SQA – submission for DFM commission on 2019 results

This paper provides SQA's input to a request by the Depute First Minister (DFM) for a distilled analysis around the 2019 National Course results. It should be read in conjunction with the SQA's attainment statistics for 2019 and the Chief Examining Officer's '2019 National Qualifications Results' Report – see link below:

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/91419.html

Statistical contribution analysis

The DFM was particularly interested in a detailed analysis of the reported reduction in the A to C rate at Higher (SCQF level 6). Appendix 1 gives a subject by subject breakdown of the 2019 A to C rate change adjusted for changes in the volume of entries.

While we would expect to see some variability year on year across the 46 subjects offered at Higher, allowing for the change in entries, the main subjects contributing to the changes in the A to C rate this year are History (82.6% to 72.8%), English (75.9% to 73.2%), Psychology (57.6% to 44.6%) and Mathematics (74.5% to 72.4%).

It is interesting to note that although the majority of Higher courses had some assessment changes this session, the requirements for Higher English and Maths were unchanged or minimal change. In addition, the standards set for Higher History were fine-tuned this session to ensure that it benchmarks appropriately against the other social subjects.

SQA Course reports – key messages

Every year SQA publishes a course report for each National Course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. Each report provides qualitative information on the performance of the assessment components of the course with a focus on areas that candidates performed well in and areas that candidates found demanding.   The reports also include detailed advice and guidance on preparing candidates for future assessment. Information on the grade boundaries set for each course is also provided. The reports are intended to be constructive, informative, and promote better understanding of the standards required for course assessments.

Teachers and lecturers will find these reports useful when reflecting on the performance of their own candidates and as points of reference and advice for delivering each course in the upcoming session. Teachers and lecturers may also find it useful to use the published reports directly with candidates to enhance their understanding of the assessment requirements and to exemplify features of strong performance. The course report should be reviewed in conjunction with the published past paper and associated marking instructions for each respective year. The course reports are published on the SQA website over the period 02/09/19 to 31/10/19.

Appendix 2 provides an extract of key messages/points of advice from the 2019 course reports for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level. Strong performances were evident across subjects at all levels in 2019 and it should be noted that these key messages focus largely on areas for potential development More detail about all aspects referred to above can be found in the individual course reports.

These reports are also available for senior subject staff from Education Scotland, Local Authorities and Schools to identify key issues that require further support for practitioners in ensuring effective learning and teaching within the senior phase and for progression across the BGE. For example the references to some slight weakening of performance around extended writing in Higher English and History and the use of numeracy in Higher Mathematics.

SQA support for teachers – Understanding Standards

SQA supports teachers and lecturers on an ongoing basis around their understanding of assessment standards. For 2019 we have a programme of 90 events and webinars – see appendix 3 - covering the requirements of the new Advanced Highers and also additional events for National 5 and Higher. These events will have a particular focus on new assessment requirements and also areas where candidate performance is weaker. SQA also has a number of audio presentations and extensive on-line exemplification of assessments with commentaries available for teachers and lecturers. Qualifications staff including Subject Implementation Managers, who are experienced teachers, are also available to support centres and Local Authorities.

Reflections on National Course assessments

This was the second year of the revised assessment approach at National 5 and the first year for Higher. All assessments performed as intended. Care was taken when reviewing the subjects with extended question papers to ensure that the candidates were accessing all questions. No major issues were identified. Similarly subjects with new question paper assessments as part of their overall course assessment have performed as expected. SQA is confident that the balance between coursework and question paper in these subjects is proportionate to the skills and knowledge required and that they are benchmarked at the appropriate SCQF level.

The performance of each National Course will be reviewed by SQA's National Qualifications Support Teams (NQST) - one for each subject – which meet before the end of the year. The NQSTs include experienced teachers and representative from the various subject based teacher associations. SQA will also present at a number of teacher subject association conferences, this will allow the key message from the course reports to be reinforced. Over time our National Course arrangements for each subject will evolve working closely with our NQSTs and other key stakeholder groups.
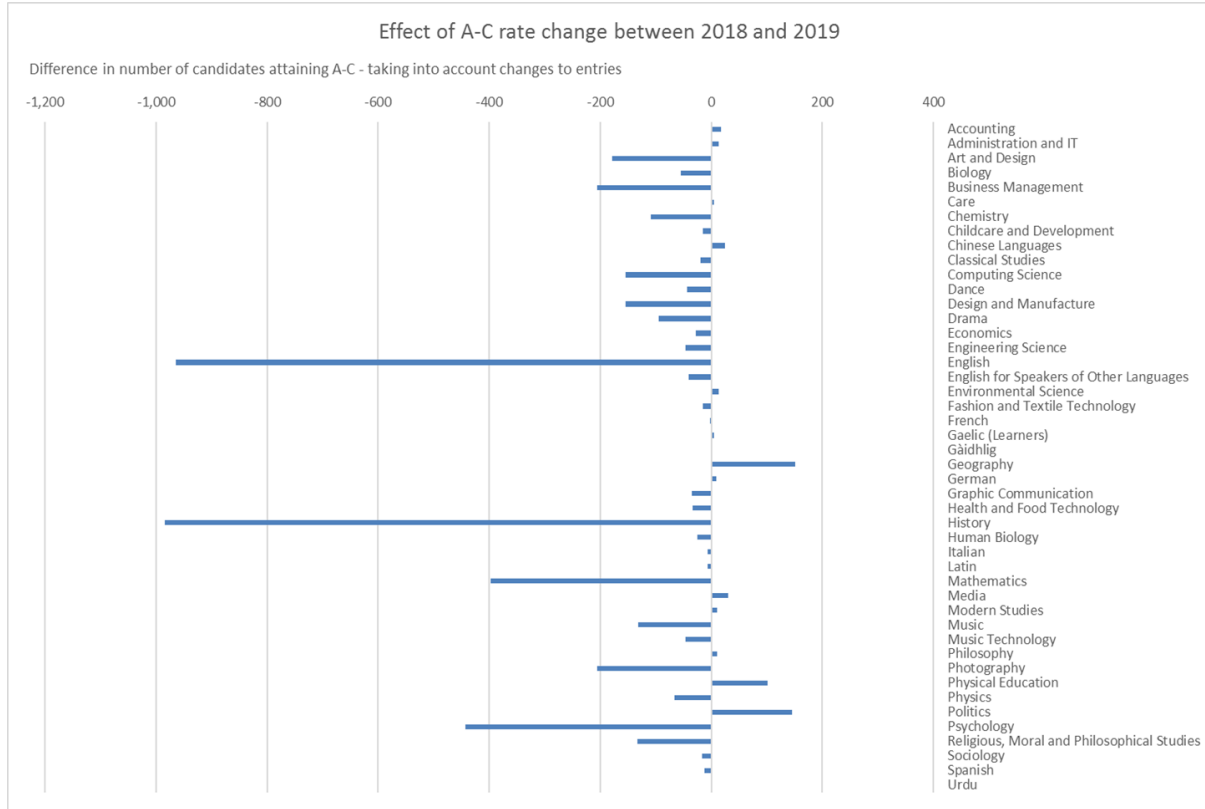
We are of the view that a period of relative stability and support is required to allow the new qualification arrangements to properly bed in. There are some longer term reviews underway for subjects such as Physical Education, Art and Design, Design and Manufacture and Graphical Communication – however no immediate change is planned. There is also a new Higher being developed in Application of Mathematics.

National 3 and 4 have been in place for 5 years and we are at the preliminary stage of carrying out a review to scope out the changes we may make to the content and assessment of these courses if required. There is no change to the overall design of the assessment approach to National 4, as agreed by the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB). This work sits within the broader programme of Scottish Government work to enhance the credibility of National 4. It is planned that this work would be taken forward in a phased manner over a number of academic sessions.

Qualifications to support wider curriculum pathways

It is pleasing to note the increase in uptake and attainment for SQA vocational qualifications and awards and we remain committed to ensuring our wider provision meets the needs of the growing diversity of curriculum pathways in Scottish schools and colleges. In addition, SQA continues to work with Skills Development Scotland on developing work based learning courses at SCQF level 4 and 5 and on Foundation Apprenticeships.   This includes work around approaches to developing and assessing metaskills.

Appendix 1 – Higher A – C rate changes

Effect of A-C rate change between 2018 and 2019

Difference in number of candidates attaining A-C - taking into account changes to entries

-1,200	-1,000	-800	-600	-400	-200	0	200	400

Accounting
Administration and IT
Art and Design
Biology
Business Management
Care
Chemistry
Childcare and Development
Chinese Languages
Classical Studies
Computing Science
Dance
Design and Manufacture
Drama
Economics
Engineering Science
English
English for Speakers of Other Languages
Environmental Science
Fashion and Textile Technology
French
Gaelic (Learners)
Gàidhlig
Geography
German
Graphic Communication
Health and Food Technology
History
Human Biology
Italian
Latin
Mathematics
Media
Modern Studies
Music
Music Technology
Philosophy
Photography
Physical Education
Physics
Politics
Psychology
Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies
Sociology
Spanish
Urdu

Appendix 2 – SQA Course Reports – key messages

Accounting	N5	• In some cases, candidates perform well in the computational aspects of a question or task but find it challenging to go on and analyse their information. Candidates should be prepared to calculate and analyse, for appropriate topics. • Candidates appear to find theory questions, in general, challenging. Many theory questions at National 5 require a short response or standard definitions.
Accounting	H	• Theory continues to be an area that candidates often do not attempt or perform well in, throughout the course assessment. • There was varying degrees of accuracy with layouts, headings and nomenclature across financial statements. This continues to prevent candidates from achieving the associated marks in both the question paper and the assignment.
Accounting	AH	• There were varying degrees of accuracy with layouts and processes across financial statements. This continues to affect candidates from achieving the associated marks in the question paper. • In the project, candidates should be encouraged to consider the relevance of their chosen stakeholders and ensure that they are interrogating the annual report from the perspective of these stakeholders. • Referencing consistently continues to be an area that candidates find challenging.
Administration and IT	N5	• Across the course assessment, when working with e-files, candidates must follow the style and layout for consistency. More information about style and layout can be found within the general marking principles for Admin and IT. • In the assignment, especially when creating a new document, candidates should take care to accurately key-in information. Keyboarding inaccuracies affect many candidates.
Administration and IT	H	• In the assignment, database and spreadsheet tasks appear to be most challenging for candidates. Candidates should attempt all elements of the task, as they can be rewarded for skills even if the full task is not completed correctly. • In the case study section of the question paper, there continues to be a number of candidates who provide points of knowledge instead of relating their answers to the context (as required by the question).
Applications of Mathematics	N5	• Candidates seem better prepared for the course as centres become more familiar with course demands. • Candidates' weak numeracy too often undermines success on the non-calculator paper. • Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure they know what is required. • Where candidates are entered for both Mathematics and Applications of Mathematics, care needs to be taken that they

		know the relevant concepts, eg the interquartile range is used as a measure of spread in Applications of Mathematics.
Art and Design	N5	• The question paper continues to present a challenge for many candidates at this level. • We identified that the mandatory questions (questions 1 and 7) have been set at a higher level than intended, therefore we are in the process of rewording these questions to improve accessibility. • Optional questions were well attempted by candidates who had a good knowledge and understanding of expressive art and design concepts. These candidates understood the question prompts and were able to apply art and design terminology effectively to make justified comments. Centres should make use of Appendix two in the Course Specification as it provides details of the art and design terminology that is used in the question paper. • In the Expressive folio, the majority of candidates demonstrated an appropriate level of skill. Some portfolios were outstanding and showed skill beyond the level required. • However, some centres adopted a 'house style' where all candidates had followed exactly the same process, using identical materials and techniques, often with very similar subject matter. This 'one size fits all' approach inhibits personal choice. It can result in candidates working with materials and techniques that do not suit them, or having little opportunity to demonstrate personal choice and creativity. • As has been the case in previous years, design portfolios were generally less successful than expressive portfolios. • Candidates were able to respond effectively to well-constructed, realistic design briefs. However, many candidates continue to be adversely affected by poorly constructed and unrealistic design briefs. Some design briefs were concerned only with aesthetic issues and did not give candidates an opportunity to consider functionality or target market. Some briefs were so open-ended as to be meaningless. Overly complicated briefs sometimes required more than one solution, such as a set of postage stamps, or pattern being applied to multiple products. This presented candidates with unnecessary challenges, often resulting in a confused design process.
Art and Design	H	• The question paper was well received by candidates, centres and markers. Feedback indicated that it was fair and accessible for candidates in terms of coverage and overall level of demand. • Many candidates performed well in the expressive portfolio and demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of the revised assessment. Candidates who did not have a clear expressive theme were disadvantaged as they found it more difficult to refine their ideas and sustain the development process.

		• Design portfolios were generally less successful than expressive. The best design portfolios had pertinent, well-constructed and realistic design briefs that identified key design issues, which, in turn, allowed candidates to more fully engage in the design process.
Art and Design	AH	• Markers reported on high standards of performance. Throughout the process, markers saw work by candidates with a strong personal interest in the subject, a confidence in technique and an enjoyment in the relative freedom of the course. • This year continued the trend of the last five years where results for design achieved parity with expressive. Design portfolios are generally well researched, with more organised development and often better presented than expressive.
Biology	N5	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Some candidates struggled with items assessed in practical, experimental contexts. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT.
Biology	H	• Expectations of the course are much clearer with the renewed content. • Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT. • Where possible, prelims should reflect the structure of the final exam.
Biology	AH	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Some candidates struggled with items assessed in practical, experimental contexts. • Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure they know what is required. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the projects clearly set out in the CAT.
Business Management	N5	QP Section 1 • Some candidate answers were not always linked to the case study. Some candidates were losing marks due to providing generic answers. Assignment

		• Candidates continue to be weaker on the interpretation/analysis of findings and making conclusions.
Business Management	**H**	QP Section 1 • Some candidates were poor at developing or explaining information from the case study. Assignment • Some candidates did not base their analysis of findings on researched evidence. Conclusions and recommendations were not always clearly linked to the research evidence.
Business Management	**AH**	QP section 1 • On occasions candidates spend too long copying sections of the case study into their answer which takes too much time and could mean candidates have less time to complete section 2. Project • Evidence of poor choice of topic was more common this year, as well as the possible upscaling of higher assignments. Not choosing the correct topic or organisation can impact on the amount of analysis that can be made.
Care	**N5**	Question Paper • Centres should remind candidates that if the question relates to an individual in a scenario, they must refer only to the named individual and not an elderly person in general. • In terms of the positive care environment, centres should make sure candidates understand the four areas: organisational, physical, therapeutic, and community, and that they are able to refer to them and describe them. Project • Centres must use the Health and Social Care Standards 2018 'my support, my life' and direct candidates to use this rather than dated standards. • Where a centre distributes a case study or refers to a DVD for candidates to use as their chosen individual, it is important that teachers and lecturers check that it allows the candidates enough scope to develop the project fully and access marks.
Care	**H**	Question Paper • Centres should continue to prepare candidates to respond to the command word in each question. Candidates should answer the question asked. For example, if the question requires the candidate to evaluate, a descriptive answer will not access all of the available marks. Project • Teachers and lecturers should discuss and clarify candidates' understanding of their chosen brief before they start the project. • Candidates are expected to use appropriate language in their projects. Projects should not include discriminatory language, which conflicts with care values and principles.
Chemistry	**N5**	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations.

		• Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Some candidates struggled with items assessed in practical, experimental contexts. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT.
Chemistry	H	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Many candidates lack the necessary experience to successfully complete questions based on experiments. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT. • Where possible, prelims should reflect the structure of the final exam.
Chemistry	AH	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Some candidates struggled with items assessed in practical, experimental contexts. • Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure they know what is required. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the projects clearly set out in the CAT.
Childcare and Development	H	Question Paper • Centres should ensure candidates have a sound understanding of all aspects of development and can effectively discuss and relate them to children. • In section 2: child development: theory, candidates should ensure they can effectively discuss theories of development, including relevant play theorists. Project • Centres should continue to encourage candidates to keep case studies brief, and relatively simple, introducing the identified child and some background information. • Centres should ensure candidates address the brief and include relevant theorists, strategies and initiatives, professionals and services.
Classical Studies	N5	Question paper • Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully and focus on key words. For example, many candidates missed the two elements in question 3 — a Greek

		house designed 'to suit the climate' and 'the lives of the people who lived in it'.
		• For the 'Explain the source…' question candidates should not merely repeat what is written in the source. The information must be examined and explained.
		Assignment
		• Candidates should consider the counter arguments and challenges in order to access the full range of marks for the conclusion.
Classical Studies	H	Question paper 1 Classical literature • Candidates should be encouraged to seek depth rather than breadth. Good answers can be based around one or two texts or characters. Question paper 2 Classical society • Candidates should be encouraged to paragraph and structure, and ensure they give good detail in their answer, by using specific examples. Assignment • Best practice is to form a question as an issue to research. Some candidates made a modern comparison the basis of their assignment. Those candidates tended to score well for comparison, but less well in analysis and evaluation.
Classical Studies	AH	Question paper • In the comparison questions, teachers and lecturers must remind candidates that their comparisons should be specific to the question and should refer to details of the classical texts in order to gain marks. • For 'comparison with a modern source' questions, candidates must compare what they have learnt about the classical world with the modern source given to them in the question paper. Candidates should be aware that there are no marks to be gained from presenting their own examples from the modern world. Project–dissertation • Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to pay close attention to their chosen title, making sure that the line of argument in their dissertation adheres closely to the title.
Computing Science	N5	• Candidates performed well when required to demonstrate problem solving skills in design and implementation tasks in the question paper and assignment. • In the question paper, candidates often lacked confidence, or did not appreciate the depth required in answering questions that require the application of knowledge and understanding. • Candidates often struggled to identify or explain why a particular coding construct had been used. Candidates should be supported through the use of appropriate technical vocabulary in the classroom.
Computing Science	H	• In its first year, the new assignment performed in line with expectations. Feedback from markers, teachers and lecturers

		• indicates it was positively received by centres, and was fair and accessible for candidates. • While tasks that assessed implementation were well done, centres should ensure that candidates appreciate the value of the analysis, design, testing and evaluation stages of the development process. • Candidates often struggle to provide appropriate descriptions and explanations. Answers often do not use the correct vocabulary and technical language for the subject or are not linked to the context of the question.
Computing Science	AH	• The project was externally marked for the first time. The average project mark decreased, giving a distribution of marks for the project more in line with the question paper. • Centres must ensure they are using the correct version of the coursework assessment task. It was clear in the submissions that a significant number of centres had been referring candidates to guidelines issued for the former Advanced Higher Computing or Information Systems courses. • Centres should advise candidates on their choice of problem to ensure that candidates' chosen problem meets the criteria for an Advanced Higher project and is achievable. • In the question paper, it was encouraging that, overall, candidates engaged well with problem-solving questions that required them to cope with the challenges of unseen programming tasks. • Candidates must pay more attention to the wording of questions. In several questions, candidates ignored important details or instructions that had clearly been stated.
Dance	N5	• Feedback from the marking team and teachers and lecturers indicated that the 2019 question paper was positively received by centres, and was fair and accessible for candidates. • The practical activity and performance components performed as expected.
Dance	H	• Feedback from the marking team and teachers and lecturers indicated that the 2019 question paper was positively received by centres, and was fair and accessible for candidates. • The practical activity and performance components performed as expected with candidates encouraged to follow course guidelines to access the full range of marks.
Design and Manufacture	N5	• For the 2019 diet, the number of 1-mark 'state' or 'name' questions within question 1 was reduced, and a list of materials was added to question 7. These changes resulted in improved candidate performance. • All Assignment: design tasks performed well and allowed candidates to access the full range of marks. All tasks also generated a wide range of responses and marks. Overall, markers felt the standard of work had improved from the previous year. • Candidates should be aware of the skills and knowledge being assessed in the Assignment: design. Teachers and lecturers should give candidates access to all relevant documentation

		including the *Instructions for Candidates* and allow them to clarify any issues or concerns they may have, before starting the assessment. • In the Assignment: practical component, candidates manufacture the proposal they developed in the assignment: design. Candidates should select a proposal that allows them to demonstrate all the practical skills being assessed. Teachers and lecturers should advise candidates on the suitability of their proposal for generating practical evidence.
Design and Manufacture	H	• The Question Paper performed in line with expectations. Feedback from the marking team suggested that it discriminated well and was fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand. • Before starting work on the Assignment, teachers and lecturers should ensure that they issue all candidates with the *Instructions for Candidates* as they provide candidates with details of exactly what they have to do in each section of the task. • Some candidates did not access any marks for practical modelling skills; centres should note that practical modelling skills do not require use of resistant materials and should not be overly time-consuming. The models used to generate, explore, refine or communicate could generate evidence for this section. • This qualification is subject to current review, with mid/long-term plans to develop an improved overall approach to design education.
Design and Manufacture	AH	• Many candidates lacked the ability to provide responses of Advanced Higher level – instead providing the sort of detail that would be expected at Higher or even National 5. • Instead of referencing products they have learned about in their course, candidates tend to reference products such as mobile phones in their responses. However, this knowledge is generally not factual and is instead based on personal opinion. This makes it difficult for them to access marks. • In the Project, the general quality of work verified this year showed an improvement. This was largely because candidates had identified appropriate design opportunities. Centres should continue to give clear advice to candidates on the suitability of their design opportunity.
Drama	N5	• The question paper performed in line with expectations. Feedback from the marking team and practitioners suggested that it was fair and accessible. • The performance component performed as expected with candidates performing a wide variety of plays.
Drama	H	• The question paper performed in line with expectations. Feedback from the marking team and practitioners suggested that it was fair and accessible. • The performance component performed as expected with candidates performing a wide variety of plays.

Drama	AH	• For the performance, the majority of candidates chose the acting option. This year, 20 candidates chose design, and five candidates chose directing. • Centres and candidates explored a greater range of plays this session. Most candidates communicated their research and interpretative ideas for their role(s) with clarity and relevance in their preparation for performance summaries, and achieved good marks. • Candidates investigated varied topics and performance issues in the project–dissertation and the majority of candidate performed well. However, candidates found the dissertation demanding if their title lacked focus and was too wide in scope.
Economics	N5	Question Paper • Candidates sometimes found it difficult to identify the correct diagram required. Improvements could be made with regards to the format and labelling of diagrams. Assignment • Candidates were weaker on analysis. There were some instances of using sources that were not as up to date as they could be, which impacts the analysis made.
Economics	H	Question Paper • Candidates did not always provide the level of depth of theory required. Assignment • Similar to N5, if findings are not up to date then candidates find it difficult to make good analysis. Some topics were too wide so analysis is difficult to link to the topic.
Economics	AH	Question Paper • Candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of current economic events. Project • A range of projects were seen covering different economics issues.
Engineering Science	N5	• Both assessments worked well and candidates seemed well prepared • Candidates struggled with 'emerging technologies'. • There were some instances of candidates not responding to questions fully because they did not refer to the given context and gave generic answers. • A number of candidates did not use significant figures correctly.
Engineering Science	H	• Generally good performance in both components. • Candidates found written (as opposed to calculated) responses more challenging, and did not give Higher level responses that relate to the context of the question. • Some specific areas of content proved to be challenging (such as code and nodal analysis of a frame). • A number of candidates did not use significant figures correctly.

		• In the assignment, a number of candidates gave descriptive responses in lieu of evaluative responses.
Engineering Science	AH	• Both components performed as expected. • Some specific areas of content proved to be challenging (such as transistor load lines and electronic nodal analysis) and teachers should focus on these areas of delivery.
English	N5	• Improved performance in Paper 1 (reading skills). Noticeable in areas previously highlighted (eg question on structural 'links'), suggesting targeted teaching and learning in this area. • Slight dip in Portfolio coursework performance, but not dramatic, and not specific to a genre/type of writing. Candidates should be advised to fully reflect on, and improve, their first draft of writing before submitting final pieces.
English	H	• Slight dip in performance in Paper 2 (Critical Reading) in terms of extended writing. Candidates need to ensure they are fully addressing all aspects of a question, and they are demonstrating complex analysis, rather than assertion of opinions. • Slight dip in Portfolio coursework performance, but not dramatic, and not specific to a genre/type of writing. Candidates should be advised to develop their creative and discursive ideas fully. In discursive writing, care should be taken to integrate research and evidence into a line of thought.
English	AH	• Breadth and depth of reading should be a key feature of Advanced Higher English courses. • Candidates should offer a rigorous and varied range of analysis, avoiding unsubstantiated assertion, in response to texts in Literary Study, Textual Analysis and Dissertation. • Candidates should aim to produce thoughtful, carefully-constructed writing, which demonstrates awareness of relevant genre features.
Environmental Science	N5	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Some candidates struggled with items assessed in practical, experimental contexts. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT.
Environmental Science	H	• Candidates were well prepared for the new case study paper. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT. • Where possible, prelims should reflect the structure of the final exam.
ESOL	N5	Listening

		• Candidates should be given practice in all of the question types in the 2019 paper. With regard to gap-fills, it should be emphasised that the specified word limit must be used. • Candidates should be encouraged to check the spelling of answers. Reading • Candidates should be given practice in all of the question types in the 2019 paper. • Candidates should be given practice in completing 35 questions in the time limit of 70 minutes. Writing • Candidates should be given the chance to discuss the marking criteria used for this section and advised that the highest marks require a good range of both grammar and vocabulary as well as accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Therefore, substantial formative work on accuracy is required in addition to exam practice. In 2019, many candidates supported and developed their points well but lacked accuracy in the three areas above. Performance • There should be a particular focus on the need to demonstrate an appropriate range of structures in spoken English. This is essential to achieve high marks in the performance.
ESOL	H	Listening • Candidates should be instructed to adhere to the word limit when a question asks for 'no more than X words'. • Reading • Candidates should understand that when questions ask for 'words or phrases from the text' they should chose words found in the text and not try to paraphrase. For more open questions candidates should be trained to either choose words/phrases directly from the text or paraphrase. Writing • Candidate responses this year were significantly weaker than previous years. To help candidates improve centres could focus on writing skills and provide additional guidance on writing tasks. Performance • There should be a particular focus on the need to demonstrate a wide range of detailed and complex structures, in their spoken English. Encourage candidates to review their speaking and listening skills and consider how best to develop their use of detailed structures when communicating.
Fashion and Textile Technology	N5	Question paper • The question paper performed in line with expectations. The marking team indicated an improvement in candidates' answering technique, but noted a lack of knowledge in the following key areas: properties and characteristics of fabrics, construction techniques and pattern markings.

		Assignment • In some cases, the evidence continues to be driven by the candidate choosing their item for production before carrying out investigations, whereas their investigations should guide the candidates in creating an individual and personalised item based on the project brief. • The assignment candidate workbook was amended to help candidates organise their work in a better way, specifically in section 1c (justification). This did result in better marks for this section. However, several candidates failed to investigate both key areas of the briefs and thus limited the marks they were able to access later in the assignment. Practical Activity • There is still a tendency for centres to over-inflate potential marks by misidentification of the construction techniques used, - Consequently, we will be looking to increase verification activity in 2019/2020, in an effort to control this.
Fashion and Textile Technology	H	• The introduction of the question paper at Higher was perceived to have led to a new standard for the qualification, and is a valuable addition in ensuring that the Higher is valued and success is rewarded via valid assessment. • Development and support work will continue to ensure close communication to work with centres on effective development of the subject area.
Gàidhlig	N5	Writing • Candidates performed well in the Writing Assignment, where they are given the option of submitting a piece of creative writing or a piece of discursive writing. This year there was an equal split between the number of creative responses and the number of discursive responses. • A wide range of topics were covered, with the best responses in discursive writing clearly presenting different sides of an argument and coming to some conclusions. The vast majority of responses were well-presented and well-structured. There was evidence in most responses that candidates had undertaken relevant research and were familiar with the chosen topic. • The best responses in Creative writing showed good imagination. Most of the responses were well structured. However, some responses contained little 'creativity' and were merely a narrative of an event or a description of a particular place.
Gàidhlig	H	Reading • The majority of candidates made effective use of referencing techniques, giving examples and appropriate analysis as required for the different types of question. Where candidates perhaps did not note the marks available, the resultant partial answers precluded them from accessing the full range. Literature • Some candidates were particularly adept at integrating quotations and giving detailed textual analysis, going beyond a

		straightforward re-telling of plot and illustrating effectively their own personal appreciation of the text. Listening • Strong performances were demonstrated in this component, in which the majority of candidates used evidence effectively to describe the writer's opinions. Marks were lost where answers lacked precision or were more disjointed. Assignment-writing • As a new component, some of the best responses were in personal reflective writing with a number of candidates submitting very good responses in this genre. There were, however, a number of factual pieces that lacked anything more than a re-telling of events and had very little if any personal or additional views. There were also a number of imaginative pieces that lacked a coherent storyline. Performance-talking • Candidates were well prepared and able to discuss a range of different topics, allowing them to perform to a high level.
Gàidhlig	AH	Literature • Candidates should continue to have the opportunity to study a range of literature within their course and practise developing an approach to critical essay writing which is a progression of skills, and has some depth of analysis and personal response. • Candidates should be aware of the need to give an holistic coverage of texts. They should structure answers to questions which focus on comparison so that this is inherent within the whole essay rather than being left to a brief point at the end. Candidates should also recognise the focus of questions set and be aware of the key words within the question and any quotations given as part of them. Writing • In writing, there should be some development of style and accuracy with spelling and grammar, and engagement with the reader. The best pieces of writing are those which are able to balance these.
Geography	N5	Question Paper: • It is vital that candidates know the difference between 'explain' and 'describe' questions, as many confuse these two command words. • It is evident that there is much good teaching that takes place in centres in relation to case studies. This helps candidates to write detailed answers and to demonstrate their in-depth geographical knowledge. Assignment: • It is helpful if candidates provide the title of their assignment clearly at the start of their write-up — this can take the form of an aim or a research question. • Candidates must produce their own processed information - multiple candidates should not have photocopies of the same processed information.

		• Candidates gain marks for adding value to the information shown on their processed information sheets, such as by identifying a trend or by highlighting the links between different data sets and offering relevant explanations.
Geography	H	Question Papers • Candidates should ensure they carefully read the command word(s) in the question and that all points they make respond to these. • Centres should ensure that when candidates are presented with resources such as graphs, they can make full use of these resources by reading accurately from them. • Centres should ensure that all case studies are up to date and relevant. • Centres and candidates should be reminded there are marks available for named examples in many areas of the course, and candidates will be rewarded for specific case study information. • Candidates are reminded that in question 5 in the Geographical Skills section, marks are available for accurate and appropriate map evidence. Assignment • Candidates should be sensitive and avoid stereotyping when making generalisations about more deprived areas, particularly when they do not have the evidence to back them up. • There is no advantage or disadvantage to a candidate in fieldwork being undertaken individually or as a group. • It must be noted however, that only the fieldwork stage may be completed as a group. All other aspects of the assignment should be undertaken independently, so all candidates who have collected data as part of a group have individual write-ups. • There is again evidence of candidates having undertaken fieldwork on topics that they did not entirely understand. Centres should ensure that all candidates have a choice of topic.
Geography	AH	Question Paper • Candidates should practice past papers to develop their exam technique. This will help them appreciate and recognise differences in the wording of the questions. • Candidates should be aware of the skills and the required knowledge and understanding that are being assessed in the 'Gathering and processing techniques' section of the question paper. • Drawing a site to scale needs to be absolutely precise. • Reading a question in its entirety before attempting an answer is good practice. Folio • Candidates used technology and innovative techniques, demonstrating skill and insightfulness to generate data. • Some candidates submitted their folios as a bound booklet. Marking is holistic, therefore separate pages makes it easier for markers to cross-refer.

		• Bibliographies often appear as an afterthought. A bibliography should be a work-in-progress throughout the entire project–folio process and should be reflected within the issue and study through citations and footnotes or endnotes. • Group fieldwork, whilst acceptable, can reduce the opportunities for candidates to develop their own ideas and skills.
Graphic Communication	**N5**	• This year's assignment took a similar approach to last year's updated assignment (SQA issuing an annual task, then externally marking the assignments). • Although there has been an improvement from last year, many candidates displayed a poor understanding of orthographic projection. Teachers and lecturers should support candidates to understand third angle projection and learn how to apply and understand hidden detail in orthographic sketches. • For the question paper, centres should ensure that candidates are using the correct terminology, as detailed in the National 5 Graphic Communication Course Specification. This is particularly important when responding to 2D and 3D CAD modelling and drawing standards, conventions and protocols questions. • Centres should ensure that they encourage candidates to respond appropriately to the command word used in each question, for example 'state', 'explain', 'indicate', and 'describe'.
Graphic Communication	**H**	• This was the first year of SQA issuing an annual assignment task, and the assignment being marked by SQA. • On the whole, candidates seemed to have been well prepared for the assignment. The quality of the work produced showed that candidates were able to put the practical elements of the Higher course into practice to a very good standard, particularly in the CAD work. • DTP was an area that could be improved on, as some candidates did not produce work of a Higher standard. • In question paper responses centres should encourage candidates to support their responses with sketches. Although sketching is not a requirement, some candidates find it challenging to express their responses in writing. This is particularly evident in 3D CAD modelling questions.
Graphic Communication	**AH**	• Centres must download and use the most up-to-date versions of the project assessment materials, this is particularly important for 2019/20 as the project will incorporate both technical graphics and commercial and visual media graphics, and it will be submitted to SQA for external marking. • Although the project performed as expected, some centres that were verified were found to be marking too generously across all sections of the project. • Overall, the level of performance in the question paper was a little lower than expected.

		• Questions on 3D CAD modelling techniques, the application of specific file types and built environment surveys were poorly answered. • Candidates responded well to questions on printing techniques and practices, design elements and principles as well as those on digital testing methods.
Health and Food Technology	N5	Question paper • The question paper performed as expected. • In some cases, candidates are describing answers rather than explaining, centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with the command words used in the question paper and the different responses required for each one. Assignment • Candidate performance in the assignment was again improved from last session, with evidence of more personalisation and choice, and individual working. • There is the potential of having additional/updated Understanding Standards material published during this session as further online exemplification, which will aim to provide support and exemplify both components following the 2019 procedures.
Health and Food Technology	H	• Significant development work has gone into question paper and assignment design to ensure that practical skills are developed alongside a wider knowledge of theoretical understanding. • The introduction of the revised question paper has led to articulation of a clearer standard and has generally been supported by the sector for ensuring that the Higher has parity of challenge and esteem with other Higher qualifications. • Development and support work with centres, and via skills days, has assisted the sector in better articulating the standard, and this is continuing to come through in candidate work.
Health and Food Technology	AH	Question paper • The question paper performed as expected. • There was a range of marks gained in the question paper. Feedback from the marking team suggested the paper was fair in terms of overall demand and course coverage, and candidates were able to complete it in the allocated time. Project • Candidates performed as expected in the project, and achieved a range of marks. • Candidates generally performed well in stages 1 and 2, and were weaker in stage 3. Some candidates did not fully analyse the results and link what they had found out from their research to the results, whilst more depth is required. • There is a webinar taking place in September, and an Understanding Standards event in November, both of which will provide support for the introduction of the revised national qualification.
History	N5	Section 1 – The Scottish contexts

		• Centres should ensure that they prepare candidates with specific Scottish historical knowledge (as detailed in the National 5 Course Specification document). This advice is especially important for centres teaching Part E – The Era of the Great War. Assignment • Centres should support candidates in researching and analysing issues using the question stems: 'to what extent/how successful/how important' as per the question stems for the 9-mark essay in the question paper. • For information from sources, evidence should be collected from at least two different sources and referred to clearly and directly. This means that references should be enclosed by quotation marks.
History	H	Question paper 1 — British, European and world history • Many candidates did not link their evaluative comments to build a line of argument and were unable to access the full range of marks. • A relative judgement between the different factors is essential to access the three marks available for the conclusion. • Candidates must answer the question as it appears in the question paper and not give a pre-prepared answer. • If a candidate is choosing to answer an evaluation question by selecting another factor, they must still address the question. Question paper 2 — Scottish history • Centres should ensure they prepare candidates with specific Scottish historical knowledge. • Centres should note that the 'How fully' and 'Explain' questions will come from the key issues in the Higher History course specification. The 'two source interpretation' and the 'Evaluate' questions will assess more in-depth knowledge from the description of content. • Candidates are required to identify the overall interpretation in each source. • Candidates should carefully select the relevant points from the sources and interpret why the selected points are important to the issue being discussed. • Candidates must attempt the overall interpretation in each source to access the 6 source marks. Assignment • Best practice was reflected in those candidates who used the resource sheet as an essay plan, providing a summary of the factors, key knowledge points and detailed referencing such as author, textbook (or website) and full quote. • Some website references demonstrated poor practice. References should not include factual evidence. • References used to support the analysis and/or evaluation exemplified best practice.

History	AH	Question paper • In the essay questions, balance in the discussion is vital. This means considering more than one view. Candidates should use historians to highlight the range, or not, of arguments. • In the source questions, interpretation is more than repetition of sources. Candidates should explain why their selected point is important to the issue being discussed. Project–dissertation • Candidates will benefit from establishing a clear structure at the outset. The introduction should contextualise, focus the reader on the key areas of debate, and present the writer's hypothesis.
Practical Cake Craft	N5	Question paper • The question paper continues to present a challenge for many candidates. Most candidates attempted all three questions, and completed the paper in the allocated time. Candidates should have opportunities to develop their skills in answering questions with different command words, as they find answering evaluate questions difficult. Assignment • There was a general improvement from last year. Candidates produced more detailed design illustrations and plans of work. Most candidates attempted to complete the evaluating stage. Some candidates produced design illustrations, resources and plans of work that were retrospective. These components must be completed before candidates start to make the cake. Practical activity • The assessment judgements made by most centres were in line with national standards, reliable and accepted. Most assessors had made effective use of the published marking instructions to support the marks they awarded to each candidate. However, some centres were awarding marks for all three nine-mark techniques, which is not allowed. • Most candidates took the opportunity to demonstrate five finishing decoration techniques, maximising the marks they can access.
Practical Cookery	N5	Question paper • Many candidates continue to find explain and evaluate questions challenging. Assignment • There was an improvement in performance this year, due to the availability of understanding standards materials, and centres being more familiar with the detail required. However, some candidates are still using their time plan as a rewrite of the recipes as opposed to an 'aide-memoire', and centres must ensure they review their candidates' work prior to submission for marking/use in the practical activity. Practical activity

		• Performance was similar to last year. Some centres are still having difficulty with holistic marking. An increase in visiting verification may help centres understand how to mark holistically.
Human Biology	H	• Expectations of the course are much clearer with the renewed content. • Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT. • Where possible, prelims should reflect the structure of the final exam.
Latin	N5	Literary Appreciation • Candidates found all parts of the paper accessible and produced wide-ranging and imaginative responses. Translating • In most cases, candidates used the English rubric and the wordlist effectively to aid an accurate translation.
Latin	H	Literacy Appreciation • Centres should ensure candidates gain experience and practice in understanding the meaning of command words and question types – particularly in relation to open ended questions. Translating • Centres should ensure candidates recognise the accidence and syntax, as well as the basic vocabulary meaning of words.
Latin	AH	Literary Appreciation • Generally, centres had prepared candidates well for this question paper, in the interests of course coverage, any part of any text in the prescribed texts may be sampled. Translating • Most candidates would benefit from some practice, or even some specific training, in the effective use of the wordlist. Dissertation • Choice of topic was often seen to be a determining factor. Well-used topics tended not to produce the same level of research and innovation as was characteristic of more unusual or original topics. On the other hand, a few titles that expected a fairly standard response, went on to produce insightful analysis that brought a fresh perspective to familiar issues. It was encouraging to see that literary topics were more popular this year.
Mathematics	N5	• Candidates were able to use efficient methods to compute compound growth. • Candidates were able to substitute into formulae and apply standard trigonometric techniques.

		• Candidates' weak algebraic skills meant they could not construct expressions or change the subject of a formula. • Candidates' weak numeracy too often undermined success on the non-calculator paper. • Candidates' poor communication undermines success in items that asked for a reason, explanation or interpretation.
Mathematics	H	• Candidates could use many standard techniques effectively but struggled in novel contexts. • Candidates need to be familiar with the entire course given the longer papers. • Candidates' weak algebraic manipulation skills can undermine performance. • Candidates need to be able to use and apply their mathematics in a range of contexts. • Weak numeracy skills continue to undermine the performance of many candidates.
Mathematics	AH	• Candidates showed resilience when solving problems. • Candidates used standard techniques effectively and efficiently. • Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure they know what is required. • Many candidates struggled to develop a mathematical model for a given context. • Candidates' weak numeracy can undermine success. • Candidates' poor communication undermined success in items that asked for a reason, explanation or interpretation.
Mechanics of Mathematics	AH	• Candidates showed resilience when solving problems. • Candidates used standard techniques effectively and efficiently. • Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure they know what is required. • Many candidates struggled to develop a mathematical model for a given context. • Candidates' weak numeracy can undermine success. • Candidates' poor communication undermines success in items that ask for a reason, explanation or interpretation.
Media	N5	• Continued positive engagement with both components, resulted in stable performance. • For the QP, centres should focus on teaching all of the mandatory key aspects along with a selection of media texts to allow candidates to select from them appropriately when answering different questions. • For the assignment, it is essential that a suitable brief is set by centres that takes into account candidates' preferences and includes some institutional constraints relevant to a school production or professional context. This will allow candidates a good deal of scope to be creative within appropriate parameters.
Media	H	• Positive engagement with the new textual analysis section and changes to the Assignment, resulted in increased performance • For the QPs, centres should focus on teaching all of the mandatory key aspects and ensuring candidates are able to

		analyse connections between content and context in the depth and detail required at Higher level • For the assignment, it is essential that a suitable brief is set by centres. This should provide candidates with some form of creative stimulus, but should not restrict their ability to negotiate and/or make their own decisions
Modern Languages	N5	• Although candidates generally performed well in QPs assessing the receptive skills (Listening and Reading), a significant minority of candidates had issues in providing sufficient detail in their responses. • Candidate performance in the assignment-writing component – new in 2018 – continued to be strong in 2019, with most engaging well with the formative aspects of its production. • Candidates were generally successful in the performance-talking. In instances where candidates struggled, this is commonly in relation to their ability to sustain detailed language for the duration of the assessment, with pronunciation occasionally being an issue, particularly in French.
Modern Languages	H	• Although candidates generally perform well in QPs assessing the receptive skills (Listening and Reading/Translation), some candidates have issues in providing sufficient detail in their responses, and find the demand of the Translation particularly challenging. • Candidate performance in the assignment-writing was very strong - a new component in 2019 - with most engaging well with the formative aspects of its production, and building on the pathway from National 5. In a number of centres, candidates had not provided a stimulus in line with the course specification and advice in the course support notes. This created some marking issues. A small number of candidates also found it difficult to sustain a discursive approach. • Candidates performed well, in line with the new performance-talking format, with many able to sustain the extended discussion for the required duration, using detailed and complex language appropriately.
Modern Languages	AH	• Candidates generally approached the Portfolio effectively, and a better range of titles was in evidence in 2019. The selection of a good title being essential, some candidates' choice did not allow for sufficiently investigative/evaluative approaches and this limited their scope. • The performance-talking continued to be the component where candidates tend to do best.
Modern Studies	N5	Question Paper • Centres should re-emphasise the importance of expanding knowledge answers using specific 'real world' current examples.

		• Candidates should be reminded that when knowledge questions ask for 'two ways' or 'a maximum of three reasons', writing more should be avoided as only the best two or three points in the answer will gain marks. • Candidates should always explicitly state in their source evaluation answer which option they have chosen, which of the bullet-pointed conclusions they are addressing, and whether they are supporting or opposing a view. This will support the candidate in terms of giving a more structured response. **Assignment** • Topics must clearly address a relevant, contemporary modern studies issue. Candidates are advised not to combine their modern studies topic with their assignments in other subjects in order to avoid using irrelevant or historical information. • Centres should emphasise to candidates that direct copying from the research evidence sheets will not gain marks and where research evidence is not identified, full marks cannot be achieved. • Generic descriptions of research methods must be avoided as 0 marks will be awarded for this.
Modern Studies	**H**	Question paper 1 • Centres should continue to emphasise the importance of analysis/evaluation and up-to-date exemplification in both the 20- and 12-mark extended-response questions. • Centres should encourage candidates to pay close attention to the specific wording of the questions and respond accordingly. Question paper 2 • Centres should remind all candidates that their overall judgement as to the degree of accuracy in source questions should include a quantitative comment such as 'very accurate' or 'highly inaccurate'. • In 'conclusions' questions candidates should be encouraged to consider the bullet points carefully and should not provide only pre-learned, generic or simplistic conclusions. • For source reliability questions, candidates should be encouraged to include an active comparison rather than just stating the positive attributes of their chosen source. Assignment • Centres should continue to emphasise to candidates that their research sheets should not be used as a plan. • Centres should emphasise to candidates that direct copying from the research sheets will achieve no marks. • Candidates must make sure that the focus of their chosen topics is social, economic and/or political.
Modern Studies	**AH**	Question Paper • Centres should ensure that candidates are fully informed and familiar with the assessable criteria as laid out in the general marking principles and criterion marking grids for each question type.

		• Centres should direct candidates to focus on answering the questions set in the question paper and avoid attempting to turn the question to pre-prepared essay responses. • In the extended-response questions, candidates should be reminded of the importance of referring to an international comparator. Project-Dissertation • Centres should discourage candidates from framing aims using the stem 'To find out…'. Instead, candidates should be directed to use questions or stems such as 'To what extent…?', 'To analyse…', 'To examine…', 'To examine the extent to which…'. • Centres should inform candidates that dissertations must be within the maximum word count (5000 words with 10% tolerance) and ensure proofreading of dissertations is undertaken before final submission.
Music	N5	• Across all levels, uptake is healthy and performance is strong. • Visiting Assessors noted a very high standard of practical performance across all levels of Music. • This year's question paper performed as expected. Feedback from markers indicated that the question paper had good coverage of course content, was of a fair and appropriate standard, and covered a wide range of styles that were accessible to candidates. • Markers noted that a wide range of candidate work was submitted for the composing assignment for National 5. Personalisation and choice was evident by composing music in a style/genre that interested candidates and this continues to be encouraged. • Some centres were disappointed with their candidates' assignment marks. Through the Understanding Standards programme, SQA is working with teachers to illustrate different approach to the assignment.
Music	H	• Across all levels, uptake is healthy and performance is strong. • Visiting Assessors noted a very high standard of practical performance across all levels of Music. • The Higher question paper performed in line with expectations. Marker feedback and statistical analysis indicate that it was a fair paper with a good spread of coverage of concepts at an appropriate level of demand. • Markers noted that a wide range of candidate work was submitted for the composing assignment. Personalisation and choice was evident by composing music in a style/genre that interested candidates. • However, some centres were disappointed with their candidates' assignment marks. Through the Understanding Standards programme, SQA is working with teachers to illustrate different approach to the assignment.
Music	AH	• Across all levels, uptake is healthy and performance is strong. • Visiting Assessors noted a very high standard of practical performance across all levels of Music.

		• The question paper performed in line with expectations. Markers reported that it was a fair and balanced paper, challenging in some areas but with an appropriate level of demand. The paper provided opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their subject knowledge and music theory/notation skills. • A new assignment will be introduced to the Advanced Higher Music course in 2019/2020.
Music Technology	**N5**	• The uptake for Music Technology at both National 5 and Higher continues to increase and markers observed some quality, innovative and creative work from candidates' assignments. Centres and candidates have engaged well with the revised requirements for the National 5 and Higher question papers. • The average mark for the assignment has decreased in comparison with previous years. Many candidates did not include all of the mandatory technology skills in their assignments and therefore could not access the full range of marks, and teachers are encouraged to engage with support material to ensure candidates are able to access full mark range. • There is an Understanding Standards event in September that will exemplify candidate assignments and detail how the full range of marks can be accessed.
Music Technology	**H**	• The uptake for Music Technology at both National 5 and Higher continues to increase and markers observed some quality, innovative and creative work from candidates' assignments. Centres and candidates have engaged well with the revised requirements for the National 5 and Higher question papers. • The average mark for the assignment has decreased in comparison with previous years. Many candidates did not include all of the mandatory technology skills in their assignment and therefore could not access the full range of marks. • There is an Understanding Standards event in September that will exemplify assignments to illustrate effective candidate assignments and detail how the full range of marks can be accessed.
Philosophy	**N5**	Question Paper • At this level, it is not mandatory for candidates to read the original text of Hume but it is essential that candidates know and understand the mandatory course content. • Candidates should be able to explain the hedonic calculus and show how it works by applying it to an example. Candidates should also be able to describe problems with the hedonic calculus. • Candidates should be able to explain what Hume meant by impressions and ideas and give examples to illustrate what Hume said. They are expected to explain simple and complex ideas with accompanying examples such as Hume's examples of the 'golden mountain' and 'virtuous horse'

		Assignment • At the beginning of the research process, it is worth cross-checking the marking instructions against the proposed title to make sure that the chosen topic allows candidates to access all the available marks. • Candidates should be reminded that failure to cover criticisms will mean an immediate loss of 6 marks. However good the description might be, it can only be awarded a total of 6 marks.
Philosophy	H	Question Paper 1 • Candidates will benefit from essay writing practise as they develop knowledge and understanding of the course. Candidates should be encouraged to answer the question that is being asked of them and not learn a generic essay response. • Candidates should have in-depth knowledge and understanding of Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy and David Hume's An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. It is important that candidates are thoroughly familiar with the detail of the specified texts. • Teachers and lecturers may find it helpful to provide opportunities for candidates to practise applying the moral theories to different moral issues and scenarios, as well as evaluating them. Question Paper 2 • Candidates need to demonstrate precision and accuracy in describing and explaining philosophical ideas and arguments. • Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are familiar with all the content identified in the course specification. Candidates should also be made aware of the skills and knowledge assessed across this paper.
Photography	H	• Overall, the question paper component performed as intended. Feedback from markers identified that the question paper component was pitched appropriately, was fair and accessible, and provided a suitable level of challenge. • Centres should continue to develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of photographic terms, techniques, styles and genres. This will ensure they are fully prepared for any images or scenarios that may arise in the question paper. This will also help to broaden their understanding of photography for their project. • Candidates' response to the coursework assessment task was as expected. The task proved to be fair and accessible for all candidates in terms of coverage and overall level of demand. Markers commented positively on the overall quality of projects. However, candidates found some aspects of the project challenging.
Physical Education	N5	• Feedback from the marking team and teachers and lecturers indicated that the portfolio is fair and accessible for candidates. As an instrument of assessment, the portfolio clearly differentiates between candidates of different ability levels as the marks achieved by candidates span the full marks' range.

		• In the performance component, a wide range of activities were observed by verifiers and information from the centres showed that an even wider range of activities were assessed in centres.
Physical Education	H	• The question paper performed as expected in the first year of the revised format, following the integration of unit content. Feedback from Team Leaders and markers indicated that there had been an appropriate range of content sampled, allowing candidates to demonstrate acquired and applied knowledge throughout the assessment. • The revisions to the Higher Physical Education course resulted in a more appropriate distribution of candidate marks.
Physical Education	AH	• The project performed in line with expectations. Feedback from the marking team and practitioners suggested that it was fair and accessible. • The performance component of the course functioned as expected.
Physics	N5	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Some candidates struggled with items assessed in practical, experimental contexts. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT.
Physics	H	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Many candidates lacked the necessary experience to successfully complete questions based on experiments. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the assignments clearly set out in the CAT. • Where possible, prelims should reflect the structure of the final exam.
Physics	AH	• Candidates were able to apply knowledge and complete calculations. • Many candidates were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge and understanding of definitions and terminology from the course specification. • Some candidates struggled with items assessed in practical, experimental contexts. • Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure they know what is required. • Centres must implement SQA requirements for the projects clearly set out in the CAT.
Politics	H	Question paper 1

		• Candidates should be clear on the differences between the 12-mark, and 20-mark essay- type questions, including how marks are allocated. • Centres should be aware of the Higher Politics marking grids. Question Paper 2 • Candidates should be aware of how marks are allocated for the source-based questions and the specific skills they are required to demonstrate. • Candidates should be clear on the key terms to identify in the viewpoint and the range of aspects of data included in the sources that may relate to the different parts of the viewpoint. Assignment • Centres should, in particular, be clear on the use of the resource sheet that should enable candidates to identify information collected during the research stage. • The resource sheet is not intended as an essay plan, nor is it simply for recording a number of URLs likely to support a candidate during the write-up of their assignment.
Practical Electronics	N5	• There was an improvement in candidate performance in the practical activity, in particular circuit construction, wiring and assembly, and circuit simulation. • In the question paper, when candidates were asked to describe or explain, answers often lacked sufficient detail or technical accuracy to gain marks.
Practical Metalworking	N5	• In the question paper, some candidates failed to demonstrate a basic knowledge of practical metalworking processes. • Candidates' use of correct terminology for tools and equipment in question paper responses has improved. • For the Practical Activity the majority of centres made fair and accurate assessment judgements within marking tolerances. Centres marking out with these tolerances were lenient in their application of marks. • Candidates were very well prepared for the Practical Activity and produced some very good work.
Practical Woodworking	N5	• Candidates struggled to respond well to question paper questions that related directly to practical activity (eg candidates made an object using joint x, but could not respond to questions on joint x). • Candidates need examination technique to be reinforced as they were not responding to questions correctly (particularly with 'explain' and 'describe'). • Turnery seemed rushed in the practical activity; the log book was also a weak area. • There was evidence of some very good practical activity work.
Psychology	N5	Question Paper • When teaching the research studies for the optional topics of phobias (personality, altruism and NVC), teachers and lecturers should refer to the studies as being: - A study on the biological or situational causes of APD (personality).

		- A study on the two-process model or genetic inheritance of phobias (phobias). - A study on the kin-selection theory or the empathy–altruism theory of altruism (altruism). - A study relating to nature or nurture in non-verbal communication (NVC). • It was apparent that some of the candidates who were entered for the course assessment were not adequately prepared, or were not yet ready, to study Psychology at National 5 level. Assignment • Centres are reminded that research plans must adhere to ethical guidelines. • Teachers and lecturers should continue to encourage candidates to use up-to-date relevant research studies in their plans.
Psychology	H	Question Paper • The majority of Higher Psychology candidates are new to the subject. Therefore, centres should carefully consider the ability of potential candidates to study a subject with highly abstract content. • Candidates cannot rely on rehearsal alone to do well in the exam and therefore, will need to apply higher order skills to the knowledge they have gained. • Candidates will benefit from being given guidance and practise on developing the skills required by the course, particularly those of evaluation, analysis and application. • Candidates showed little evidence of skills' development, particularly evaluate, analyse and apply. • Many candidates provided evidence of their knowledge but found it difficult to use that knowledge appropriately. • Many candidates gave a narrative account of research studies instead of using them to respond to the question asked. Assignment • Candidates will benefit from support and guidance in the development of the skills of 'justify' and 'apply', particularly when making decisions about their method, testing their hypothesis and choice of statistics. • Guidance and practise with operationalisation of hypotheses and variables will help candidates. • Ethical treatment of participants is essential. Candidates must be able to explain how their procedures are ethical.
Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies	N5	Question Paper • In the morality and belief section, candidates should be prepared to unpack moral issues raised by all aspects of the mandatory content. • Candidates should avoid writing about the impact of a concept within the framework of a religion when they are supposed to be writing about the impact of believing in it. • When exploring religious views on the origins of the universe, there is no need to look at religious creation stories, especially as they do not describe the universe as we understand it today.

		Views that give a wider explanation, perhaps including some interpretation of the meaning behind scripture and views on current philosophical and scientific thinking, tend to give candidates more to write about in the question paper. Assignment • Candidates should avoid issues that may be hugely concerning but are not particularly controversial. This includes issues that most people would agree are morally wrong (for example racism, human trafficking or cruelty to animals). • It is best to approach the task as a discursive rather than a persuasive piece. This helps candidates to take account of the main arguments around the issue, and to avoid missing out key aspects of the debate.
Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies	**H**	Question Papers 1 and 2 • Candidates will benefit from practising essay writing skills – there must be a focus on question stems, how to address them and how to ensure candidates are picking up available marks for skills, knowledge and understanding. • In Paper 1, candidates must be prepared to write about religious and non-religious responses in the Morality and Belief Section. This could be religious responses from a single world religion, or from more than one world religion, non-religious responses for a single non-religious perspective or from more than one non-religious perspective. Assignment • Candidates should be aware of the importance of maintaining a clear focus on their chosen question throughout the assignment, and be confident in applying the skills of relevant analysis and supported evaluation before embarking on their assignment.
Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies	**AH**	Question Paper • Candidates should refer to sources and be specific. For example, avoid phrases such as 'Christians say' or 'some people' or 'religious people'. They need to show that they know who says what. • Candidates would benefit from developing their evaluative skills. They must engage with the question when evaluating. It is not sufficient at Advanced Higher to state 'A strength of this is...' or 'A weakness of this is...'. Candidates should avoid simply listing arguments for and against. Dissertation • Candidates should ensure the content of the dissertation is consistently relevant to the title. It is useful to refer back to the question throughout. • Candidates should be accurate in their bibliography. For example, if they have read extracts from a classic text in an anthology or from a secondary source, they should cite the source used rather than the complete classic text.
Sociology	**N5**	Question Paper

		• Centres should ensure that candidates are able to answer questions specifically on the mandatory studies and on other studies where required. • Candidates are expected to refer to research evidence when explaining social issues; this includes the Kingdon and Cassen, and the Rosenthal and Jacobson studies. • Candidates must be prepared to refer to two other research studies that relate to their other social issue. • Candidates need to be prepared to discuss the role of research within sociology. Assignment • Candidates should be able to attempt all parts of section E of the assignment and should be reminded of the need to refer back to the common sense views discussed in section B, in order to assess whether their research supports or challenges these views.
Sociology	H	Question Paper • Many candidates found essay writing demanding. Centres should provide support to candidates, for example, by practising past paper questions. • Candidates should respond according to the command word in the question, for example, 'describe' or 'explain'. • Centres should ensure that candidates are prepared in all the mandatory content. Assignment • Whilst candidates are encouraged to select their own topic, centres should support them in their choice, for instance in narrowing their focus into a manageable area of study. • Some candidates found it difficult to formulate a hypothesis, for example some expressed their hypothesis as a question or as an overlong statement. Centres should continue to support candidates in their understanding of what a hypothesis is, and how to formulate a hypothesis.
Statistics	AH	• Candidates showed resilience when solving problems. • Candidates used standard techniques effectively and efficiently. • Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure they know what is required. • Candidates' weak numeracy can undermine success. • Candidates' poor communication undermined success in items that ask for a reason, explanation or interpretation.

Appendix 3 – SQA Understanding Standards events and webinars

Date	Subject	Level	Location
17/06/2019	Advanced Higher Chemistry		Webinar
03/09/2019	Computing Science	Advanced Higher	Stirling
04/09/2019	PE Performance	Nat 5 & Higher	Edinburgh
04/09/2019	Travel & Tourism	SFW	Glasgow
04/09/2019	Advanced Higher Engineering Science		Webinar
05/09/2019	Computing Science	Advanced Higher	Aberdeen
05/09/2019	PE Performance	Nat 5 & Higher	Aberdeen
05/09/2019	Advanced Higher Graphic Communication		Webinar
06/09/2019	PE Performance	Nat 5 & Higher	Inverness
09/09/2019	PE Performance	Nat 5 & Higher	Glasgow
09/09/2019	Art & Design	Advanced Higher	Inverness
10/09/2019	PE Performance	Nat 5 & Higher	Dunblane
10/09/2019	Travel & Tourism	SFW	Perth
10/09/2019	Art & Design	Advanced Higher	Dunblane
11/09/2019	Computing Science	Advanced Higher	Edinburgh
11/09/2019	Scottish Studies & Scots Language	Awards	Edinburgh
11/09/2019	Art & Design	Advanced Higher	Dunblane
12/09/2019	Music Technology	Nat 5, Higher and AD Higher	Dunblane Hydro

12/09/2019	Computing Science	Advanced Higher	Glasgow
13/09/2019	Modern Studies	Advanced Higher	Perth
14/09/2019	Health & Food Tech	National 5, Higher & Advanced Higher	Dundee
17/09/2019	Music - Assignment	Advanced Higher	Glasgow
17/09/2019	History	Higher	Glasgow
17/09/2019	National 5 Drama		Webinar
18/09/2019	Music - Assignment	Advanced Higher	Edinburgh
18/09/2019	Scottish Baccalaureate	Baccalaureate	Stirling
18/09/2019	Higher Physical Education		Webinar
19/09/2019	History	Higher	Edinburgh
19/09/2019	Maths	National 5	Edinburgh
19/09/2019	Advanced Higher Health and Food Technology		Webinar
20/09/2019	Maths	Higher	Glasgow
23/09/2019	Maths	Higher	Edinburgh
24/09/2019	Music - Assignment	Advanced Higher	Dunblane Hydro
24/09/2019	Drama	Advanced Higher	Dunblane
24/09/2019	Health & Food Tech	Higher	Stirling
25/09/2019	Music - Assignment	Advanced Higher	Aberdeen
25/09/2019	History	Higher	Stirling
25/09/2019	Health & Food Tech	Higher	Aberdeen

26/09/2019	Modern Studies	Advanced Higher	Glasgow
26/09/2019	Fashion & Textile Tech	Higher	Stirling
26/09/2019	Accounting	Advanced Higher	Stirling
27/09/2019	Modern Studies	National 5	Perth
27/09/2019	Biology	Advanced Higher	Aberdeen
01/10/2019	PE Performance	Advanced Higher	Stirling
01/10/2019	Economics	Advanced Higher	Webinar
03/10/2019	Classical Studies	Higher & Advanced Higher	Glasgow
03/10/2019	Maths	National 5	Glasgow
04/10/2019	Statistics	Advanced Higher	Edinburgh
07/10/2019	Application of Maths	National 5	Glasgow
08/10/2019	Modern Studies	National 5	Edinburgh
10/10/2019	Modern Studies	National 5	Glasgow
29/10/2019	Politics	Higher	Glasgow
29/10/2019	Application of Maths	National 5	Edinburgh
29/10/2019	National 2 ESOL		Webinar
30/10/2019	Politics	Higher	Edinburgh
30/10/2019	Geography	Advanced Higher	Perth
30/10/2019	Business Management	Advanced Higher	Edinburgh
31/10/2019	Geography	Advanced Higher	Glasgow
31/10/2019	Modern Languages	Advanced Higher	Stirling

31/10/2019	Biology	Advanced Higher	Glasgow
01/11/2019	Physics	Advanced Higher	Aberdeen
01/11/2019	Health & Food Tech	Advanced Higher	Stirling
01/11/2019	Philosophy	Higher	Stirling
02/11/2019	Media	Higher	Glasgow
04/11/2019	Computing Science	Higher	Dunblane
04/11/2019	RMPS	Higher	Glasgow
04/11/2019	Higher Music		Webinar
05/11/2019	Design & Manufacture	Advanced Higher	Dunblane
05/11/2019	RMPS	Higher	Edinburgh
06/11/2019	Computing Science	Higher	Edinburgh
06/11/2019	Environmental Science	Higher	Stirling
06/11/2019	National 5 Psychology		Webinar
07/11/2019	Psychology	Higher	Glasgow
08/11/2019	Computing Science	Higher	Glasgow
08/11/2019	Physics	Advanced Higher	Inverness
08/11/2019	Chemistry	Advanced Higher	Glasgow
09/11/2019	Chemistry	Advanced Higher	Stirling
11/11/2019	Biology	Advanced Higher	Edinburgh
11/11/2019	RMPS	Higher	Dundee
12/11/2019	Psychology	Higher	Edinburgh

12/11/2019	RMPS	Higher	Inverness
12/11/2019	National 3 ESOL		Webinar
13/11/2019	Higher Geography		Webinar
14/11/2019	ESOL	Higher	Edinburgh
15/11/2019	Childcare & Development	Higher	Glasgow
15/11/2019	Chemistry	Advanced Higher	Inverness
15/11/2019	Gaidhlig	Advanced Higher	Inverness
16/11/2019	Physics	Advanced Higher	Stirling
16/11/2019	Chemistry	Advanced Higher	Aberdeen
18/11/2019	Latin	National 5 & Higher	Glasgow
20/11/2019	Chemistry	Advanced Higher	Edinburgh
20/11/2019	Graphic Communication (AM & PM sessions)	National 5	Stirling
22/11/2019	Care	Higher	Glasgow
23/11/2019	English	National 5 & Higher	Glasgow
25/11/2019	Advanced Higher Classical Studies		Webinar
26/11/2019	Mental Health Awards	National 3 & 4	Glasgow
26/11/2019	National 4 ESOL		Webinar
27/11/2019	Graphic Communication (AM & PM sessions)	Higher	Stirling
29/11/2019	Care	National 5	Stirling
30/11/2019	Physics	Advanced Higher	Glasgow
30/11/2019	English	National 5 & Higher	Stirling

04/12/2019	Mental Health Awards	National 3 & 4	Glasgow
04/12/2019	National 5 Art & Design		Webinar
06/12/2019	English	National 5 & Higher	Edinburgh
07/12/2019	Physics	Advanced Higher	Edinburgh
09/12/2019	English	National 5 & Higher	Inverness
13/01/2020	Nat 5 Media		Webinar
21/01/2020	ESOL	National 2-4	Glasgow