

SSTA Advice 30 April 2020

Producing SQA estimated grades

The Senior Phase is when young people build up their portfolio of qualifications and continue to develop the knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. Their teachers are in a strong position to judge their learning success, their confidence as individuals, their readiness to live responsibly, and how effectively they are able to contribute to wider society.

Teachers have designed learning experiences which provide the breadth and depth of education to develop flexible and adaptable young people with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive. Teachers are best placed to use their professional judgement to draw on demonstrated and inferred evidence to assess the extent to which young people have engaged in these learning experiences and their levels of attainment.

The SSTA supports the efforts of the SQA to develop a robust, defensible procedure for ensuring that teacher judgement informs certification of learners' achievements during the Senior Phase.

To allow certification to take place, employers must ensure that SQA procedures are interpreted in a way which does not add significantly to teacher workload. Collegiality and consistency are at the heart of the process. Within the constraints of the current restrictions, teachers need to be able to take as collaborative an approach as possible and employers must facilitate this.

Consultation and discussion of deadlines will help reduce the stress arising from remote working. Schools which have brought their change of timetable forward will need to recognise that their teachers are working with additional competing priorities.

The extent to which teachers can access their records is likely to be a factor; it will be helpful for teachers to be provided with levels of remote access which enable them to review their records. Teachers should not be required to travel to school to collect or collate evidence and it is not necessary to gather together large quantities of evidence for each learner.

Estimate information should not be released to learners or parents/carers. Results will be published by the SQA on 4 August.

The following is drawn from SQA guidelines:

Estimating grades for National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher courses

- An estimate is a judgement of a grade and band. SQA requires estimated grades and bands for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses based on professional judgement
- Estimated learners' grades and bands are based on their demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for each National Course. They should be based on a holistic review of a learner's performance in the assessment evidence available.
- Additional prelim exams or homework tasks after 20 March should not be used to determine learner estimates.
- Teachers are not required to mark non-question paper components that would have been externally marked by SQA.

- Existing bands have been subdivided with the aim of developing as fair a process as possible. Learners will be placed by teachers within these 19 band categories.
- Teachers will rank order their learners within each estimated grade.
- SQA will use ranking and subdivision to adjust estimates.
- Consistency will be informed and achieved using centres' prior attainment information and previous subject and qualification performance compared against national information. SQA will provide centres with their estimates and awards from the previous three years.
- Schools should refer to detailed guidance issued by the SQA on 20 April https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/SQA-Information-on-Producing-Estimates-20-April-2020.pdf and in the SQA Learning Academy course, here available as a PDF: https://www.sqaacademy.org.uk/pluginfile.php/101770/mod_scorm/content/4/scormcontent/assets/IsJ6SEtG--gcgxNg_B3-9tnYJM7hkuNn1-Estimates.pdf.
- Estimates should be submitted by 29 May.
- SQA will issue full details of a free post-results service to question any result.

National 5 Coursework

- N5 coursework will not be marked, nor will it be returned to schools.
- It may be used at a later stage as part of an appeals service.
- SQA does not require centres to submit marks for internally assessed coursework.

Approach to quality assurance and certification for National 2, National 3, and National 4 courses and free-standing units at SCQF levels 5, 6, and 7

- Schools should provide unit results based on either existing evidence from assessments that have already been completed, and/or using their professional judgement of other learner evidence, including their knowledge of their learners, their progress and achievements to date.
- Results should be submitted by schools in the normal way by 22 May.
- External verification is postponed. Schools should use their own quality assurance systems and processes to verify the appropriateness of internal assessment outcomes and certification.
- All assessment evidence and the justification of decision-making should be retained until December 2020 for later verification if required.
- Approach to quality assurance and certification for National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Skills for Work courses, and Awards
- Schools, colleges, employers and training providers should provide the results of their internal assessment decisions, where some evidence from the course already exists but further progress is not possible, and/or using their professional judgement of other learner evidence, including their knowledge of their learners, their progress and achievements to date.
- Results should be submitted to SQA in the normal way, reflecting the achievements of learners.
- External verification will be reduced and quality assurance undertaken remotely.
- SQA will work with stakeholders to agree the appropriate conditions of assessment and quality assurance arrangements for each of these qualifications and awards with an update due very soon.
- Schools, colleges, employers and training providers should use their own quality assurance systems and processes to verify the appropriateness of these internal assessment outcomes and certification.
- All assessment evidence should be retained until December 2020.
- Other activity planned for session 2019-20 will be reviewed and where appropriate moved to academic session 2020-21.