# National Course modification summary: Computing Science

## National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher course assessment in session 2020–21

The Deputy First Minister has announced that National 5 exams will not take place in session 2020–21. SQA is working with stakeholders to develop an alternative certification model for National 5 that is based on teacher and lecturer estimates.

At present, Higher and Advanced Higher exams are still planned for 2021 and this will remain under review. We continue to work with stakeholders to put contingency plans in place to respond to any changes in public health advice, or local or national lockdowns, that may result in further changes to the 2021 exam diet — including changes to the timetable.

For up-to-date information on arrangements for National Courses in session 2020–21, including timetable information and guidance on estimates, please visit our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021.

## Modifications to assessment

Following our public consultation on proposed modifications to National 5 to Advanced Higher course assessment, which closed on 24 August 2020, we are making changes to course assessment for session 2020–21. The changes detailed on the following pages are intended to support the delivery of learning and teaching, while maintaining the validity, credibility and standard of the courses.

We have published a high-level report on the outcomes of the consultation, which is available from www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021. This includes details of the modifications to National 5 course assessment, which were planned prior to the 2021 National 5 exams being cancelled.

## National 5 course assessment 2020–21

There will be no external assessment for National 5 courses in session 2020–21. **Candidates will not be required to sit exams and SQA will not assess coursework.** Instead, we are working with stakeholders to develop an alternative certification model for National 5 that is based on teacher and lecturer estimates.

Centres need to gather evidence of candidates' attainment and use this to determine estimate grades and bands. We have published separate guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates and there is an SQA Academy course available to support teachers and lecturers.

We are also developing subject-specific guidance for teachers and lecturers on gathering evidence and producing estimates. This will include how the previously-intended National 5 modifications could be used to support with gathering evidence and producing estimates in session 2020–21. This guidance will be published from the end of October.

Details of the modifications we had previously intended to make to National 5 course assessment in session 2020–21 are included in our high-level report on the outcomes of the consultation.

To view the high-level report, and to access the guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates, visit www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021.

**Higher course assessment 2020–21**

| Component | Marks | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| Component 1: question paper | 80 | 2 hours |
| Component 2: assignment | 40 | 6 hours |

The question paper and assignment components will be modified to give an option of either 'database design and development' or 'web design and development'. This will give teachers and lecturers flexibility in how they deliver the course, and will reduce the volume of assessed content. It will remove any pressure to teach all three practical areas before the assignment and also build contingency to make up for lost time.

This approach reduces assessment by approximately 25%, while ensuring at least one of the database or web areas of study is assessed in each component.

**Question paper**
The marks for the question paper will change from 110 to 80 marks.

There is no change to the style of questions, however we will structure the question paper by area of study.

♦ Section 1 is mandatory and is worth 55 marks covering 'software design and development', and 'computer systems'. Questions will be a combination of short-response questions and larger context-based questions with multiple parts.
♦ Section 2 is worth 25 marks and has the option to answer either 'Part A — database design and development' or 'Part B — web design and development'. Questions will be a combination of short-response questions and larger context-based questions with multiple parts.

The duration of the question papers will change from 2 hours and 30 minutes to 2 hours.

**Assignment**
The total number of marks for the assignment will change from 50 to 40 marks.

♦ The 'software design and development' task is mandatory and remains with 25 marks allocated (15 marks for implementation).
♦ There is an option to complete either the 'database design and development' task or the 'web design and development' task. This has 15 marks allocated, an increase of 2-3 marks from the current arrangements.

The time to complete the assignment will change from 8 hours to 6 hours.

**Advanced Higher course assessment 2020–21**

| Component | Marks | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| Component 1: question paper | 70 | 2 hours and 30 minutes |
| Component 2: project | 75 | No fixed duration |

The optional approach we are taking for database and web content for Higher is not possible at Advanced Higher. This is because:

♦ the volume and complexity of content is not comparable
♦ integrating database and web technologies is a key theme of the course
♦ some candidates may already be progressing a project which involves both areas

Instead, we will not assess 'computer systems' or any of the evaluation sections of the skills, knowledge and understanding of the course in either the question paper or the project.

**Question paper**
The marks for the question paper will change from 80 to 70 marks.

♦ Section 1 will reduce from 20 to 15 marks
♦ Section 2 will remain as four questions with multiple subparts, but will reduce from 60 to 55 marks.

The duration will remain as 2 hours and 30 minutes.

**Project**
The marks for the project will change from 80 to 75 marks, as we have removed the evaluation section.

Candidates can complete the work outwith the supervised classroom environment, however teachers and lecturers must put in place ways to authenticate evidence, for example:

♦ regular checkpoint or progress meetings with candidates
♦ checklists which record activity and progress

This is detailed on page 2 of the Coursework Assessment Task.

If you have any questions about these changes, please email NQ2020@sqa.org.uk.