

# 2020 National Qualifications Appeal Outcomes

On 2 December 2020, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) published the [outcomes of 2020 Appeals](#) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

On Tuesday 11 August, the Deputy First Minister outlined in a statement to the Scottish Parliament that he was using powers available to him under the Education (Scotland) Act 1996, to direct SQA to change the previous approach to certification and instead award candidate results based solely on the estimates provided by schools and colleges. The results of those learners who were awarded a higher grade during the initial moderation process, were maintained.

The Ministerial direction also included the introduction of an appeals service for schools and colleges to address three categories of procedural issues with the centre estimate process and SQA subsequently changing grades back to the centre estimates. This service was agreed with Scottish Ministers.

This report reflects my very brief observations, as Chief Examining Officer for Scotland, on the outcomes of the appeal requests we received and processed for 2020, a truly unprecedented year for everyone living in Scotland and for learners who completed National Qualifications.

## Appeal process

The appeal process allowed for three grounds upon which schools and colleges could submit an appeal:

- **SQA Error** – the Head of Centre believed that there had been an error with SQA's internal processes for confirming results back to the school or college following the Ministerial direction on 11 August
- **Centre Administrative Error** – the school or college discovered that an administrative error was made when they submitted their original estimate or entry information for a candidate to SQA in May
- **Centre Discrimination** – the school or college's internal review process disclosed that a candidate's original estimate was affected by discrimination or other conduct by the centre that was unacceptable under the Equality Act 2010

As in any year, priority was given to candidates who needed to confirm a university or college place.

In keeping with the Ministerial direction – and the decision to accept centre estimates – the appeal service did not include any review of candidate evidence and there was no further moderation of centres' academic judgements by SQA.

Schools and colleges were responsible for determining the original estimates that were submitted and upon which grades were awarded after 11 August and so it was only the centre that could request a change to the estimates they submitted to SQA in May.

## Appeal outcomes

The overall outcomes of accepted 2020 appeals are summarised below. Further statistical information is available on our [Statistics Information](#) webpage.

**Table 1: 2020 Accepted Appeal outcomes**

Award level	Accepted Appeal Outcomes					Total
	New Entry	Withdrawn Entry	Grade Amended Up	Grade Amended Down*	No Grade Change	
National 5	48	4	152	8	3	215
Higher	18	5	272	18	5	318
Advanced Higher	4	2	18	0	0	24

\* Grades amended down were at the request of the centre with the consent of the candidate

## Conclusion

SQA has fully complied with the Ministerial direction, and has today published the [2020 Appeal Outcomes](#).

**Fiona Robertson**

Scotland's Chief Examining Officer

2 December 2020