

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher assessments 2021-22

Tuesday 14 September 2021

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to cause disruption in all our lives, we understand that teachers, lecturers, parents/carers and learners have questions on how National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses will be assessed in 2021-22.

Following the decision by Ministers that exams should go ahead in 2022 if it is safe to do so and our related [statement of 18 August 2021](#), we are continuing to monitor public health advice to prepare for a range of scenarios. These scenarios and associated contingencies, agreed by partners in the National Qualifications 2022 (NQ22) Group*, acknowledge the possibility of further disruption in the months ahead and will help to ensure the safe delivery of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

Scenarios

1. Current public health advice → SQA exam diet with modifications, as published

The [Scottish Government announced](#) on 18 August that SQA exams will take place – if safe to do so – in Spring 2022. Recognising the continued disruption to learning and teaching this year, we have kept most of the modifications made to course assessments (exams and coursework) in session 2020-21. This means that, in most courses, learners will do less assessment than in a 'normal' year with exams, and more time will be available to focus on learning and teaching. You can view a summary of all the modifications at sqa.org.uk/NQmodifications.

2. Increased levels of disruption → SQA exam diet with modifications (as above) + additional measures

We will continue to constantly monitor public health advice and levels of disruption across the country, while taking account of discussions that take place in the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG)**. If there is further significant disruption to learning and teaching this session, appropriate additional support measures for learners will be put in place to help reduce pre-exam stress. For example, where possible in some subjects we may provide additional information to help learners focus their study on the run up to the exams. This will not be possible in all subjects due to the types of modifications which are already in place. The actual assessments will not change under this approach.

If additional measures are required, they will be introduced at the end of March 2022.

3. Public health advice leads to SQA exams being cancelled → teachers and lecturers use learner evidence to determine provisional results

If the Covid-19 pandemic gets worse to the point where physical gatherings are restricted at the time of the exams, the SQA exam diet will be cancelled. If this happens, teachers and lecturers will be asked to determine provisional results by using

their professional judgement of evidence that shows each learner's skills, knowledge and understanding.

The main focus for schools, colleges and training providers will continue to be learning and teaching, with assessment to support that process. With this in mind, and in preparation for the possibility that exams cannot go ahead, teachers and lecturers should use the type, quality and volume of evidence that would be needed to support quality assured estimates in a 'normal' year. This will also serve as the basis of the evidence needed to support the submission of provisional results if it is not possible to run exams. We will publish further guidance in October 2021 to support teachers and lecturers with this activity. The guidance being prepared is based on last year's guidance on estimates and will include information on determining provisional results should the exam diet be cancelled.

Under this approach there is **no requirement** for schools, colleges and training providers to run additional assessments. Doing so would place excess workload on teachers, lecturers and learners. Provisional results would be based on in-year assessments that normally take place during the school year such as prelims, practical activities, performances and class tests.

Consideration also needs to be given for those learners with additional support needs and who would normally use specific assessment arrangements during their exams. Schools, colleges and training providers should ensure that appropriate assessment arrangements are put in place for normal in-year assessments to ensure equity.

Further information and guidance on assessment arrangements is available on our [website](#).

Understanding Standards and Quality assurance

In keeping with previous years, we will provide an extensive Understanding Standards programme of events and materials that support teachers and lecturers with assessment decisions, building on their experience of determining provisional results in 2020-21. We will also continue to work with schools, colleges and training providers in checking the internally assessed elements of National Qualifications to ensure they meet national standards.

If public health advice results in the exams for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher being cancelled it is intended that, a national quality assurance exercise will be carried out. Should this happen, we will review selections of learner assessment evidence submitted digitally by schools and colleges, similar to the approach used for 2020-21.

We will provide more detail, particularly around the timing of the quality assurance approach for scenario three in the coming weeks following further discussion with the NQ22 Group.

Further information

The Scottish Government has announced that SQA is to be replaced by a new curriculum and assessment agency and has commissioned an independent review to advise on next steps, which is expected to report early next year. Until a replacement organisation is established, we will continue to fulfil our statutory functions and deliver for Scotland's learners. This includes delivery of exams and other assessments to schools, colleges and training providers in 2022.

We will continue to provide all schools, colleges and training providers, as well as learners, parents and carers, with information regarding National Qualifications in 2021-22. To stay up to date, please visit sqa.org.uk/nq2022.

-ENDS-

*The National Qualifications Group provides advice to SQA and the wider education system and is made up of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES); Colleges Scotland; Education Scotland; Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS); National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFSS); School Leaders Scotland (SLS); Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS); Scottish Government; Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

**The [COVID-19 Education Recovery Group \(CERG\)](#) is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. It brings together decision makers and key influencers to ensure that the delivery of childcare, early learning and education maintains a strong focus on excellence and equity for all, within the necessary constraints of the COVID-19 response.

Members include representation from the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Education Scotland, Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland (AHDS), Early Years Scotland, School Leaders Scotland (SLS), National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFSS), General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), Scottish Government, Local Authorities, UNISON, Scottish Youth Parliament -ENDS-