

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 March 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Supporting the Alternative Model for SQA Certification in 2021
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ update the Committee on current and future SQA/Moderation activities to support the national qualifications of senior phase pupils.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s): -

- (1) that the planned local Quality Assurance and Moderation activity in schools to support the national qualifications of learners in the senior phase be noted, and
- (2) that the ongoing support being provided to Secondary establishments across Education Resources be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. Following the closure of schools in Scotland from 20 March 2020 as part of the national lockdown resulting from the Covid pandemic, schools reopened to all pupils on 11 August 2020.
- 3.2. On 7 October 2020 it was announced that National 5 examinations would be cancelled and replaced by awards based on teachers' judgements of candidate evidence supported by an alternative certification quality assurance model.
- 3.3. On 8 December 2020 it was further announced that the Higher and Advanced Higher examination diet would also be cancelled and awards would be made using the same alternative certification model being developed for National 5.
- 3.4. On 4 January 2021 it was announced that pupils would not return to school buildings and that from January 2021 all learning was to be undertaken remotely.
- 3.5. It is noted that many schools had planned to run Higher and Advanced Higher 'prelim' diets during January and that, following the cancellation of the SQA examination diet, this would be an opportunity to gather evidence of a high predictive value i.e. assessment of content and skills at known SQA levels under controlled conditions. As a result of the January lockdown, schools had to revise their plans for assessment.

- 3.6. Since 22 February 2021 a small number of senior phase pupils (up to 8% of the school roll) have been able to attend school to undertake practical activities in support of their qualifications.

4. Alternative Certification Model

- 4.1. Pupil awards will be made using grades submitted by teachers to the SQA based on evidence of demonstrated attainment from high predictive value assessments completed under controlled conditions in school.

- 4.2. Two significant changes have been introduced to the model, to address issues with the process implemented last year:

- there will be no adjustment for inferred attainment
- there will be no 'algorithm' applied to pupil grades

- 4.3. As a result, pupil grades will be based solely on their demonstrated attainment.

- 4.4. A multi-stage model for quality assurance has been developed by the SQA in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including teacher unions, directors of education, regional improvement collaboratives, colleges, independent schools, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government.

- 4.5. The stages are:

Stage 1, Nov 2020 – April 2021:

Support for teachers in 'understanding standards' and local approaches to moderation;

Moderation of pupil evidence in schools and at subject level across the Local Authority or Regional Improvement Collaborative;

Stage 2: April – May 2021

Moderation of pupil evidence in schools and at subject level across the local Authority or Regional Improvement Collaborative continues;

During May, SQA will request, review and provide feedback on samples of assessment evidence from each centre.

Stage 3: End May – 25 June 2021

Finalisation of assessments in schools, and engagement at school and local authority level to ascertain consistency of approach and to reassess any unexpected outcomes based on the evidence presented by the school.

Stage 4, 25 June: Final submission of results.

Stage 5: Appeals process.

5. Supporting Moderation at Stage 1/2

- 5.1. Moderation is the process by which teacher judgements relating to pupil assessments and evidence are shared and discussed to ensure that SQA standards are consistently applied.

- 5.2. Local Authority subject networks have been previously established to support collaboration and professional dialogue in SQA subjects. Subject Networks are undertaking, and supporting, school and local authority moderation and supporting assessment approaches for session 2020-21.

- 5.3. Subject Lead Teachers lead subject moderation activities across 34 subject areas for all South Lanarkshire Council subject teachers. Guidance has been developed to support each of the Subject Networks to help facilitate and promote professional engagement in moderation activities.
- 5.4. 13 link Depute Head Teachers are working with the Subject Lead Teachers to provide strategic support to Subject Networks as a means of establishing consistency.
- 5.5. Further proportionate support is provided for each of the subject networks and associated link DHTs by members of the CQIS.
- 5.6. On 10 February 2021, the Subject Lead Teachers organised online moderation activities for the 1627 teachers currently employed within our 20 secondary school establishments. This provided an opportunity for all subject teachers to be involved in professional dialogue focused on moderation; to share their understanding of standards in each of the NQ levels and to collaborate as a subject network. Agreed actions and next steps for moderation are now in place across each Subject Network.

6. Quality Assurance at Stage 3

- 6.1. Each school will engage with the CQIS Service Manager with responsibility for Senior Phase Curriculum and Attainment to agree a school level moderation process.
- 6.2. Education Resources staff will meet with each secondary school Senior Leadership Team in May/June to consider anticipated provisional awards.

7. Pupil Voice

- 7.1. In February 2021, a programme of engagement with Senior Phase pupils through an online questionnaire to evaluate remote learning experiences and to take views relating to SQA qualifications was launched.
- 7.2. Pupil focus groups are planned as a follow-up activity enabling senior phase learners to share their experiences of undertaking SQA qualifications in such challenging circumstances. The outcomes from this programme will inform the work of Education Resources and schools moving forward.

8. Employee Implications

- 8.1. There are no direct employee implications arising from the recommendations in this report. However, it is recognised that our employees in secondary schools are central to the assessment, moderation and certification process and engagement will continue with them to provide guidance, support, and training as we move ahead.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

10. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 10.1. There are no direct climate change, sustainability or environmental implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1. The requirement to meet the timelines as shown in para 4.5 will be monitored and support provided to schools to ensure that all deadlines for certification are met.

12. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 12.1. The report does not present a new strategy, policy or plan and therefore not subject to an equality impact assessment.
- 12.2. Consultation and engagement with staff in secondary schools, the SQA, Education Scotland, the professional associations, trade unions, young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders is a cornerstone of our implementation plan for the journey towards certification.

Tony McDaid
Executive Director (Education Resources)

4 March 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- Work with communities and partners to promote high quality, thriving and sustainable communities.

Previous References

- ♦ None

List of Background Papers

- ♦ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact: -

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