

National Course modification summary: Physics



Freestanding units at SCQF levels 5, 6, and 7; and National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher: session 2021–22

Freestanding units at SCQF levels 5, 6, and 7

Modifications for session 2021–22 remain the same as session 2020–21.

The requirement to complete outcome 1 in all units is removed.

For freestanding units that were formerly part of the National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher courses, the normally mandatory completion of outcome 1 involves carrying out and reporting on a practical experiment. However, current restrictions make it difficult for centres to carry out practical work safely and in line with the guidelines issued by SSERC. Nonetheless, teachers and lecturers should still endeavour to develop their candidates' practical skills, which are a feature of these units.

There are no modifications to J20D 76: Researching Physics and J2B9 77: Investigating Physics, as these two units are entirely practical based — removing the requirement to pass the outcome would have meant nothing was required to pass the units. Centres should not enter candidates for these units unless candidates are able to undertake all of the necessary practical work.

There are a small number of centres that currently present candidates for units that were part of physics courses prior to Curriculum for Excellence (Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher, and Advanced Higher), perhaps as part of a Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP). In these units, outcome 3 involves 'carrying out and reporting on a practical experiment'. For these units, the requirement to complete outcome 3 is removed for session 2021–22.

National 3

Modifications for session 2021–22 remain the same as session 2020–21.

The requirement to complete outcome 1 in all units is removed.

The development of practical skills in physics is a fundamental part of the course. For the unit assessment, outcome 1 requires candidates to undertake a practical experiment and write a report. However, current restrictions make it difficult for centres to carry out practical work safely and in line with the guidelines issued by SSERC. Nonetheless, teachers and lecturers should still endeavour to develop candidates' practical skills, which are a feature of the National 3 course.

National 4

Modifications for session 2021–22 remain the same as session 2020–21.

The requirement to complete outcome 1 in all units is removed.

There is no requirement to complete the added value unit assessment.

The development of practical skills in physics is a fundamental part of the courses. For the unit assessment, outcome 1 requires candidates to undertake a practical experiment and write a report. However, current restrictions make it difficult for centres to carry out practical work safely and in line with the guidelines issued by SSERC. Nonetheless, teachers and lecturers should still endeavour to develop candidates' practical skills, which are a feature of the National 4 course.

Added value unit

The requirement to complete the added value unit is removed for session 2021–22. To achieve the overall course award for National 4 this session, candidates must pass all other contributing units in the National 4 course. You must submit a 'pass' result for the added value unit to ensure your candidates are certificated for the course award.

You are not required to gather evidence for the added value unit this session; however, it is important you give candidates opportunities to develop and demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding outlined in the National 4 added value unit specification, where possible. This will support your candidates as they progress to further learning and assessment at SCQF level 5.

Although the added value unit allows a range of approaches, including literature research rather than practical work, almost all National 4 added value unit evidence seen at verification in physics includes practical work. It is clear that this is the preferred approach of the physics teaching profession. This may be because many centres have multi-level classes, and using the same approach for National 5 and National 4 candidates allows a similar experience and easier classroom management. In addition, some centres decide later in the academic session whether a candidate is struggling with National 5 and should therefore be presented for National 4 instead.

The removal of the assignment at National 5 this session may create problems for centres with multi-level classes trying to undertake either experimental work or literature research with their National 4 candidates. Restricted access to IT facilities in session 2021–22 could impede candidates' ability to undertake literature research.

National 5

Modifications for session 2021–22 remain the same as session 2020–21.

Component	Marks	Scaled marks	Duration
Section 1 (Objective test)	25	N/A	2 hours 30 minutes
Section 2	110	75	

Question paper

There are no changes to the question paper. The format and duration of the question paper remain unchanged. Additionally, maintaining the current format and balance of the papers means that candidates can be familiar with the style and format of the papers through practising past papers and the specimen paper.

Assignment

The assignment is removed for session 2021–22.

The development of practical skills in physics is a fundamental part of the course. However, current restrictions make it difficult for centres to carry out practical work safely and in line with the guidelines issued by SSERC. The question paper contains a number of questions related to practical work and the skills associated with practical work. It is therefore important that teachers and lecturers continue to develop candidates' practical skills, which are a feature of the National 5 course.

Higher

Modifications for session 2021–22 remain the same as session 2020–21.

Component	Marks	Scaled marks	Duration
Question paper 1 (Objective test)	25	N/A	45 minutes
Question paper 2	130	95	2 hours 15 minutes

Question paper

There are no changes to the question papers. The format and duration of the question papers remain unchanged. Additionally, maintaining the current format and balance of the papers means that candidates can be familiar with the style and format of the papers through practising past papers and the specimen paper.

Assignment

The assignment is removed for session 2021–22.

The development of practical skills in physics is a fundamental part of the course. However, current restrictions make it difficult for centres to carry out practical work safely and in line with the guidelines issued by SSERC. The question papers contain a number of questions related to practical work and the skills associated with practical work. It is therefore important that teachers and lecturers continue to develop candidates' practical skills, which are a feature of the Higher course.

Advanced Higher

Modifications for session 2021–22 remain the same as session 2020–21.

Component	Marks	Duration
Question paper	155	3 hours

Question paper

There are no changes to the question paper, although scaling of marks is now not required since there is only one component. The format and duration of the question paper remain unchanged. Additionally, maintaining the current format and balance of the paper means that candidates can be familiar with the style of questions by practising past papers and the format of the paper through the specimen paper.

Project

The project is removed for session 2021–22.

The development of practical skills in physics is a fundamental part of the course. However, current restrictions make it difficult for centres to carry out practical work safely and in line with the guidelines issued by SSERC. Additionally, some centres often rely on university facilities for equipment that they don't have in centre, and it is unclear whether universities will be able to offer such facilities this year, resulting in additional problems within centres around practical work and apparatus.

The question paper contains a number of questions related to practical work and the skills associated with practical work. It is therefore important that teachers and lecturers continue to develop candidates' practical skills, which are a feature of the Advanced Higher course.

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