



Post-Certification Review: Information for centres

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Context

In response to the cancellation of the 2020 exam diet, SQA has developed an alternative certification model for 2020 to ensure the hard work of Scotland's learners is fully recognised through our qualifications system. The alternative certification model allows us to award grades to all learners entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses as fairly and reliably as possible, across subjects and levels.

The alternative certification model is based on teachers' and lecturers' estimates, which have been moderated by schools, colleges and SQA. The process may lead to a candidate or group of candidates being certificated with a grade that's different from their estimated grade. To be as fair as possible to candidates, we are providing a post-certification review (appeals) service to allow centres to request a review of the grade awarded for a candidate or a group of candidates.

This document outlines SQA's post-certification review policy in 2020. It provides guidance on eligibility for review, the materials centres are required to submit in support of a review request, key dates for the service and other relevant information.

How does post-certification review work?

Post-certification review is free of charge. It is carried out by SQA examiners at the request of a centre. It involves a review of candidate evidence, including any completed coursework components that were submitted in the March uplift, for an eligible candidate or group of candidates identified by the centre.

A candidate is eligible for review only when they have been awarded a lower grade than the grade estimated by their centre. A successful post-certification review request will result in a change of grade only — a change in band is not a feature of the review. Post-certification review is available for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Courses in 2020 only.

Centres will be able to request one of two post-certification review types:

- ◆ a priority review
- ◆ a review

Priority reviews are for candidates with a conditional university or college offer.

The UCAS Advisor Portal (<https://www.ucas.com/advisers>) provides real time applicant status data and can help you identify candidates with conditional places before August certification. Once you have identified these candidates, you may wish to ensure that all supporting evidence is readily available for them should a request be necessary.

UCAS will also send an 'Unplaced Applicant' email to centres in Scotland at 09:00 on 4 August.

Key dates

Priority reviews

Dates	Activity
Tuesday, 04/08/20	Request service opens
Friday, 14/08/20	Deadline for submission of Priority Review requests
Thursday, 20/08/20	Uplift of evidence by carrier
Friday, 04/09/20	Issue outcomes to centres/HEIs/UCAS

Reviews

Dates	Activity
Tuesday, 04/08/20	Request service opens
Friday, 21/08/20	Deadline for submission of requests
Thursday, 27/08/20*	Uplift of evidence by carrier
TBC**	Issue outcomes to centres

*A second uplift date may be arranged depending on the number of requests received. We will advise you of the date if this is required.

**There is no date for conclusion as this will depend on volumes received.

Making a post-certification review request

A request must be submitted by a head of centre (or their representative). Requests from candidates or their parents and carers will **not** be accepted by SQA. It should be noted, however, that a head of centre must obtain a candidate's approval before submitting a request.

Before submitting a request, the head of centre must confirm that subject-specialist staff have used their professional judgement in endorsing the request. It is important to note that SQA will not make the decision on whether to undertake a review — the decision to submit a request is the responsibility of the head of centre.

In deciding whether to request a review for a particular candidate or group of candidates, you should revisit the evidence used as the basis of your estimate. You should ensure that you are confident that this evidence supports your estimate. As with the original estimating process, you should value the evidence for its own worth and merit as an indicator of course assessment, and consider issues of potential bias which may affect judgements. A conscious effort should be made to consider and avoid the negative impact of potential implicit bias based on assumptions or stereotypes about characteristics such as background,

gender, disability, race and ethnicity. Further information on implicit bias is available in our [SQA Academy course on estimates](#).

Before submitting a request, the head of centre should ensure that:

- ◆ The candidate is eligible for the service. Eligible candidates will be displayed to centres when the service opens.
- ◆ Assessment evidence is available that demonstrates performance at a higher grade than that awarded by SQA.
- ◆ The centre has discussed with each candidate its intention to submit a request for a review and informed them of the possible outcomes.
- ◆ The centre has the candidate's consent to submitting the request for review.
- ◆ The candidate is aware that, if this is required for progression, SQA will share the outcome of their post-certification review with UCAS and/or the institution to which they have applied to allow their application to progress.
- ◆ Where there is a requirement to provide higher/further education contact details, these are accurate and up to date.

These stipulations form the terms and conditions of post-certification review, and the head of centre will be prompted to accept these when submitting any requests.

Supporting detail

Heads of centre must be able to demonstrate that they have secured consent from each candidate they submit a request for. They must also be able to provide evidence of the requirement for a priority review request. This detail should be retained for 12 months as it might be necessary in supporting candidates' rights in relation to:

- ◆ any subsequent enquiry to SQA
- ◆ any potential complaints that may be raised with the centre, SQA and/or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Alternative assessment evidence in support of a post-certification review request

You must provide alternative evidence for each request.

SQA will consider a wide range of alternative evidence. The most robust evidence has strong predictive value in the absence of course assessment. You are encouraged to submit a wide range of alternative evidence, and **not solely** a class test or prelim wherever possible.

Evidence will be reviewed holistically. It should demonstrate the candidate's performance at the level you originally estimated. Estimates always rely on both demonstrated and inferred evidence, since it is not possible to assess all skills, knowledge and understanding exhaustively.

When deciding which evidence to submit, you should focus on its predictive value. It is important to note that a few convincing pieces of evidence can be more useful in demonstrating a candidate's ability than a larger number of pieces with less convincing predictive value.

The alternative evidence you submit must demonstrate coverage of the skills, knowledge and understanding set out in the course specification.

All alternative evidence must have been generated **before** 29 May (the deadline for submitting estimates). Where candidates have completed additional work after school and college closures, you should exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases, it is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work was done.

Any evidence already held by SQA (for example, uplifted coursework materials) will be considered as part of a review.

SQA's advice on the type of alternative evidence that centres can submit is generic, rather than subject-specific. Examples of the types of evidence that you may wish to submit include:

- ◆ **Prelims/mock tests:** These are likely to be the most reliable indicator of performance in a question paper. The most convincing examples of these will accurately predict attainment in the skills, knowledge, and understanding assessed by the question paper, clearly aligned to the course specification and content as exemplified in the specimen question paper.
- ◆ **Commercially-produced question papers:** These may provide suitable evidence and can be used in their entirety. They do not have to be the most recent version, although you should ensure that they meet the demands of the course specification.
- ◆ **SQA past papers or specimen question papers:** Evidence from these sources, if used in their entirety, is not suitable for submission, and should **not** form the basis of a request. A request which features a past paper or specimen paper as its only evidence will be rejected. This is because they are in the public domain and can be readily accessed by candidates. However, an adapted past paper or specimen question paper, featuring, for instance, different questions/tasks, where alteration does not change the level of demand or standard of the paper, may be suitable as evidence.
- ◆ **Class tests:** You could submit a series of marked class tests as supplementary evidence to the evidence types listed above. Such tests should sample the key aspects of the course, and the conditions of assessment should be consistent with those of the external assessment. If the class tests do not cover sufficient integration, challenge and/or application, additional evidence will be required to demonstrate this.
- ◆ **Classwork:** This may consist of a variety of naturally-occurring evidence types, produced under different conditions than those set for course assessment. Evidence of this kind will most often supplement other evidence types.

- ◆ **Completed or partially-completed course assessments:** Coursework already submitted to SQA will be considered as part of a review. You may choose to submit coursework that could not be completed, but shows strong candidate performance.
- ◆ **Performance evidence:** If you hold records of a candidate's abilities in a practical setting, these could be included as part of an overall submission. This evidence may be in the form of photographs or videos, or take the form of detailed notes or a commentary on a candidate's performance.

For National Courses in Dance, Drama, and Music, where visiting assessment took place and recordings were made by the centre of the final performance, you can enclose these as part of the evidence submission. The recording of candidate performance is not mandatory. If submitting a recording for Music, you must include a copy of the sheet music performed by candidates.

Submitting alternative evidence

For each type of alternative evidence, you must submit the instrument of assessment and marking instructions or other guidance with the evidence, clearly indicating how the evidence was evaluated.

- ◆ **Instrument of assessment:** This is the mechanism by which the evidence was generated to demonstrate a candidate's skills, knowledge and understanding.
- ◆ **Marking instructions (MIs):** For each type of alternative evidence submitted it is important that you submit the marking instructions, or other guidance, to show how it has been assessed. MIs normally indicate the number of marks for each question or component of the task, and they should also indicate acceptable answers or criteria for awarding marks.

For each candidate, you may additionally include a candidate commentary.

- ◆ **Candidate commentary:** You may wish to include a short commentary relating to a candidate's performance if evidence for a candidate is sparse, or where evidence indicates improvement in performance over time. Commentaries must focus on statements about the candidate's evidence, rather than information about their personal circumstances. A commentary should be unique to that candidate, and it would not be appropriate to use a template approach for multiple candidates. Some examples of candidate commentaries are given below:

Example A

Limited evidence is available for [CANDIDATE]. We believe the available evidence shows strong performance, and of the topics covered [CANDIDATE] is able to answer in sufficient depth to merit an A grade. In particular, [CANDIDATE] meets the Skills, Knowledge and Understanding as described in the Course Specification in the essay dated 11/10/19 and prelim question 3.

Example B

The most recent evidence (prelim paper dated 28/02/2020) shows [CANDIDATE] operating at a B level. [CANDIDATE] goes beyond the minimum level required in the course specification and can cope with more complex tasks with some degree of proficiency – particularly questions 7 and 8 of the prelim paper in question.

Example C

Limited evidence is available for the practical section of the course. However, in pairing [CANDIDATE]'s strong performance in the theoretical element with their strong start to the coursework, we determine that they are capable of performance at A grade. [CANDIDATE] achieved a score of 83% in the prelim dated 21/02/2020, which covered all aspects of the course, and their incomplete assignment shows good skills and creative ideas which are carried through well.

Assessment arrangements/reasonable adjustments

For disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, you may have a range of evidence that shows what the candidate can achieve with the correct support in place and evidence without the correct support in place. If you submit evidence produced before appropriate support/reasonable adjustments were put in place, you may wish to indicate this in a candidate commentary.

The post-certification review process

Post-certification reviews will be undertaken by senior subject-specialist SQA examiners.

A review will involve two key stages:

- ◆ Review of alternative assessment evidence.
- ◆ Review of any additional non-question paper evidence held by SQA.

The examiner will make a holistic judgement on the totality of the evidence available to them, and award the candidate a grade. There are three possible outcomes:

- ◆ Agree with the original centre estimate and upgrade the candidate result.
- ◆ Disagree with the original centre estimate and confirm the grade awarded by SQA.
- ◆ Disagree with both the original centre estimate and the original grade awarded by SQA and apply an alternative, lower grade.

When reviewing a submission, examiners will have access to the alternative assessment evidence submitted by the centre, and any non-question paper component materials held by SQA for the candidate. Examiners will also have access to candidates' refined estimated bands and rank order. They will take a holistic approach to reviewing evidence.

It is important to note that any award will be placed in the grade's lower banding — A2, B4, C6, D7 or No Award 9.

Escalated appeals

The outcome of a post-certification review is an academic judgement. It represents the considered findings of an examiner, taking into account all the evidence available to them, and it is not possible to appeal the outcome on this basis.

If you believe there has been a procedural irregularity, you may be eligible to make an appeal on this basis. An appeal must come from the head of centre. We will publish more information about appeals before the post-certification review service opens.

Return of alternative evidence

Evidence is returnable on request and free of charge.

However, we must retain evidence that has been submitted in support of a post-certification review request for 12 months from the date the outcome is notified before it can be returned to centres. This is to enable any subsequent enquiries or complaints to be dealt with efficiently.

Any evidence that might be required within the 12-month time period should be copied and retained before submission to SQA. Where it is not possible to make a copy, SQA will consider requests for early return on an individual basis.

Quality assurance

SQA's quality assurance activities seek to ensure that the post-certification review service is used fairly and consistently across all centres, supporting candidates and maintaining the confidence of education professionals, candidates, their parents, and carers. All centres using the service may be subject to quality assurance checks by SQA, and must ensure that supporting detail is submitted when requested.

Changes to estimates

Although we do not anticipate any need for you to amend the original estimates you submitted, we recognise that in some rare and exceptional cases, you may discover that an error has been made by your centre in submitting a candidate's estimate or entry information. This may be an administrative error, or an academic error identified through your internal appeals process. This includes any errors detected which are the result of bias, including where — following your own review — you believe that a candidate has been subject to discrimination by your centre, especially in relation to your responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

If you have identified an error, you can email estimate.amendments2020@sqa.org.uk for more information and to request a 'Late Estimate Amendment' form. You must submit the form to us by 31 August 2020.

Contact us and further information

Information is also available at www.sqa.org.uk/appeals

For any further support or queries about post-certification review, please visit the SQA website, or contact the SQA post-certification review helpdesk or your local liaison manager (details can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/liaisonteam).

With the exception of local and bank holidays, the SQA PCR Helpdesk is available from 4 August 2020:

- ◆ 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Thursday
- ◆ 8:30am to 3:30pm Friday

Phone: 0345 279 1000

E-mail: pcr.enquiries@sqa.org.uk

We will provide information on how to use the post-certification review system before 4 August.