



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

Subject	Sociology
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 who were moderated used valid and reliable assessments.

Some centres provided partial evidence which consisted of questions from Section 1 Human Society and Section 2 Culture and Identity, or one of these sections and the Assignment. Centres are reminded that to make a final judgement of provisional results, teachers/lecturers should consider evidence from Section 1, Section 2 and the Assignment.

In generating evidence for Sections 1 and 2, some centres used SQA's 2021 NQ assessment resource and some used assessments made up of questions from SQA past papers. Both approaches are appropriate means of assessing candidates.

When adapting past paper questions, centres should ensure that the combination of questions is appropriate. For instance, in Section 1 a balance of questions on theories and research methods should be found. Centres should also ensure that questions are structured in such a way as to differentiate between C and A candidates (see https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/h-guidance-evidence-sociology.pdf)

When devising a new assessment from adapted SQA past paper questions, it is imperative that marking instructions are accurate. If amending a question, centres must ensure that marks are still allocated in line with national standards.

For example, in a 6-mark question asking candidates to explain two similarities of specific theories, rather than one similarity and one difference, the basic allocation of up to 3 marks for each point should be retained.

It should also be noted that where an explanation is required, and each explanation can gain up to 3 points, this does not mean that 1 mark may be awarded for each stand-alone point made.

It should be noted that the demands of an essay question are different to those of short answer questions, and it would be expected that centres base their overall judgement of candidates' grades on evidence that includes an example of an essay.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Most centres' assessment judgements were valid, reliable and in line with national standards. They were clearly recorded against individual/specific aspects of performance.

For most centres there was clear evidence throughout the sample of effective internal moderation procedures in the centre/local authority/Regional Improvement Collaborative etc.

Centres should try to ensure that any cross-marking within the centre and further moderation is recorded clearly either on separate documentation and/or using different colour pens.

Centres should note that when a question relates to a specific topic, theory or study, generic advantages and disadvantages cannot score full marks. Full marks cannot be awarded unless the research is referred to.

Centres are also reminded they should check adding of total marks in each section, and for the entire assessment. Centres should also check that the allocation of marks for each section of the assignment is accurate as per the marking instructions (eg 2/2 for hypothesis or 6/6 for analysis). Centres should refer to SQA guidance on the Higher Sociology Assignment Assessment task at https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/HigherCATSociology.pdf.

In making judgements on provisional results, centres should gather evidence from Human Society, Culture and Identity and the Assignment (see SQA subject specific guidance at https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/h-guidance-evidence-sociology.pdf).

Centres are reminded that the assignment is usually worth 27% of the overall marks for the course assessment. Where centres aggregate the question paper and assignment marks to decide on candidates' grades, it is important to remember that the proportions should be maintained even though the question paper will now be worth 55 marks instead of 80 marks. Therefore, extra weighting should be given to the question paper.

To get the correct weighting where a question paper has been marked out of 55 and the assignment has been marked out of 30, the question paper mark should be multiplied by 1.455. The total is then out of 110 marks, as is usually the case.

For further information and detail about Higher Sociology assessment, centres should refer to:

- ◆ Course Reports: https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/2019HCourseReportSociology.pdf
- ◆ Understanding Standards materials: <https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/Sociology/Higher/QuestionPaper>