



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

Subject	Psychology
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 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

Overall, approaches to assessment were in accordance with SQA's guidance on gathering key evidence. Most centres sampled included evidence from assessments for the mandatory topics of Sleep and Dreams, and Conformity and Obedience. Centres using the SQA assignment assessment task did this effectively to produce evidence for provisional results.

Most centre-devised, end-of-topic assessments had appropriate course coverage and level of demand, enabling effective differentiation to allow for accurate allocation of grades. A minority of centres increased the challenge for learners by including more questions requiring the skill of analysis and/or application than is required for differentiation purposes. To accommodate this in 60 marks overall, the lower order skills as required of the grade 'C' candidate were underassessed: this led to potential grade 'C' candidates being unable to achieve the marks needed. Similarly, the level of challenge for grade 'A' candidates was set too high. Centres should reflect on the feedback given to this effect and adjust provisional results if required. Centres following the same approach should take account of this when making and/or reflecting on their approach to assessment.

Some centres within the sample intended to use the SQA 2021 NQ assessment resource after the submission date for this national quality assurance exercise.

Most centres in the sample provided evidence of cross-marking and/or internal moderation. Many evidenced effective use of thorough quality assurance procedures within centres and local authorities. When included, professional dialogue was mostly supportive and developmental.

Some points for centres to consider in their approach to assessment include:

- ◆ Check past paper questions are still valid, especially if using older past papers.
- ◆ Check marking instructions concur with current requirements.
- ◆ Consider potential overlap between questions (which may enable candidates to gain marks twice for the same information).

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Marking was generally in line with national standards, particularly in questions requiring the skills of description, explanation, evaluation, and application. In a minority of cases, marking was inconsistent with national standards, but most of these were addressed by internal moderation procedures.

A minority of centres erroneously allocated marks for analysis where the candidate response evidenced the skill of evaluation, or where links to research were made. A few centres awarded marks for evaluation where the skill evidenced was of explanation.

Overall, where evidence of assignments was provided, national standards were applied accurately. However, a minority of centres allocated marks for general comments about ethics rather than those that were specific to the candidate's own procedure and/or materials.

Some points for centres to consider about assessment judgements include:

- ◆ Be aware of the potential for ethical breaches in assignments: this is an area where the teacher and/or lecturer can intervene and support the learner towards constructing a procedure that adheres to ethical guidelines and principles. This is not beyond reasonable assistance.
- ◆ Pay close heed to the guidance on allocating marks for questions that require the skill of analysis and evaluation.