



ELLON ACADEMY

**SQA PRESENTATION
POLICY**

'Expectations for the Senior Phase'

August 2018

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1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is two-fold. Firstly, to provide consistency and clarity in our Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) examination presentation processes and secondly, to make clear the purpose and expectations for pupils returning to S5 or S6 at Ellon Academy. To be effective, this policy must be shared with staff, pupils, parent/carers and others as appropriate. In so doing we provide clarity, fairness and an understanding of assessment and examination presentation decisions in the Senior Phase.

It is recognised that the vast majority of school based qualifications will be gained through the SQA framework. However, other, equally important attainment and achievement successes will also be gained through our Broad General Education and Senior Phase Wider Achievement programmes.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child*, underpins all Ellon Academy policies, procedures and practices to ensure that pupils' rights and responsibilities, along with respect for all are promoted. This links into our *United Nations Rights Respecting School Framework*.

2. SCHOOL AIMS & LINKED NATIONAL PRIORITIES

1. Aspirational Achievement and Attainment

We have the highest expectations for every single young person who enters Ellon Academy. All our young people are given every encouragement to aim for the highest possible levels of achievement in educational attainment and life skills.

2. Transformational Teaching

We aim to provide quality learning and teaching experiences for all our pupils, based on their unique aptitudes, needs and abilities, delivered by a professional and highly dedicated staff. By constantly reviewing and evaluating our curriculum, we aim to ensure that the needs of all learners are addressed. We see each individual as unique and make every effort to make them aware of the school's responsibilities to them and also their responsibilities to the school, fellow pupils and the local community. Also, we have very high expectations for the learning that takes place in every classroom, and for each pupil's contribution to this. Good classroom relationships are crucial to developing a positive school ethos, firmly built on positive relationships between all partners.

3. Limitless Learning

Ellon Academy has a tradition of being a fully inclusive school. We aim to help every individual pupil to benefit from education, and take pride in the support we continue to provide for pupils of all abilities and needs, within a framework of equal opportunities. We aim to continue to be a caring community, providing the highest possible levels of support for all pupils. All members of the Ellon Academy community are valued and respected.

4. Elevating Ethos

Promoting Education at Ellon Academy is firmly founded on a partnership that aims to teach pupils respect for themselves and others. It also aims to make pupils aware of their rights and responsibilities both within the school community and as part of society generally, thus developing effective skills of citizenship and an awareness of the need to care for and value our environment.

5. Promoting Partnerships

Ellon Academy aims to create a learning environment that enables pupils to develop creativity, ambition, enterprise, and the skills and attitudes required for success in life the 21st Century.

3. POLICY AIM(S)

This *Senior Phase Arrangements and SQA Presentation Policy* specifically relates to our *School Aims*, namely:

1. Aspirational Attainment and Achievement
2. Transformational Teaching
3. Limitless Learning
4. Elevating Ethos
5. Promoting Partnerships
6. Excellence and Equity
7. Lifted Leadership

4. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Ellon Academy has embraced the national *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) programme. Teaching strategies to support our pupils' learning have been agreed and documented in our cluster schools' *Learning and Teaching Policy*. The learning framework (curriculum structure) at the Academy progresses from that experienced in our cluster primary schools. CfE curriculum areas are used as 'learning organisers' in the Broad General Education (Primary - S3). To provide our pupils with the greatest personalisation, choice, depth and breadth of learning, this structure continues through to National Qualifications in the Senior Phase (S4 - S6). Pupils' learning is further enhanced and complemented through: inter-disciplinary and thematic activities, thereby ensuring that our pupils meet the four capacities at the heart of the CfE programme.

Apart from a few potential exceptions, all certificated SQA attainment will take place in the Senior Phase. Individual talented and gifted pupils may progress their learning to Fourth Level and beyond in the Broad General Education and therefore it may be entirely appropriate that they are presented for National Qualifications at an earlier stage. The Senior Phase provides significant flexibility to ensure all pupils have opportunities to broaden or extend their learning. In so doing, pupils have every opportunity to formally recognise their learning through the SQA qualification framework.

Parent/Carer Communication

School staff use a range of communication strategies to ensure parents/carers and pupils are aware of Senior Phase curriculum expectations and the academic progress their child is making. These strategies include: monitoring and tracking reports, subject choice recommendations, curriculum booklets, curriculum evenings, parent evenings, summative reports, faculty 'Supporting Progress Letter, mentoring, **parent/carers texts** various intervention strategies, Guidance staff interviews, revision materials and twice yearly letters from the Head Teacher.

S5/S6 – Returning to Ellon Academy

The majority of S4 and S5 pupils chose to return to Ellon Academy for a further school year. To ensure pupils are well prepared for the world of work, training, college or university when they ultimately leave school, they are required to study a minimum number of subjects. Further details are shared through course choice materials each year.

Returning to school for S5 and/or S6 provides further achievement opportunities: vital in today's society. Ellon Academy Principal Teachers of Guidance and DHT Heads of House work with pupils to ensure that pupils return to school with a clear understanding of what they

can expect from the school and, in return, the school's expectations in regard to: attendance, lateness, behaviour, effort, homework and progress. Should expectations not be met, discussions will take place as to whether it is in the pupil's best interests to continue at school for the remainder of that year.

SQA Qualifications

By the beginning of S4, almost all our pupils will be secure in their learning at Third Level. Almost all of our pupils will engage with the SQA qualification framework from S4 of the Senior Phase. However, individual or small groups of pupils who have significant gaps in any of the 8 curriculum areas studied at Third Level will be recommended to continue with a different range of options in S4. These individual pupils will be identified through tracking, monitoring and reporting data and in discussion with: Guidance staff, Support for Learning staff (where appropriate) and their parents/carers, will have a modified Senior Phase curriculum.

Course Recommendations

The opportunity to personalise learning is evident in every pupil's education at Ellon Academy. Throughout the Broad General Education, pupils will follow a 'broad base' of subjects as identified through the 8 curricular areas. As they progress towards the Senior Phase, pupils will personalise their learning by reducing the number of subjects studied and concentrate on maximising attainment in these areas. Throughout their school careers, pupils and parent/carers will be kept informed of progress and recommended subject progression routes through: monitoring and tracking data, Parent Evenings, Curricular Evenings, individual discussions and their child's annual School Report.

Throughout each school session, staff discuss and negotiate targets, next learning steps and, where appropriate, recommend pathways for the following year. During S2, S3, S4 and S5 course recommendations are made for the following session. These recommendations are based upon a pupil's overall: academic progress, effort, attendance, behaviour and attitude in that subject or curricular area. Occasionally, a pupil and/or parent/carer chooses not to follow school advice and selects a subject or level of course which is not advised. In such cases, where there are 'pupil spaces' in a particular class, discussion between all parties will take place to ensure the best learning and attainment outcomes for the pupil involved.

A significant number of our Senior Phase pupils will want to progress their learning from National 5 to Higher Grade. Pupils who are expected to attain a grade A or B at National 5 should consider a one-year progression to Higher Grade in that subject the following year. Pupils who are expected to attain a grade C at National 5 should consider a two-year pathway to Higher, where they gain Unit Passes in the first year of the two-year course and the full course award at the end of the second year of study. Pupils who are expected to attain a grade D at National 5 should consider re-sitting that subject at that level or chose an alternative subject as they are unlikely to attain a Higher Grade. Pupils who achieve National 4 awards should follow progression advice offered by each subject. Subject recommendations for the following year will indicate the appropriate subject pathway based on predicted grades. If a pupil has demonstrated little or no commitment to a subject, they will not be recommended to continue with that subject.

All Senior Phase pupils begin their new courses at the change of timetable in June. S4 and S5 pupils use the *Course Choice* materials to make an informed choice for the following year based upon their expected attainment when the SQA results are published in August. Subject to availability, S4 and S5 pupils who get better or worse than expected SQA results in August can adjust their curriculum accordingly. To ensure pupils quickly settle into their learning, the deadline for any curricular changes is by the end of the second school week in August.

Prelim Examinations

The school recognises the importance of prelim examinations as a 'dry run' for the final SQA examinations in May. For S4 pupils this will be the first occasion they have engaged with the formal SQA examination requirements. Prelim examinations provide pupils with the opportunity to gain experience of the formal SQA process and to demonstrate the required knowledge and skills to pass courses in May. Prelim examination timetables and expectations with regard to: attendance, punctuality and behaviour will be issued each year. The prelim examinations provide teachers with clear data on pupils' progress. This data is used to provide pupils with next learning steps and strategies. In addition, the school uses this information to track and monitor pupils' overall progress and make recommendations for SQA presentation and progression routes for the following year (if appropriate).

Course presentation levels are decided shortly after the prelim examinations. The vast majority of our pupils will continue to be presented at the level they were working at prior to the prelim examinations. In such cases, pupils will continue with their coursework in preparation for the final examination in May. Following the prelim examinations, the minimum attainment for presentation in May is:

SQA Presentations:

- Our aim is for all pupils to achieve a level of success that is equal to, or even greater than, our estimate of their potential
- Pupils complete the course they start, and they complete it successfully
- There is no transfer to a lower level, unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Approval for any transfer to a lower level is by DHT Performance Management on recommendation of House Head. This must be sought and agreed before any paperwork is completed/parents are contacted.
- Non-submission of course work should not result in a pupil being withdrawn from the course/exam.
- Incomplete units should not preclude pupils sitting the exam, if they are capable of sitting them in the period following the SQA exams
- Pupils should not sit Nat 1/2/3/4 course/units if the course/units have already been passed. Pupils must achieve something.
- Level recommendations from S3 →S4 must be evidence based and judgements based on national standards and moderated.
- Early intervention procedures implemented to get pupils back on track.
- Clear communication with parents at prelim time
- Estimate grade takes into account the totality of course assessment

Pupils studying National 4 courses are assessed through coursework rather than an SQA examination in May. Parents/carers will be notified by letter if their child is not making satisfactory progress in a National 4 course.

Parents/carers will be notified by letter if the school is changing their child's presentation status. In the case of course level change, to ensure pupils have the best learning opportunities at their new course level, the process is enacted at the point of parent/carer notification.

If a parent/carer wishes to discuss their child's presentation status, the following process will apply:

- Initial communication received by the Guidance Teacher;
- Guidance Teacher requests the concern in writing (if not already so);
- Guidance Teacher discusses the issue with Principal Teacher (Faculty) / pupil to gain facts and then intimates the background and reason for the decision with the parent/carer;
- If unresolved, the parent/carer writes to the Head Teacher.

Pupils will not be permitted to 'drop' subjects and leave a class to study elsewhere in the school. Each session, class lists are finalised in August. Class teachers, together with pupils and parent/carers are responsible for the attainment of all pupils in their classes. Any exceptional discussion regarding alternative curriculum arrangements requires approval from a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Study Leave

Senior Phase pupils (S4-S6) who, in the opinion of their teachers, have made satisfactory progress in their work, will be granted study leave for the January/February prelim and final SQA examinations in May each year. To minimise 'lost teaching time' the Senior Phase SQA January/February prelim examination diet will take place over as few days as possible and may include INSET days.

Almost all Senior Phase pupils will be engaged with prelim examinations each day throughout this short examination diet at the beginning of each calendar year. Therefore, provided they have made satisfactory progress in their work, Senior Phase pupils are not required to attend normal classes during this period. If a pupil has no prelim examination for a part/whole day, he/she may attend classes to: consolidate learning, revise, complete coursework, assessments etc.

Senior Phase pupils not studying any Higher, Advanced Higher courses and two or less National 5 courses will be offered the opportunity to attend school during the May SQA diet to follow an alternative education programme.

National Qualification Courses – SQA Unit Assessments

Almost all National 5, Higher Grade and Advanced Higher Grade courses are assessed through three or four internally marked units and an external course examination in May. The unit assessments are marked pass/fail. There are no external examinations for National 4/3/2 qualifications. These qualifications are assessed internally by the school and graded as pass or fail.

Unit assessments are not an indicator of likely course success. Unit assessments represent minimum competence in that part of the overall course. The prelim examination will provide a more realistic 'picture' of overall course progress. If pupils successfully complete the unit assessments and pass the external course examination, they will be awarded an overall grade. At National 5, an SQA overall award of A, B or C represents a pass in that

subject. For Higher Grade and Advanced Higher Grade courses, an SQA overall award of A, B or C represents a pass in that subject. For National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses a Grade D award is recognition of the course being successfully completed.

National Qualification Courses – SQA Unit Re-Assessments

All National 5, Higher Grade and Advanced Higher Grade courses are judged through a mixture of internal (school) assessment and external (SQA) examinations. National 4/3/2 courses are assessed entirely through internal assessment and graded as pass or fail. The required standards for both internal and external assessments are set by the SQA and the school will be scrutinised to ensure it is reaching them. For pupils to receive an overall course award, they are required to pass all SQA assessments for that course. **Any pupil who fails a unit assessment will get one further opportunity to pass.** Failure of this re-assessment will result in that pupil being accredited with other unit passes but not an overall course award. Unit assessments take place throughout Senior Phase courses. Most courses have three unit assessments. If a pupil fails a unit assessment, a letter will be sent to notify parent / carers of the seriousness of the situation in that subject and the re-assessment date.

Alternative Assessment Arrangements (AAAs)

Prior to any AA arrangements being agreed, the SQA require the school to demonstrate that the support will make a significant difference to the likely attainment of a candidate. The school will liaise with classroom teachers, subject by subject, to establish if this requirement is met.

The AA arrangements for final SQA examinations will be based on January/February prelim support. Prior to the prelim examinations, parents/carers of S4 pupils will receive their child's AA arrangements to sign and return. S5 and S6 pupils will be responsible for signing for their own AA arrangements, a copy of which will be sent home prior to the prelim examinations.

No AA arrangements will routinely be offered to support class assessments, tests, homework etc. Depending on the required AA arrangements, support for SQA unit assessment may be provided.

Pupils who are entitled to AAA support will be issued with a letter outlining the process nearer the time of the prelim examinations. Following this information, individual SQA Additional Arrangement timetables will be issued.

SQA Results Service (Formally SQA Appeals)

A national two-stage process was introduced by the SQA during session 2013-2014.

- *Stage 1 – The Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service*

This will be applied at the time of an examination if the school considers that a pupil has been disadvantaged, e.g. a close family member bereavement. In relevant cases, a medical certificate may be required.

- *Stage 2 – The Post-Results Service*

After results are published in August, the school can request an administrative review of a pupil's examination and/or request to have the marking of the script checked. There is an SQA charge for unsuccessful requests and a candidate's grade can go down as well as up.

5. POLICY CONSULTATION PROCESS

This Policy has been subject to consultation with sample groups of relevant stakeholders including: teaching staff, parents/carers, the Parent and Pupil Councils and the Ellon Academy Quality Improvement Officer.

6. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

There are no direct staff development and resource implications, however the SQA will charge the school for each unsuccessful 'Results Service' application. Photocopying and postage costs will apply as appropriate.

7. POLICY EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as required and formally as part of the Ellon Academy policy cycle as outlined in the *Whole School Development Plan*. The policy will be formally reviewed during session 2019-2020.