

Date 03 April 2020

Your ref

Our ref S&LL/LS/AH

Dear pupils, parents and carers,

I am writing to you to provide you with the information we currently have regarding SQA processes for certification this session. I appreciate that this is a very difficult time for our senior students, and I hope that this letter reassures you that we are doing all we can to ensure that their achievements are recognised and rewarded. This letter has been prepared in conjunction with council officials to state the position in City of Edinburgh schools.

SQA released further details of what they have referred to as their “alternative certification model” on 2 April 2020. I can share some of the details of this model below, but please note that there is yet further advice, dealing with the technicalities of the process, which we have been told we will receive from SQA by 20 April.

You may also wish to refer to the SQA’s newly published online document *Guidance for learners, parents and carers*, which can be accessed via this link: <https://bit.ly/2UD5Laq>

SQA certification for National Qualifications in session 2019-20

The SQA will ask teachers to provide an estimated grade for each pupil in each course, in line with their advice. These estimates will be submitted to SQA by 29 May – note that this is a considerable extension from the original deadline of 24 April.

The SQA will then use all of the information gathered nationally to allow them to adjust estimates where necessary, to ensure consistency both across the country, and in comparison with previous years.

The SQA have stated that results will be issued no later than 4 August, as planned, and they have encouraged pupils to sign up online for the *MySQA* service, to access their results electronically.

Following the publication of results, a free appeals service will be available, to ensure that schools and colleges continue to have a mechanism to question any result.

Communities and Families Directorate

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Estimated grades

The SQA are asking teachers at schools across the country to use their professional judgement, and knowledge of your work, to make an estimate of grades. These will be based on learners' demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for each course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

The SQA will provide detailed guidance to schools on how to determine and submit this estimate information after Easter, and by 20 April.

Please note that an estimated grade is usually based on a range of evidence, which includes formal assessments, coursework, practical or performance elements and a teacher's professional judgement of pupil progress. We know that sometimes a pupil who performs poorly in an assessment earlier in the school year can then significantly improve in the final examination, and we will look for evidence to recognise where pupils have made such improvements.

We are aware that there has been some call for pupils to be allowed to sit a "second prelim" or other formal assessment online, during school closures, to generate additional evidence. The SQA guidance issued on 2 April states *There is no requirement to set additional mock or prelim exams or homework tasks for the purpose of determining a learner estimate.* We are therefore not setting any such tasks for our pupils.

You will appreciate that we can only begin the process of finalising estimated grades once the SQA clarify the process and that this will take some considerable time. We therefore have no information to share at this point regarding your estimates.

SQA Coursework

SQA advice, issued on 24 March, stated that schools are no longer required to submit coursework for marking in Higher or Advanced Higher courses. Any coursework completed thus far can however be considered by teachers as supporting evidence for an estimated grade.

For National 5 courses, some coursework had already been submitted to SQA (to meet earlier deadlines for particular courses). Sadly, SQA have since advised that they can no longer undertake any marking of this submitted coursework, nor can the coursework be returned to schools safely at this time. (It is however hoped that submitted coursework may be used at a later stage if necessary, as part of an appeals process.) Any coursework completed thus far, but not submitted to SQA, may be considered by teachers as supporting evidence for an estimated grade.

Certification of National 2, 3 and 4 qualifications and other awards with an internally assessed component

National 2, National 3 and National 4 qualifications are made up of units, and an added value unit at National 4, which are internally assessed as pass or fail by the school. We will provide the SQA with your unit results based on either existing evidence from assessments that have already been completed, and/or by using teacher professional judgement of your work throughout the year. If you have been unable to sit a unit assessment because of school closures, you will not be disadvantaged.

For National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Skills for Work courses, and Awards, SQA are asking schools to provide them with the results of own internal assessment decisions, where some evidence from the course already exists but further progress is not possible, and/or using teacher professional judgement of your work through the year.

I hope that you find this information useful and that you have a relaxing Easter holiday.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Sweeney
Senior Education Manager