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Dear Parent/Carer

### **SQA Arrangements: Current Position**

Further to the announcement made by the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 that there would be no SQA examination diet this year as a result of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, I am writing to provide an update with regards the current position in relation to certification. Firstly, I appreciate this is a period of great anxiety for all concerned; teachers, parents and most importantly the young people themselves who will have worked so hard as they headed towards their final exams this term. This is the first time in the history of the SQA that exams have not taken place, clearly underlining the gravity of the current situation we are living in.

The SQA has recently announced how awards will be determined in August and schools have a critical role to play in this. In order to begin the process of awarding grades, the SQA will ask our teachers to provide estimate grades, based on the evidence available to them, for each course being undertaken by each student, and these will be submitted to the SQA by 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Each estimate grade will be based on the teacher's professional judgement of what a student would have been likely to achieve in the exam in this year's examination diet, if it had taken place. Each teacher's professional judgement will be informed by various sources of evidence, which may include ongoing class assessments, prelims, homework and other assignments and coursework completed over the course of a year. Teachers will consider all of this evidence alongside any improvements a student has made since the prelim exams held earlier this session. Teachers will have engaged in moderation and quality assurance activities with colleagues to validate their own assessment of a student's performance and this will inform the teacher estimate grade.

To assist teachers and schools in allocating estimate grades the SQA will be sending back to schools the estimates and then the actual grades for all learners from the past three years' examination diets to show the link between school estimate grades and the final grades awarded by SQA. More detail is provided on the [SQA website](#).

Once the estimate grades are submitted by schools, the SQA will then consider these alongside any other information they have, including prior attainment and trends of attainment over time for individual schools and courses. This will then inform the final award which the SQA allocate for each course to each student, in August.

Curriculum for Excellence, and the new examination system which arose from Curriculum for Excellence is built on the foundations of teacher professionalism and teacher professional judgement and we are fortunate in Aberdeenshire to have a well trained and highly skilled and experienced teacher workforce.

In Aberdeenshire, we have a robust and well-tested process for analysing SQA data and school performance both at local authority and individual school levels. As such, this gives us a very high level of confidence in teacher estimates as demonstrated through our performance reviews with schools each year where we see these estimates translated into final awards.

There has been no appeals process in place for SQA exams since 2014 when the previous appeals system was replaced with a marking review. However, given this year's extraordinary circumstances, the SQA will be re-introducing a free appeals process whereby schools can appeal if they feel a candidate has received the wrong award and they have evidence to present to appeal the grade awarded.

I wish all our students well for their future studies or transitions post school. Should any young person feel particularly anxious at this time, then they should contact their school to discuss their specific concerns to ensure appropriate support and reassurance can be provided at what is a challenging time.

Yours sincerely



**Laurence Findlay**  
**Director of Education & Children's Services**