Note on Scotland

Grading process

The basic principles behind the alternative Scottish grading system are very similar to England's. Scottish National 5s and Highers qualifications (which usually rely on exams) required teachers to provide estimated grades, which were then moderated by centres and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). The data they have been working with includes: centre estimates; rank orders; historical results; and estimates for all National Courses, as well as students' prior attainment data for many Highers and Advanced Highers.

The main difference is in the significance of the appeals procedure. Whereas the English appeals system (and the Welsh one for the most part) is based on process and data errors only, Scotland has a much more comprehensive appeals process. There will be two post-certification review types using senior subject-specialist SQA examiners: a priority review (for candidates with a conditional university or college offer); and a standard review. Appeals will be submitted by a head of centre and supported by alternative evidence.

Results – how different were they from last year?

Scottish results were announced on 4 August. There were sizeable increases in outcomes:

Pass rates in National Qualifications (A-C), 2019-2020

Award Level	2019	2020	Change (ppt)*
National 5	78.2%	81.1%	+2.9
Higher	74.8%	78.9%	+4.2
Advanced Higher	79.4%	84.9%	+5.5

The grade distribution also changed, with an increase of 2.9 ppt in the proportion of A to C grades at National 5 and **4.1 ppt at A to C in Highers**:

Standardisation process

The aims of the standardisation process were broadly similar to England's. On subject differences, Scottish Government officials understand that smaller entry courses may have been more likely to have had their estimates upheld in the process, but don't have the data to back that up at this point. So it is not clear whether they have had the same issue in the same way as we have with small cohort centres in some A level subjects.

Moderation[1] process – how were numbers calculated

The proportion of grades to be adjusted is a function of the operation of their

[1] Scotland calls moderation what we call standardisation.

statistical model. This was a mixture of national and local moderation, and where estimates fell outside of these ranges, then they would be adjusted down, to bring them back within tolerance. The actual adjusting of grades was done by an optimisation process and looked to adjust grades by the minimum amount to ensure that they returned to fit with identified tolerances.

- Without moderation the rate of attainment at grades A-C compared to last year would have increased by 10.4 percentage points for National 5s, **by 14 percentage points for Highers**, and by 13.4 percentage points for Advanced Highers.
- Of 500,000 entries, 134,000 (around a quarter) were adjusted. **Ofqual estimates around 40% will be adjusted in England.**
- Of the 134,000 entries with adjusted grades – 93% were adjusted down. . **We do not yet have equivalent figures for England, but understand that the vast majority of grades adjusted, will be adjusted down.**
- Of the 134,000 entries with adjusted grades – 96% were changed by one grade (e.g. A to B, or C to D). **We do not have precise figures but understand that the vast majority of grades adjusted in England will only be adjusted by one grade.**
- 45,454 grades were adjusted from an A-C pass to a grade D or No Award.

Disadvantage

The table below from SQA's EQIA shows that students living in the areas of most deprivation did on average have their results moderated to a greater extent than students living in areas of the least deprivation (column B), but that equally it may be seen that estimates for students in areas of most deprivation were more optimistic than those for students in less deprived area as shown by the difference between final 2019 results and 2020 estimates (column A).

However, overall and as set out in the EQIA, students in areas of more deprivation saw a greater increase in attainment than students in less deprived areas between 2019 and 2020 (column C). This has led to the decrease in attainment gap SQA reported, on this measure.

Higher	**2019 final v 2020 estimates (A)**	**2020 estimates v 2020 final (B)**	**2019 v 2020 final (C)**
Most dep	19.8	15.2	4.6
2	18	12.5	5.5
3	14.8	10.9	3.9
4	12.7	9	3.7
Least dep	9.8	6.9	2.9