Alternative Certification Model 2020–21: National QA Exercise Key Messages

Subject	Administration and IT
Level	Higher

This report provides information on themes emerging from the national quality assurance exercise, which is part of the Alternative Certification Model for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

A sample of candidates' assessed work from selected centres was reviewed to determine whether assessment was in line with the national standard. The evidence submitted may have been partial or incomplete and is unlikely to have represented all of the evidence that will be gathered to allow the centre to determine a provisional result.

The centres selected for review in this subject and at this level have been provided with specific feedback on the evidence that they submitted. The comments below highlight key points about the assessment approaches and instruments used and the sampled centres' assessment judgements, for all centres delivering the subject at this level to reflect upon and make any appropriate adjustments.

Section 1: Comments on approach to assessment

Most centres submitted either a question paper or an assignment.

Some centres used commercially produced question papers or assignments without amendments and in most cases these were produced for the current academic year. Many of these papers met national standards both in coverage and marking principles. Appropriate theory assessments were often created from SQA past papers, with both the topic and the command word carefully considered.

Unit assessments were also submitted and, while they may be useful as supplementary evidence, they often do not have high predictive value for making assessment judgements for course assessment.

Almost all centres indicated that they were planning to use the 2021 SQA question paper and assignment towards provisional results.

Where theory assessments were not in line with national standards, the following issues were noted:

♦ There were too many low mark questions, which do not allow candidates to display depth of knowledge. There are certain topics (for example teams) where a 6-mark question would allow a candidate to demonstrate that they have a full understanding of the topic. High mark questions allow for differentiation in the paper, as a grade C candidate should attain 2 or 3 marks.
♦ The minimum mark allocation for a question should be 2 marks.
♦ A case study should be structured to allow candidates to address issues arising from a scenario.
♦ There should not be 2 command words in one question, for example identify and describe. These may be split into part a) and part b).
♦ Some topics are more appropriate for compare questions and allow candidates to display knowledge of 2 areas. Candidates can find it difficult to structure answers for compare questions.

Most centres provided very detailed information about their quality assurance processes. This included referencing SQA's Understanding Standards resources, undertaking a standardisation process and working with other centres to ensure national standards were applied.

Marking and annotation of scripts was, in the main, easy to follow and assessors were consistent in how they detailed the marks they awarded. Where there was a record of discussion between the assessor and the moderator, it was clear why the final judgement was made. Some centres used a marking grid to record the marks awarded with space for a moderator to record any variance. Whilst these are a great overview, assessors should also annotate the candidate script.

It was clear that a great deal of time and effort had been invested in both marking and quality assuring candidates' evidence prior to submission.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Most centres made judgements that were in line with national standards from evidence that had been through local quality assurance procedures. Where centres consistently referred to the general marking principles and followed the detailed marking instructions carefully, their judgements tended to be accurate.

Question paper

Where candidates repetitively refer to the employees' emotional state in response to a question, the number of marks awarded should be limited. Emotion was recently capped at one mark in a question.

Development marks cannot be awarded for an outline question — each outline is a stand-alone answer. Normally, the question would reference the number of points to be made, for example 'Outline 4 features … '.

Assignment

Many candidates do not key-in accurately and assessors need to be vigilant when checking this section of the word-processing task.

Candidates often have formulae that are not in the marking instructions. This does not mean that they are wrong. Centres should try these formulae, and award marks if they are correct.

The majority of candidates used absolute ranges rather than named ranges. A formula with named ranges in it is easier to read and may be helpful to the candidate when double-checking their work. It may be easier to use named ranges if the data is on a different sheet. Where candidates used named ranges rather than absolute ranges there is less risk of formulae being truncated.

In the presentation task:

♦ the design template should not cover text
♦ watermarks should be transparent enough so that text can be read
♦ information added should be formatted consistently
♦ graphics inserted should be relevant to the theme, and should not hide text

Some centres used a commercial assignment and did not amend the marking instructions in line with the current national standard. This included:

♦ Individual marks should not be awarded for replication in spreadsheets.
♦ Complex formulae marks should be all or nothing (for example, if the first formula does not have an absolute cell reference it will copy incorrectly).
♦ One mark is awarded for a footnote — for both insertion and keyboarding.
♦ Manuscript corrections are included in the keyboarding mark.