

Index of Enclosures - FOI 202000087831

Request:

- Minutes of any meetings, and any briefings produced for these meetings, between the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, and the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills, John Swinney MSP, that are (at least in part) on the subject of the 2020 SQA Awards. I would like this information from 25 July to 20 August.
- Any correspondence (including letters, emails, text messages or phone calls) between the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills, John Swinney MSP, and the SQA, on the subject of curriculum changes for the 2020/21 academic year. I would like this information from 20 August 2020 to 15 September 2020.
- Any correspondence (including letters, emails, text messages or phone calls) between the Scottish Government and the SQA, on the subject of curriculum changes for the 2020/21 academic year. I would like this information from 20 August 2020 to 15 September 2020.

Enclosure No	Description	Date	Explanation of redactions	Exemption
1.	Email from SQA to Deputy First Minister	31 August 2020 14:36	Policy development	29(1)(a)
2.	Email from SQA to SG re: SQA letter to Education and Skills Committee	01 September 2020 22:10	Personal information	38(1)(b)
2.1.	Letter from SQA to Education and Skills Committee	01 September 2020	Information publicly available	25(1)
2.2.	Appendix 1 SQA Communications timeline	01 September 2020	Information publicly available	25(1)
2.3.	Appendix 2 SQA NQ 2020 Awarding Decision timeline	01 September 2020	Information publicly available	25(1)
3.	Email from SQA to Deputy First Minister	08 September 2020 20:43	Personal information	38(1)(b)
3.1.	Advice to Ministers on National Qualifications	08 September 2020	Policy development	29(1)(a)
4.	Email from SQA to SG with presentation	10 September 2020 11:04	Personal information	38(1)(b)

4.1.	Presentation National Qualifications in 2021	10 September 2020		
5.	Email from SQA to SG with meeting papers	14 September 2020 09:33	Personal information	38(1)(b)
5.1.	Extract from SQA Qualifications Committee Papers			
6.	Email from SQA to SG re: meeting	10 September 2020 16:24	Personal information	38(1)(b)

Enclosure 1 Email from SQA to Deputy First Minister

From: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 31 August 2020 14:36
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>
Subject: In Confidence - BOCSH Proposals on Qualifications
Importance: High

In Confidence

Deputy First Minister

Following our discussion on Sunday 30 August, you asked me to set out some brief thoughts on the proposals from the BOCSH Group of headteachers about modifications to assessment for 20/21.

I have not focussed on their assessment of the consultation the SQA has published, rather, I focus on the broader, pan-subject approaches suggested for 20/21 at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

General observations

We are currently working through modifications to assessment for 2021 to relieve pressure on learning and teaching for 2021. This is on the basis that the Exam Diet may take place and central planning for a Diet continues.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

There remains no certainty about Diet 2021, but we do need to have a developed contingency relating to the possibility of there being no Diet, either in full or in part – or where considerable numbers of young people are unable to undertake exams.

National 5

BOCSH suggest the removal of National 5 exams, to be replaced by teachers' predicted grades and internal assessment.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

Higher

BOCSH agree that the diet should remain in place but at a later date. We would agree that timetabling could be adjusted to later in the absence of National 5 exams.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

BOCSH advocate the removal of examinations for practical subjects. [Redact 29(1)(a)]

Advanced Higher/Level 7

BOCSH suggest we remove the final exam, increasing the weighting of the dissertation and introducing assessment windows throughout the session for moderated graded assessments to take place and contribute to the final award.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

Conclusion

BOCSH has long advocated for the reduction in the reliance of summative, high stakes assessment. This submission continues to promote that view and calls for boldness in decision making.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

I hope these brief initial thoughts are helpful to you. I am, of course, happy to discuss further.

Fiona

Fiona Robertson
Chief Executive
Scottish Qualifications Authority

t: [0345 213 5000](tel:03452135000) | w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ | 24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

Enclosure 2 Email from SQA to SG re: SQA letter to Education and Skills Committee

From: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk> **On Behalf Of** Fiona Robertson
Sent: 01 September 2020 22:10
To: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>
Cc: CEO Office <ceooffice@sqa.org.uk>; [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Letter to E&S committee

With apologies [Redact 38(1)(b)],

It has only issued late this evening. Please find our response attached.

Regards, [Redact 38(1)(b)]

From: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 01 September 2020 21:52
To: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; DirectorofLearning@gov.scot
Cc: CEO Office <ceooffice@sqa.org.uk>; [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot
Subject: Letter to E&S committee
Importance: High

Hi Fiona,

This morning, you said you would send me a copy of your letter to the Education and Skills Committee, ahead of Mr Lochhead's appearance tomorrow.

Can you please forward it asap?

Graeme – if you have it, can you send on?

Thanks,

[Redact 38(1)(b)]

[Redact 38(1)(b)] | [Redact 38(1)(b)] | Scottish Government | M: [Redact 38(1)(b)]

[Redact 38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 2.1 Letter from SQA to Education and Skills Committee

Enclosure 2.2 Appendix 1 SQA Communications Timeline

Enclosure 2.3 Appendix 2 SQA NQ 2020 Awarding Decision Timeline

Redacted 25(1) - this information is publicly available on the Scottish Parliament website:

https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/General%20Documents/20200901Ltr_SQ_A_response_to_ES_ltr_of_20th_Aug_and_appendices.pdf

Enclosure 3 Email from SQA to Deputy First Minister

From: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 08 September 2020 20:43
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Cc: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: 2021 Qualifications

[Redact 38(1)(b)]

As requested, please see attached advice for the Deputy First Minister.

I hope this is helpful and happy to discuss further, of course.

Fiona

Fiona Robertson
Chief Executive
Scottish Qualifications Authority

t: 0345 213 5000 | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ | 24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot **On Behalf Of** DFMCSSE@gov.scot
Sent: 06 September 2020 11:37
To: Fiona Robertson
Cc: DFMCSSE@gov.scot
Subject: 2021 Qualifications

Good morning Fiona

As you know, the Deputy First Minister is considering contingencies and options in relation to the assessment of national qualifications in 2020/21. One option is to not hold an examination diet next year and instead use an alternative verification model. Following his discussions with you, and to assist in his consideration of this option, he would welcome your advice as the Chief Examining Officer on what assurances you would be able to provide in relation to the deliverability of such an approach. He would also like an outline of what an alternative model might look like and has commented that this would need to be based firmly on individual learners' work and evidence of their progress and achievement during the year.

I would be grateful if you could provide this advice for the Deputy First Minister by close on Tuesday 8 September.

Many thanks

[Redact 38(1)(b)]

[Redact 38(1)(b)] [Redact 38(1)(b)] | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | Tel: 0131 244 [Redact 38(1)(b)]/[Redact 38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

Enclosure 3.1 Advice to Deputy First Minister on National Qualifications

Official Sensitive – Advice to Ministers

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN 2021

Purpose

To provide initial advice to Scottish Ministers on alternative certification arrangements which could be in place following an early decision to cancel the exam diet in 2021.

Current context

SQA is currently concluding work on modifications to assessment for 2021 to relieve pressure on learning and teaching for 2021. This is on the basis that the central planning assumption, as outlined in the Strategic Framework for Re-opening Schools published in May, is for an exam diet to be held next year.

The principles that guided this work were:

- Making adjustments for subjects constrained by current public health advice;
- Increasing learning and teaching opportunities; and
- A more flexible approach to assessment for learners, whilst retaining the validity and credibility of qualifications.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

We are confident that we have listened to feedback and modifications will assist learning and teaching. However, schools and colleges remain concerned about the complexities of this academic year, with increased pupil and teacher absences and learning and teaching time already constrained. There are calls to make early decisions on the exam diet to reduce pressure on learners and teachers. Clearly, we need to balance these calls with a need to ensure that high quality learning and teaching continues, with depth and breadth, including through e-learning and blended learning approaches, and with young people being able to progress through the Senior Phase and beyond.

As things stand, there remains no certainty about Diet 2021 and Scotland needs to have a developed contingency relating to the possibility of there being no exam diet, either in full or in part – or where considerable numbers of young people are unable to undertake exams next spring.

Scottish Ministers will decide on whether there should be an exam diet in 2021 and it is for Ministers to commission SQA to develop an alternative certification approach.
[Redact 29(1)(a)]

An alternative certification model for 2021

There is increasing acknowledgement in the system that we can neither adopt a purely statistical approach to moderation in any alternative certification model nor simply accept teacher/lecturer estimates. The role of quality assurance and moderation, where necessary, and how that is done, is key if we consider the maintenance of standards over time, and across centres, to be important. As the national awarding body for Scotland, SQA considers standards to be central to the ongoing credibility of our qualifications system and in fairness to learners, whatever school or college they attend.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

SQA has an established history of undertaking large scale external quality assurance of internally assessed qualifications. This is undertaken by SQA appointees who are teachers or lecturers working in schools and colleges across Scotland. Systems and models of quality assurance are widely used across sectors - the most mature being the college sector which delivers the full depth and breadth of SQA's qualifications, including HNC/Ds.

Except for schools, SQA conducts systems verification - quality assurance of a centre's data management systems and processes, their appeals, malpractice and complaints processes, internal quality assurance systems and so on - of all colleges, employers and training providers.

Following the decision to remove units from National Qualifications, SQA has continued to quality assure National 2 – 4, freestanding units at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7 and other qualifications delivered in centres, including schools, such as National Progression Awards and Skills for Work.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

SQA Support

SQA is currently working on a suite of support material to assist with certification this year and further work could also be undertaken to support a model of quality assured alternative certification.

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

Issues and risks

Before a final decision is taken, there are number of important issues to consider:

[Redact 29(1)(a)]

I hope this is helpful and I am happy to discuss further.

Fiona Robertson
Chief Executive/Chief Examining Officer
Scottish Qualifications Authority
8 September 2020

Enclosure 4 Email from SQA to SG with presentation

From: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 10 September 2020 11:04
To: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: SQA presentation for CERG today

From: Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 10 September 2020 09:07
To: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Cc: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; [Redact 38(1)(b)]sqa.org.uk>; [Redact 38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: SQA presentation for CERG today

[Redact 38(1)(b)]

Attached is the SQA presentation for today – at the relevant part of the agenda could you share this with the meeting?

Thanks Gill

Dr Gill Stewart
Director of Qualifications Development

t: [Redact 38(1)(b)] | e: gill.stewart@sqa.org.uk | w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk> Scottish Qualifications Authority The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ

Enclosure 4.1 Presentation on National Qualifications in 2021



National Qualifications in 2021

Session 2020/2021

- ◆ Modifications to assessment of National Courses, as far as possible, whilst retaining validity & credibility
- ◆ Changes to timetabling
- ◆ Contingencies if exam diet for 2021 is disrupted or cancelled in full or in part



Modifications to assessment for 2021

Guiding Principles

- ◆ Delivery & assessment of subjects constrained by current public health advice
- ◆ Increased learning & teaching opportunities
- ◆ A more flexible approach to assessment for learners, whilst retaining validity & credibility of qualifications for learners



Consultation

- Open from 14 to 24 August
- 22,216 people accessed survey & 16,957 completed survey. Quantitative and qualitative responses
- 60% responses from practitioners, 22% from young people, 16% from parents & carers
- Written response key education groups
- Focus group with young people



Analysis of qualitative responses

- 34 (of 112) proposals not supported mainly across mathematics, sciences, technical and practical subjects
- Qualitative feedback very helpful in identifying modifications
- Even where people agreed with proposal we analysed qualitative responses to identify best approach
- General feedback around equity for young people and consistency

Types of Changes Made

- Modifying or removing coursework
- Removing exams
- Modifying exams to provide a narrower focus for assessment

Nature of subjects varies – mix of skills & knowledge
- changes to assessment reflect this inherent variation
EQIA and CRIA undertaken



Modifications to respond to public health advice - examples

- Sciences & Engineering Science – removal of coursework at all levels given challenges of completing practical work.
- PE – N5 and H - one sports performance rather than two
- Geography – removing field work
- Additional guidance for Art & Design, Dance and Drama to assist with practical/performances



Modifications to increase learning & teaching opportunities - examples

- English – removal of spoken language & reduction in folio
- Mathematics – introduce some optionality in exams at all levels
- Social subjects & sciences – removal of assignment & optionality in exam
- Psychology, Sociology – optionality in both exam & project
- Business subjects – optionality in exam & removal of assignment
- Languages – removal of some coursework.
- Art & Design, Design & Manufacture, Photography – more focused exams & a reduction of coursework
- Music – reduced performance times & removal of composing



Modifications to give more flexibility for learners - examples

- Computing Science – N5 & H optionality in exam & coursework; AH removal of topic to reduce both exam & Coursework.
- Practical Electronics, Practical Metalworking, Practical Woodworking – removal of exam, earlier release practical tasks
- Practical Cookery, Practical Cake craft – exam retained, reduced coursework & more flexibility in how carry out practical work
- Music Technology – adjust assignment



Timetabling Changes

What we consulted on

- Option 1 – delay start date
- Option 2 – N5 first, then H and AH
- Change certification date from 10 to 19 Aug

Who we consulted with

- Timetable Advisory Group , Advisory Council
- Young Scot, Youth Parliament, Children & Young Peoples Commissioner
- Markers

What they said

- Mixed response – people in favour of later start to timetable but concerns re later certification date, concerns re markers availability
- Recommendation to retain existing timetable and certification date



Contingencies for 2021

- Exam diet cannot take place
- Local lockdowns – extend submission dates for assessment evidence and data
- Individual absences – use exceptional circumstances consideration and expand capacity



Enclosure 5 Email from SQA to SG with meeting papers

From: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 14 September 2020 09:33
To: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: SQA Qualifications Committee - 16 September 2020
Sensitivity: Confidential

This attachment is confidential and protected. You must not make use of, disclose or copy.

Good morning [Redact 38(1)(b)],

Please find attached a set of papers for the Qualifications Committee meeting on Wednesday.

If you have any issues or I can help with anything, please do let me know.

Kind regards,

[Redact 38(1)(b)]

[Redact 38(1)(b)] | [Redact 38(1)(b)] | Corporate Office

t: [Redact 38(1)(b)] | e: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk | w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ
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Enclosure 5.1 extract from SQA Qualifications Committee papers

[Redacted information not in scope]

QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

NEXT GENERATION PRODUCTS: META-SKILLS ACTIVITY UPDATE

[Redacted information not in scope]

Level 6

A new Work-based Challenge Unit at SCQF Level 6 has been developed to support the development, application, and assessment of meta-skills in Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF Level 6.

However, a different approach has been adopted. A bespoke assessment support pack aimed directly at learners has been developed. Taking its context from the National Progression Award in the relevant Foundation Apprenticeship the focus is on business improvement with the learner taking on the role of an internal consultant.

There is an emphasis on developing meta skills around *Innovation* supported by those in *Self-Management* and *Social Intelligence*. Learners are required to select one from each category for development and reflect on these in *combination* at the end of the project. Indicative opportunities for the development and application of meta skills are included to

support candidates. This approach has been chosen to reduce approval and verification activity compared to the L4/L5 pilot activity.

Finally, it needed to be able to be flexible to cope with an online or virtual work environment and possible emerging COVID-19 restrictions. The following Foundation Apprenticeships will be included in the pilot:

- Foundation Apprenticeship in Accountancy
- Foundation Apprenticeship in Business Skills
- Foundation Apprenticeship in Financial Services
- Foundation Apprenticeship in Information Technology: Hardware/ System Support
- Foundation Apprenticeship in Information Technology: Software Development

[Redacted information not in scope]

Enclosure 6 Email from SQA to SG re: meeting

From: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 10 September 2020 16:24
To: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: College qualifications and assessment contingencies

Good afternoon [Redact 38(1)(b)],

Please accept this as acknowledgement of your email below. I will contact [Redact 38(1)(b)] to arrange time for you and [Redact 38(1)(b)] to discuss.

Kind regards,
[Redact 38(1)(b)]

[Redact 38(1)(b)]
[Redact 38(1)(b)]
Corporate Office

t: [Redact 38(1)(b)] | e: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk | w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 08 September 2020 11:41
To: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redact 38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: College qualifications and assessment contingencies

Hi Jean and [Redact 38(1)(b)],

I'm getting in touch after this morning's SG-SQA call when we agreed to pick up separately about college (and university) contingency planning around qualifications and assessments.

From the call this morning, it feels like there are some important areas to explore including:

- Institutional preparedness for further disruption to curriculum delivery and assessments
- Contingency plans/ alternative models of course delivery and assessments – what happened in 2020 and implications/ options for 2021
- Quality of learning and teaching
- Approach to prioritisation
- Understanding the accreditation landscape
- Foundation apprenticeships

I know we've been engaging separately with stakeholders on some of these issues so perhaps a sensible first step would be to get together and compare notes?

We can then decide how best to proceed, including who else we need to bring in.

If you can let me know, [Redact 38(1)(b)] (copied) can set up time.

Thanks,

[Redact 38(1)(b)]

[Redact 38(1)(b)] | [Redact 38(1)(b)] | Scottish Government | M: [Redact 38(1)(b)]

[Redact 38(1)(b)]