



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

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
<b>Level</b>	<b>National 5</b>

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 provided evidence of a non-calculator paper and a calculator paper for each candidate. Some centres provided only one of these, but noted their intention to sit the other paper at a later date. Some centres also provided evidence of unit-level assessments and topic tests. In most cases, these were in addition to a course assessment.

The evidence submitted was from a variety of sources including the SQA 2021 paper, commercial question papers, and centre-devised papers.

The majority of non-SQA assessments did not meet the national standard. Many were lacking marks at A standard, while others had an excess of marks at A standard. Analysis grids for the 2018 and 2019 SQA past papers are available in the subject-specific guidance. The analysis grid for the 2021 paper is available on SQA's secure site.

Some centres amended the SQA 2021 paper to fit centre time constraints, and successfully maintained the balance of skills, and C and A marks.

In some commercial and centre-produced papers:

- ◆ Specific skills were assessed on more than one occasion.
- ◆ Some questions assessed skills at a lower level, for example converting an answer from a calculation involving two numbers given in full to scientific notation. (At National 5 level, at least one of the numbers involved in the calculation must be given in scientific notation in the question.)
- ◆ Some questions assessed content not in the National 5 Mathematics course, for example interpreting a box plot or a stem-and-leaf diagram.

Often marking instructions did not reflect current SQA standards:

- ◆ The number of marks allocated to some questions differed from SQA papers, for example:
  - rationalising the denominator of a surd should only be awarded 1 mark unless simplification is required
  - when identifying the gradient of a straight line from the equation  $ax + by + c = 0$ , the first mark should be awarded for isolating the  $y$  term or dividing throughout by the coefficient of  $y$  (There is no requirement to re-arrange into the form  $y = mx + c$  to award the first mark.)

## **Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements**

Assessment judgements were generally accurate, and in line with the national standard.

In most cases, follow-through marking was applied appropriately.

It was encouraging to see some centres awarding marks for alternative valid strategies and providing additional guidance to markers, by annotating the marking instructions.

Most centres had a well-structured moderation process. Moderation of assessment judgements was effective at identifying issues in marking. Where the original marker and the moderator disagreed over a mark, this was often recorded with comments explaining the final decision.

A presentation on applying the national standard can be found on the [Understanding Standards website](#).