



## Results Services

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. My centre didn't teach me topics that came up in the examination, can I use the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service?**

A. It is the responsibility of your school or college to ensure you have the knowledge and understanding across the Course syllabus to answer exam questions that SQA may set. The Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service exists to support candidates who have been fundamentally disadvantaged. Only where an exceptional circumstance has occurred can a request be made by the Head Teacher/Principal. The service is not for candidates who have under-performed in the examination due to lack of teaching and preparation.

**Q. I didn't feel well on the day of the examination but didn't tell anyone. I've now failed the exam and want my centre to use the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service, is this possible?**

A. There are very clear guidelines on the timelines available to use the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service. Requests must come to us from centres within 10 working days of the examination. The alternative evidence materials our Examiners need to consider the request has to follow 3 days later. Requests can only be made by the Head Teacher/Principal so it is really important you tell them immediately of any exceptional circumstances that may affect your exam performance. We can't accept any requests after the closing date for the service and our online request system closes.

**Q. Why doesn't SQA release component marks for the grades awarded to Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service candidates?**

A. A condition of using the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service is that centres accept no component marks will be provided. Candidates following the SQA set external assessment route will all undertake the same exam paper, allowing standardisation of national standards. Due to the wide

and varied alternative evidence our Examiners consider for Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service candidates, such standardisation is not possible and therefore no component marks can be provided.

**Q. Does SQA only review the marking of my exam paper as part of the marking review?**

A. No, all externally assessed components of your Course are reviewed. For example, in Higher English we would review the marking of both question papers and the folio sent to us for assessment. We also undertake a clerical check to ensure every question attempted was marked and the marks were correctly input to our computer system.

**Q. Is it a different marker who re-marks my exam paper?**

A. The important point to note is we don't re-mark exam papers. Exam materials are reviewed by a Senior Examiner, never the marker who originally marked the paper. The review will ensure that the original marker followed the agreed marking scheme and that the exam paper was marked to the nationally agreed standard and within the tolerance levels agreed for marking. Our Senior Examiners are not looking to find additional marks, their job is to ensure your exam paper has been marked in accordance with the national standards applied to all candidates.

**Q. Why can't I ask SQA for a marking review?**

A. Candidates can't ask us to investigate results and must ask their school/college to do this. This is because the school/college has responsibility for entering candidates for examinations. It is up to the Head Teacher/Principal to decide, using their professional judgement and knowledge of the candidate, whether there appears to be an anomaly in the result that could suggest a marking error. Schools/colleges will not make requests to the Post-results Service where they do not consider there is good reason to do so.

**Q. I did really well in my prelim and class tests; why won't SQA take this work into consideration and give me the grade I deserve?**

A. If you were affected by an exceptional circumstance that prevented you sitting the timetabled exam this is the evidence our Examiners would review to ensure an appropriate grade was awarded. However, for the vast majority of candidates the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service is not appropriate. We do not consider any alternative evidence when awarding an exam grade to candidates. We will award a grade appropriate to the examination materials sent to us for assessment. It is up to candidates to be well prepared for the external exam and to demonstrate their level of knowledge and understanding.

**Q. I got a grade B estimate from my school but achieved grade C in the exam. Can I insist my school makes a marking review request for me?**

A. An estimate is the professional judgement of your teachers of what they expect you to achieve in the external exam based on your work across the academic year. It is not a guarantee you will achieve the grade. Schools/colleges will only request a marking review when they believe, in their professional judgement, that a marking or clerical error may have been made by SQA. Most centres have criteria they will follow to determine whether or not to make a review request. Please check if your school/college has review criteria in place and obtain details direct from them.

**Q. I'm only one mark short of grade A. Can't SQA just find an extra mark for me?**

A. We know it's really tough when you are so close to the grade boundary and getting a higher grade. SQA has numerous quality assurance processes in place to ensure the grades awarded are correct. Once all marking is complete we set the 'grade boundaries', that is, the number of marks required for an A, B, C and D grade. We then run a quality assurance process called 'finalisation' where we review most exam scripts for candidates on the grade boundaries. This involves our Senior Examiners confirming the marks awarded are correct before we issue results. There will always be candidates who fail to achieve a higher exam grade by a very small margin. At the marking review process our Senior Examiners are checking that the grade awarded to you is correct. They are not trying to find extra marks.

**Q. SQA is only interested in reducing costs and making money out of candidates who fail exams. Is this true?**

A. Results Services were introduced to be fair to all candidates. We genuinely want to ensure that the grade our Examiners award you is correct and rewards the level of work you put into your studies. Results Services let schools/colleges challenge us if they think we made a mistake. That is only fair. However, undertaking the Post-results Service involves substantial operating costs such as holding review meetings, paying for the release of our Examiners from centres and so on. These are additional costs not covered by the exam entry fees. If we have made a mistake we are truly sorry and, of course, no charge is payable, but if the grade awarded originally is correct then schools/colleges pay a fee to cover costs in operating the Post-results Service arrangements. We encourage schools/colleges who believe there is a marking anomaly to use the service.

Our Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service supports candidates who can't sit the timetabled exams, or where an exceptional exam arrangement could have affected performance. We make no charge for using this pre-results service.

**Q. Does SQA tell UCAS the results of priority marking reviews?**

A. Yes. We have data transfer protocols in place between SQA and UCAS to exchange and update results data for candidates applying for college or university admission. SQA sends updated results to UCAS by 31 August for all priority marking review requests that we receive.

- Q. Is it true I will be given 5 extra marks if I can't sit the exam due to a broken leg?**
- A. No, it's not true. We make awards based on demonstrated evidence of achievement only. If you could not sit an exam your school/college would use the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service and our Examiners would award a grade based on the evidence submitted for you. You get no extra marks for any ailment.
- Q. How can we trust SQA to mark every exam paper to the same standard? Surely markers can interpret answers differently?**
- A. We have a range of quality assurance processes in place to ensure standardisation and fairness in marking. Additionally, we are investing in electronic marking processes, which have quality assurance built in to ensure markers are constantly marking to the agreed national standards. Traditional marking relies on quality assurance procedures that require more resources. In 2015, over 70% of exam scripts, including the majority of National 5 and new Higher Courses, will be electronically marked and benefit from built in quality assurance procedures. Our traditionally marked scripts will still benefit from the quality assurance steps of standardisation, marker check and finalisation before we publish results.
- Q. Will SQA accept late Post-results Service requests if we agree to pay a late fee?**
- A. Considerable behind the scenes work goes on, within exceptionally tight deadlines, once a Post-results Service request is submitted to us online.. Exam scripts and other materials need to be pulled from files and review meetings need to be held, which involve the release of Senior Examiners from schools and colleges. Therefore, we do not accept late requests in any circumstances. The online system is now the only way we can accept requests and once the closing date is reached the system automatically closes. Initial results are issued to centres in sufficient time to review grades awarded and consider whether the Post-results Service is needed. Please ensure your centre has processes in place to meet all published deadlines to avoid disappointing candidates.
- Q. Will SQA be re-introducing cohort reviews where we have concerns about grades made to a group of candidates?**
- A. Our initial plans to introduce cohort review procedures were removed in 2014 due to legal advice that the process could be perceived to be unfair to all candidates. They will not be re-introduced. Requests must be submitted for all candidates where the centre has concerns about the grades awarded.
- Q. I'm not prepared to accept the decision of the marking review. How do I appeal the decision?**
- A. The decision of the marking review is final and there is no appeal against the decision. Our Senior Examiners will have reviewed the externally assessed materials and confirmed the grade awarded as meeting national standards. If

an error had been identified it would have been amended. If you remain unhappy you can use the SQA's formal complaints procedures but this will not change the grade awarded.

**Q. When does SQA destroy examination materials?**

- A. All materials from the May and June exams are confidentially destroyed in the first week of December.

**Q. Why won't SQA let me have my marked examination script?**

- A. We appreciate you would find it helpful to see the marked work submitted for external assessment. However, examination materials are exempt from the right of subject access, in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. The detail of the exemption for examination materials is set out in Section 37 of this Act, Miscellaneous Exemptions, which are further defined in Schedule 7. Paragraph 9 of Schedule 7 specifically defines examination materials. They are also exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Candidates therefore have no right of access to their examination materials and it is not SQA's policy to issue such materials.

The Data Protection Act gives individuals the right to ask if SQA possesses any personal data about them by raising a subject access request. There is more information about this kind of request on the Access to Information section of our website at [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)

Where candidates or their representatives submit a request, then we provide the personal data we hold subject to applicable exemptions. During the period in which we hold examination materials this will include any additional breakdown of marks or markers' comments available. This information is only available for some subjects and levels. Candidates can find that comparing any breakdown of marks with the Past Paper, Marking Instructions and External Assessment Report (all available on our website) helps them to better understand their exam performance. It can also be helpful to see the marks attained for each component of the external assessment (eg Paper 1), and the overall estimate submitted by their centre.