



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

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Computing Science</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

Centres submitted evidence from a variety of assessments. The majority of centres submitted evidence of either a partially or fully completed question paper or assignment. A small number of centres submitted evidence of both.

Evidence of practical work was mainly from the SQA 2021 assignment assessment resource. Candidates had completed the Software Design and Development task and either the Web Design and Development or Database Design and Development task, in line with the arrangements for this session.

Where past paper assignment tasks had been used, centre commentary indicated that these were being used as practice tasks for formative assessment — the SQA 2021 assignment would be used to determine provisional results.

Questions paper evidence consisted of a mixture of the SQA 2021 papers, commercial question papers and centre-devised papers.

Where centres had edited SQA or commercial papers, the amendments maintained a valid coverage of content and level of demand.

The most common issue in commercial and centre-devised papers was that these often contained insufficient 'A' grade marks and were therefore not of an appropriate level of demand to effectively differentiate between candidates.

Most centres using commercial or centre-devised papers commented that these had been used as prelims and that provisional results would also be based on evidence from the SQA 2021 question paper resource.

Where this is not the case and evidence will be from a commercial or centre-devised question paper, centres are advised to refer to the [National 5 - Computing Science: Identifying A and C marks](#) audio presentation to consider the level of demand, and make the necessary adjustments to align provisional results with national standards.

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

Generally, centres applied the marking instructions accurately and consistently, in line with national standards.

There were instances in question paper and assignment evidence where marking was lenient. This was usually where marks were awarded for answers that did not contain the level of detail required by the marking instructions.

There were also some instances where marking was not consistent for a particular question across candidates in the sample. In these centres, local moderation/quality assurance may not yet have been carried out.

Many centres had amended marking instructions in light of candidate responses, sometimes in collaboration with the local authority or with partner schools. This demonstrates positive engagement with the marking instructions and is good practice in supporting accurate and consistent marking.

There is also the opportunity to tailor the marking instructions for the programming language used in a centre, and some centres did this. All marks should be accessible to candidates regardless of the language/software being used.

For example, in a small number of centres programming using Visual Basic, marks were not awarded for initialising the running-total to 0 in the SQA assignment programming task (1c). As Visual Basic defaults numeric variables to 0 when they are declared, the declaration itself would be enough to award the initialisation mark.

The quality of the marking commentary provided by centres to support their assessment decisions was high and centres are commended for this. Also evident was the extent and effectiveness of the internal moderation procedures — most assessment discrepancies, between an assessor and moderator were resolved appropriately and clearly communicated.