

Report To:	Education and Communities Committee	Date:	20 January 2015
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/05/15/WB
Contact Officer:	Wilma Bain (Head of Education)	Contact No:	01475 712824
Subject:	Review of S4 Study Leave Arrangements During Exam Diet 2014		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report is to give members of the Education and Communities Committee an overview of the review of the S4 study leave arrangements that were put in place during the SQA exam diet in 2014.
- 1.2 In addition, members of the Education and Communities Committee will be asked to support the proposed S4 study leave arrangements for SQA exam diet 2015.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The new national qualifications for S4 pupils had their first exam diet in 2014.
- 2.2 In session 2014/15, following consultation with secondary Head Teachers, it was agreed that study leave for S4 pupils was no longer viable due to the assessment requirements for the new National 4 and National 5 Qualifications.
- 2.3 At the Education and Communities Committee in September 2014, a request was made for a review of the S4 study leave arrangements to be undertaken and that the outcome of that review be shared with members of the Education and Communities Committee at a future meeting.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members of the Education and Communities Committee are asked to note the outcome of the review of S4 study leave arrangements that were put in place during the SQA exam diet in 2014.
- 3.2 Members of the Education and Communities Committee are asked to support the proposed study leave arrangements for SQA exam diet 2015 as outlined in section 6 of this report.

Patricia Cassidy
Corporate Director
Education, Communities and Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In session 2014/15, a decision was taken by Education Services' Senior Management Team, in consultation with secondary Head Teachers, that study leave for the S4 cohort was no longer viable as many S4 pupils were studying new National 4 courses which are based on internal assessment with no external SQA exam.
- 4.2 The result was that the S4 timetable continued to operate for both National 4 and National 5 courses during the period of the 2014 SQA exams. The potential benefits identified at that time were as follows:
- Pupils studying National 4 courses will continue their course until all coursework is completed, participate in planned activities designed to progress their learning from each National 4 course, and begin work, where appropriate, on the new National 5 courses.
 - Opportunities would be provided for targeted pupils studying National 4 courses to experience taster sessions at college to support them in making decisions about their post-school destination.
 - Pupils studying National 5 courses will have more learning and teaching time which will assist them with their exam preparation in the form of supported study activities and subject-specific tutorials.
 - Once a pupil has sat their National 5 exam, work can begin on preparation for Higher Grade courses in S5.
 - A subject-specific tutorial will be offered on the day prior to that subject's National 5 exam. Alternatively, pupils can choose to study at home on that particular day. However, I would like to stress that our preference was that all pupils come into school to study where they will have access to staff who can support their exam preparation.
- 4.3 It was agreed that upon completion of a National 5 exam, pupils could choose to go home for the rest of that day.
- 4.4 Secondary Head Teachers were recently asked to consult with a sample group of pupils, staff and parents/carers to review the S4 study leave arrangements for 2014, and in doing so help to inform a recommendation for study leave arrangements for exam diet 2015. Questions are shown on Appendix 1.

5.0 OUTCOME OF REVIEW

- 5.1 The overall response to the questions outlined in Appendix 1 from pupils, staff and parent/carers were very mixed and varied from school to school.
- 5.2 Overall, S4 pupils who were studying National 4 courses and had the opportunity to attend taster sessions at West College Scotland found their experience enjoyable and useful.
- 5.3 Many of the S4 pupils involved in this review found attending classes up to their National 5 exams helpful in preparing them for their SQA exams. However, the

majority of S4 pupils studying National 5 courses agreed that they would have felt better prepared for their National 5 exams if they had been allowed to study at home as part of study leave arrangements. Some pupils found it stressful starting the new Higher course following a National 5 exam while there were other National 5 exams to study for in other subjects.

- 5.4 The response from teachers who took part in the review varied from school to school. There seemed to be inconsistency in how the time following National 5 exams was used in classes. Some departments let pupils study for other National 5 exams, while others started the Higher Grade course. Teachers reported that new Higher Grade course work had to be repeated for many pupils for a variety of reasons, for example some pupils chose to study at home throughout the exam period and others missed classes due to sitting other National 5 exams.
- 5.5 The majority of parents/carers who participated in the review did not think that their son/daughter was better prepared for their SQA exams last session as a result of the increased time in class due to study leave not being granted. Their main concerns were that they felt attending classes for revision was distracting and stressful, and that there should be an element of choice as to where pupils study without any penalties on their school attendance record. Parents overwhelmingly felt that pupils should be allowed to go home immediately after their exams to allow them to de-stress before their next exam. There were some parents who were supportive of the arrangements in place for S4 pupils studying National 5 exams and were happy to send their son/daughter to classes throughout the exam diet.
- 5.6 The majority of our secondary Head Teachers recommend that S4 study leave is not granted to S4 pupils in the 2015 SQA exam diet and that the arrangements put in place last session be continued. These Head Teachers felt that many of the concerns raised by pupils, staff and parents/carers can be addressed by making adjustments to the school arrangements, for example, giving pupils time off before their exam and allowing them to go home after sitting an exam.
- 5.7 The majority of secondary Head Teachers recommended that study leave continue to be granted to S5/S6 pupils. The majority of these senior pupils will have surpassed the statutory school leaving age. For S5 pupils there is more uncertainty as to their course progression routes as the results of their SQA exams will have a greater influence on their course choice for the following school session. In addition, Higher Grades and Advanced Higher Grades are the exit qualifications for the majority of senior pupils.

6.0 PROPOSALS

- 6.1 The first proposal is to take account of the majority view from secondary Head Teachers and not grant full study leave for S4 pupil during the 2015 exam diet. Instead, arrangements should be put in place to provide supported study classes/pre-exam tutorials leading up to National 5 exams similar to those in place during exam diet 2014. Thereafter, pupils will start Higher Grade course work.
- 6.2 The second proposal, taking into account the views of all those consulted in this review, is to put in place arrangements that will allow S4 pupils studying National 5 courses to have an opportunity to study at home the day before their National 5 exam and only have to attend school the following day to sit their exam. If pupils wish to go home immediately after sitting their exam they can do so.
- 6.3 The third proposal is to continue to allow study leave for S5/6 pupils.

6.4 The fourth proposal is to continue to review the S4 study leave arrangements on an annual basis.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct financial costs associated with the information provided in this paper.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

7.2 Legal
There are no legal implications.

7.3 Personnel
There are no personnel implications.

7.4 Equalities
The proposed arrangements for S4 pupils during the SQA exam diet 2015 are designed primarily to support all S4 pupils with their learning and ultimately impact positively on their success with the new National Qualifications.

7.5 Repopulation
N/A

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Each secondary Head Teacher was asked to consult with a sample group of pupils, teachers and parents/carers using the questions outlined in Appendix 1.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A

QUESTIONS FOR S4 PUPILS (Session 2013/14)

Pupils studying Nat 3 or Nat 4 Courses (Sample No: 10-15 pupils)

- 1 Did you participate in a taster course at college during the SQA exam diet in 2014?
- 2 If so,
 - a. Did you enjoy the experience?
 - b. Find the experience useful?
 - c. Found that it helped your decision about what you want to do when you leave school?

Please tick all boxes that apply.

Pupils studying Nat 5 Courses (Sample No: 10-15 pupils)

- 1 Did you find attending classes up to your National 5 exam helpful in preparing you for your SQA exams last session?
Yes No
- 2 Would you have felt better prepared for your National 5 exams if you had been allowed to study at home as part of study leave arrangements?
Yes No
- 3 Do you have any other comments regarding the arrangements for S4 pupils last session during the SQA exam diet?

QUESTION FOR TEACHING STAFF

- 1 Do you think that your S4 Nat 5 class(s) were better prepared for the SQA exam last session as a result of the increased time in class due to study leave not being granted?
Yes No

QUESTION FOR PARENTS/CARERS (Sample No: all staff who taught S4 Nat 5 classes last session)

- 1 Do you think your son/daughter was better prepared for the SQA exam last session as a result of the increased time in class due to study leave not being granted?
Yes No

APPENDIX 1 – REVIEW OF S4 STUDY LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS DURING SQA EXAM DIET 2014

RECOMMENDATION FRO HEAD TEACHER

- 1 Please provide your overall recommendation regarding study leave arrangements for S4 pupils for SQA exam diet 2015.