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S4/S5/S6 Parent/Carer

Dear Parent/Carer

SQA

Because of the Coronavirus pandemic, SQA has changed the way that pupil grades at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will be decided this session. This has involved teachers in our schools working together to ensure estimate grades were submitted by the deadline of 29th May 2020.

In deciding the estimate grades for each pupil, schools have followed SQA's Guidance on Estimates, published on 20 April. This Guidance put an emphasis on the importance of **evidence** in coming to decisions, and considerable work has been done within and across schools to come to agreement about the range of evidence teachers could use on which to base their grades. Evidence has included work pupils have done under test or exam conditions, classwork and homework assignments, pupil performance in the type of practical tasks which are covered in courses, and intelligence gathered from information about pupils' prior attainment. Teachers' own knowledge of how well pupils were progressing before schools had to close has also influenced decisions.

The task of creating estimates was not left to individual teachers to do alone. Teachers have worked with subject and faculty colleagues to look at the evidence available: moderation of teacher marking is a standard feature of quality assurance in all our schools and ensures that standards are applied as consistently and fairly as possible from teacher to teacher as well as helping to eliminate any implicit bias; and the ranking process demanded by SQA has involved discussion amongst teachers in all subject teams. Senior Leadership Teams have also been fully involved in this process, and they had the responsibility for signing off grades before final submission to SQA. At every point in this process, staff have been aware of the responsibility they have to pupils as individuals, and as part of the whole cohort of pupils, and have been mindful of SQA's stated aim that no pupil should be disadvantaged because of the changes forced on schools by the Coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, however, everyone is conscious that SQA will make the final decisions about the grades awarded, a process which is likely to involve a degree of statistical modelling over which schools have no control.

As well as submitting estimates for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher students, teachers have also entered unit results for pupils who have been studying units at National 2- 4 levels, and for those who have been studying for other SQA Awards including Skills for Work and National Progression Awards. Again, the advice from SQA was that where units had not been completed prior to schools closing, decisions about whether or not a pupil should be awarded passes in units was to be based on a range of evidence and so the process followed has been very similar to that used to decide estimates.

SQA has intimated that Results will be sent out to pupils on 4th August and that following this, it will offer a Post Certification Review Process – an appeals mechanism. This will have 2 stages. Stage 1, with a closing date of 14th August, will be for Priority Reviews required for pupils whose grades fall short of what is required for entrance to college or university courses. Stage 2, with a closing date of 21st August, will be for the remainder of Post Certification Review requests. Requests can only be made by schools.

The criteria which need to be met before schools can submit a request for a review have been made clear by SQA:

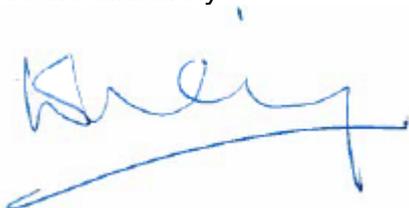
- The grade awarded by SQA must be **below** the estimated grade submitted by the school
- There must be assessment evidence available to support the estimate grade submitted by the school.

When a request for a review is submitted to SQA, the evidence on which the decision has been made has to be sent to SQA and this will be considered by senior subject specialist examiners. SQA may then make one of three decisions:

- It may accept the request and **upgrade** the award
- It may reject the request and **confirm the original grade** awarded by SQA will stand
- It may reject the request and **give a lower grade** if it feels the evidence supplied does not reflect the required standard for the original grade awarded.

If a parent has a concern about a grade awarded, the concern should be discussed with the school. The school will be able to advise whether or not a request would meet the SQA's criteria. Final decisions about whether a request should be made will, therefore, be taken by each school. The last few months have been testing for everyone, but teachers have been united in their desire to do the very best they could for the learners they work with, and this will continue as we move forward into a new school year.

Yours sincerely



Laurence Findlay
Director of Education & Children's Services