

SQA ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION

A GUIDE FOR LEARNERS, PARENTS & CARERS

What is the purpose of this guidance?

This session, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher external assessments has been cancelled. Qualifications for these courses will be awarded based on work completed by students in school.

The purpose of this guidance document is to share our key principles and processes to support the Alternative Certification Model and is informed by national publications from the SQA and Education Scotland and local guidelines issued by Stirling Council.

What are Provisional Results and why are they required?

A provisional result is a professional judgement of a final grade and band for all National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. Each provisional result must be realistic and based on evidence gathered through assessments completed in school.

Schools must submit provisional results to the SQA by 25 June 2021 following the processes and procedures outlined in the Alternative Certification Model.

As provisional results are an integral part of the awarding process for all National Qualifications. It is crucial that this process is fair and equitable for all candidates.

How will Provisional Results be decided?

Provisional results will be decided based on evidence gathered throughout the session for each subject/level through on-going assessment opportunities. These assessment opportunities will allow students to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the key aspects of each course. SQA guidance indicates that assessment evidence used for provisional results should come from assessments similar to final course awards.

The number of assessments may vary across subjects. This is due to the nature of individual subjects and how they are taught. Each subject will decide upon the type and amount of formal assessment opportunities which will allow students to cover the key course components. Depending on the subject, formal assessments will by their nature involve different types of tasks and different conditions. All assessments used will be validated to ensure that they are of an appropriate standard and challenge. A number of these assessments will take place in May/June 2021.

How will each subject/level decide Provisional Results?

Each subject using both information from the SQA as well as their own knowledge of the assessments that young people have completed in the subject will develop a validated system that ensures a consistent approach is used for each student and includes the following information, specific to each subject:

- Course components required.
- Evidence required.
- Conditions of assessment.
- The moderation and quality assurance process.
- Processes to ensure the assessment is accessible by all.

When, where and how will formal assessments be carried out?

All formal assessment to support Provisional Results are planned as part of normal learning and teaching and undertaken during class time. This advice is also in keeping with our current measures and mitigations to ensure public health and safety during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As advised by SQA guidance, some assessments will be 'broken up' into smaller sections. We believe that this supports an approach to more gradual, manageable assessment - undertaken at times most appropriate to the subjects and courses.

All subjects enter the formal assessments planned into our School Assessment Calendar which is then shared periodically with learners and parents/carers. The Assessment Calendar allows us to have an overview of assessments across the school to support learners and their parents/carers and assist with the distribution of resources such as ICT.

Students will also receive notice of planned formal assessments from their subject teachers - with clear guidance shared with students in person, and via Google Classroom, about the timing, content and assessment conditions required.

It is recognised that due to constraints at school level, it will sometimes be necessary for groups of learners to be sitting the same unseen question paper at different times, for example if a subject is spread across several different columns in the timetable. Priority must be given at school level to the continuation of normal learning and teaching.

If learners are completing an unseen question paper as a formal assessment, the teacher must approach this in the same way as an SQA final exam would be supervised. This means that students

should only bring in materials required for the assessment and that learners do not discuss the content of any paper with friends, family or on social media.

How will we moderate our assessment judgements?

We have a range of moderation processes in place to ensure that all judgments are fair, robust and consistent.

At school level, all subjects are following SQA guidance. The assessments used are of appropriate content and challenge and are subject to checking and validation prior to use. Student evidence is also checked through activities such as cross marking and Principal Teacher sampling.

All staff from across Stirling schools are working together in their subject groups to validate assessments and moderate and cross mark learner evidence to ensure that assessment judgements are accurate.

During May, the SQA will request, review and provide feedback on samples of assessment evidence from each school and college.

How will we ensure equity and fairness for all learners?

Ensuring equity and fairness for all candidates is an important part of our process in determining Provisional Results.

For students with an additional support need, Alternative Assessment Arrangements (AAA) will continue to be applied to all formal assessment opportunities. We are going to continue to follow our internal processes for determining AAA requirements, communicating with families and quality assuring the evidence to support these needs. Any adaptations to seating plans or rooming to accommodate assessments, will be appropriately dated and recorded to support COVID contact tracing.

What are the key principles of the Alternative Certification Model for 2020-21?

Our schools are committed to ensuring that our school actions and processes support the successful implementation of the Alternative Certification model in 2020-21. We have established the following key principles which will underpin our assessment approaches:

- Formal Assessments will be undertaken in class time to prioritise learning and teaching across the curriculum.

- Formal Assessments are broken up and completed over time for each subject and level to manage the revision required for students, the marking burden on staff and to ensure that all subjects can participate in all ongoing moderation events.
- All Formal Assessment follow our timetable model to avoid overburdening students.
- There might be some exceptions to this such as individual assessments i.e. Modern Languages speaking; Music/Drama/Dance/PE Performance which can be undertaken in any class time over specified weeks.
- Students will have regular opportunities to receive feedback and undertake learner conversations to help identify the evidence-based grade they are currently working at and what they should focus on next.
- All staff will participate in moderation activities to validate assessments and moderate judgements for candidate evidence.