



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

Subject	History
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

The evidence that centres submitted for Higher History was mainly for Component 1: British, European and world history. Centres provided essays in the main. In some cases, this was supported by evidence from the Scottish history component. The evidence submitted was often partial. One centre submitted assignments as additional evidence.

Most centres made effective use of the SQA 2021 NQ assessment resource — they had either made good use of this or were planning to use it for assessment purposes in May/June.

Some centres devised their own assessments using a range of SQA past papers from 2015–19, which had appropriate course coverage and level of demand. These were used to create '4 from 6 essay' question papers, in both the British section and the European and world section.

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

Overall, the approach to assessment was in accordance with SQA's guidance on gathering key evidence. Centres used the correct question stems for both assessment-type and evaluation-type questions for Component 1: British, European and world history. Centres provided many examples of good practice in their assessment evidence.

However, the level of demand contained in one Scottish history question paper was found to be incorrect. The centre had failed to follow the national standard in some of the questions in the Scottish history paper. It is important that the correct question types are derived from the relevant '**key issues**' and '**description of content**'. The 'Explain' and 'How fully' questions come from the key issues. The 'Evaluate' and 'two-source' questions come from the 'description of content'. If centres have devised assessments with questions that are not drawn from the relevant key issues and description of content, they should take account of this when making assessment judgements because it will affect the level of demand.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Centres' assessment judgements were, on the whole, in line with national standards. This is to be highly commended.

The majority of centres' assessment judgements were valid, reliable and in line with national standards.

Almost all candidates were assessed accurately, fairly and consistently in accordance with national standards.

In some cases, the evidence provided showed a real sense of engagement from candidates, and the feedback provided by assessors was detailed, helpful and supportive. There was a lot of good practice showing robust discussions between candidates and teachers. Centres should be commended on the clear and detailed comments provided throughout the evidence.

Centres' assessment judgements were accurate, in the main. There were few instances where marking instructions had been applied too leniently or severely.

Assessment evidence was often supported with detailed annotations and explanations. Analysis and evaluation marks were awarded accurately in most centres. It was encouraging that so much of the evidence featured the skill of evaluation.

There was clear evidence that centres' moderation processes were thorough, detailed and highly effective. In particular there was evidence of good practice in adopting effective internal moderation, as well as cross-marking. This was often supported by local authority moderation. In some cases, there was local moderation between a number of centres within the local cluster group or across the local authority. This exemplified good practice. This should be encouraged in exemplifying both the approach to national standard assessments and making reliable assessment judgements.

General comments

There was clear evidence of effective learning from the candidate evidence. Most assessment evidence and assessment judgements were based on Component 1: British, European and world history, essay writing. Use of the general marking principles, marking instructions and essay marking grid ensured good practice across the majority of centres.

Most candidates were broadly successful in meeting the required standards of attainment for Higher History.

Centres can refer to these resources to support their assessment judgements:

- ◆ **Subject Guidance:** https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/h-guidance-evidence-history.pdf
- ◆ **Course Specification:** https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/HigherCourseSpecHistory.pdf 'Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment' pages 3–20

- ◆ **Guidance on creating assessments for Higher History session 2020–21:** https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/modification-guidance-h-history.pdf
- ◆ **Higher Scottish history specimen question paper:** [HigherSQPHistoryScottish.pdf \(sqa.org.uk\)](https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/higherSQPHistoryScottish.pdf)
- ◆ **Higher British, European and world history specimen question paper:** [HigherSQPHistoryBritishEuropeanAndWorldHistory.pdf \(sqa.org.uk\)](https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/higherSQPHistoryBritishEuropeanAndWorldHistory.pdf)
- ◆ **Understanding Standards materials:** <https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/History/higher> (see 'Additional resources for Session 2020-21')
- ◆ **Webinar:** Understanding Standards tab on Higher History subject page <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47923.html>