
Report To:	Policy & Resource Executive Sub-Committee	Date:	5 May 2020
Report By:	Head of Education	Report No:	PR/13/20/MR
Contact Officer:	M Roach / N Greenshields	Contact No:	01475 712812
Subject:	SQA Qualifications Arrangements 2019/20		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the latest position and guidance from the SQA and Scottish Government regarding this year's examination and qualifications for Senior Pupils.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 On 18th March 2020, the Deputy First Minister announced that this year's exam diet would be cancelled for the first time in history.

2.2 Since then the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has liaised with the professional bodies, including ADES and the unions, to come up with final guidance which was published on 20th April 2020.

2.3 This report provides information on how the SQA has proposed to generate final grades for pupils across the Senior Phase. The full guidance can be found here:
<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93920.html>

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Sub-Committee:

- notes the report and the SQA guidance for the 2020 examination diet
- notes the actions taken by schools and Education Services so far, and the actions proposed, to support schools to deliver on the SQA guidance for the 2020 examination diet

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director: Education, Communities & Committee

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Government announced the cancellation of the 2020 exam diet due to the lockdown and closure of all schools on the 18th of March 2020. The SQA published a holding statement and then final guidance on producing grades on 20th April 2020. The Head of Education wrote to all parents during the Easter break to update them on the position relating to the exams as it was known at the time.
- 4.2 The Inverclyde Council Education team has been briefed and is able to have some influence on the published guidance via the Association of Education Directors Scotland (ADES) – Curriculum and Qualifications sub group.
- 4.3 The Head of Education and Education Officer responsible for SQA Coordination, have met with the Head Teachers on two occasions to keep them briefed on the current position and guidance as it developed. Education services are now supporting and advising Head Teachers with the implementation of the guidance in preparation for submission of the final grade data on 29th May 2020.

5.0 PUBLISHED GUIDANCE

- 5.1 Schools are being asked to produce an estimate grade which will be a holistic professional judgement based on a candidate's attainment in all aspects of the course studied (i.e. attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for the predicted grade and band estimated).
- 5.2 To make accurate estimates, teachers need to have a clear understanding of:
 - the range of skills, knowledge and understanding covered by the course
 - the structure and the assessment requirements of the course
 - the components that contribute to the course award, including weightings where appropriate
 - the grade descriptors for the course
- 5.3 When determining an estimate, schools will be firstly asked to gather and review the key evidence they have for each candidate e.g. prelim or mock papers, additional tasks or assignments, performance or practical evidence. Estimate grades are not just to be based upon one prelim mark but on all the "holistic" evidence available.
- 5.4 There will then be a process of quality assurance carried out by each school to determine the estimate grades, banding and ranking within the estimates. These will be required to be checked and signed off, both at course level and school level, by the Head Teacher before submission to the SQA on 29th May 2020.

Where at all possible, more than one subject specialist will be involved in this process. In one teacher departments, schools will be looking to support this process and their judgements by the involvement of the SQA coordinator. Our work across the authority will be seeking to ensure that a consistent approach to this is taken by all of our schools.

This session, a key aspect of producing accurate and fair results will be how schools convert their estimates into a new refined banding system. The banding system is attached as appendix 1.

- 5.5 Once SQA procedures have been completed and the results announced on August 4th 2020, there will be an opportunity for schools / parents / pupils to consider making an appeal. This is a free process and will be open to our schools to use for any individual where concerns arise about the final result. However, this appeal process will rely upon the identification and collation of clear evidence to support that request. This evidence will be looked at by the

SQA, and a final decision made.

- 5.6 The SQA has published a timeline to support schools, which will include training on grade submission and the releasing of historic predicted grade data for each school and its departments. This will support schools to review the historical accuracy between predicted and actual grades.
- 5.7 The SQA will review the submitted estimates grades for each school against this data set to ensure that there is no inflation of grades and as such ensure the integrity of the final gradings. The school's estimates will not be shared with parents until after the publication of SQA grades in August.

6.0 CHALLENGES

- 6.1 There are significant challenges ahead given the remote nature of teaching staff working from home at this time. Access to school buildings is being managed and coordinated in order to allow teachers to gather evidence required to support estimates. All secondary school buildings, apart from Notre Dame High School, remain open as hubs or centres for catering. We are liaising with FES re NDHS and risk assessments for accessing the buildings are in place.

Given the ultimate deadline for submission at the end of May, schools will need to draw up their own timelines in order to ensure that they can complete all the processes involved and to allow for final sign-off well ahead of time. Inverclyde's involvement in the ADES group pre-publication has ensured that Head Teachers have been well briefed as matters have arisen.

6.2 Communication

The SQA guidance is in the public domain in full and is clear and easy to read. Schools and Education services will continue to communicate with parents and pupils. Head Teachers have met with all Principal Teachers to ensure that they are clear on the guidance, how best to implement it, the timelines and deadlines that will need to be in place.

6.3 Evidence and appeals

Due to the way that the exam process has previously developed there will inevitably be a variation in how departments and schools across the country have gathered holistic evidence over time. Schools will be supported to help address this and to provide reassurance to teachers of the use of, and reference to, a wider evidence base than usual. This evidence base can include prior attainment e.g. Nat 5 outcomes to support estimates for Higher exam outcomes.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

Financial Implications:

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

7.2 Legal

Guidance has been sought from Legal Services about data sharing.

7.3 Human Resources

None

7.4 Equalities

Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

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YES

✓

NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

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YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.

✓

NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

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YES –

✓

NO - This report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

7.5 Repopulation

None.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 N/A

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A.

Appendix 1

Grade	Band	Refined band		Notional % range
A	1	1 Upper	1	93–100
A	1	1 Lower	2	85 – 92
A	2	2 Upper	3	80–84
A	2	2 Middle	4	75–79
A	2	2 Lower	5	70–74
B	3	3 Upper	6	67–69
B	3	3 Lower	7	65–66
B	4	4 Upper	8	62–64
B	4	4 Lower	9	60–61
C	5	5 Upper	10	57–59
C	5	5 Lower	11	55–56
C	6	6 Upper	12	52–54
C	6	6 Lower	13	50–51
D	7	7 Upper	14	47–49
D	7	7 Middle	15	44–46
D	7	7 Lower	16	40–43
No Award	8	8 Upper	17	35–39
No Award	8	8 Lower	18	30–34
No Award	9	9	19	0–29