



Your Ref:
Our Ref: ES/SP
Contact: Eleanor Sheppard
Location: Marischal College

Date: 13 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Senior Phase National Qualifications Update

In December, the Scottish Government cancelled all SQA examinations for session 2020/2021 and advised that National Qualifications would be awarded on the basis of estimate grades submitted by schools to the SQA. These estimate grades would be confirmed as the final grade by the SQA, as the awarding body.

Following the First Minister's announcement that schools will operate on a remote learning basis until at least the beginning of February, I write to reassure you that all our secondary schools have plans in place to ensure the successful completion of National Qualification courses and associated assessment evidence.

The priority for our schools at this time is to continue to deliver National Qualification courses to Senior Phase pupils. This is in line with an update provided by the SQA on Tuesday 12 January which states:

The priority for schools and colleges during January should be to maximise learning and teaching time. Given the move to remote learning and the challenges learners face, the assessment of learner evidence cannot be undertaken unless young people have the foundation of teaching and learning of course content. This will impact on the timing of assessment, which can take place in the later stages of the 2020-21 session. **(Extract from SQA National Qualifications Update 2021 Tuesday 12 January 2021)**

Currently, teachers are either delivering new course content and/or consolidating key knowledge and skills through Google Classroom. It is crucial, therefore, that our young people work with their teachers and engage fully with Google Classroom. Young people have been asked to complete a daily registration form and you will be informed if your child is not engaging with Google Classroom sufficiently. The last period of school closure showed that some young people adapt better to a digital learning environment than others and it is important that you make your child's school aware of any issues you may be experiencing so that we can work with you to ensure the best possible outcomes for your child.

In terms of gathering assessment evidence for pupils' estimated grades, SQA guidance states that assessment evidence should reflect the breadth and depth of the course. In its most recent update, the SQA has highlighted the importance of planning assessment when young people are at a more advanced stage of course completion. As such, schools will schedule assessments to take place in the later stages of the 2020-21 session. These planned assessments will add to the body of

evidence which teachers have been gathering throughout the session for each learner.

The Scottish Government has indicated that they will inform schools of any extension to remote learning on 18 January 2020. If the decision is made that pupils can return to school in February, each secondary school will communicate their updated assessment calendar to pupils and parents/carers. If a further extension of online learning is announced, we will consider alternative arrangements to gather assessment evidence, for example, digitally. Whatever is decided, I want to assure you that we will adapt to the circumstances. We have been undertaking extensive scenario planning to ensure that our young people are afforded the best possible opportunities to demonstrate their progress and attainment.

Plans are already in place at school, Authority and SQA level to moderate key pieces of assessment evidence to allow for a fair assessment of pupil attainment. The estimated grades which schools will submit to the SQA will be shared with you.

We may hear of changed SQA expectations over the coming weeks but want to reassure you that our approach is sufficiently flexible to take account of further changes. We will continue to keep you updated on any changes and appreciate your on-going support during this challenging period.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eleanor Sheppard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'E' and 'S'.

Eleanor Sheppard
Chief Education Officer