



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

Subject	Geography
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

The majority of centres submitted partial evidence, with a significant number submitting complete evidence. Most centres made effective use of the SQA 2021 NQ assessment resources. Some centres made minor modifications to this which were in line with national standards.

Some centres devised their own assessments using a range of SQA past papers, which had appropriate course coverage and level of demand. When using older SQA past papers, centres should ensure that mark allocations, and marking instructions, are updated to take into account the changes to course assessment introduced for session 2019–20. When changing the allocated marks, centres should also take care to update the General Marking Instructions; for example, the number of marks awarded for named examples.

A few centres used a commercially-produced paper, which contained appropriate course coverage and was in line with national standards.

The validity of assessment used by centres was robust and in line with national standards.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Generally centres' assessment judgements were valid, reliable and in line with national standards.

Some centres submitted evidence of detailed discussions undertaken during prior moderation; it should be noted that detailed marking instructions are not an exhaustive list and marks should be awarded for any other relevant points.

Many centres submitted annotated marking instructions to exemplify other relevant points highlighting effective standardisation prior to marking.

Many centres made effective use of the full range of marking symbols, explaining how assessment judgements were reached.

Centres' assessment judgements were generally accurate, however, there were a few instances where marking instructions had been applied too severely. Centres may wish to utilise the Higher Geography 2021 webinar on the SQA Secure website, in preparation for future assessments.

There was clear evidence of robust and supportive internal and local moderation procedures. Detailed checklists and/or detailed observation notes were provided by many centres, which gave a clear indication that effective moderation had taken place. A small number of centres submitted extremely detailed moderation records.

Many centres helpfully used different coloured pens, which showed effective moderation; in a small minority of cases, however, the colour representing the agreed mark was not always indicated.

There is clear evidence that moderation processes adopted by almost all centres is thorough, detailed and effective.