



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

Subject	Psychology
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

The volume of evidence varied across centres. It is important to emphasise that the quality of evidence (in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding as well as course coverage) is more important than the quantity of evidence when determining provisional grades.

All centres provided evidence from both the Social and Individual Behaviour topics, which was in line with the subject-specific guidance. Some centres created their own assessments, which replicated the approach, level of demand and structure of SQA assessments.

Generally centres devised assessments using a range of SQA past papers, which had appropriate course coverage and level of demand. However, in some cases the level of demand was insufficient because the command words in the past papers had been changed, so not all assessments covered the range of skills sufficiently or allowed for differentiation. In addition, some centres used the pass/fail UASPs from previous units. These are not aligned to the current N5 Psychology course content, nor do they allow for differentiation. This should be considered when reflecting on provisional results.

Some centres provided candidate assignments. Assignments provided evidence of candidates' understanding of the basic research process, including the ability to explain strengths and weaknesses of methods and to describe ethical standards. The assignment is key evidence that should be used to help determine the provisional results.

When considering provisional grades, centres should take into account the conditions of the assessment — ie consider whether the level of demand has increased or decreased, due to the way the assessment instrument was set or conducted.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

The evidence provided showed a real sense of engagement from candidates, and the feedback provided by the assessors was detailed, helpful and supportive. Detailed checklists were employed effectively by most centres.

Centres' assessment judgements were accurate, on the whole. However, there were some instances where the marking instructions had been applied too leniently. This was apparent in the assignment, where in Section B some candidates were awarded full marks but had not made links to theories/concepts; in Section D they were awarded full marks for the hypothesis but it was not always expressed clearly; in Section E they were awarded marks for variables which were not clear. Generally, centres highlighted unethical research plans and consequently awarded no marks for ethics, applying marking instructions appropriately.

Generally, there was clear evidence that centre moderation processes were effective.

Overall, it was evident that teachers and lecturers are working hard to develop and to encourage the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for National 5 Psychology.