

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

**QUALIFICATIONS - [REDACTED] APPEALS [REDACTED]**

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Assessment & Qualifications Unit ([REDACTED])

3 March 2011

**OPERATION OF THE CURRENT APPEALS SYSTEM** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Future Plans**

6. Following on from a period of research and engagement, SQA initiated a review of their appeals process. This identified a number of problems with the current system:

- That it is no longer being used for exceptional circumstances for which it was originally designed and stakeholders wish to return to this

- That the drive to generate alternative evidence potentially takes precedence over quality teaching and learning and this can dilute the learning experience and is not in keeping with the key pedagogical changes being promoted under CfE

- The current requirements are onerous and very challenging for all concerned.

- The same standard of evidence is required for absentee and appeals candidates which can potentially be harsh on absentee candidates.

7. SQA proposes, based on extensive consultation, are to introduce two new services – i) Exceptional Circumstances consideration (pre-results), and ii) a Results Enquiry Service. The Results Enquiry Service option will not include any consideration of alternative evidence and brings the system more in line with the approach taken by other UK awarding bodies. Annex B provides more detail on these new proposed approaches.

8. The SQA Qualifications Committee, at their meeting on 26 January 2011, approved this approach in principle and agreed the next steps of conducting a feasibility exercise around operationalisation and timelines for introduction. This feasibility exercise is due to complete around the end of March 2011. The Curriculum for Excellence Management Board were also passed these proposals for noting and no issues were identified.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

11. The changes suggested to the appeals system will bring the approach more in line with systems used elsewhere in the UK, whilst allowing the consideration of a wider range of alternative evidence for candidates with exceptional circumstances.

## **Summary of Proposed New Approach to Appeals**

### Exceptional Circumstances consideration

If a centre believes a candidate has suffered as a result of exceptional circumstances, for example, if they are absent from or ill during an external assessment, then the centre informs SQA of the appropriate circumstances (pre-results). If it is agreed that the exceptional circumstances procedure should apply, then the centre submits alternative evidence of demonstrated attainment by the candidate and this is received and progressed as in the current process.

This approach is part of the current appeals process but formally removes the need for consistency with the mainstream appeals process, and should provide SQA examiners with an opportunity to consider a wider range of acceptable alternative evidence of attainment, including potentially consideration of statistical evidence of performance across the entire centre's cohort.

The above scenario accounts for approximately 3,000 of SQAs appeals cases currently.

### Results enquiry service

If, after certification, a centre is concerned by a candidate's result then they can engage with the Results Enquiry Service and request a range of services including a clerical check of the script and a request to have marking of the script checked. If this process results in a change of grade (up or down) then this will be amended on the system and a new certificate issued as appropriate. If the above results in no change to the candidate's grade, then the centre will be charged for the services used.

This approach would deter centres from entering speculative appeals.

The introduction of such services would allow SQA to be more responsive to the needs of HEIs who are increasingly asking for appeals to be dealt with in very short timescales.

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### **Exam Appeals - position elsewhere in the UK**

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Awarding Bodies are working towards a common set of procedures for the receipt and processing of appeals. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) produces booklets setting out the processes for post-services review and for appealing against decisions made by JCQ Awarding Bodies in relation to GCSE, GCE, AEA, Principal Learning and Project Qualifications. These procedures are governed by the regulator's Code of Practice for GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project qualifications. The "Code of Practice" is published annually by the three regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Ofqual, DCELLS and CCEA).

In summary, the process for appeals is:

If a Head of Centre or private candidate is dissatisfied with examination results and has reasons to suspect they may not be accurate, the first step to take is to make an "Enquiry about Results" request.

- The school or college will lodge an enquiry with the examining body. This will normally result in a re-mark or re-moderation by the awarding body.
- If a candidate is still unhappy with the outcome of the first enquiry, their school or college can lodge a secondary appeal within two weeks.

Awarding bodies may charge a fee for each stage of an appeal against the outcome of an Enquiry about Results. The fee will be refunded if the appeal is successful.

If the school or college is still not satisfied with the result, they can lodge an appeal with the Examinations Appeal Board (EAB). This must be done three weeks after receiving the draft report on the outcome of the appeal from the awarding body. The school will be told within two weeks if the application has been accepted or not. If it's accepted, an appeals hearing will be arranged before an EAB panel. An investigation into the candidates' or centre's results, and the awarding body's procedures will follow. An appeal investigation does not generally involve a further review of candidates' work.

[Redacted]

**From:** [Redacted]  
**Sent:** 04 March 2011 12:45  
**To:** ZZZ Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning  
**Cc:** [Redacted]  
**Subject:** FW: Advice on Appeals and Use of Prelim Exams as Alternative Evidence

Please find below a short update to the briefing forwarded yesterday:

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Kind regards

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Senior Policy Officer (Qualifications)  
Assessment & Qualifications Team

[Redacted]

Learning Directorate  
Area 2-B South  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

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**From:** [Redacted]  
**Sent:** 03 March 2011 16:17  
**To:** Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning  
**Cc:** [Redacted]  
**Subject:** Advice on Appeals and Use of Prelim Exams as Alternative Evidence

[Redacted]



Document name: [Redacted]  
[Redacted]

A slot has been identified at 8.30 on Thursday 17 March if, following this advice, the Cabinet Secretary wishes to proceed with a meeting between himself, SQA and Fergus Ewing.

Kind regards

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Senior Policy Officer (Qualifications)  
Assessment & Qualifications Team

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Learning Directorate  
Area 2-B South  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

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**From:** [Redacted] **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning  
**Sent:** 24 February 2011 17:41  
**To:** [Redacted]  
**Cc:** Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning; [Redacted]  
**Subject:** MCS 2011/0001144 AND MCS 2011/0001602

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Many thanks

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

APS/Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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**Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills**

**SQA RESULTS SERVICES**

**Purpose**

1. To provide DFM with background information on SQA "Results Services". These were introduced in 2014 to replace the former appeals system, under which schools could appeal a candidate's results following the annual SQA results day in August.

**Priority**

2. Routine. The 2016 Post-Results Service opens on Tuesday 9 August.

**Recommendation**


3. **DFM is invited to note the submission attached at Annex A**

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the official.

2 August 2016

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interests	General Awareness
Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science			X		

Director General Learning and Justice  


## SQA RESULTS SERVICES

### Background

1. SQA's new Results Services were introduced in 2014, following consultation with stakeholders. The services replace the former appeals system, under which schools could appeal a candidate's results following the annual SQA results day each August.

### Previous appeals system

2. SQA's previous appeals process was originally designed as a safety net for use in exceptional cases i.e. where a candidate through unforeseen circumstances (e.g. bereavement or illness) had not been able to attend an exam or perform on the day to the standard expected and for whom the school or college had convincing alternative evidence.

3. The volumes of appeals rose significantly over the years, and a general view developed that this was largely due to speculative applications by schools, rather than those founded on firm evidence/belief that a candidate merited a higher grade.

4. Given the misgivings being expressed, SQA undertook an investigation and consultation with a range of stakeholders and concluded that the old appeals process was unsustainable, open to misuse and in some cases detrimental to candidates. In particular:

- the appeals system was no longer being used for exceptional circumstances for which it was originally designed and that stakeholders wished to return to the original purpose.
- the drive to generate alternative evidence potentially took precedence over quality teaching and learning.
- the same standard of evidence was required for absentee and appeals candidates which could potentially be unfair on absentee candidates with genuine exceptional circumstances.

### New Results Services

5. There are two components of the new system:

- a pre-results **Exceptional Circumstances** service that takes alternative evidence into account where a candidate has missed or underperformed on the day of an exam because of illness, bereavement, etc. The service can be accessed immediately after an exam has taken place in May or June, and there is no charge for this service.
- a **Post Results Service**, following results day in August, to enable schools and colleges to query any SQA results that they feel are out of line with expectations. Under this, SQA carries out either a clerical check (to ensure all marks have been correctly totalled) or a marking review of the candidates' exam script. Unlike the former appeals system, the service does not include any consideration of alternative evidence. There is no charge for this service if a change is made to the grade as a result of the review. However, there is a fee where the grade remains the same (clerical check £10; marking

review £29.75; priority marking review £39.75). Only schools or colleges can request a review from SQA – SQA does not accept appeals from individuals.

6. The new system was introduced to ensure a fairer approach, and is based on the professional judgement of head teachers and schools, to act as a sense-check in preventing any centre submitting a large number of spurious requests. A school should only request a review if it thinks there is a legitimate question about a candidate's result. The head teacher should be satisfied that there is legitimate ground for believing that an error may have occurred in the marking of a candidate's script or in the processing of the marks.

7. The changes brings the approach in line with systems used elsewhere in the UK, whilst allowing the consideration of a wider range of alternative evidence for candidates with exceptional circumstances.

8. Stakeholders, including the unions, were broadly supportive of the proposed changes, although EIS expressed concerns that the system was introduced in the same year as the first of the new National Qualifications (the changes were not of themselves related to Curriculum for Excellence).

#### Uptake of new Post Results Service

9. In 2015, there were 12,077 requests following Results Day in August (compared to 8,448 in 2014, the first year that the new system came into operation).<sup>1</sup> The number of grade upgrades increased to 2,373, from 2,172 in 2014, although the 'rate of success' fell to 19.6% in 2015 (from 25.7% in 2014).<sup>2</sup>

#### PROPORTION OF UPGRADES IN 2014 AND 2015

All Qualifications	2013-14	2014-15
Entries	526,704	511,326
Requests	8,448	12,077
Upgrades	2,172	2,373
Percentage of entries for which a request was made	1.6%	2.4%
Upgrades as a percentage of entries	0.4%	0.5%
Upgrades as a percentage of requests	25.7%	19.6%

<sup>1</sup> These figures compare to 66,204 appeals in 2013, 48.2% of which were upgraded. However, the two systems are not comparable as the new service does not consider alternative evidence.

<sup>2</sup> To date, changes have nearly always resulted in an upgraded mark. There were only three downgrades in 2014 and five in 2015.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

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15.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### **Next Steps**

17. The 2016 Post-Results Service will open on Results Day, Tuesday 9 August, and close 30 August (there will be an earlier closing date for priority marking requests for candidates with a conditional offer at university or college). Centres and UCAS will be advised of priority marking review results by 29 August, and of general marking review and clerical check results by 30 September.

[REDACTED]

### **Conclusion**

19. DFM is invited to note this submission.

[REDACTED]  
Learning Directorate

[REDACTED]

2 August 2016

## EXAM RESULTS APPEALS

### **Background**

- This year, the “Results Service” replaced the old SQA exam appeal system
- Under the new system there are two types of appeal:
  1. An “Exceptional Circumstances Consideration” appeal – schools request this within ten days of an exam taking place where they believe that illness, bereavement or similar may have effected the pupils performance. Previous evidence of performance is submitted to the SQA and no charge is made for such appeals.
  2. A “Post-Results Service” – following results day in August and offering a clerical check or review of marking of the exam script – no alternative evidence is considered under this part of the new system. Fee is up to £39.75
- On Monday (27Oct) the Herald reported claims that pupils at private schools were able to appeal because their parent chose to pay for the appeal, whereas state pupils were unable to appeal as their school was not willing to do so.

### **It would be fundamentally wrong for local authority schools to charge parents for an appeal**

- In state schools, the payment of SQA fees is met by the local authority. It would be wrong to pass this charge on to hard-pressed families.
- The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) have made clear “Local authorities finance the costs of SQA entries.” ADES statement, 10 February 2014

### **Teacher judgements on pupil performance should determine whether there is an appeal**

- Appeals should only go ahead where in the professional judgement of the teacher it is justified.
- Teaching union the EIS agree. Larry Flanagan, Herald, 27 Oct14: “Appeals should be based on the professional judgement of teachers”

### **That’s why the SQA does not accept appeals from individuals**

- The SQA only accepts requests for its Results Services from schools and colleges - and not from individuals.
- SQA also only accepts payment from schools and colleges - and not from individuals.

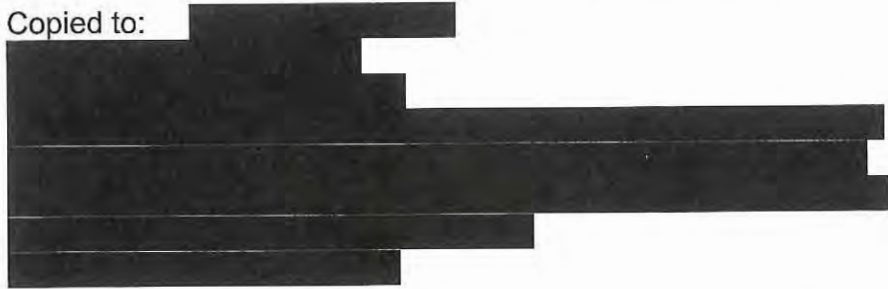
### **SQA’s new appeals service was introduced largely because it is a fairer system**


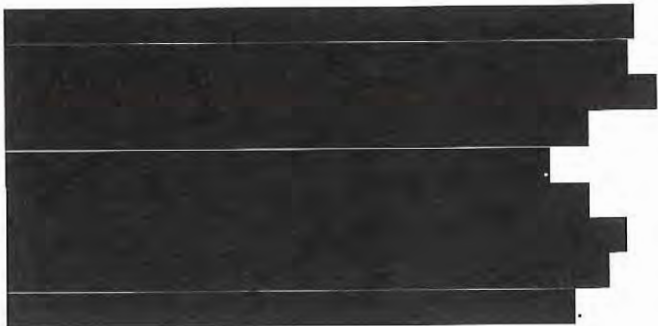
- The new results services are the result of wide-ranging consultation between SQA, schools, colleges and other education professionals who recognised that a review of the Appeals service was required.
- The new system is fairer. It allows a wider range of alternative evidence to be considered for candidates who miss an exam through illness or other exceptional circumstances.
- It is also better for learning and teaching. Under the old system there was the potential for the drive to generate alternative evidence to support appeals to take precedence over quality learning and teaching – bad for teachers and learners.
- It reflects the greater emphasis on course work in the new National Qualifications. There is more on-going assessment and opportunities for learners to demonstrate their achievements over the year. For example, the exam in the new English Higher is only 70 per cent of the overall course assessment (80 per cent previously).



**MINISTERIAL ENGAGEMENT BRIEFING: MICHAEL RUSSELL**

Copied to:



<i>Engagement Title</i>	SQA Appeals discussion with Fergus Ewing and SQA
<i>Timing</i>	<b>Normal</b>
<i>Organisation/Venue and full address including postcode</i>	Room TG:20/21, Scottish Parliament
<i>Date and Time of Engagement</i>	Date(s): <b>Thursday 17 March</b> Time(s): <b>0830-0900</b>
<i>Background/Purpose</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> MCS Diary Request Letter date: N/A <input type="checkbox"/> MCS Letter reference: N/A  
<i>Relevance to Core Script</i>	
<i>Greeting Party and specific meeting point on arrival (if event is at a non SE Building)</i>	