

# SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

## DIET 2022

### PRINCIPLES FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CANDIDATES IN DIET 2022 (GEARCHANGE MODEL: PLAN B)

#### AUGUST 2021

#### WHY DO WE NEED TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CANDIDATES?

##### Background

The Scottish Government has confirmed its central planning assumption for awarding National Qualifications in 2022 as being that *'...an examination diet for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses will be held in session 2021-2022.'*

It is in the interest of fairness to learners that SQA examinations go ahead in 2022. Examinations are the most valid and reliable method of assessing young people's skills, knowledge and understanding within our national qualification system.

The 'Gear Change Model' outlines a set of three Plans (Plans A, B and C) that can respond to the course of the pandemic should it continue to create deteriorating conditions and negative impacts in educational provision. The aim of the Model is to ensure that learners can still access National Qualifications and progress onto the next stage of their learning or employment.

The exam diet is Plan A. Plan B and Plan C are outlined below:

- **Plan B - If there is further significant disruption to learning and teaching this session**, beyond that experienced in 2020-21, appropriate additional support measures for learners will be put in place to support learners and teachers in the run up to exams.
- **Plan C - If changes to public health advice mean that large gatherings of people are no longer permitted in April to June, and exams are cancelled**, SQA will ask teachers and lecturers to use their professional judgement of assessment evidence to determine learners' grades.

Table 1 summarises Plan A, B and C. Detailed planning for each is currently underway. The remainder of this document focuses only on Plan B.

**TABLE 1**

|   | Plan   | Detail  |
|---|--|---|
| A | Default: exams based on modifications as currently established                 | Modifications as currently planned to take account of disruption to learning.   |
| B | Provision of additional support measures to candidates preparing for Diet 2022 | Additional support measures for candidates should help support the examination and revision experience by providing candidates with information that would e.g. help to focus revision and reduce pre-exam stress. Plan B |

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
|   |  | will only be implemented if the Scottish Government trigger point has been reached. This would be disruption to learning beyond that experienced in 2021. Should this happen the implementation date will be the end of March 2022. Information on the additional support measures should only be made available if Plan B is invoked. |  |
| C | Plan C would see certificates awarded on the basis of teacher determined result. | The detail of Plan C is currently being worked on with the support of the NQ 2021 Working Group  |  |

Should there be significant disruption<sup>1</sup> during the academic session, the intention is that Plan B would help reduce the burden and stress of the final weeks of consolidation and revision leading up to the examination. Plan B is intended to protect the examination Diet in 2022 and builds on the established National Course assessment modifications for Session 2021-22.

#### WHY DO WE NEED PRINCIPLES?

It is not the intention to change any of the established National Course assessment modifications for Session 2021-22. This includes no change to 2021-22 examination papers or coursework tasks.

The intention is to consider measures that can be implemented to provide additional support for candidates preparing for the 2022 examination diet, should learning and teaching be significantly disrupted in Session 2021-22 beyond that experience last year.

The principles are required to provide support to Qualification Development staff in their consideration of additional support or alleviation for candidates. Examples of some suggested options are provided below. These options can be applied singularly, or in combination, across all subjects and levels, where possible.

The list of options is not exhaustive and alternative arrangements can be proposed at subject level, provided they can be justified as providing additional support for candidates and can be easily understood by candidates, teachers and/or lecturers.

This document outlines:

- Examples of some options that can be applied singularly, or in combination across all subjects, at all levels, where possible.
- Broad principles for the additional support.

#### WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?

Additional support will be provided for **the question paper component** only to support candidates with preparation for the examination diet. **However, it is recognised that additional support for question papers may not be possible in all subjects at all levels.** A rationale outlining the reasons why additional support cannot be provided, within a particular subject or level, will be required. **It is important that we document why this cannot be achieved for some courses.** Documenting this will enable us to ensure that we have taken a rigorous approach across all subjects and will be useful if people

<sup>1</sup> For example of a greater scale seen in 2020

question why we have not been able to provide any additional support. For example for some courses we have already removed the exam.

**We recognise that it is unlikely to be possible for additional support to be equitable or coherent across subjects.** There is an acceptance that benefits will be gained across the broad range of subjects being undertaken by candidates. There is no maximum or minimum level of support: any steps we can take to help focus candidate exam preparation and revision and reduce pre-exam stress will support our ability to assess learners via the Diet, which is the fairest means of assessment.

The following additional support and considerations are designed as guidelines.

| Additional support   | Consideration  |
|--|--|
| Providing advanced notice of some examination topics to candidates, teachers and/or lecturers.           | Providing advanced notice of some topics will support candidates to focus their consolidation and revision on a narrower range of topics or content and reduce the stress associated with preparing for an exam.   |
| Providing advanced notice of which topics will not be examined to candidates, teachers and/or lecturers. | Providing advanced notice of topics that will not be examined will support candidates to focus their consolidation and revision on a narrower range of topics or content.  |
| SQA provides study notes for candidates  | Study notes can be provided in advance to further support candidates to better prepare for the examination. This might include particular areas of the course to focus on.   |
| Open book conditions in some Advanced Higher subjects  | Allowing examination conditions to move from closed book to more open access to limited, specified resources will provide candidates with a wider set of resources to draw on during the examinations. This will not be possible or appropriate in all Advanced Higher subjects. |

## WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CANDIDATES IN DIET 2022?

Where additional support is proposed, developers must consider the impact of those on:

- ◆ Candidate's examination preparation time.
- ◆ Learning and teaching time.
- ◆ Centres' understanding of the assessable content.
- ◆ The volume of administration SQA would have to undertake to support the development and implementation of the additional support