

National 5 English

Guidance on gathering key evidence for producing estimates in session 2020–21



This document provides subject-level guidance to SQA approved centres on gathering key evidence to support estimates for National 5 English in session 2020–21. You should read this guidance alongside [National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates](#) and the SQA Academy resource, [Quality assurance of estimates for National Courses](#).

This document also includes information on subject-level assessment resources.

Gathering key evidence to produce estimates for National 5 English

Every year you provide estimates for your candidates. This document and *National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates* will give you additional support and guidance to support your decision making for session 2020–21. Evidence should be gathered later in the course, as a realistic reflection of a candidate's attainment. It is important to note that it is not the **quantity** of evidence, but the **quality** of evidence, in relation to its predictive value, that will support you during the estimation process.

The following types of key evidence are likely to provide a good predictive value and may be helpful, although there may be other types of key evidence you feel you would like to use.

Types of key evidence and assessment resources

You can generate the most valid evidence for question paper components using assessment instruments which replicate, as far as possible, the standard, duration, format and security of SQA question papers. You should gather evidence where candidates have had opportunities to apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have learned from the course in unseen situations.

The relative weightings of marks which contribute to the National 5 English course assessment are given below. You should take these into account when reviewing candidates' evidence across the three contributing components.

Question paper components

Candidates do not need to produce evidence for question paper components on a single occasion, but it is important that assessment tasks are unseen.

It would be best to use internally assessed question papers towards the end of the academic year when all or the majority of the course has been delivered. These assessments could be devised using:

- ◆ 2021 National 5 question papers
- ◆ commercially produced question papers

- ◆ centre-devised questions
- ◆ questions selected from a range of SQA past papers
- ◆ questions selected from SQA past papers which have been amended

Component 1: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

This component has a relative weighting of 30% of the overall course assessment.

Candidates read and answer questions on an unseen passage of detailed non-fiction text of approximately 1,000 words.

This assessment task gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate some of the following skills:

- ◆ understanding of the writer's ideas by re-casting ideas from the passage in candidates' own words
- ◆ understanding of vocabulary in context
- ◆ analysis of language (word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, punctuation, text structure — opening, conclusion, linkage, etc)
- ◆ evaluation of the writer's techniques or the overall impact of the text
- ◆ inferring meaning
- ◆ summarising: candidates demonstrate their understanding of the writer's ideas through identifying and isolating key points or main ideas

Refer to the [National 5 English Course Specification](#), page 9.

Component 2: Critical Reading

This component has a relative weighting of 40% of the overall course assessment.

Section 1 Scottish texts

Candidates read and answer questions demonstrating understanding and analysis of a poem or extract from a short story, prose fiction text or drama text. They should also show understanding and analysis of the remainder of the text or other texts on the prescribed list.

The text(s) will have been previously studied, but the assessment text (or extract) and questions should not be signalled, and candidates should not have access to the texts and/or notes.

This assessment task should give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate some of the following skills:

- ◆ summarising: candidates show understanding of the writer's ideas, narrative events or characterisation through summarising/explaining using their own words
- ◆ analysis of language (word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, punctuation, text structure — opening, conclusion, etc)
- ◆ analysis of how a writer achieves a particular effect or mood or atmosphere, etc

- ◆ analysis of overall text structure
- ◆ inferring meaning from what is implied by the writer
- ◆ evaluation of overall impact of the text, or the writer's techniques
- ◆ understanding and analysis of the remainder of the text or other texts on the prescribed list

Refer to the [National 5 English Course Specification](#), page 10.

Section 2 Critical essay

Candidates apply their understanding, analysis and evaluation skills to previously studied texts from the following genres: drama, prose, poetry, film and TV drama, and language, by writing a critical essay.

Candidates should respond to one unseen question from a choice of two, giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a studied text, their skills in analysis and evaluation, and their construction of a line of thought. During the assessment candidates should not have access to texts and/or notes.

Refer to the [National 5 English Course Specification](#), page 11.

Coursework components

Component 3: portfolio–writing

This component has a relative weighting of 30% of the overall course assessment.

Although writing remains a central focus of the National 5 English course, for session 2020–21 it is not necessary to take evidence from two pieces of writing. High predictive value can come from one piece of writing, either broadly creative or broadly discursive, which you must conduct under some supervision and control.

Candidates produce the piece of writing independently, but you can support candidates to choose the focus, theme and genre of the piece of writing.

Refer to the [National 5 English Course Specification](#), pages 12–18.

Spoken language

Spoken language skills are essential to all English courses and you should encourage and foster these whenever possible.

However, there is no requirement to assess the spoken language component for National 5 English in session 2020–21, and it should not contribute to estimate decisions.

Using additional assessment resources for session 2020–21: key information

In National 5 English, SQA will provide question papers (Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation, and Critical Reading) for session 2020–21, which you can use when gathering evidence to support your estimates. Please note that the marking instructions have not been standardised based on candidate responses. You may therefore need to agree within your centre how to consistently mark an item if a candidate response is not covered by the marking instructions.

The National 5 question papers will only be available on SQA's secure website — you must treat these confidentially, in the same way as other live assessment materials.

You should carefully consider how best to use these materials to support candidates, to integrate with your programme of learning, and to help you collate evidence of candidate attainment. Given current public health advice and to maximise learning and teaching time, it is important to stress that there is no expectation that schools and colleges hold a formal diet of prelims for National 5. One of the key reasons for moving to an alternative model was to create additional teaching time through removing the need for prelims and replacing the final examination diet with more flexible classroom-based assessment.

If you use a question paper in part or in its entirety, you should remind candidates that they must not discuss the content of the paper with anyone, including friends, family or on social media.

Understanding the national standard

National standards are exemplified through marked examples of candidate work from previous examination diets, which illustrate how marking instructions are applied. These examples and assessment commentaries are available on [SQA Understanding Standards National 5 English web page](#).

When considering 2019 evidence for the portfolio–writing, candidates A and B provide clear examples of grade C performance; candidates F and G exemplify grade A performance.

For Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2019), candidate D broadly exemplifies grade C performance, and candidate C broadly exemplifies grade A performance.

Examples of performance in Critical Reading should be referred to according to genre and text, as appropriate.

Judging evidence

When marking centre-devised assessments (which may include SQA past paper questions) it is important to use the methods described in SQA marking instructions. These can be found using the [past paper search facility](#).

For writing, you should use the portfolio–writing marking instructions in the [National 5 English Course Specification](#), pages 15–18.

It is good practice to build in collaborative approaches to marking and the moderation of marking, where possible. This can be done at a department or faculty level, but ideally on a wider scale. SQA Understanding Standards materials provide a useful starting point for this activity.

Summary

A holistic review of a candidate's performance in National 5 English should have as its focus four key pieces of evidence. One from each listed below:

- ◆ Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation
- ◆ Scottish text
- ◆ Critical essay
- ◆ Writing

Supplementary, naturally occurring evidence can also contribute to a holistic judgement.