



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

Subject	Computing Science
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

Centres submitted evidence from a variety of assessments. The majority of centres submitted evidence of either a partially or fully completed question paper or assignment. A small number of centres submitted evidence of both.

Evidence of practical work was mainly from the SQA 2021 assignment assessment resource. Candidates had completed the Software Design and Development task and either the Web Design and Development or Database Design and Development task, in line with the arrangements for this session.

Where past paper assignment tasks had been used, centre commentary indicated that these were being used as practice tasks for formative assessment — the SQA 2021 assignment would be used to determine provisional results.

Question paper evidence consisted of a mixture of the SQA 2021 question papers, commercial question papers and centre-devised papers.

The most common issue in commercial papers was the level of demand resulting from insufficient 'A' grade marks. This made it difficult to effectively differentiate between candidates. For example, design and implementation of algorithms were often allocated entirely 'A' marks, but they are designed to include a mix of 'A' and 'C' marks. This resulted in some papers having less actual 'A' marks than indicated.

However, most centres using commercial or centre-devised papers commented that these had been used as prelims and that provisional results would also be based on evidence from the SQA 2021 question paper assessment resource. Centres that are not planning to use the SQA 2021 question paper assessment resource are advised to refer to the [Higher — Computing Science: Identifying A and C marks](#) audio presentation to consider the level of demand, and make the necessary adjustments to align provisional results with national standards.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Centres' assessment judgements were accurate overall, particularly when assessing implementation evidence. However, there were instances where the level of detail requested in the marking instructions and additional guidance was not applied. This resulted in leniency in assessment judgements. For example, in the SQA 2021 assignment assessment resource:

- ◆ 1a — centres should only award the input mark when each input is explicitly listed and the CSV file is mentioned
- ◆ 1a — centres should only award the output mark when both store entry ID and bib value are written to file
- ◆ 2a — candidates should only receive marks for functional requirements where there is a clear distinction between end-user requirements stated in the scenario and functional requirements. Functional requirements should be extracted from end-user information and reference the underlying query

Examples of good practice included:

- ◆ effective internal and local authority moderation procedures
- ◆ standardisation of the marking instructions based on candidate responses, sometimes across the local authority or with partner schools. This demonstrates positive engagement with the marking instructions and is good practice in supporting accurate and consistent marking
- ◆ provision of detailed checklists and/or observation notes of moderation and assessment judgements