

18 May 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Alternative Model for Certification (ACM)

As you know, the cancellation of this year's examination diet led the SQA to introduce a new approach to providing grades for young people sitting courses in session 2020/21. This new approach is called the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). It is based on young people producing evidence of "demonstrated attainment" using assessment tasks that are in line with the guidance and regulations set out by the SQA for each subject and level. The evidence that is collected will allow teachers to make a professional judgement about what grade each candidate in each course should be awarded. These grades will be submitted to SQA on 25 June. They will then be formally issued to candidates on their SQA Results Certificate on 10 August.

Schools have been allowed some flexibility by SQA about the arrangements they have in place for carrying out assessments (for example, whether assessment papers are split or carried out at one time and whether or not assessments take place in classrooms or in a larger space). Head Teachers and staff in our secondary schools have planned all of this very carefully, taking account of factors such as the number of pupils sitting courses, staffing and timetabling matters and the extent to which the pandemic has affected the delivery and completion of courses. While this means that practical arrangements may vary from school to school, it is very important that all of the grades that are decided upon by teachers are in line with national standards. SQA has issued "subject-specific guidance" that set out the requirements for each subject and level and have made clear that these requirements must be followed. This term's assessments will provide the most valid and reliable attainment evidence across the whole course, though supporting evidence from before the period of remote learning may also contribute to final grades.

To make sure teachers finalise grades correctly, schools are taking part in quality assurance activities this term. This is to make sure that the whole process is as fair and accurate as it can possibly be when we do not have the usual situation with an external examination diet.

Throughout this term, teachers will be talking to young people and families about how assessments are progressing and towards the end of term teachers' final decisions will be shared, once all of the assessments and the quality assurance checks are complete.

The SQA has announced that there will be an appeals process, which we had expected to hear about early in May. Unfortunately the details of this have not yet been finalised by SQA. As soon the information is available we will provide further advice.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we deliver the Alternative Model for Certification, in line with the strictly defined guidance from SQA. If you have any questions about the assessment timetable for your child/ren please contact the school directly. Similarly, if you have concerns about your child/ren's wellbeing, please make contact with the school guidance/support team.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicky Grant'.

Nicky Grant
Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning