February 2021

Subject guidance for internally assessed qualifications in 2020–21

Please read this document in conjunction with guidance for the assessment of internally assessed qualifications issued to centres in August 2020.

Group award titles:	PDA Criminology (SCQF level 8)
Group award codes:	GK8R 48

Units and/or outcomes where conditions of assessment can or cannot be altered

All units should be completed following local authority guidance.

Adaptations to evidence requirements to help manage assessment

Rationale

It is possible to administer all of the assessments for the PDA in Criminology, SCQF level 8 online in session 2020–21.

Higher National Units

Centres can use the flexibilities that were introduced by SQA in August 2020, including integrating assessment and changing closed-book assessments to open-book assessments.

Please refer to the document, *Supporting the delivery, assessment and verification of SQA units, session 2020–21: Information and guidance for centres* published in August 2020.

These adaptations will help maximise time available for learning and teaching, ensure that the validity and integrity of the PDA in Criminology is maintained and help to ensure the safety of lecturers and learners.

Additional guidance/information

Social Sciences Qualification Support Team (QST)

The Social Sciences QST includes members from 11 Scottish colleges and SQA qualifications staff. The team monitors the delivery of the PDAs in Criminology, including monitoring standards. It also provides advice to SQA about supporting the delivery of these qualifications.

The QST met in November 2020 to discuss the recent SQA announcements. Members felt that it would be beneficial to work collaboratively across centres to agree common approaches to assessment to ensure a measure of consistency and standardisation.

The advice that follows is intended to offer support to those delivering the PDAs in Criminology in session 2020–21. Centres have discretion over how they implement the guidance issued by SQA and the recommendations of the QST.

Alternatives to closed-book unit assessments

To maintain the integrity of the PDAs in Criminology awards and offer some standardisation across all centres, the QST advocates the following suggestions for alternatives to closed-book assessments:

- Continue to sample information for the alternative assessment, allowing depth of knowledge on specific areas rather than assessing the whole topic.
- Keep the same word counts as advised in the closed-book assessments to challenge learners and develop their skills in concise responses.
- For parity, learner responses must adhere to set approximations for all assessment word counts, with upper and lower thresholds to ensure fair marking.
- Use a range of diverse assessments to avoid repetition and develop a range of skills that support the aims of the group awards and accommodate the demands of remote delivery.
- Work within course teams to develop different assessments across the programme. Consider, where possible, a different assessment method for each alternative assessment, for example a wiki or blog, presentation, online timed assessment, response to a stimulus scenario, restricted response, portfolio or project, academic poster, professional dialogue or interview.
- It is strongly recommended, if possible, that the centre incorporates one timed response in the alternative assessments, considering issues around digital poverty and accessibility. This may depend on the logistics and access to ICT. For example, learners could have 24 hours to access and complete an assessment.
- Except for timed assessments, a bibliography should be submitted with the coursework.
- Where possible, maintain separate assessments for double credit Social Science units. Feedback on a Social Sciences A unit assessment could give learners the opportunity to improve their work.
- The QST's advice is to avoid combining assessments for these awards as it is difficult to create meaningful assessments of this type. Overall, this will not reduce learner workload and could lead to difficulties in remediation and re-assessment.

For the alternative to closed-book assessments, avoid using SQA and centre prior-verified ASPs on SQA's secure website. Their use would mean they are no longer secure and they would become invalid. If a centre wishes to use a centre prior-verified assessment it should be one that their own centre has devised. SQA should also be notified of this. Please email qvprior@sqa.org.uk.

If you have any questions, please contact qualification.development@sqa.org.uk.