



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

Subject	RMPS
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 evidence was from the World Religion, Morality and Belief, and Religious and Philosophical questions parts of the National 5 RMPS course. Most centres provided evidence for one complete part of the course, though a few centres had covered two or three.

The evidence from each centre included a range of scripts for five candidates, the instruments of assessment, and detailed marking instructions (MIs) showing possible responses and marks allocations. Some centres used the SQA 2021 assessment resource, while the others devised their own question papers or used questions from a range of past papers.

Supporting documents included very helpful records of discussion and finalisation of marks as part of the centre and local authority moderation processes. These demonstrated that markers had taken considerable care in applying the MIs and had discussed answers where it was difficult to assign a mark.

Most of the instruments of assessment were valid in terms of coverage, demand, and the balance of knowledge and skills in the National 5 question paper. As they closely replicated the style and demand of the exam, they provide very useful evidence which can contribute positively to decisions about provisional results, alongside evidence for the remaining parts.

Creating a paper from a range of past papers can make it hard to keep the flow of the whole question paper. For example, in some centres an impact question (4 skills marks) didn't have a related knowledge and understanding (KU) question to set it up. While this isn't required, it is common practice in the exam, and can be helpful for candidates as they move from, for example, a knowledge question about a practice to a question about how the practice might affect followers. These questions should only be worth 4 marks, as each section of the exam has 12 skills marks in total, including the 8-mark question.

One centre used questions and MIs from question papers published prior to the course review and therefore the instrument of assessment didn't fully mirror the format of question papers since 2018, or the content in the revised course specification document. The candidate responses were still useful for making judgements about the standard, but in future, questions should not be taken from pre-2018 papers, unless they are clearly in line with the revised course specification. The format of MIs and the approach to marking has also changed and so centre-devised MIs should be modelled on the most recent publications.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Markers were diligent in their application of the MIs, and the majority of the marking was consistent and in line with the national standard. They indicated where the marks were achieved, including identifying development and the use of double ticks to show that this was being recognised and rewarded. There was clear evidence of cross-marking in all of the submissions, and the commentaries on discussion around areas where allocation of marks was difficult were very helpful and demonstrated good practice in terms of moderation at school and local authority level.

The only issue was where out-of-date MIs were used, as some of these are now judged to be too lenient. Although they were applied accurately, they do not reflect the standard as it is shown in post-2018 publications.

There were a few cases where candidate responses strayed from the question and should not have been given marks. At National 5 level, candidates should only be awarded marks for points that directly answer the question. For example, in a question asking what followers do to practice an aspect of religion, there are no marks for saying why they do it.

Some candidates presented answers using bullet points to organise their thinking. This is acceptable and does not impact on the awarding of marks, provided they present their points clearly. Marks would only be capped at 1 if they use them to present a basic list, in the same way as if they presented it in continuous prose.

The evidence submitted by centres was encouraging in terms of validity, coverage and assessment judgements. Teachers should continue to mark with confidence and engage in supportive discussions about answers which are difficult to assess.

For future assessment, centres should take care to work with up-to-date publications, especially the course specification and past papers. These should be from the 2018 diet onwards, and are available online on the SQA National 5 RMPS subject webpage. Centre-devised questions should focus on content as it is expressed in the course specification. However it is acceptable for candidates to bring additional KU and terminology into their answers, and this will be awarded marks where it is appropriate to the questions.