

**SQA - ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION MODEL (ACM)**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the SQA - Alternative Certification Model (ACM) arrangements for all certificated qualifications undertaken by young people in session 2020-2021 as a result of the cancellation of the 2021 examination diet due to COVID-19.
- 1.2 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee notes the arrangements in place for young people undertaking SQA qualifications in Session 2020-2021, the Alternative Certification Model stages and roles and responsibilities outlined in Appendix 1 and 2.

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### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Alternative Certification Model (ACM) was developed for National 5 courses, in response to the Deputy First Minister's announcement on 7 October 2020 of the cancellation of National 5 exams.
- 2.2 Following the cancellation of Higher and Advanced Higher exams on 8 December, it was decided that the ACM would be expanded to include Higher and Advanced Higher courses.
- 2.3 The First Minister announced on 4 January and 6 February 2021 that schools would be closed to most learners until at least 22 February and that remote learning would take place during this time. Consequently, the SQA developed a revised plan for the delivery of the ACM, with the submission date for provisional results being moved to the 25 June.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 This report provides an update on the SQA - Alternative Certification Model (ACM) arrangements for all certificated qualifications undertaken by young people in session 2020-2021 as a result of the cancellation of the 2021 examination diet due to COVID-19.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee notes the arrangements in place for young people undertaking SQA qualifications in Session 2020-2021, the Alternative Certification Model stages and roles and responsibilities outlined in Appendix 1 and 2.

## 4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The ACM model has five stages:

- **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 and local authority quality assurance continues. During May, SQA requests, reviews and provides feedback on samples of assessment evidence from each school.
- **Stage 3: End of May to 25 June 2021**  
Schools, colleges, 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 and colleges submit quality assured provisional results to SQA.
- **Stage 5: Appeals process for 2020-21**  
The SQA have confirmed the appeals process for 2020-21 and information on this can be accessed via the following link: [2021 Appeals Service announced - SQA](#)

4.2 In contrast to the 2020 Alternative Certification Model, this guidance requires schools to undertake 'a holistic review of a candidate's performance as indicated by assessment evidence' with final grades being based upon teacher estimation and supporting evidence. This guidance can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96760.html>

4.3 The ACM is fully outlined in Appendix 1 and provides detail of the 5 stages of the process.

4.4 The roles and responsibilities of teachers, Principal Teachers, Senior Leadership Teams and the Local Authority are outlined in Appendix 2.

4.5 Provisional results have to be submitted to the SQA no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Two additional in-service dates have been provided nationally to support the submission of these grades. These dates have been agreed for each of our schools in consultation with staff and our professional associations.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 In response to Covid-19 an alternative certification model was instigated by the SQA to ensure that Senior Phase pupils would be accredited for their national qualification courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level.
- 5.2 The Education Service has worked with Head Teachers to implement this model and are on track to submit provisional results to the SQA by the deadline of the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – The Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000 places a duty on Education Authorities to provide children and young people with school education and (in terms of raising standards) requires Authorities to endeavor to secure improvement in the quality of that school education.
- 6.2 Financial – None
- 6.3 Legal – None
- 6.4 HR – None
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
  - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics
  - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none
  - 6.5.3 Islands – none
- 6.6 Risk – Reputational risk to Education Service if provisional grades are not submitted to the SQA by 25<sup>th</sup> June.
- 6.7 Customer Service – None

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1 - Alternative Certification Model Stages**

#### **Stage 1: Ongoing until April 2021**

- Learning, teaching and assessment (to guide further support for learners) together with consolidation of learning, are ongoing
- Subject-specific guidance on selecting the appropriate learner evidence is available for all subjects at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher
- National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher assessment resources are available to help inform assessment planning and evidence gathering
- SQA supports schools and colleges by adding new materials and webinars to its established Understanding Standards programme
- Schools and colleges are supported by local and national networks
- Schools and colleges further develop assessment plans (including any assessment arrangements needed for individual learners) and become familiar with internal quality assurance arrangements for learner assessments, including standardisation of all assessment instruments and marking instructions, sampling of assessment evidence and teacher marking to ensure that national standards are being applied consistently
- Schools and colleges carry out internal quality assurance processes in line with agreed procedures and engage in local authority / RIC activity as appropriate

#### **Stage 2: April to May 2021**

- Learning, teaching and assessment (to guide further support for learners) together with consolidation of learning, are ongoing
- Schools and colleges put in place and record any assessment arrangements required by individual learners
- Schools and colleges assess learner evidence, carrying out and recording decisions in line with internal quality assurance procedures.
- Schools and colleges continue to provide feedback to learners on progress, including results based on evidence
- Schools and colleges continue to carry out and engage in internal quality assurance in line with their procedures and local authority / RIC quality assurance processes
- During May, on a proportionate basis, SQA selects courses from each school and college for national quality assurance and provides subject-specific feedback. For national quality assurance, this package of evidence will be less than that used for reaching provisional results. The assessment evidence can be partial or incomplete. For example, it could consist of one or two pieces of key evidence from a small number of learners in the subjects selected.
- Schools and colleges start to develop provisional results based on the available learner evidence and feedback from local and national quality assurance, including checking that results are consistent across the centre and based on learner evidence
- Schools, colleges or local authorities can speak to SQA if further support is desired.
- SQA issues further information on how to submit the provisional results

#### **Stage 3: End of May to 25 June 2021**

- Learning, teaching and assessment should be concluding for the purposes of certification in 2020-21
- Schools and colleges provide ongoing assessment feedback to learners, including provisional grades based on evidence
- Schools, colleges and local authorities complete final stages of quality assurance, taking account of feedback from the prior stages
- Schools and colleges record provisional results based on evidence of demonstrated attainment for each learner
- Heads of centre sign off the outcomes per subject, and local authorities endorse the process and engagement in reaching those outcomes

#### **Stage 4: By 25 June 2021**

- Schools and colleges submit provisional results by 25 June
- SQA undertakes administrative checks and addresses any queries with centres (eg potential data inputting errors)
- Schools and colleges retain learner assessment evidence.

#### **Stage 5: Appeals process for 2020-21**

- Appeals process for 2020-21 - to be advised following consultation.

## Appendix 2 - Roles and Responsibilities within Alternative Certification Model

