

2021 Appeals Service announced

Wednesday 2 June 2021

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) today announces a free appeals service, available directly to learners for the first time, covering this year's National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher qualifications.

Fairness to learners and the credibility of the qualifications that learners have worked so hard to achieve in this exceptionally challenging year is central to the alternative certification model that has been developed by the Scottish education system. The model gives teachers and lecturers the necessary [flexibility to support their learners](#), whom they know best. Teachers and lecturers, with the support of the system and SQA, are working hard to deliver the right results to learners, first time. However, it is important that a direct right of appeal is available, and the appeals service is the final essential part of the model.

Support to help answer learner questions about their next steps and their options [is available](#).

Key features of the Appeals Service

All learners will have the right to appeal directly to SQA for free. Learners will be able to register that they want to appeal their provisional result directly to SQA from Friday 25 June.

Appeals will be processed with the support of schools and colleges after learners have received their result certificates on Tuesday 10 August. An overview of the service [is available](#).

Importantly, learners should be supported by their school, college and training provider with the information they need to make decisions that are in their best interests. However, centres cannot stop an appeal request.

As in any other year, priority appeals will be available to learners who have offers to study at college, or university, or have an employment or training position dependent on a grade. All other appeals will be progressed thereafter.

The grounds for appeal are broad. There are three types of appeal:

- an appeal against the academic judgement made
- an appeal against an unresolved administrative error
- an appeal on grounds of discrimination where:
 - (i) there has been a breach of the Equality Act 2010 (which must have been either acknowledged by your school, college or training provider or established by a court or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman), or
 - (ii) your school, college or training provider failed to provide agreed Assessment Arrangements.

A key principle of the awarding of qualifications in any year is that a learner's grade is based on the evidence of their demonstrated attainment of the skills and knowledge of a course, and this is a central feature of this year's alternative certification model. Given this, an appeal of a result must also be based on the evidence of the learner's demonstrated attainment against the national standard. Therefore, the outcomes of an evidence-based appeal could be that a learner's grade could go up, go down, or stay the same.

Schools, colleges and training providers will still be able to submit an appeal on behalf of their learners, if the learner prefers to use that route.

Guidance on the appeals service for schools, colleges and training providers will be published by Friday 11 June.

Development of the Appeals Service

We have consulted and engaged widely with education stakeholders and representatives of parents and carers and young people. An [analysis of consultation responses](#) has been published.

SQA has produced an [Equalities Impact Assessment](#), and a [Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment](#) that summarises the evidence SQA has considered during the development of the appeals service.

We have also published some [research](#) that asked representatives from universities, colleges, and employers their views on the value of qualifications. The findings illustrate that there is agreement that to successfully achieve a qualification there must be evidence available of a learner's demonstrated attainment in the skills and knowledge at the required national standard. Consistent standards over time also provide flexibility for learners to access immediate opportunities today, and different opportunities later in their career.

- ENDS -