INDEX OF ENCLOSURES

Description	Date	Explanation of redactions	Clause
Enclosure 1 – Calendar request for meeting on 11/06/2020	10/06/2020	Personal information: names and contact details

Teleconferencing details | 38(1)(b)

30(c) |
Enclosure 2 – Email from SQA to Deputy First Minister's office	10/06/2020	Personal information: names and contact details	38(1)(b)
Enclosure 2.1 – Agenda for meeting on 11/06/2020		Personal information: names	38(1)(b)
Enclosure 3 – Email from Scottish Government officials to Deputy First Minister's office	10/06/2020	Personal information: names and contact details	38(1)(b)
Enclosure 3.1 – Briefing for meeting with SQA on 11/06/2020		Personal information: names and contact details	38(1)(b)
Enclosure 4 – Emails between SQA and Deputy First Minister's office	30/07/2020	Personal information: names and contact details

Teleconferencing details | 38(1)(b)

30(c) |
Enclosure 5 – Emails between Scottish Government officials and Deputy First Minister's office	30/07/2020	Personal information: names and contact details	38(1)(b)
Enclosure 6 – Email from SQA to Deputy First Minister	30/07/2020	Personal information: names and contact details	38(1)(b)
Enclosure 6.1 – SQA PowerPoint presentation			-
Enclosure 7 – Calendar request for meeting on 30/07/2020	30/07/2020		-

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk> **On Behalf Of** Fiona Robertson
Sent: 10 June 2020 08:55
To: 'Fiona Robertson'; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; Gill Stewart; Jean Blair
Subject: 2020 Awarding: Meeting with SQA and the Deputy First Minister
When: 11 June 2020 12:30-13:30 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London.
Where: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Dear all

Please see confirmed slot for the meeting with DFM and SQA colleagues. An agenda will be circulated shortly. Joining link below.

Kind regards
[Redact s38(1)(b)]
_____

Join Microsoft Teams Meeting [Redact s30(c)]

Learn more about Teams │ Meeting options
_____

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk> **On Behalf Of** Fiona Robertson
Sent: 10 June 2020 15:14
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>;
[Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; [Redact
s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>;
[Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; Jean Blair
<Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; Dawnne Mahmoud <Dawnne.Mahmoud@sqa.org.uk>; John
McMorris <John.McMorris@sqa.org.uk>; Lee Downie <Lee.Downie@sqa.org.uk>; Michael
Baxter <Michael.Baxter@sqa.org.uk>; David Middleton <David.Middleton@sqa.org.uk>;
David Middleton [Redact s38(1)(b)]a@gmail.com>
Cc: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: Agenda - SQA 2020 Awarding presentation - Thursday 11 June, 1230-1330

Please find attached agenda for SQA's 2020 Awarding presentation, taking place on
Thursday 11 June from 1230-1330 via Microsoft Teams.

Kind regards,
[Redact s38(1)(b)]

[Redact s38(1)(b)]
Scottish Qualifications Authority

m: 07[Redact s38(1)(b)] **w:** http://www.sqa.org.uk

Please note [Redact s38(1)(b)]

1. SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
2.
3. 2020 AWARDING PRESENTATION TO THE DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

4. AGENDA

Time: **12.30pm – 1.30 pm**

Location: **MS Teams**

In attendance:
John Swinney MSP - Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Supporting officials tbc

SQA

David Middleton – Chair
Fiona Robertson – Chief Executive and Scotland's Chief Examining Officer
Jean Blair – Director of Operations
Gill Stewart – Director of Qualifications
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]

[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official][Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]

Time	Item	Topic	
12.30	1/1	Welcome and introductions	Fiona Robertson
12.35	1/2	Introduction to 2020 Awarding	Jean Blair
12.40	1/3	2020 Awarding • Higher National and Vocational Qualifications • Estimates • Awarding • Resulting & Certification • Post Certification Review • Communications • Business Systems	[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official] [Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official] [Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official] [Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official][Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official][Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official][Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
13.05	1/4	Q&A	All
13.25	1/5	Wrap up and closing remarks	Fiona Robertson Deputy First Minister

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Sent: 10 June 2020 17:10
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redact s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>
Subject: Briefing - DFM discussion with SQA staff regarding work to deliver the certification model

Hi [Redact s38(1)(b)]

As discussed, to see the briefing for DFM's call tomorrow with SQA staff regarding the work to deliver the alternative certification model.

Thanks

[Redact s38(1)(b)]

[Redact s38(1)(b)]
Senior Phase Unit - Learning Directorate
Scottish Government
(0131 24) x. [Redact s38(1)(b)]

email: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

MEETING WITH EMPLOYEES OF SQA

Date and Time of Engagement	Thursday 12 June 2020, 12:30 - 13:30
Where	Via MS Teams – invite is attached to calendar request
Who	Included in agenda at annex A
Key Purpose / Message	- Fact-finding on the progress being made to deliver this year's awards approach - To engage with SQA employees during a period of high pressure and profile
Media Handling	Non-media event
Official Support	[Redact s38(1)(b)]
Annexes	**Annex A** – Agenda **Annex B** - Top Lines/Discussion Points **Annex C** – Latest SQA Coronavirus statement – 3 June

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

2020 AWARDING PRESENTATION TO THE DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

AGENDA

Time: **12.30pm – 1.30 pm**

Location: **MS Teams**

In attendance:
John Swinney MSP - Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Supporting officials tbc

<u>SQA</u>

David Middleton – Chair
Fiona Robertson – Chief Executive and Scotland's Chief Examining Officer
Jean Blair – Director of Operations
Gill Stewart – Director of Qualifications
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]

Time	Item	Topic	
12.30	1/1	Welcome and introductions	Fiona Robertson
12.35	1/2	Introduction to 2020 Awarding	Jean Blair
12.40	1/3	2020 Awarding • Higher National and Vocational Qualifications • Estimates • Awarding • Resulting & Certification • Post Certification Review • Communications • Business Systems	[Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official] [Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official] [Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official] [Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official][Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official][Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official][Redact s38(1)(b) – SQA official]
13.05	1/4	Q&A	All
13.25	1/5	Wrap up and closing remarks	Fiona Robertson Deputy First Minister

TOP LINES/DISCUSSION POINTS

Alternative certification model
- More than half a million grade estimates from teachers and lecturers were submitted by the deadline of 29 May.
- Focus is now on obtaining all unit results (including free-standing units at SCQF 5 & 6) by the preferred deadline of 12 June, postponed due to the estimating process.
- The main focus of SQA's efforts now moves onto Pre Diet Assurance between 6-28 June, which will assess the need for any moderation of estimates. There has been discussion about the degree to which SQA will engage with schools/colleges where there may be significant divergence between estimates and SQA data. SQA have indicated they are unlikely to engage in such discussion because of resource cost and the difficulty in ensuring fairness for all schools and colleges.
- Any significant divergence between estimates and final awards will likely receive political and media focus. SQA are committed to providing an explanation for any such difference on Results Day.
- Implementing the alternative certification model is a considerable undertaking and is on track. Risks are being actively managed, especially for the data/software preparation for the awarding strand, reflecting the complexity and scale of the challenge.
- As several local authorities have indicated that not all centres can digitise evidence, the working assumption is that evidence required for the post certification review will be digitised at SQA Lowden and the practical requirements are being investigated.
- Following a proposal by DfE Ministers to introduce legislation to change an exemption in the Data Protection Act (DPA) to ensure that pupil grade estimates would never be released, Officials continue to consider the issue of release of grade estimates, and how it may be best handled post-results day by the wider education system.
- Significant effort has been undertaken to ensure that paper certificates of awards can be issued to coincide with Results Day, although all candidates are being encouraged to sing up to MySQA to also receive results electronically.
- Guidance has been issued setting out a Post-certification appeals process. This is likely to see a raised level of demand compared previous years and SQA are taking steps to support this, although there is some concern about the call on teacher resource to assemble evidence for appeals as schools are returning on 11 August.
- SQA have committed to completing and publishing an EQIA to support the certification model, but have not given an indication of a likely date yet.

Communications
- There has been some criticism of the SQA from politicians and unions about its communications with teachers and stakeholders.
- In developing its guidance the SQA engaged with teachers and a range of other stakeholders.
- It has worked with Young Scot to share recorded questions and answers through the appropriate social media channels. Engagement continues with Carers Trust Scotland, Scottish Youth Parliament and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland to ensure the voice of young people is heard and responded to using learner-friendly language.
- SQA also continues to engage with the National Parent Forum Scotland, Connect and the Scottish Government's parental engagement network to make sure information reaches parents and carers.

Annex B – Latest SQA statement to schools and colleges – Wednesday 3 June 2020

National Qualifications 2020 Awarding - an update for schools and colleges

In response to the cancellation of this year's exams, we have been working on developing an alternative certification model, to ensure the hard work of Scotland's learners is fully recognised through our qualifications system. Following the receipt of refined estimates for learners from schools and colleges across Scotland, I would like to further update you on our work this year, including details of our free appeals service.

As you know, three guiding principles have underpinned our work:

- fairness to all learners

- safe and secure certification of our qualifications, while following the latest public health advice; and

- maintaining the integrity and credibility of our qualifications system, ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners

I am committed to ensuring we meet our obligations to the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, through an equality impact assessment of our approach to certification this year. We take this commitment very seriously. It is also, of course, our intention to publish the assessment.

As I set out on 20 April, our approach is made up of four steps. Here is an update on each of these steps.

Step 1 – Estimates

Estimates are the core element of the certification process this year, in the absence of national performance data such as exams and coursework. These estimates have now been submitted to us by schools and colleges across Scotland.

To support schools and colleges with the estimation process, we provided detailed information and an online SQA Academy course. Teachers, lecturers and partners from across education helped inform the approach and the guidance, which included advice on ensuring consideration of equalities issues and the impact of potential bias.

I am very grateful to all teachers and lecturers, SQA co-ordinators, school and college staff, local authorities, professional associations and national organisations, who have worked together, in difficult circumstances, to successfully deliver refined estimates and rankings for all learners entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

Now that all the information has been received, we are progressing with the awarding process.

Step 2 – Awarding

The alternative certification model will allow us to award grades for all learners entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses as fairly and reliably as possible, across subjects and levels. It is based on teacher and lecturer estimates, with associated moderation by schools, colleges and SQA.

The data we will be working with includes school and college estimates, rank orders, historical results and estimates for all National Courses as well as learners' prior attainment data for many Highers and Advanced Highers. This will allow us to explore the reasons for any apparent changes in the pattern of attainment (compared with previous years) that are reflected in the estimates submitted by schools and colleges.

To be as fair as possible such an approach needs to incorporate multiple checks and decision rules to identify where adjustment may be necessary. But it is important to highlight that, in Scotland, there are some qualifications that have low uptake either at a school and college level or at a national level.

Prior attainment data is also not available for National 5 and some Higher learners. This means that we will not use a purely statistical approach to moderation. Final grade distributions will be signed-off through national awarding meetings. Each meeting will involve input from senior qualifications staff in SQA and principal assessors for each subject and level.

It is important for us now to concentrate on the significant task of considering these estimates so that we can meet the timescales to deliver results to learners on 4 August. In line with our approach every year, we will be clear about the awarding process on Results Day.

This year, this will of course include the detail underpinning our approach and the impact of any moderation that we have had to make to estimates.

Step 3 - Results and Certification

I can confirm that results will be issued to learners on Tuesday 4 August, by post and via [MySQA](), our online and text service.

Learners are strongly encouraged to sign-up to MySQA, as a direct way to receive their results.

Step 4 - Appeals

After 4 August, a free appeals or post-certification review process will be available to schools and colleges to allow them to request a review of the grade awarded for a learner or a group of learners. It is important that such a service is in place in this exceptional year.

If a learner has a concern about their results, they should discuss it with their school or college as soon as possible after 4 August. As we do every year, we will give priority to requests for those learners requiring a result to secure a conditional place at college or university.

For schools and colleges to request a review, the following criteria must be met:

- a learner or group of learners must have been awarded a lower grade than the estimated grade their school or college submitted; and

- assessment evidence must be available to support the estimated grade — this can be wide ranging and include:

- prelim or mock papers

- additional tasks or assignments

- performance or practical evidence

In some cases, SQA may already hold evidence that has previously been submitted but not marked, for example some National 5 coursework.

Schools and colleges may want to submit a rationale for their decision-making for each learner or group of learners, which highlights the key areas of evidence that they believe validates their estimated grade.

Requests must be signed-off by the head of centre, or their representative, before being submitted to SQA.

Once a request and all the associated assessment evidence is received, it will be reviewed by our senior subject specialist examiners and they will either accept or reject the request, based on the evidence submitted.

If a request is accepted, the learner will be upgraded. If the learner requires the result for a conditional college or university place, we will advise the school or college, the higher education institute and UCAS, as appropriate. Learners will be sent an updated Scottish Qualifications Certificate after all review requests for 2020 have been completed.

If a request is rejected, we will confirm the original grade certificated, or an alternative lower grade, with the school or college.

It is possible that a lower grade may be awarded following a review because the alternative evidence supplied is judged to be so far from standard that it cannot support either the original school or college estimate or the certificated grade awarded.

We expect this to be very rare and if it does occur, we would have further dialogue with the school or college. The inclusion of this option within the review process supports fairness and equity to all learners, while maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualifications.

We will also put in place a process to consider review requests from schools and colleges based on an administrative or academic error in the original estimate process. This will only be by exception and will require support from a head teacher or college principal, and agreement from an SQA director.

More detailed guidance on the review process, evidence required and planned dates for the service including uplift dates for the collection of evidence from centres, will be sent to schools and colleges on 19 June.

A system user guide providing information on how to make review requests, detailed instructions on how to package the evidence and what support is available, will follow before 4 August, when the service opens.

Everyone at SQA remains committed to delivering results to learners, in as fair a way as possible, allowing them to progress to further learning or work. We all want to ensure the class of 2020 can hold their heads high, now and in the future, with their qualifications fully recognised as they would be in any year.

We continue to provide support and resources on our dedicated [teacher and lecturer](), [learner]() and [parent and carer]() web pages. We are also working with national bodies, such as the National Parent Forum of Scotland, Connect, Young Scot and the Scottish Youth Parliament to share information on what is happening and when.

I am very grateful for your continued support. By working in partnership, we can achieve our common goal, of ensuring that learners' hard work is rightly and fairly recognised.

Fiona Robertson

SQA Chief Executive and Scotland's Chief Examining Officer

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 30 July 2020 09:54
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Diary query - Teams meeting with Fiona Robertson 1045 today

Many thanks [Redact s38(1)(b)], confirming receipt.

I understand our Chair David Middleton will join Fiona, and that Graeme Logan is supporting DFM, I will share the Zoom invite with David.

Best wishes
[Redact s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** DFMCSE@gov.scot
Sent: 30 July 2020 09:46
To: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; DFMCSE@gov.scot
Subject: RE: Diary query - Teams meeting with Fiona Robertson 1045 today

Hi [Redact s38(1)(b)],

As discussed please see zoom details for the meeting in an hour or so.

DFM Private Office is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: meeting with Fiona Robertson
Time: Jul 30, 2020 10:45 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting
https://[Redact s30(c)]

Meeting ID: [Redact s30(c)]
Passcode: [Redact s30(c)]

Thanks
[Redact s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 30 July 2020 09:28
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Diary query - Teams meeting with Fiona Robertson 1045 today

Good morning

I sent over a MSTeams meeting invitation for the meeting with Fiona Robertson at 10:45 this morning. I haven't received an 'accept' notification. Please can you confirm it has safely reached you?

Kind regards
[Redact s38(1)(b)]

[Redact s38(1)(b)]
Scottish Qualifications Authority

m: <u>07</u>[Redact s38(1)(b)] **w:** <u>http://www.sqa.org.uk</u>

Please note [Redact s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Director of Learning
Sent: 30 July 2020 10:02
To: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Sewell J (Jonathan) (ECON) <Jonathan.Sewell@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Discussion with Fiona Robertson

Hi [Redact s38(1)(b)],

Thanks for your email. I'd be grateful if you can invite Jonathan and Malcolm too, please. There will be no papers for this meeting.

Let me know if you need anything else.

Regards, [Redact s38(1)(b)]

[Redact s38(1)(b)]
Tel: 0131 244 [Redact s38(1)(b)]
The Scottish Government:
Area 2B North - Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 30 July 2020 09:36
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Sewell J (Jonathan) (ECON) <Jonathan.Sewell@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Discussion with Fiona Robertson

Hi Graeme,

Can you confirm what officials are dialling in to the meeting with Fiona this morning, and if we can expect any papers for this soon?

Thanks
[Redact s38(1)(b)]

[Redact s38(1)(b)] | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |Tel: 07[Redact s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Sent: 24 July 2020 07:55
To: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Sewell J (Jonathan) (ECON) <Jonathan.Sewell@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>;

Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Discussion with Fiona Robertson

Hi Graeme,

This meeting has been confirmed for 10:45 on 30/7. I will send out a diary invite in due course. Can any papers be with us by Wednesday night.

Fiona has asked if this meeting can be held on MS Teams, her office will send out log in details, once we receive them we can send onto you and relevant officials.

Thanks
[Redact s38(1)(b)]

[Redact s38(1)(b)] | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |Tel: 07[Redact s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

From: Logan G (Graeme) <Graeme.Logan@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Director of Learning
Sent: 23 July 2020 10:18
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Sewell J (Jonathan) (ECON) <Jonathan.Sewell@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>
Subject: Discussion with Fiona Robertson

Morning [Redact s38(1)(b)]

I've had a brief discussion with Fiona Robertson at SQA today and agreed that it would be helpful for DFM to speak to Fiona on Thursday 30 July (ahead of our handling meeting with DFM at 1500 that day) regarding preparations for results day on 4 August. We will provide official support on the call. Can you set this up with Fiona's office please?

Thanks
Graeme.

From: [Redact s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 30 July 2020 10:17
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>
Subject: Presentation for 10:45 meeting with Fiona Robertson - 30 July 2020

Dear DFMPO and Graeme

In confidence, please find attached presentation for today's meeting at 1045.

Best wishes
[Redact s38(1)(b)]

[Redact s38(1)(b)]
Scottish Qualifications Authority

m: 07[Redact s38(1)(b)] **w:** http://www.sqa.org.uk

Alternative Certification Model for Diet 2020

Presentation to the Deputy First Minister
Thursday 30 July 2020

Principles

- ◆ Fairness to all learners
- ◆ Safe and secure certification of our qualifications, while following the latest public health advice
- ◆ Maintaining the integrity and credibility of our qualifications system, ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners

Approach

1. Estimates
2. **Awarding**
3. Results and Certification
4. Appeals (post certification review)

Supported by end-to end EQIA

Awarding

1. Initial review of centre estimation accuracy
2. Centre level moderation
3. National Awarding

SQA

Context

- 511,070 entries across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher
- 122,465 learners
- 21,380 centre/course combinations across 129 subjects and 467 centres
- Mix of high and low uptake subjects at each level. Even high uptake subjects can see significant variation between centres

SQA

Entries

- National Entries from 11 entries for Advanced Higher Gaelic (Learners) to 46,626 National 5 English
- At centre level, entries vary significant even for the largest subjects
  - From 1 to 337 for National 5 Mathematics (average 97)
  - From 1 to 317 for Higher English (Average 88)
  - From 1 to 70 for Advanced Higher Mathematics (average 11)
- 6,548 entries from centres with no prior history since 2016

SQA

Estimates: National picture

- Estimates significantly above previous A to C attainment in most subjects across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher
  - 10.4 percentage points higher than 2019 at National 5
  - 14.0 percentage points higher than 2019 at Higher
  - 13.4 percentage points higher than 2019 at Advanced Higher
- Estimation at A Grade contributing most to increased attainment

SQA

Moderation Approach

- Establishing National Starting Point Distributions (SPD) with tolerances for each course
- For each centre the proportion of entries achieving each grade on a given course was assessed for each of the past 4 years.
- Allowed additional flexibility before setting a course and grade constraint at centre level (constraint +/- 2 ventiles either side)
- Centre adjustment is outside the constraint for the course
- Rank order sacrosanct, so relativities maintained
- We sought to minimise grade movements through optimisation to meet the grade constraints and tolerances of the SPD
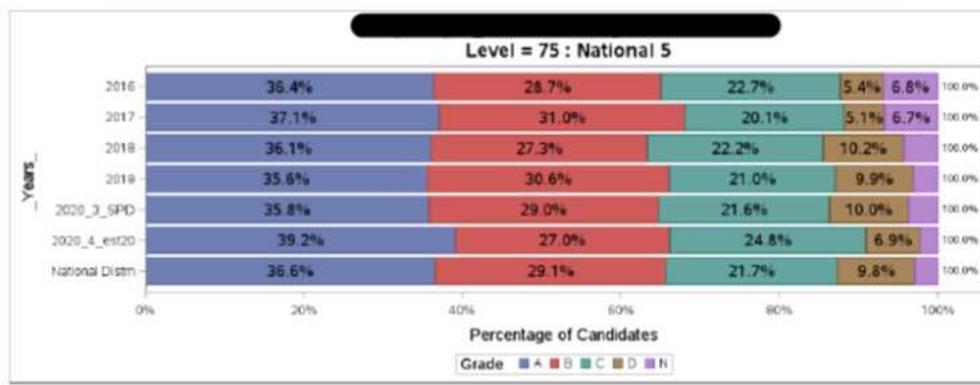- No adjustment for centres with no historic attainment data

SQA

Level = 75 : National 5

OPT6F : centre/course with no history not adjusted : with cost ratio ABCtariffhistoric vs 2020 , exp weight by number grade changes , min 0 if other grades all within constraints AtoC constraints , 2 ventile band leeway, min 5 ventiles for centres <=2yr history , N min0

Level 75	Grade						Grade					
	A	B	C	D	N	Total	A	B	C	D	N	Total
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	%	%	%	%	%	%
Years												
2016	16,394	12,949	10,207	2,448	3,065	45,063	36.4	28.7	22.7	5.4	6.8	100.0
2017	16,880	14,085	9,128	2,315	3,045	45,453	37.1	31.0	20.1	5.1	6.7	100.0
2018	15,747	11,930	9,697	4,445	1,849	43,668	36.1	27.3	22.2	10.2	4.2	100.0
2019	15,916	13,681	9,385	4,421	1,335	44,738	35.6	30.6	21.0	9.9	3.0	100.0
2020_3_SPD	16,742	13,542	10,089	4,688	1,684	46,744	35.8	29.0	21.6	10.0	3.6	100.0
2020_4_est20	18,302	12,641	11,601	3,202	998	46,744	39.2	27.0	24.8	6.9	2.1	100.0
National Distrn	17,111	13,601	10,147	4,561	1,324	46,744	36.6	29.1	21.7	9.8	2.8	100.0

Level = 75 : National 5

Years_					
2016	36.4%	28.7%	22.7%	5.4%	6.8%	100.0%
2017	37.1%	31.0%	20.1%	5.1%	6.7%	100.0%
2018	36.1%	27.3%	22.2%	10.2%		100.0%
2019	35.6%	30.6%	21.0%	9.9%		100.0%
2020_3_SPD	35.8%	29.0%	21.6%	10.0%		100.0%
2020_4_est20	39.2%	27.0%	24.8%	6.9%		100.0%
National Distrn	36.6%	29.1%	21.7%	9.8%		100.0%

Percentage of Candidates

Grade ■ A ■ B ■ C ■ D ■ N

Level 75	Grade			Grade		
	ABC	DN	Total	ABC	DN	Total
	Number	Number	Number	%	%	%
Years						
2016	39,550	5,513	45,063	87.8	12.2	100.0
2017	40,093	5,360	45,453	88.2	11.8	100.0
2018	37,374	6,294	43,668	85.6	14.4	100.0
2019	38,982	5,756	44,738	87.1	12.9	100.0
2020_3_SPD	40,373	6,371	46,744	86.4	13.6	100.0
2020_4_est20	42,544	4,200	46,744	91.0	9.0	100.0
National Distrn	40,859	5,885	46,744	87.4	12.6	100.0

Proportion of entries expected in each grade in starting position after feedback
With Min/Max range based upon historic 90pct confidence limits about the mean proportion
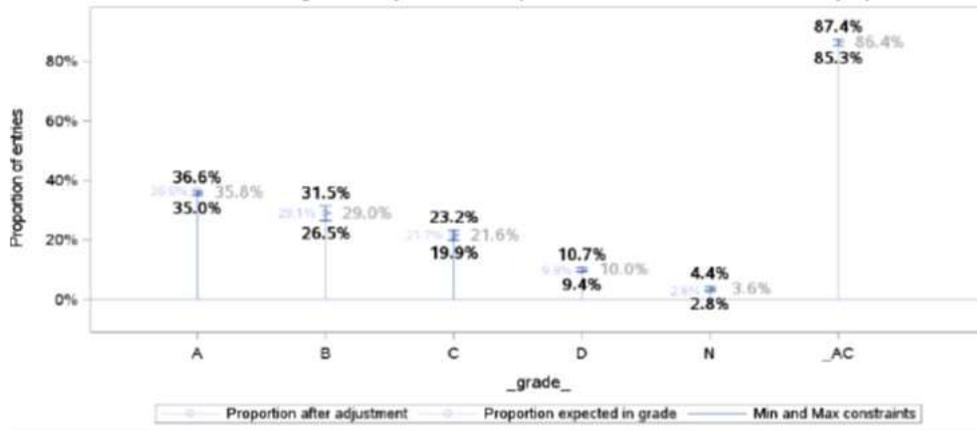
OPT6F : centre/course with no history not adjusted : with cost ratio ABCtariffhistoric vs 2020 , exp weight by number grade changes , min 0 if other grades all within constraints AtoC constraints , 2 ventile band leeway, min 5 ventiles for centres <=2yr history , N min0
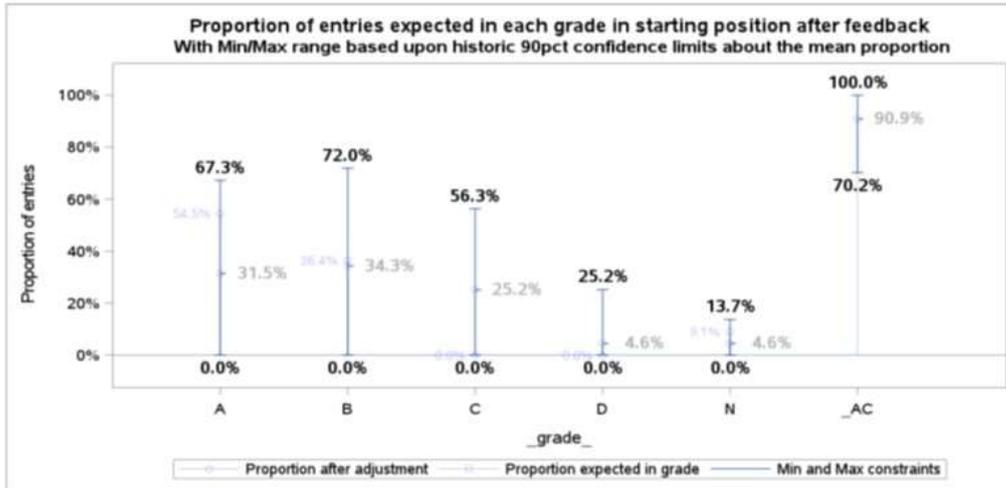
Level 77	Grade						Grade					
	A	B	C	D	N	Total	A	B	C	D	N	Total
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	%	%	%	%	%	%
Years												
2016	11	7	3	1	1	23	47.8	30.4	13.0	4.3	4.3	100.0
2017	3	4	1	1	0	9	33.3	44.4	11.1	11.1	0.0	100.0
2018	5	3	3	0	0	11	45.5	27.3	27.3	0.0	0.0	100.0
2019	5	8	3	2	1	19	26.3	42.1	15.8	10.5	5.3	100.0
2020_2_prioratt	3	4	3	1	1	11	31.5	34.3	25.2	4.5	4.5	100.0
2020_3_SPD	3	4	3	1	1	11	31.5	34.3	25.2	4.5	4.5	100.0
2020_4_est20	6	4	0	0	1	11	54.5	36.4	0.0	0.0	9.1	100.0
National Distrn	6	4	0	0	1	11	54.5	36.4	0.0	0.0	9.1	100.0
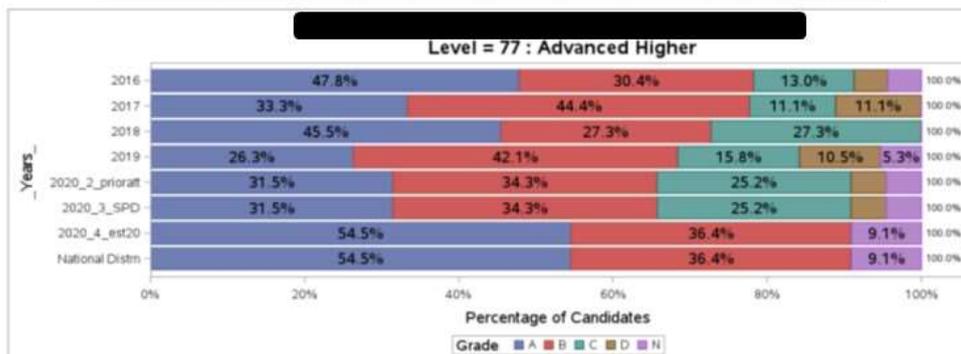
Level = 77 : Advanced Higher

Level 77	Grade			Grade		
	ABC	DN	Total	ABC	DN	Total
	Number	Number	Number	%	%	%
Years						
2016	21	2	23	91.3	8.7	100.0
2017	8	1	9	88.9	11.1	100.0
2018	11	0	11	100.0	0.0	100.0
2019	16	3	19	84.2	15.8	100.0
2020_2_prioratt	10	1	11	90.9	9.1	100.0
2020_3_SPD	10	1	11	90.9	9.1	100.0
2020_4_est20	10	1	11	90.9	9.1	100.0
National Distrn	10	1	11	90.9	9.1	100.0

Proportion of entries expected in each grade in starting position after feedback
With Min/Max range based upon historic 90pct confidence limits about the mean proportion

Moderation centre-constraints allow for variability on past 4 years' attainment
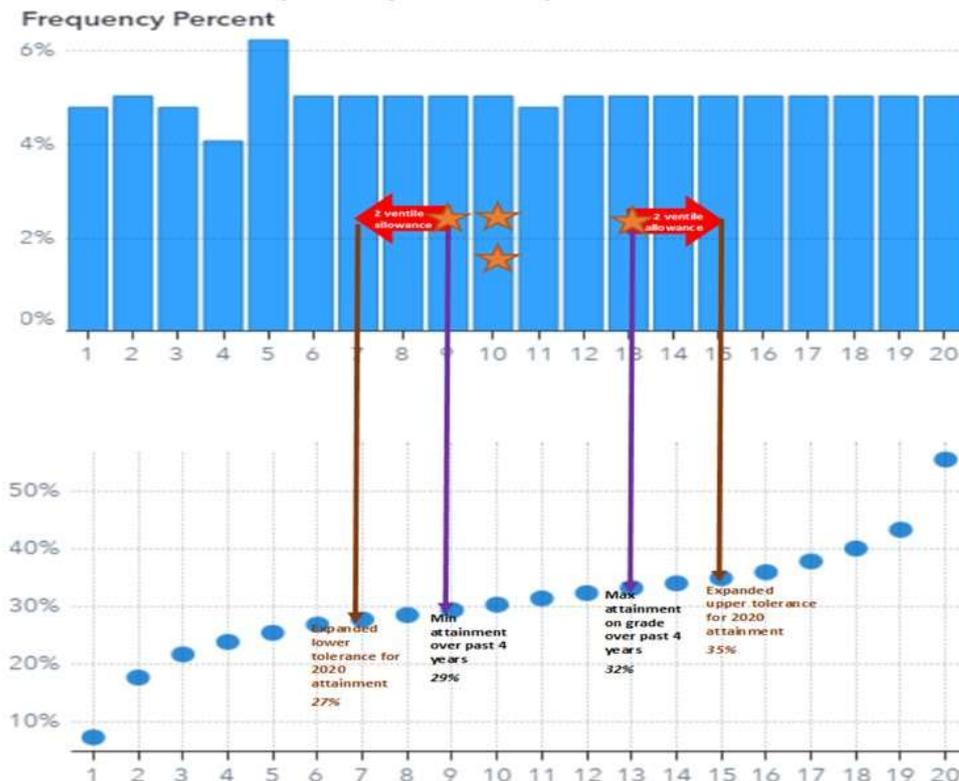
Moderation outcomes

- 14,050 (65.7 %) course combinations were adjusted.
- Of 511,070 entries, 133,762 (26.2%) were adjusted.
- Given the profile of estimates, most of the adjustments – 124,565 or 93.1% - were down
- 9,198 entries (6.9%) were moderated up.
- Of 133,762 moderated grades, 128,508 or 96.1% were moderated by one grade.
- 45,454 entries were moderated from A to C to D or No Award.

Moderation outcomes

A to C attainment in 2020:

- National 5 is 243,572 and 81.1% (compared to 225,594 and 78.2% in 2019)
- Higher it is 146,643 and 78.9% (compared to 138,972 and 74.8% in 2019)
- Advanced Higher is 20,010 and 84.9% (compared to 18,627 and 79.4% in 2019)

- Some variation of attainment is to be expected between subjects and over time. This year, the absence of external assessment information and the moderation process has led to more significant upward movements in attainment than we would see in a normal year.

EQIA

- Demonstrates compliance with our statutory obligations
- Developed and refined as our ACM has been progressed
- Consideration of equalities duties at each decision point and stage of process
- Guidance to centres on equalities in estimation process
- Post certification review and exceptional circumstances arrangements to address cases of discrimination in original estimation by centres
- Statistical analysis on available data demonstrating that lowest SIMD bandings not adversely affected in revision of estimates
- Engaged with SG for further statistical analysis on protected characteristics

SQA

Post certification Review

- **Eligibility and Review**
  PCR (appeals) service will open on 4 August Results Day allowing centres to request a review on behalf of those candidates who received an award below their estimated grade supported by alternative evidence. No charge for the service

  As with the PRS there is both a Priority (conditional offers) and Standard service.

- **Planning**
  Potential volume of eligible appeals – 125k; planning assumption of 50%. Operating model aims to minimise teacher release and compliance with social distancing guidance in SQA's offices. There will be a blended model of remote with limited face to face eg Art and Design.

  Circa 700+ senior appointees will support the process and will be trained and supported before and during the process of assessing candidate evidence

- **Systems Development**
  New systems and MI reports have been developed. A user guide and helpdesk in place to support centres use the service

- **Contingency planning** should volumes exceed our planned estimate

SQA

To conclude

In a very challenging year, we believe we have:

- Delivered fairness to learners, through a consistent, evidence-based approach to awarding, supported by an Equalities Impact Assessment;
- Ensured safe and secure certification of our qualifications, taking difficult decisions when needed, following public health advice; and
- Maintained the integrity and credibility of our qualifications system, ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners, through judicious moderation of grades.

SQA

From: Sewell J (Jonathan) (ECON) <Jonathan.Sewell@gov.scot>
Sent: 30 July 2020 10:35
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Subject: Accepted: 10:45 - 11:30 - Meeting with Fiona Robertson SQA
When: 30 July 2020 10:45-11:30 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London.
Where: MS Teams - details to follow