

Information for candidates undertaking SQA qualifications

Your course handbook outlines the content and structure of your course.

It also tells you where you can find support and guidance and advises you about assessment on your programme of study.

The following provides further information if you are undertaking an SQA qualification:

Assessment

Assessment is the formal way in which we evaluate your attainment of knowledge, understanding and skills, and is a measurement of your performance against national standards. It provides you with worthwhile qualifications that meet your educational and training needs. To be credible, all assessment must be:

- Valid;
- Reliable;
- Practicable;
- Equitable and fair.

Each programme will have an annual assessment schedule that outlines submission dates of assessments for students. This will ensure assessments are sequences in a fair and satisfactory manner. Each unit will have an assessment and delivery plan, which will give details of topics to be taught each week, and when assessments will be scheduled.

Students undertaking SQA programmes will have a maximum of two attempts at each assessment. Any student who does not satisfy the requirements of an SQA assessment on the second attempt will normally be deemed to have failed. A third attempt will only be available in exceptional circumstances.

Roles and responsibilities

A number of people play a key role in our assessment. It's important you know what the following terms mean so you can understand how Inverness College UHI and the SQA ensure your qualification meets recognised standards of achievement.

The candidate - you, the student. You have a duty to comply with all assessment instructions specified in your assessment materials.

The assessor - a member of staff at Inverness College UHI, who is responsible for judging and recording candidate evidence. This is normally your unit lecturer, who marks your work and ensures your results are recorded correctly in the students' records system;

The inter verifier (IV) - an experience subject expert at Inverness College UHI, who ensures that assessors apply standards of assessment uniformly and consistently;

The external verifier (EV) - a person appointed by the SQA, who is responsible for the quality assurance of a centre's provision and for ensuring that standards of assessment are applied uniformly and consistently across centres. Inverness College UHI is an SQA Centre.

How will you be assessed?

SQA units are assessed on a continuous basis and will involve regular assignments, which will often involve work outside of class. You will be assessed using the following methods:

- Case studies (CS);
- Extended response questions (ERS);
- Log books (LB);
- Multiple choice questions (MCQ);
- Personal interviews (PI);
- Practical exercises (PE);
- Projects (PRJ);
- Reports (RP);
- Restricted response questions (REQ);
- Tests/exams (open or closed books).

Assessment feedback

Students will be informed of their progress throughout their course and will have the opportunity for tutorial guidance.

Feedback is the information you receive about your assessment by the assessor (your lecturer for that unit). Your work will normally be marked and feedback given within 15 working days from the date of submission.

Feedback provides you with information about your strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. This is sometimes referred to as feed-forward because it shows you how to move on.

It may also tell you whether you have understood the subject, whether you have answered the questions and whether you have written your work appropriately.

Feed-forward may also tell you to pay attention to certain aspects of your work. This may be about gaps in your knowledge that have to be filled, it may be a lack of understanding that needs you to revise some course content or improving your reading. It could be advice to take support with writing skills or improving your referencing techniques.

Assessment decisions

Progression boards will convene at the end of each semester to confirm assessment decisions and determine progression arrangements. Students should be aware that all assessment decisions are provisional and subject to internal and external verification.

Late submission of assessments

Students who fail to submit assessments by the due date, without good cause, will be regarded as having failed one of their two attempts. The SQA policy is to allow two attempts after which the students is regarded as having failed.

Internal assessment appeals

Appeals that questions the academic judgement of a lecturer will not be considered.

Appeals against the decision of a course tutor will be considered only on the following grounds:

- The student's performance was adversely affected by illness or other factors, which s/he was unable or, with valid reason, unwilling to divulge to the course tutor when s/he made the decision. The student's appeal must be accompanied by documentary evidence e.g. a medical. For appeals relating to Higher Education please refer to Section 13 of the [UHI Academic Standards and Quality Regulations](#).
- Evidence is produced that there was a material administrative error or that the assessments were not conducted in accordance with the course;
- Evidence is available that some other material irregularity has occurred.

Stage 1 - Informal Procedure

A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an assessment should in the first instance discuss the matter with the relevant lecturer or PAT. This should be done within five working days of the assessment or receipt of the outcome of the assessment;

This initial discussion will not alter the student's right to follow the formal procedure (detailed below) but will represent an early opportunity for ambiguities assessment (it should be noted that all SQA assessment decisions are subject to verification and final ratification by SQA)

Stage 2 - Formal procedure

- If the matter is not resolved through the informal procedure, the student should appeal to the Head of Curriculum, including any documentary evidence (for further education courses);
- The Head of Curriculum shall, within 10 working days, consider the appeal and respond to the student in writing within 5 working days of reaching a decision.

Stage 3 - Academic board

- If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, s/he may appeal directly to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. At this stage, appeals may only be made on the grounds of administrative irregularity;
- The committee will convene a panel of three members to consider the appeal. The panel shall consider the written evidence. The decision of the committee is final;
- The chair of the committee will communicate the appeal outcome to the student (in writing) within 5 days of the decision being reached.

Further stages of appeal

Students who are undertaking regulated qualifications have additional stages of appeal open to them. These are:

- An appeal to the SQA (or other awarding body) once Stages 1-3 have been exhausted;
- An appeal to the SQA Accreditation of Ofqual if they feel an appeal has not been dealt with appropriately. An appeal of this nature will not overturn academic decisions, but may trigger an investigation into the effectiveness of the process concerned.

Mitigating circumstances

There may be times when you cannot complete assessments to the best of your ability, are unable to attend an exam, or are unable to meet an assessment deadline due to adverse circumstances beyond your control e.g. illness or serious accident. As a result, students can request that these circumstances are taken into consideration by Inverness College UHI. Submitting a request does not automatically guarantee that it will be accepted.

Mitigating circumstances should be unexpected, disruptive to assessment and out with the student's control. Mitigating circumstances will normally fall into categories listed below:

- Illness or serious accident at the time of an assessment or in the period leading up to formal assessment;
- Serious illness or death of a family member;
- Severe unforeseen personal or psychological problems;
- Unanticipated difficulties in child or adult care arrangements during a semester, where the student is the named carer.

In addition, for part-time students;

- Unforeseen and essential work commitments.

The Mitigating Circumstances Request Form should be submitted in writing to your PAT and accompanied by relevant supporting evidence within 7 days of the submission date for an assessment. If it cannot be submitted in advance, it should be submitted as soon as possible and include reasons for the delay. Please speak to your PAT for more information.

Disability

Guidance and help with assessment arrangements for learners with additional support needs is available from our [Additional Support Team](#).

Please let us know as early as possible that you have a specific need, so we have time to put appropriate support in place for your assessments.

If you wish to disclose a disability or additional support need, please discuss your requirements with the [Guidance Team](#) or your PAT.

Appeals to SQA Results Services

[SQA Results Services](#) is a suite of SQA services covering those national qualifications where an externally assessed examination contributes to the candidate's final award. There are two parts to Results Services:

Exceptional circumstances consideration service:

This service supports candidates who could not sit an exam or who did sit an exam but their performance suffered because of exceptional circumstances, which includes bereavement or serious illness. Minor ailments will not be considered exceptional circumstances.

If your performance in a timetables exam has been affected by exceptional circumstances, Inverness College UHI can inform SQA and submit alternative evidence for consideration. Please contact your lecturer or PAT immediately if you feel that your exam performance has been affected by exceptional circumstances.

The appeal request to SQA has to be made within 10 working days of the exam. SQA will only accept requests direct from Inverness College UHI.

Post-results services

This takes place after candidates have received their results. Candidates concerned about their results may contact Inverness College UHI to request that a post-results service request (appeal) be submitted on their behalf. SQA will only accept requests from Inverness College UHI directly. Requests can be made by contacting the Inverness College UHI Guidance Team on 01463 273460.

Priority requests can only be made for candidates who have been given a conditional offer at college or university, which is dependent on their results. Priority requests must be made by the following day of the candidate receiving their results. Candidates will be asked for the name of the college/university and the programme for which they have a conditional offer.