

**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 20 May 2021**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: SQA Alternative Certification Model**

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## **1. Summary**

1.1 On 7 October 2020, it was announced that the planned diet of SQA National 5 examinations for session 2021-21 would be cancelled. This was followed by a second announcement on 9 December 2020 that the planned diet of SQA Higher and Advanced Higher examinations for session 2021-21 were also to be cancelled.

1.2 The key difference to the traditional certification model is that now schools have been asked to take the lead on determining provisional grades based on assessment evidence. This has never happened before.

The SQA have stated that a provisional grade should be 'a holistic review of a candidate's performance as indicated by assessment evidence'; unlike the 2020 estimate it should be an evidence-based prediction of final attainment and does not include an inferred element. SQA have provided guidance in relation to this.

1.3 On 16 February 2021 the National Qualification 2021 Group published the revised alternative certificate model (ACM) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

1.4 Schools are working closely with the central team to ensure the successful implementation of the Alternative Certification Model, making sure that the hard work of all our young people is rightly and fairly recognised.

1.5 Pupil awards will be based solely on their demonstrated attainment subject to:

- Internal centre-level moderation.
- Subject-level moderation, either through Local Authority or Regional Improvement Collaborative networks.
- Review of summary data by centre Senior Leaders.
- Review of summary data by the Central Education team

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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Elected members are asked to note and consider the arrangements for and progress of the implementation the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) in Renfrewshire as part of the 2021 certification process.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government took the decision that there would be no examination diet in 2020. Subsequently the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) set out arrangements for an alternative certification model.
- 3.2 Following the release of results on 4 August 2020 the focus nationally was on whether the certification model was equitable to all candidates. Professor Mark Priestley was commissioned by the Scottish Government to lead an independent review of the processes through which qualifications were awarded.
- 3.3 In October 2020, following the publication of the Priestley Review and in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Deputy First Minister announced the suspension of the National 5 examinations diet. An Alternative Certification Model for National 5 qualifications was outlined based on teacher and lecturer judgements supported by assessment resources and quality assurance.
- 3.4 The Deputy First Minister made further changes on 8 December 2020 indicating that there would be no external assessments of Higher or Advanced Higher courses. As a result, the entire 2021 National Qualifications examination diet had been cancelled and replaced by the ACM.
- 3.5 The National Qualifications 2021 Group was set up to support the development of the ACM nationally, it includes representatives from a range of key stakeholders including Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), the National Parent Forum of Scotland, SQA and Schools Leaders Scotland (SLS).
- 3.6 Locally, officers have been liaising with local authority colleagues across Scotland via ADES and have been supported by our SQA Liaison Manager.
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## **4. Implementation of Alternative Certification Model**

- 4.1 As noted in paragraph 3.5, the National Qualifications 2021 Group is overseeing the national development of the ACM. The agreed model has

recently been revised to reflect the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and is based on five key stages, these are summarised below:

**Stage 1:** ongoing until April 2021 – Teachers and lecturers access subject specific guidance, assessment resources and Understanding Standards materials and webinars from SQA.

**Stage 2:** April to May 2021 – School, college, training provider and local authority quality assurance continues. During May, SQA requests, reviews and provides feedback on assessment evidence from each school, college and training provider.

**Stage 3:** end May to 25 June 2021 – Schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and SQA work through final stages of local and national quality assurance and feedback, to reach provisional results that are consistent, equitable and fair.

**Stage 4:** by 25 June 2021 – Schools, colleges and training providers submit quality assured provisional results to SQA.

**Stage 5:** Appeals process for 2020–21 – To be advised following consultation.

- 4.2 The SQA published additional guidance on the implementation of the Alternative Certification Model in February 2021. This guidance formed the basis of our own local guidance.
- 4.3 Our focus is on ensuring that pupils get the results that they deserve through a robust fair and transparent process. To ensure this we have developed additional advice for staff (Appendix 1) on the appropriate implementation of the ACM, which is designed to build confidence in the system and the judgements being made through a robust inter-authority quality assurance process which ensures grades are subject to rigorous checks.
- 4.4 Internal verification guidance, closely aligned with SQA policy, has been developed with senior school staff (Appendix 2). It sets out best practice for the creation and validation of assessment and how schools will undertake moderation to ensure a shared understanding of standards and expectations. The policy has also been peer reviewed by another Local Authority.
- 4.5 Schools are working together to implement the ACM. Moderation teams have been set up through subject networks, with schools working in pairs or trios to validate assessments and moderate candidate evidence. Time has been dedicated to subject leads to carry out validation of assessments. In addition, subject teachers across Renfrewshire are supporting the quality assurance model to reinforce assessment standards.
- 4.6 HM Inspectors of Education are carrying out a national review of local authority approaches to quality assurance as part of the Alternative Certification Model. This review will take place between 12 April and 30 April 2021 to enable a national report to be published in mid-May 2021.

- 4.7 On the 16th February, the First Minister announced that an additional two days will be set aside for teachers to engage with the assessment, moderation and quality assurance process required for awarding National Qualifications during this year. These two days are additional in-service days specifically for assessment, moderation and quality assurance purposes, and are therefore termed 'assessment support days'. Further to consultation with schools and Unions, it has been agreed that in Renfrewshire, these will take place on the Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> and Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June.
- 4.8 During May and June, the central education staff will support schools in the ongoing review of provisional grades.
- 4.9 During May SQA will request, review and provide feedback on a sample of assessment evidence from each school across Scotland as part of the national quality assurance.
- 4.10 Unlike 2020, provisional results will be shared with learners before being submitted to the SQA. The provisional results will still be subject to further administrative checks by SQA, who will then issue the final results individually to learners on 10 August 2021.
- 4.11 Stage 5 of the ACM is the appeals process, which is still to be finalised following national consultation.
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## **5. Conclusion and next steps**

- 5.1 The implementation of the ACM poses significant challenges for Local Authority Education staff not just in Renfrewshire but across Scotland. We have put various steps in place to ensure that the delivery of the ACM is robust, fair and transparent. As a result of these measures we can be confident that young people will get the grades that they deserve, and that their hard work and dedication to their learning will be fairly rewarded.
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## **Implications of this report**

### **1. Financial**

There are no financial and efficiency implications associated with the amended certification process for 2021. The 2021 arrangements will be covered by the agreed SQA budget.

### **2. HR and Organisational Development**

None.

### **3. Community/Council Planning**

Our Renfrewshire is fair

- The delivery of the ACM aims to ensure that

Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all

- The delivery of ACM aims to ensure that all young people in the Senior Phase have the opportunity to achieve success

Working together to improve outcomes

- Education staff will work together to ensure that the process is robust fair and transparent.

**4. Legal**  
None.

**5. Property/Assets**  
None.

**6. Information Technology**  
None.

**7. Equality and Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

**8. Health and Safety**  
None.

**9. Procurement**  
None.

**10. Risk**  
None.

**11. Privacy Impact**  
None.

**12. Cosla Policy Position**  
None.

**13. Climate Risk**  
None.

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## List of Background Papers

NA

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*Children's Services*  
JC 13/04/21

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# ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION MODEL

February 2021

## Roles and Responsibilities



# Introduction

The following document sets out each of our roles and responsibilities to deliver the SQA's Alternative Certification Model (ACM).

Collaboration will be critical to the successful delivery of the ACM, therefore as well as the SQA expectations, we have set out additional Renfrewshire-specific actions to ensure that we have robust procedures in place to provide a valid and reliable assessment process for our young people.

Also included within the document is a template for middle leaders to be populated and used as appropriate to your own school context.

# SQA

January- April	May	June
<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	
<p>January/February 2021 — For Higher and Advanced Higher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ produce subject-specific guidance clarifying assessment requirements</li> <li>○ publish and promote subject-specific assessment resources for centres to use</li> </ul> <p>January–April 2021 for all levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ provide Understanding Standards resources and activities</li> <li>○ provide direct advice and support to centres, on request, where queries have not been addressed in guidance</li> </ul>	<p>During May, issue selections to centres</p> <p>Receive assessment evidence from centres for the subjects/levels selected</p> <p>Externally quality assure marked learners’ assessment evidence from every centre, to ensure that marking is to the national standard</p> <p>Provide subject-specific feedback for National Courses to centres (and the local authority, where appropriate) on the extent to which assessment approaches were valid and marking was reliable and to the national standard, and provide advice on any adjustments that need to be made.</p> <p>Obtain a declaration from the head of centre that the feedback from SQA has been acted on within the centre</p> <p>Collate any common issues from national quality assurance for each National Course and publish this to inform all centres</p> <p>Issue further information on how to submit the provisional results</p>	
	<b>Stage 3</b>	
	<p>Encourage use of existing published training materials for centres and local authorities on how best to check results during local quality assurance of provisional results, while ensuring that these are firmly based on current candidate evidence</p>	

# Central Team

January to April		May		June
Stage 1		Stage 2		
SQA expectation	<i>Additional actions for central team</i>	SQA expectation	Additional actions	
<p>Support/facilitate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding Standards</li> <li>- centre-level assessment approaches</li> <li>- centre-level quality assurance</li> <li>- local authority/area-based subject quality assurance</li> <li>- access to local SQA appointees to support identified subject areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request confirmation that all staff delivering NQ courses have engaged with US materials.</li> <li>• Discuss guiding principles for assessment with HTs and request confirmation of approach to assessment. (Discussion with JC)</li> <li>• Request confirmation that QA aligns with Renfrewshire Internal verification policy</li> <li>• Establish subject specific moderation teams</li> </ul>	<p>Consider capacity to support the national QA exercise by releasing a limited number of appointees to undertake this work if required.</p>	<p>Release appointees as appropriate</p>	
		Stage 3		
		SQA expectation	Additional actions	
		<p>Support/facilitate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o centre-level quality assurance</li> <li>o local authority based subject quality assurance, perhaps through subject networks</li> </ul> <p>Develop and implement processes for the checking stage, building on processes implemented in 2020. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o the processes implemented by the school/centre</li> <li>o the outcome of the checking exercise</li> <li>o the rationale for any variances</li> </ul> <p>Engage with schools to consider data by subject. Internal checking processes provide a rationale for the centre's assessment judgements and may lead to a review of candidate evidence, if required, using local subject expertise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PT meetings will continue; purpose will continue to be to provide the platform to validate assessment and moderate evidence.</li> <li>• Release staff to participate in moderation</li> <li>• Subject specific moderation teams will be deployed to support schools/subject areas where additional supports are requested and to support sense checking. This will be on-going as teachers gather evidence that will inform provisional grades</li> </ul>	

# School

January to April		May		June
Stage 1		Stage 2		
SQA expectation	Additional actions	SQA expectation	Additional actions	
<p>Support teachers in their roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Ensure that teaching staff are aware of, and using, SQA guidance on assessment and producing provisional results</p> <p>Ensure that the centre's quality assurance procedures are being defined and made available to staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all staff have engaged with the SQA's alternative certification model documentation including Understanding Standards activity.</li> <li>• <b>Share with staff teams guiding principles of assessment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each school has the responsibility for determining their approach to assessment and timetable for assessing their young people. It is recognised that this will vary across schools and be dependent on the times which best fit around learning and teaching that has taken place. However, schools may choose to consider some of or all of the following key points:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When determining two to four pieces of evidence, this does not mean two to four full 'practice' or 'prelim exams' which would normally mirror a traditional final paper.</li> <li>○ Assessment pieces will be spaced out, if possible, to allow young people to get feedback to further support their learning for subsequent pieces of evidence. For example, a piece of evidence gathering may take place in early May with a further 2 pieces closer together towards the end of the time frame available.</li> <li>○ Tailoring assessment pieces to the needs individual schools and its young people, taking into consideration depth of learning and appropriate course coverage. While it is accepted that SQA support materials will help significantly in this process, nevertheless careful consideration should be given around using these in full as the only evidence base.</li> <li>○ Final provisional grades must only be determined through demonstrated attainment. Inferred attainment must not be used.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide clarity to young people on what pieces of evidence will inform their provisional grade for each subject; the weighting of each piece of evidence; and the timeline for assessment.</li> <li>• Agree on school approach to assessment (this could include subject specific variances.)</li> <li>• Share with staff teams the Renfrewshire SQA internal verification policy or school equivalent.</li> <li>• Confirm with central team that:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All staff delivering NQ courses have engaged with understanding standards activity</li> <li>○ Approach to assessment is in line with guiding principles above and that this has been discussed and agreed at school level.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Continue to support teachers in their roles and responsibilities in relation to assessment and centre quality assurance</p> <p>Support and facilitate teaching staff awareness and use of SQA guidance on assessment and producing provisional results</p> <p>Support and facilitate the consistent application of centre's QA procedures</p> <p>Support teachers in their roles and responsibilities within the national QA process</p> <p>Support and facilitate teaching staff to act on any feedback received from SQA's QA, to ensure that marking is consistent with national standard</p> <p>Act on feedback received from SQA's quality assurance process to consider the effectiveness of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that quality assurance of each stage of the assessment process, as per the Internal verification policy to ensure a robust mechanism to help support final provisional grades.</li> <li>• Use estimate tool to sense check assessment information and inform the central team asap if additional moderation is required.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All assessment tools have been validated as per internal verification policy.</li> </ul>	<p>the centre's quality assurance process and any adjustments required</p> <p>provide a declaration from the head of centre that the feedback from SQA's quality assurance has been acted on within the centre</p> <p>Carry out checks that results are consistent with evidence, to inform any initial discussions within the centre</p>		
<b>Stage 3</b>				
		<b>SQA expectation</b>	<b>Additional actions</b>	
		<p>Carry out centre quality assurance on provisional results, prior to submission to SQA, including checking that provisional results are based on current learner evidence.</p> <p>Engage in any further local quality assurance on provisional results with the local authority,</p> <p>Local quality assurance could also include dialogue with SQA where the centre requests further support</p> <p>Make any adjustments to provisional results and/or processes required as a result of centre, local and/or national quality assurance. Any adjustments would be made on the basis of current candidate evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to use estimate tool to sense check assessment information and work with the central team if additional moderation is required</li> <li>• Submit provisional grades to local authority by 15<sup>th</sup> June. This can be in or around this date.</li> </ul>	

# Middle Leaders

January - March		May		June
Stage 1: Package of support for centres on assessment of N5, H and AH in 2020-21		Stage 2: May		
Expectation	Additional actions	Expectation		
<p>Support teachers in their roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Ensure that teaching staff are aware of, and using, SQA guidance on assessment and producing provisional results</p> <p>Ensure that the centre's quality assurance procedures are being defined and made available to staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ensure all staff in department delivering NQ courses have engaged with the SQA's alternative certification model documentation....</i></li> <li>• <i>Share with staff in department guiding principles of assessment:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>When determining two to four pieces of evidence, this does not mean two to four full 'practice' or 'prelim exams' which would normally mirror a traditional final paper.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Assessment pieces will be spaced out, if possible, to allow young people to get feedback to further support their learning for subsequent pieces of evidence. For example, a piece of evidence gathering may take place in early May with a further 2 pieces closer together towards the end of the time frame available.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Tailoring assessment pieces to the needs individual schools and its young people, taking into consideration depth of learning and appropriate course coverage. While it is accepted that SQA support materials will help significantly in this process, nevertheless careful consideration should be given around using these in full as the only evidence base.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Final provisional grades must only be determined through demonstrated attainment. Inferred attainment must not be used.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Provide clarity to young people on what pieces of evidence will inform their provisional grade; the weighting of each piece of evidence; and the timeline for assessment.</i></li> <li>• <i>Ensure that all assessment tools are validated by at least one other school. PT meetings should be used to support this.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Continue to support your team in their roles and responsibilities in relation to assessment and centre quality assurance</p> <p>Support and facilitate awareness and use of SQA guidance on assessment and producing provisional results</p> <p>Support and facilitate the consistent application of the school's QA procedures</p> <p>Act on feedback received from SQA's quality assurance process to consider the effectiveness of the department/Faculty quality assurance process and any adjustments required</p> <p>Carry out checks that results are consistent with evidence, to inform any initial discussions within the department/faculty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inform SLT that you have acted on advice of SQA</i></li> <li>• <i>Use estimate tools to sense check and work with SLT if additional moderation is required.</i></li> </ul>	

Stage 3: May and June	
Expectation	Additional actions
<p>Carry out centre quality assurance on provisional results, prior to submission to SLT including checking that provisional results are based on current learner evidence.</p> <p>Engage in any further local quality assurance on provisional results with the local authority,</p> <p>Make any adjustments to provisional results and/or processes required as a result of department/faculty/ local and/or national quality assurance. Any adjustments would be made on the basis of current candidate evidence.</p>	<p>Submit provision grades to SLT by.</p>

# Renfrewshire Internal Verification Guidance

## December 2020

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## Purpose of document

This document is intended to offer support to centres in ensuring robust approaches to internal verification and compliance with SQA expectation.

Internal verification is a crucial element of quality assurance. It ensures that all candidates entered for the same qualification are assessed fairly and consistently to the specified national standard. A robust verification system across the school ensures the validity and reliability of assessment.

An effective internal verification system will ensure that:

- Assessments are robust, valid, reliable, practicable and equitable
- Assessments are conducted appropriately and candidates are given the opportunity to show they have met the national standards
- Assessments are appropriate for learners at all levels whilst while maintaining and supporting national standards of assessment
- Assessment decisions are reliable and consistent across a specific qualification
- Assessments are being regularly reviewed and agreed marking criteria are being adhered to and uniformly applied by all assessors

Effective internal verification also brings additional benefits to centres. These include:

- facilitating collaborative working between assessors and internal verifiers therefore ensuring that standards are met across all presenting centres
- allowing quality concerns to be identified, addressed and rectified in a timely manner
- checking that record-keeping and resulting of candidates is accurate
- supporting preparation for successful external verification
- helping to protect assessors from appeals/challenges of their professional assessment judgements

Effective internal verification is an ongoing process. It allows good practice to be shared and can help identify problems at an early stage. Leaving internal verification until too late in the assessment process is not good practice and can jeopardise candidates' chances of success because there may not be sufficient time to carry out remediation or re-assessment.

## Models of internal verification

There are many different ways of operating effective internal verification processes. In choosing approaches, centres should ensure that these meet the requirements as set out by SQA in the course specification documentation.

Centres should choose a model for the allocation and deployment of internal verifiers that works in their situation and meets SQA's requirements.

Approaches may include:

- Allocating responsibility to named staff for carrying out internal verification for particular units/awards. This has the advantage of giving the designated internal verifiers a view of all assessments relating to the units/awards they are responsible for quality assuring.
- Allocating responsibility to named staff for carrying out internal verification relating to particular assessors. This is particularly appropriate where the units/awards require a high degree of performance evidence, as is the case with many regulated qualifications.
- All staff members taking responsibility for both assessing and internally verifying units. This has the advantage of promoting in-depth understanding of the unit/award requirements and facilitating standardisation.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all internal verifiers are competent in their role and that they understand and apply the internal quality assurance system consistently. There must be an effective selection and induction process for internal verifiers. Any training or development needs for internal verifiers should be identified and met.

**It should be noted that under no circumstances should an internal verifier be verifying assessments which they have developed or verifying their own assessment judgements.**

## Tools of internal verification: standardisation and sampling

### **Standardisation**

The internal verifier should arrange standardisation exercises to support all assessors in their judgement of candidate evidence. These activities allow any subjectivity and/or discrepancies between assessors' judgements to be identified and allow adjustments to remedy these. They also allow the internal verifier to disseminate good practice.

There are different ways of carrying out standardisation, for example by observation, product evaluation, written/oral questions or a combination of these methods.

### **Standardisation exercises**

Each of these standardisation exercises encourages co-operative working and fosters professional development. They also lead to a shared understanding of national standards, thereby ensuring fair, accurate and consistent assessment judgements. There are benefits for any assessor in checking their judgement, particularly for new qualifications and awards. Teaming a new assessor with an experienced assessor is also an ideal way to provide support for a new assessor.

**Agreement trial:** appropriate for product evidence. Assessors consider examples of candidate work, together with the assessment scheme. Any discrepancies or differences in judgement should be discussed to reach a shared understanding.

**Blind marking:** appropriate for written evidence and aims to reduce any bias by an assessor, however unintentional. There are two ways to carry out blind marking. In one form, the evidence is anonymous as the candidate's details are removed. In the other, more commonly used form, two or more assessors mark the same evidence but are unaware of the mark awarded by the other. Any discrepancies in marks, or application of the marking scheme, should be discussed to reach a shared understanding.

**Cross assessment:** assessors exchange candidate evidence to review, discuss and agree on the interpretation of the standard. The assessors may have used a different assessment or followed different procedures, but they should be judging candidate evidence against a common standard. Cross assessment can be particularly useful for centres with alternative or satellite centres, or who have a partnership arrangement for qualification delivery.

**Double marking:** This is similar to blind marking as it is normally used with written evidence. In this exercise, assessors exchange the same candidate evidence to check each interpretation of the marking scheme and apply a common standard. It can be particularly useful to discuss any borderline decisions.

**Dual assessment:** also known as peer assessment, two assessors assess the same candidate. This type of standardisation is particularly appropriate for performance, practical activities and process skills. Each assessor should make an independent initial judgement, discuss any discrepancies and reach a consensus judgement.

**Evidence review:** the internal verifier collates a range of candidate evidence and asks a group of assessors to discuss any discrepancies between their individual judgements. This allows professional development as well as ensuring a shared understanding. It can be particularly useful for any new qualifications or awards.

### **Sampling**

It is good practice to develop a sampling strategy that allows the internal verifier to check that each assessor is making consistent assessment judgments, in line with the standard, for each group of candidates over time.

During the assessment process, the internal verifier should select a sample of candidate evidence to check that each assessor is making consistent decisions in line with national standards. This allows the internal verifier to review assessment judgements and identify any inconsistencies at an early stage. The internal verifier can then ensure that action is taken to address these issues. This may involve expanding the sample or sampling the work of these assessors again later in the delivery of the qualification. It is important that this should be a supportive activity that ensures confidence in the assessment process and provides professional development.

A range of assessment methods should be included in the sample, and the number of candidates sampled should be proportionate to the total number of candidate entries for that qualification in your centre, including any candidates at alternative or satellite sites. You may choose to use a defined number, defined percentage, or the square root of the total number of candidates taking that assessment. However, for a new qualification or one new to your centre, a higher level of sampling would be expected to reduce any quality assurance risks. The internal verifier should therefore sample assessments from every candidate group assessed by every assessor. This should include any instances of remediation, where the assessor has required the candidate to supply additional evidence because of a minor shortfall or omission. Such instances must be formally noted by the assessor.

The following factors should be considered in selecting the sample:

- new assessors — either new members of staff or new to the qualification
- a new qualification, or one new to your centre
- any changes to the unit or assessment since the last delivery
- any issues previously identified by internal or external verification
- a proportionate approach to sampling candidate evidence
- different methods of assessment used with different candidate groups
- different modes of delivery (full/part-time, online, partnership arrangements)
- coverage over time to ensure that all assessments within a qualification are internally verified
- candidates in alternative or satellite assessment sites

Like standardisation, sampling should take place at different points throughout the delivery of the qualification, and not be left until assessment has been completed. This allows the internal verifier to address any concerns before external verification and the submission of candidate results, by expanding the sample or sampling again later at a later stage.

It is important that sampling is 'fit for purpose'. If the qualification is highly knowledge based, the records of that knowledge evidence and the associated assessment judgements should be sampled as part of the verification process.

If the qualification involves performance or practical activities, sampling should include not only evidence such as candidate logs and assessor observation reports, but also methods to gauge how the assessment judgments were made, such as the participation of the internal verifier in dual assessment exercises.

It is best practice to document your sampling strategy together with records of sampling activity. Such records should include the date at which sampling activity took place.

## Functions of internal verification

Internal verification is divided into three stages — before, during and after the assessment process. The internal verifier or verifier team is responsible for ensuring that internal assessments are valid, practicable, equitable and fair and that the assessors' judgements are reliable so they must be involved in each stage. This responsibility involves:

- supporting assessors
- checking assessments to ensure validity, practicability, equity and fairness
- ensuring reliability
- maintaining assessment and verification records
- reviewing internal verification

### Before assessment: supporting assessors

Internal verifiers should ensure that assessors are familiar with the qualification standards and that their assessments are valid, practicable, equitable and fair. There should also be an appropriate scheme to judge the candidate's evidence. This check should take place **before** candidates take the assessment.

Support for assessors should also take place throughout the course of the qualification — it should not be left to the point of assessment for certification. This could involve internal verifiers observing assessment practice and providing constructive feedback to the assessors.

Internal verifiers should have a developmental role for less experienced assessors by offering advice and guidance. This means that an internal verifier needs to have assessment expertise and knowledge of different assessment methods.

There are three essential forms of assessment: observation, product evaluation, and questioning. An assessment may involve a combination of some or all three. All assessment methods, such as a project or performance, can be classified under one or more of these forms.

### Before assessment: checking assessments for validity, practicability, equity and fairness

Internal verifiers are responsible for ensuring that all assessments, whether devised by the centre or provided by SQA, meet the requirements of validity, practicability, equity and fairness. This should happen **before** candidates take the assessment.

Arranging meetings between assessors to discuss planned assessments will help to minimise differences in interpretation. It is not necessary to use the same assessment between different groups and/or assessment sites, but all assessments must be checked for validity, practicality, equity and fairness.

Agreeing a scheme for judging evidence also helps assessors to make accurate and consistent judgements in line with national standards. Depending on the method of assessment used, the scheme might be a checklist for observing candidate performance or a set of questions (with responses) to test underlying knowledge and understanding. The use of digital evidence, the protocols for professional discussion, and the procedures for any indirect evidence of candidate achievement, such as witness testimony should all be discussed and agreed. It may not be necessary to repeat this process each year **provided that** there has been no change to the unit, that it is being delivered by the same assessors, and that no issues have arisen from previous internal activity or from external verification. However, the internal verifier **must** check each year that there have been no changes to the unit or any updates.

The strategy for sampling assessments should be agreed and explained. The strategy will depend on the size and structure of your organisation and the range of qualifications offered, but it must take into account all assessors, candidate groups and assessment sites to ensure that sampling is appropriate. This can range from the internal verifier in a small centre that has one assessor looking at all assessments, to a rolling programme of internal verification in a large centre with several hundred candidates taking the same qualification. The most important point is that national standards are being applied consistently over time.

## During assessment: standardisation activities and sampling assessor judgements

Standardisation and sampling during the assessment process are both essential to ensure the reliability of assessment judgements for all candidates in a centre.

Standardisation activities support assessors in making consistent and reliable assessment judgements against the national standard.

Sampling is the process whereby the internal verifier checks that all assessors are making consistent and reliable assessment judgements against the national standard. Standardisation and sampling are therefore linked activities. The findings from standardisation activities may lead the internal verifier to increase the sample or the scope of the sampling process to ensure that standards are maintained.

It is essential that standardisation and sampling are carried out for any alternative or satellite assessment centres — and in any partnership arrangement — to ensure that assessment judgements are accurate and consistent for all candidates registered with your centre, regardless of where they took the assessment.

## During and after assessment: maintaining records

It is important that centres maintain accurate records. Centres must hold records of candidate assessment and internal verification and retain physical evidence of candidate assessment for specified lengths of time.

### **Internal verification records**

Records of internal verification activity should include:

- the centre's documented internal verification policies and procedures
- reports of meetings with assessors to discuss assessment planning
- reports of standardisation exercises
- records of observation of assessment
- records of all sampling activity
- feedback to assessors and follow up of any identified actions

## After assessment: reviewing internal verification

It is important to carry out regular reviews of the internal verification system to ensure that it is working effectively, and to identify possible improvements.

It is also good practice to carry out a more formal evaluation after delivery has taken place as well as throughout the delivery stage. The internal verifier should lead this process, with the involvement of all assessors for each qualification delivered in the centre. This could include the following activities:

- reflection on the assessment approach and judgements in relation to validity, reliability, practicality, equity and fairness
- reflection on the assessment process — identifying instances of good practice and where there had been challenges
- analysis of the internal verification process in terms of its impact
- discussion of the sampling process in terms of improving reliability and providing support

## Appendix 1 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
<p><b>SQA Co-ordinator</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• operational role in managing all necessary SQA materials, deadlines, paperwork, returns and systems</li> <li>ensure use of IV policy and paperwork across the centre for returns to the SQA</li> </ul>
<p><b>SLT Departmental Links and/or SQA Co-ordinators</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure PTs are implementing IV policy</li> <li>• monitor the outcomes from IV activity</li> <li>• provide support to PTs and teaching staff as required</li> </ul>
<p><b>PTs/FHs Curriculum</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that IV and moderation activity is included in departmental meetings monitoring calendars.</li> <li>• ensure that the chosen assessment instrument is valid, reliable, practicable and equitable and is marked to the national standard</li> <li>• ensure that assessors apply standards of assessment uniformly and consistently by arranging standardisation exercises</li> <li>• ensure that teaching staff carry out their IV duties according to agreed policy</li> <li>• provide opportunities for staff to undertake IV and record this activity in line with agreed process</li> <li>• ensure that teaching staff have access to instruments of assessment including appropriate support documentation</li> <li>• provide support to staff as required.</li> <li>• complete all SQA paperwork as required</li> <li>• keep SLT link and SQA coordinator informed of any issues arising</li> <li>• retain evidence of assessment and IV activity in the event of</li> </ul>

	an appeal under exceptional circumstances
<b>Teachers/Assessors/Internal Verifiers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carry out IV activities as instructed by PTs/FHs as per the departmental monitoring calendar.</li> <li>• record all IV activity through agreed processes</li> <li>• ensure all instruments of assessment are used according to SQA guidance</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Suggested Timeline

<b>Month</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>By Whom</b>
<b>June and August</b>	Departments should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to a set assessment calendar to be followed for all certificated classes.</li> <li>• Review existing assessments and introduce new assessments - make any alterations as required to meet the National Standard</li> </ul>	PTs/FHs and Staff
<b>October/ November</b>	Department should internally verify outcomes to date of their National courses  Results and findings should be noted via agreed recording processes	This process may involve the whole department but will certainly involve the assessor(s) and the Internal Verifier
<b>November</b>	Departments should internally verify the assessment tool(s) to be used Carry out IV Activity for Round 1 of SQA Verification (date dependant on SQA)	As above
<b>January/ February</b>	Departments should internally verify the second unit of their national courses. Results and findings should be noted via agreed recording processes	As above
<b>February</b>	IV of assessment activities should also take place Results and findings should be noted via agreed recording processes  Carry out IV Activity for Round 2 of SQA Verification (date	As above

	dependant on SQA)	
<b>March</b>	<p>Departments should Internally Verify the Added Value Unit of their National 4 course</p> <p>Results and findings should be noted via agreed recording processes</p> <p>Carry out IV Activity for Round 3 of SQA Verification (date dependant on SQA)</p>	As above
<b>May/June</b>	<p><b>Departments should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review process from the current year.</li> <li>• Discuss the strengths, development needs and next steps of their assessment process for the following session.</li> </ul>	PTs/FHs and Staff

## Additional timeline specific to session 20/21

August - October	Schools determine how to assess national 5 courses in light of no formal examination
November	Monthly meetings of PTs/FHs to begin, facilitated by LA officers, to support moderation and assessment activity
Nov- January	Reviewed and amended IV Policies to be agreed with link DHT
January – March/April	Ongoing monthly PT/FH meetings
February/March	Initial data capture to ensure robustness of N5 estimates
March/April	Reviewing and refining of N5 estimates
TBC	Submission of estimates to SQA

## Appendix 3

### Challenge Questions

1. Have assessments been reviewed in line with course modifications for session 2020/2021
2. Is the assessment being used appropriate for its purpose?
3. Does it allow candidates to produce sufficient evidence that they have the knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the appropriate national standards?
4. Is there an appropriate assessment scheme/marketing instructions/recording mechanism to check that the candidate's evidence meets the requirements of the national standard?
5. Is the assessment fair and equitable and accessible to all candidates?
6. Have all candidates been considered for AAA and have these been implemented for all assessments?
7. Does the assessment meet the specified requirements of the unit/award?
8. Are staff confident in determining, through the use of agreed assessment tools, fair and appropriate estimates for all candidates?
9. What processes are in place to ensure that this is the case?
10. Have all staff involved in Estimate production completed the SQA Academy Course before commencing on the process.
11. Are all staff aware of the whole school policy on Estimates production?