the evidence for the lowest ranking candidates likely to be the most speculative. Once awarding decisions are made, SQA will be able to model potential volumes of review requests.

Approach by SQA

SQA's proposed approach will involve a senior subject specialist appointee review of the assessment evidence available for each review request. This review will involve 3 key stages:

- Review candidate performance within the evidence submitted by the centre.
- Review and mark any relevant additional non-question paper evidence held by SQA.
- Combining the above, either (i) validate the original estimate and upgrade the candidate, or (ii) reject the review request and confirm the original award.

The same subject specialist appointee will primarily review all requests for a centre for a subject and level. However, there will also be an explicit need for appointees to work collaboratively within this process to ensure consistency of decision making across centres. Discussions around the predictive value of the evidence presented and non-question paper and incomplete evidence will be complex and require close team working to achieve a fair outcome for all candidates.

SQA can use the centre rank order within this review process. For example, when reviewing a group of candidates from a centre for a subject and level, the senior appointee will review the evidence of the lowest ranking candidate first. If the request is rejected (and original result confirmed) then the appointee will move to review the next candidate and so on. However, once the appointee accepts the centre evidence and validates the estimate, the remaining requests from higher ranked candidates can be automatically accepted. The detail of this process has still to be determined. However, it is likely that there will also be some sampling of higher ranked candidates to ensure the evidence is valid.

Further appeal from the post certification review process

SQA is not obliged to offer such an appeal. However, given the proposed review approach is based on the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) Consideration Service, in the interests of fairness and consistency, it is proposed that consideration is given to developing a similar approach to the current appeals process for EC.

3 Recommendation

The CoPGG is asked to discuss and approve the proposed policy approach for the post certification review of results for 2020. Once approved, external engagement and input will be sought before finalising and communicating with centres.

Appendix one – updated CoPGG paper from 27th March 2020

Scottish Qualifications Authority

Code of Practice Governance Group

27th March 2020

Post Certification Review of results for Graded National Courses in Examination 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 a review to be requested of a grade awarded. This paper outlines SQA's proposed approach to the development of this review 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 a post certification review process 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 the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service could be adapted to deal with the situation whereby a centre wishes to request a review of the grade awarded to a candidate via the EEM. Centres would be required to submit relevant alternative assessment evidence to support their estimated grade 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 via the EEM or to award an alternative grade based on the review of evidence. If an alternative grade is awarded, a candidate's grade could either go up or down.

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.
- Assessment and Data Services: For managing the output and certification process.
- Strategic Planning and Governance: For legal advice and support.

The project team will create appropriate development metrics and report progress to the Certificate Planning Group (CPG) 2020. 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 estimated and considered using scenario planning.
- 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 English and Mathematics.
- 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.
- It is assumed that teachers will be able to access and send a range of alternative assessment evidence to support a review request.

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.

All risks will be reviewed by the project team on an ongoing basis and appropriate mitigation actions will be developed and checked.

3 Recommendation

The CoPGG is asked to note and approve the proposed approach to the development of a Post Certification Review 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.