

National Course modification summary: Modern Studies



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 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	52	1 hour and 45 minutes
Question paper 2	28	1 hour and 15 minutes

Question paper 1

For session 2020–21:

- ◆ Section 1: increase in the number of extended-response questions from three to four
- ◆ Section 2: increase in the number of extended-response questions from two to three
- ◆ Section 3: increase in the number of extended-response questions from two to three

This modification is intended to help ease the pressure on learning and teaching by providing the option for candidates to be taught a narrower range of topics while still enabling them to be sufficiently prepared for the question paper.

Question paper 2

No changes.

Assignment

The coursework component (assignment) will be removed for session 2020–21.

Removing the assignment means less class time will be required for planning, organising, and developing the assignment. This will allow for increased learning and teaching time for the course.

Advanced Higher course assessment 2020–21

Component	Marks	Duration
Question paper	90	3 hours
Project–dissertation	50	see ‘Course assessment’ section in the Advanced Higher Modern Studies Course Specification

Question paper

Within each section, each topic area will now contain a choice of two extended-response questions. Candidates will continue to answer two questions from separate topics.

This modification is intended to help ease the pressure on learning and teaching by providing the option for candidates to be taught a narrower range of topics while still enabling them to be sufficiently prepared for the question paper.

Project–dissertation

No changes.

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