

National Course modification summary: Chemistry



National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher course assessment in session 2020–21

The Deputy First Minister has announced that National 5 exams will not take place in session 2020–21. SQA is working with stakeholders to develop an alternative certification model for National 5 that is based on teacher and lecturer estimates.

At present, Higher and Advanced Higher exams are still planned for 2021 and this will remain under review. We continue to work with stakeholders to put contingency plans in place to respond to any changes in public health advice, or local or national lockdowns, that may result in further changes to the 2021 exam diet — including changes to the timetable.

For up-to-date information on arrangements for National Courses in session 2020–21, including timetable information and guidance on estimates, please visit our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021.

Modifications to assessment

Following our public consultation on proposed modifications to National 5 to Advanced Higher course assessment, which closed on 24 August 2020, we are making changes to course assessment for session 2020–21. The changes detailed on the following pages are intended to support the delivery of learning and teaching, while maintaining the validity, credibility and standard of the courses.

We have published a high-level report on the outcomes of the consultation, which is available from www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021. This includes details of the modifications to National 5 course assessment, which were planned prior to the 2021 National 5 exams being cancelled.

As a result of the modifications, we are exploring the implications for National 3 and National 4 courses, and freestanding units at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7, in session 2020–21 and will provide further guidance in due course.

National 5 course assessment 2020–21

There will be no external assessment for National 5 courses in session 2020–21.

Candidates will not be required to sit exams and SQA will not assess coursework.

Instead, we are working with stakeholders to develop an alternative certification model for National 5 that is based on teacher and lecturer estimates.

Centres need to gather evidence of candidates' attainment and use this to determine estimate grades and bands. We have published separate guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates and there is an SQA Academy course available to support teachers and lecturers.

We are also developing subject-specific guidance for teachers and lecturers on gathering evidence and producing estimates. This will include how the previously-intended National 5

modifications could be used to support with gathering evidence and producing estimates in session 2020–21. This guidance will be published from the end of October.

Details of the modifications we had previously intended to make to National 5 course assessment in session 2020–21 are included in our high-level report on the outcomes of the consultation.

To view the high-level report, and to access the guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates, visit www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021.

Higher course assessment 2020–21

Component	Marks	Duration
Question paper 1: multiple choice	25	40 minutes
Question paper 2	95	2 hours and 20 minutes

Question papers

There are **no changes** to the question papers for session 2020-21. The length of the question papers will remain unchanged as there was not enough strong support for the proposed modification.

Most respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to reduce the examination to pre-2019 length (approximately 59%, with approximately 26% being in favour). Reducing the length of the question papers was not seen as helpful in terms of lightening the workload of teachers, lecturers, or candidates. However, a proportion of the respondents who disagreed acknowledged that the length of the current examination is excessive, and their disagreement was with the scale of the modification proposed.

Some respondents suggested removing content from the course, however this was countered by responses recognising the difficulty of doing this, as there is no set order in which to deliver the course and some may have already covered content that could potentially be removed. As with the changing of the exam length, removing content would increase teachers' and lecturers' workload, as much teaching, learning, and assessment material would need to be amended.

Some respondents suggested introducing optionality to the question papers. There are considerable difficulties with introducing optionality into Chemistry question papers, owing to the structure of the questions and issues of comparability between options. Introducing optionality would require a complete rewrite of the exam paper and the removal of questions that integrate knowledge from across different parts of the course, which is part of the assessment design principles. It would also result in candidates facing an unfamiliar style of question paper.

Assignment

The development of practical skills in Chemistry is essential and candidates should undertake and experience practical work at all levels. However, in these unique circumstances and with the current restrictions in centres, **the assignment is being removed for session 2020-21**. There was overwhelmingly strong support for this modification.

It would be very difficult to carry out practical work in session 2020-21 due to current restrictions with carrying out practical work under social distancing requirements, Local Authority Health and Safety protocols, and the guidelines issued by the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC). Many respondents commented that the removal of the coursework would free up valuable time that has been lost to deliver the course content. It was also noted by many respondents that access to IT facilities is an issue, and this would also impede on candidates' ability to undertake the research element of the coursework.

Advanced Higher course assessment 2020–21

Component	Marks	Duration
Question paper	110	3 hours

Question paper

There are **no changes** proposed to the question paper.

Most respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal not to make changes to the course (approximately 48%, with approximately 23% being in favour).

Some respondents suggested removing content from the course, however this was countered by responses recognising the difficulty of doing this, as there is no set order in which to deliver the course and some may have already covered content that could potentially be removed. As with the changing of the exam length, removing content would increase teachers' and lecturers' workload, as much teaching, learning, and assessment material would need to be amended.

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Assignment

The development of practical skills in Chemistry is essential and candidates should undertake and experience practical work at all levels. However, in these unique circumstances and with the current restrictions in centres, **the project is being removed from session 2020-21**. There was overwhelmingly strong support for this modification.

It would be very difficult to carry out practical work in session 2020-21 due to current restrictions with carrying out practical work under social distancing requirements, Local Authority Health and Safety protocols, and the guidelines issued by the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC). Many respondents commented that the removal of the coursework would free up valuable time that has been lost to deliver the course content. It was also noted by many respondents that access to IT facilities is an issue, and this would also impede on candidates' ability to undertake the research element of the coursework.

If you have any questions about these changes, please email NQ2020@sqa.org.uk.