



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

Subject	Geography
Level	National 5

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 sources.

Using a range of SQA past papers, some centres devised their own assessments that had appropriate course coverage and level of demand. Many centres used the SQA NQ 2021 assessment resource, either in part or in full, with minor adaptations to suit content taught by the centre. A number of centres also included some questions from current commercial papers to produce assessments that were in line with national standards.

Many centres submitted evidence covering one section of the course (such as physical environments), although other centres submitted very detailed evidence covering two or more sections of the course.

Material from almost all centres was fully in line with the national guidance on submitting key evidence. Many centres chose to outline their planned assessment policy for the remainder of the session. This was helpful, as it confirmed that assessment judgements were likely to be based on materials with appropriate course coverage and level of demand.

Overall, the approach to assessment from centres closely followed SQA's guidance on gathering key evidence.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Assessment judgements were consistently in line with national standards.

There was evidence of robust and supportive internal and local moderation procedures.

Detailed checklists and/or detailed discussion notes were provided by many centres, clearly showing that effective moderation had taken place. The use of different coloured pens for cross-marking was helpful. It was clear that these processes helped centres to improve the accuracy of marking, which was almost always fully in line with the national standard. An example of good practice was centres choosing to use annotations in their marking (such as R for repeat point), which helped to show that their marking was accurate. As a result, assessment judgements were valid, reliable and in line with national standards.

Using questions from SQA past papers helps to ensure a balance of knowledge and skills questions in assessments and also that questions are pitched at the correct level. It is important when choosing questions for assessments, to use a variety of three, four, five and six-mark questions that broadly replicates the balance shown in past SQA papers, particularly those published since the new question paper was introduced in 2018.

The vast majority of centres closely followed the detailed SQA past paper marking schemes or those from commercial papers, where appropriate. It should be noted that detailed marking instructions are not an exhaustive list and that marks should be awarded for any other relevant points.

It was clear that all centres had worked very hard to ensure that their marking and assessment judgements were accurate. The quality of supporting documentation about assessments throughout the session, about internal and external moderation, and the discussions following on from cross-marking, was impressive. This helped to show that assessment judgements were valid and accurate.