

<b>National 5</b>	<b>Proposed modification</b>	<b>Final modification</b>	<b>Rationale for the final modification</b>
	process and mix in their assignment tasks for session 2020–21.	National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Music Technology assignments and project.	<p>and Advanced Higher Music Technology assignments and project in session 2020–21 for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ to reduce the volume of assessment to allow centres to focus their available learning and teaching time with candidates on the remaining elements of the assignments or project and the question papers (National 5 and Higher)</li> <li>◆ the current concerns in centres about sharing and cleaning equipment, such as microphones</li> </ul>
Philosophy	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b> Optional questions will be introduced to allow candidates to answer on either Descartes or Hume.</p>	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b> Optional questions will be introduced to allow candidates to answer on either Descartes or Hume for one year only.</p> <p><b>Modification of the assignment:</b> Removal of the coursework component (assignment) for session 2020–21 only.</p>	Candidates are currently assessed on both Descartes and Hume. For 2021, we will provide questions on both philosophers in the question paper to allow candidates choice on whom to answer. This will allow teachers to focus on one philosopher if there is any impact on teaching and

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			<p>learning time and is consistent with proposals for Higher to facilitate bi-level teaching.</p> <p>Feedback from the national consultation highlighted the significant benefits of removing the coursework. Removing the assignment would mean less class time will be required for planning, organising, and developing the assignment, thus reducing pressure and allowing for increased learning and teaching time for the course.</p>
Physical Education	<p><b>Guidance for centres on performance:</b></p> <p><i>Assessment item: Extent to which rules and regulations are followed and etiquette is displayed (including working with others).</i></p> <p>Working with others can be assessed by observing the level of co-operation demonstrated through interactions with an opponent or partner while observing physical distancing. Appropriate etiquette will be observable through adherence to rules or demonstration of suitable behaviour pre, during or post performance.</p> <p><b>Guidance for centres on the portfolio:</b></p> <p><i>(2a) Explain the challenges you may face when gathering reliable data on your two selected factors and (2e) From the data you have gathered, describe your strengths and development needs in relation to your performance for both factors.</i></p> <p>Collecting information on ‘whole performances’ in team/group activities may require candidates to reflect on a previous performance and make use of</p>	<p><b>Guidance for the performance: course assessment task</b></p> <p>The course assessment task will be modified to assess candidates' ability to effectively perform in one physical activity instead of two.</p> <p><b>Guidance for the performance: assessment item:</b></p> <p><i>The extent to which rules and regulations are followed and etiquette is displayed (including working with others).</i></p> <p>‘Working with others’ can be assessed by observing the level of co-operation demonstrated through interactions with an opponent or partner while observing physical distancing. Appropriate etiquette will be observable through adherence to rules or demonstration</p>	<p>Physical distancing restrictions have affected schools' ability to resume Physical Education under normal circumstances.</p> <p>Feedback from the consultation highlighted that there are a variety of approaches across the country for the delivery of Physical Education, meaning that the pressure to assess two performance activities will be too challenging for practitioners and learners for this session.</p> <p>In response, it was clear that there is continued uncertainty about available activities for delivery within Physical Education. Factors such as the changing guidance</p>

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	<p>coach/teacher feedback to identify and corroborate agreed strengths and areas for development. The involvement of the teacher/coach would provide increased validity and reliability of the information collected.</p> <p><i>(3e) Evaluate your performance in the two selected factors.</i> Personal reflections about the effectiveness of the personal development plan (PDP) would enable candidates to make evaluative statements about the potential impact of improvements on whole performance and the targets set.</p> <p>Alternatively, centres can advise candidates to complete PDP processes using activities where whole performance information will be available before and after completion of the PDP.</p>	<p>of suitable behaviour pre, during or post performance.</p> <p><b>Modification of guidance for the portfolio:</b></p> <p><i>(2a) Explain the challenges you may face when gathering reliable data on your two selected factors. and</i></p> <p><i>(2e) From the data you have gathered, describe your strengths and development needs in relation to your performance for both factors.</i></p> <p>Collecting information on 'whole performances' in team/group activities may require candidates to reflect on a previous performance and make use of coach/teacher feedback to identify and corroborate agreed strengths and areas for development. The involvement of the teacher/coach would provide increased validity and reliability of the information collected.</p> <p><i>(3e) Evaluate your performance in the two selected factors.</i> Personal reflections about the effectiveness of the personal performance plan (PDP) process would enable candidates to make evaluative statements about the potential impact of improvements on</p>	<p>for where Physical Education lessons can take place, reduced teaching time due to new hygiene procedures, lack of changing accommodation, and issues around the physical wellbeing of pupils who have been largely inactive since the onset of lockdown, further restrict the viability of assessing two performances during the session 2020–21. Reducing the assessment burden (which currently requires that two activities be assessed in a challenging, competitive and/or demanding context, to set it apart from normal learning and teaching activities) will allow more time for teaching and learning, and preparation for a single performance.</p> <p>Further guidance has been agreed because social distancing may affect candidates' ability to participate in team or group activities throughout the session and to collate whole performance data related to personal strengths and development needs. Due to social distancing, the extent to which rules and regulations are followed and etiquette is displayed (including</p>

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		<p>whole performance and the targets set.</p> <p>Alternatively, centres can advise candidates to complete PDP processes using activities where whole performance information will be available before and after completion of the PDP.</p>	working with others) may also be affected.
Physics	<p><b>Modification of the question paper to:</b> Return the question paper duration and structure to pre-2018 format of 2 hours.</p> <p><b>Modification to marks and scaling across the course assessment:</b> Section 1: objective test will be 20 marks unscaled. Section 2: restricted and extended-response questions to be 90 marks scaled to 60 marks. Assignment: 20 marks unscaled.</p> <p>Reducing the length of the exam was not seen as helpful and could cause an increase teacher workload, since prelims may need to be rewritten.</p>	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b> The format and the length of the question will <b>not</b> be modified, as there was not strong support for the proposed modification.</p> <p>Additionally, maintaining the current format and balance of the paper, without adding additional skills-based questions will mean that candidates can be familiar with the style and format of the paper through practising past papers and the specimen paper.</p> <p><b>Modification of the assignment:</b> Removal of the coursework component (assignment) for session 2020–21 only.</p>	<p>The majority of respondents either disagreed or disagreed strongly with the proposal to reduce the length of the examination to pre-2018 length (approximately 60%, with approximately 26% being in favour).</p> <p>However, it should be noted that a proportion of the respondents who selected either ‘disagree’ or ‘disagree strongly’ went on to comment that they agreed with the proposal and the disagreement was with the scale of the changes proposed. Those responses would not be sufficient to result in a majority in favour of the proposal.</p> <p>Reducing the length of the exam was not seen as helpful and could cause an increase in teacher workload, since prelims may need to be rewritten.</p> <p>The great majority of respondents indicated that their</p>

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			preferred modification would be the removal of coursework for this year. The overwhelming rationale put forward for this move was the difficulty in carrying out practical work safely, following the guidelines issued by SSERC. It was also noted by many respondents that access to IT facilities is an issue that would impede candidates' ability to undertake literature research. Almost all respondents suggesting this move said it should be for this year only.
Practical Cake Craft	<p><b>Modification of the assignment to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ remove the need for the identification of resources (recipe/equipment lists)</li> <li>◆ remove one evaluation comment from each of the final sections</li> </ul>	<p><b>Modification of the assignment:</b></p> <p>We will remove section 2 (evaluation). Centres to provide a portfolio of evidence for skills which would have been assessed in the practical activity, to support a centre-generated mark.</p>	<p>In line with consultation feedback,</p> <p>Component 2 — Section 2 will be removed to reduce the burden for teachers in the delivery of the course and allow candidates more time to prepare assessment evidence.</p> <p>Component 3 — Centres provide portfolio of evidence for skills which would have been assessed in the practical activity, to support a centre generated mark. This evidence can be generated at any stage in the session, recognising that practical work in many Home Economics departments is</p>

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			currently not allowed or severely restricted.
Practical Cookery	<p><b>Modification of the assignment to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ remove the need for candidates to complete an equipment list and to provide detailed service requirements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Modification of the assignment:</b></p> <p>SQA will not issue a specific course assessment task for session 2020–21. Centres can select a suitable task for component 2 and use recipes as detailed in the next column for component 3. SQA will provide marking instructions for these recipes.</p>	<p>The modifications were carried out in line with consultation feedback.</p> <p>Component 2 and 3 — As practical work in many centres is currently not allowed or severely restricted, centres will provide marks for these components based on the work candidates are able to complete.</p> <p>Component 2 — Centres will select an appropriate practical activity for candidates to base this assignment on.</p> <p>Component 3 — Centres will base marks for this component on recipes currently provided for the Cookery Skills Techniques and Processes National 5 unit assessment, as these recipes cover an appropriate range of skills and techniques for this level. This can be completed at any stage in the session, enabling centres to work around restrictions to practical work.</p>
Practical Electronics	No modifications proposed.	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b></p> <p>The question paper will be removed for session 2020–21 only. The course assessment is based only on the Practical Activity (IACCA).</p>	While consultation feedback does reflect strong concerns around teachers' ability to deliver the practical aspects of the course, the practical activity represents

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			<p>70% of the course assessment and is fundamental to the validity of the course. Respondents indicated that the only plausible approach was to remove the question paper.</p> <p>While the theory content has not been removed from the course, but only from the assessment, this should give centres greater opportunity and flexibility to concentrate on the practical aspects of the course and allow candidates to meet the requirements of the practical activity, while following guidance around social distancing and use of equipment.</p>
Practical Metalworking	No modifications proposed.	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b> The question paper will be removed for session 2020–21 only. The course assessment is based only on the Practical Activity (IACCA).</p> <p><b>Modification to the practical activity:</b> The 2020 practical activity will be reissued for session 2021 and it will be published as soon as administrative amends are made to it, rather than at the end of October.</p>	<p>The question paper is 30% of course assessment – consultation feedback indicated that removing this element will allow practitioners to focus on practical skills with candidates. However, there is the expectation that theory will still be delivered, and candidates' understanding of this will be evidenced through the practical activity. While removing the question paper does not necessarily allow for more learning and teaching time, it</p>

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			<p>does ease assessment burden on candidates. This change means that the weighting of the course assessment will change to 100% Practical Activity.</p> <p>Practitioners are familiar with the 2020 Practical Activity and the material requirements, so reissuing it will reduce preparation and planning time for centres.</p> <p>Publishing the assessment early will mean that candidates can complete it at any time during the year once their teacher is satisfied that they have the skills to do so.</p>
Practical Woodworking	No modifications proposed.	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b> The question paper will be removed for session 2020–21 only.</p> <p><b>Modification of the practical activity:</b> The 2020 practical activity will be reissued for session 2021 and it will be published as soon as administrative amends are made to it. Mark submission dates will be extended (as late as possible/practicable).</p>	<p>Consultation feedback indicated that removing the question paper component will support more time for learning and teaching. We will also reuse the session 2019–20 practical activity (i.e. coursework) and republish this at the earliest opportunity to direct learning and teaching. The submission date for marks will be extended as late as possible/practicable to allow as much time as possible for course delivery, the undertaking of the practical activity (coursework), and the internal assessment of the</p>

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			practical activity (coursework).
Psychology	No modifications proposed.	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b>            The question paper will now have two sections only, based on the mandatory content:            Section 1: Individual Behaviour – Sleep and Dreams (25 marks)            Section 2: Social Behaviour – Conformity (25 marks)</p> <p>All questions will be answered by candidates. There will be no optional questions. The total mark allocation in the question paper will reduce from 70 marks to 50 marks and the duration of the exam will reduce from 2 hours to 1 hour 30 minutes.</p> <p><b>Modification of the assignment:</b>            For session 2020–21 assessment conditions will be eased to allow teachers to suggest the research topic to candidates.</p>	<p>In response to consultation feedback, we will remove questions on the optional topics from the question paper and assess the mandatory content only. This will reduce the total number of marks in the question paper and the duration of the exam.</p> <p>This change will reduce teaching time, while ensuring that both sections of the course are assessed in the question paper, with all relevant skills still being sampled.</p> <p>For session 2020–21 we will slightly relax the conditions of assessment for the assignment.</p> <p>This will give teachers/lecturers greater control, allowing them to suggest the research topic for groups within the class or for the class as a whole. This will reduce teaching time and support the delivery of the assignment.</p>
Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies	<p><b>Modification of question paper:</b>            Centres will be informed of small sub-topic areas of content that will not be directly assessed in 2021.</p> <p>Centres will be advised that they should continue to deliver the course as normal. Teachers and lecturers will be aware of the sub-topic areas and themes that</p>	<p><b>Modification of question paper:</b>            Centres will be informed of small sub-topic areas of content that will not be directly assessed in 2021.</p> <p>Centres will be advised that they</p>	Informing centres of content that will not be directly assessed in 2021 will free up time for focused teaching, learning and assessment while still ensuring that the standard of the qualification is maintained.

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	will not feature in the question paper for 2021 and will be free to decide timing and depth of delivery, and any internal assessment of these sub-topics and themes.	<p>should continue to deliver the course as normal. Teachers and lecturers will be aware of the sub-topic areas and themes that will not feature in the question paper for 2021 and will be free to decide timing and depth of delivery, and any internal assessment of these sub-topics and themes.</p> <p><b>Modification of the assignment:</b> Removal of the coursework component (assignment) for session 2020–21 only.</p>	<p>Feedback from the national consultation highlighted the significant benefits of removing the coursework. Removing the assignment would mean less class time will be required for planning, organising, and developing the assignment, thus reducing pressure and allowing for increased learning and teaching time for the course.</p>
Sociology	No modifications proposed.	<p><b>Modification of the question paper:</b> The question paper will now be two sections:</p> <p>Question 1: Human Society (30 marks) Question 2: Culture and Identity (20 marks)</p> <p>The total mark allocation for the question paper will reduce from 70 marks to 50 marks and the duration of the exam will reduce from 2 hours to 1 hour and 30 minutes.</p>	<p>We will remove ‘Social Issues’ from the question paper. Social issues will still be taught, to some extent, as it will be in the assignment, but this is likely to release some learning and teaching time for this aspect of the course, in line with consultation feedback.</p>

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Enclosure 51.3 – Attachment: Word document**

**BRIEFING: DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER AND CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS – MINISTERIAL STATEMENT: ASSESSMENT OF SQA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN 2020-21**

<b>Date and Time</b>	Wednesday 7 October – 15:50-16:20
<b>Opening statement and supporting briefing material</b>	<p><b>Annexes</b></p> <p>[Redacted – not in scope]</p> <p>Annex B – Q&amp;A</p> <p>Annex C – FMQ: Assessment Approach for National Qualifications in 2021</p> <p>Annex D – Summary of recent SQA consultation reports</p> <p>Annex E – Scottish Government response to Rapid Review of National Qualifications Experience 2020 Report</p> <p>Annex F – Summary of Stakeholder Engagement on plans</p> <p>[Redacted – not in scope]</p> <p>Annex J – Copy of Stirling University news release</p> <p>[Redacted – not in scope]</p> <p>Annex L – Scottish Greens news release</p> <p>Annex M – Scottish Conservatives news release</p>

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Annex B**  
**Q&A**

Cancelling of National 5 exams

**Why are National 5 qualifications not important enough to be examined in 2021?**

- This decision should not be taken as any kind of comment on the value of National 5 qualifications, it simply reflects the difficult circumstances we are facing.
- National 5 qualifications remain valued and a key part of the Senior Phase offer, and will continue to be subject to rigorous assessment.
- The approach to replace National 5 exams with an alternative approach based on teacher judgement supported by validated assessments will allow additional time for learning and teaching for the cohorts that have entered S3 and S4 and who have already experienced disruption to teaching time, whilst at the same time ensuring that their hard work is rewarded with a qualification.
- Proportionally, much smaller numbers of pupils leave school after taking National 5s, and those that do often have additional skills-based qualifications.
- Other qualifications are offered in Scotland's schools and colleges which do not involve formal exams at the end of the course; instead relying on continuous assessment.

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Why can't National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams be held online?**

- Work is continuing within SQA to consider digital forms of assessment and we are investing in SQA's digital systems in support of this.
- This investment will see a streamlined and substantially updated next generation portfolio of qualifications incorporating innovative, technology-enabled new approaches to assessment. With a move away from paper to digital assessment and services enhancing the learner experience.
- This will help achieve a significant reduction in teacher workload and a substantial saving in the amount of time teachers are required to be released from schools to support the exam/assessment system

[Redacted – not in scope]

**What approach will be taken to assessing the equality impact of proposals for the 2021 diet and how will EQIA findings feed in to planning?**

- It is important that statutory requirements are met and that an EQIA is produced to support decision making regarding awarding in 2021.
- SQA has statutory duties both as the regulator and awarding body for National Qualifications in Scotland as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as an obligation to assess the impact of implementing its work against the needs set out in the public sector equality duty.
- We have asked that SQA work closely with the Commissioner to further embed best practice.
- In reaching the decision to cancel all National 5 exams we engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to understand their views.

**Have you undertaken an EQIA and CRWIA to support this decision? And will you publish it as soon as possible?**

- The SQA have undertaken and published an EQIA and CRWIA to support the modifications to course assessments.
- We have taken a decision based in the knowledge gained from the previous EQIA and CRWIA, in addition to a significant level of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders including learners.
- We will work with the SQA to develop an EQIA and CRWIA as the details of the approach to awarding in 2021 are developed.
- We are committed to ensuring that stakeholders' views are listened to and taken into account.

**Priestley review**

[Redacted – not in scope]

- What is most important now is to learn from the lessons the review sets out and to act on the recommendations it makes, which is what we are doing starting with the cancellation of the National 5 exams.

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Annex C**

**FMQ: Assessment Approach for National Qualifications in 2021**

[Redacted – not in scope]

**ISSUE 20 September:** Media reports that N5 exams will be cancelled, and Higher and Advanced Higher exams will go ahead this year, but no reporting of source of story. Positive and negative stakeholder reaction to this story.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted – not in scope]

- To support the sitting of Higher and Advanced Higher exams we are asking the SQA to cancel all National 5 exams and to slightly delay the start of the remaining exam diet.

[Redacted – not in scope]

- In line with the recommendation made by Professor Priestley, the Deputy First Minister has asked SQA to cancel National 5 examinations in 2021.

[Redacted – not in scope]

- In taking this decision on National 5 exams - which constitute more than half of all exams taken - it means that we can build an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers that is as safe as it possibly can be.
- Higher and Advanced Higher exams tend to be the qualifications that most pupils leave school with, determining their path into work, college, or university.
- It also means that we can use the time in the school year freed up by cancelling the National 5 exams to make up some of the time pupils lost at the end of last year.

[Redacted – not in scope]

## Annex D

### SUMMARY OF SQA REPORTING OF THE FINDINGS OF THEIR CONSULTATIONS ON COURSE MODIFICATIONS AND THE TIMING OF THE EXAM DIET

[Redacted – not in scope]

*SQA consultation on course modifications and exam timetable*

[Redacted – not in scope]

- SQA had originally intended to implement all of the proposals that were strongly supported in the consultation document. These proposals included one or more of the following: the removal of coursework or some elements of exam papers; shortened exam papers; or removal of practical assessments for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.
- [Redacted – not in scope]

- It examined options to make changes to the exam timetable to allow more time to teaching and learning lost in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years. The options were to delay the existing timetable by 3 weeks or to change the order of the exams (having N5 exams first followed by Highers and Advanced Highers).

[Redacted – not in scope]

## Annex E

### **DRAFT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO RAPID REVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS EXPERIENCE 2020**

**TO BE ADDED – below is a summary as a placeholder**

Recommendation	Decision
1. Suspension of the 2021 National 5 exam diet, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation supported by validated assessment.	ACCEPT

[Redacted – not in scope]

## Annex F

### **SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

1. Discussions have been taking place with key stakeholders to gauge opinions on assessment approaches, in light of ongoing public health concerns. Details below.

Date	Stakeholder	Key points
<b>[Redacted – not in scope]</b>		
1 October 2020	Senior Phase pupils from Fife, Perth & Kinross, and Highlands & Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17 young people were involved in the discussion.</li> <li>• Opinions were sought on the general proposals around N5 with rationale to free up teaching time and learners to build their experiences, allowing for later start of H &amp; AH exam diet.</li> <li>• Opinions from the young people were diverse with no consensus on potential approach for 2021 but strong opinion expressed on N5's role in preparing learners for perceived "higher stake" exams (i.e. Higher and Advanced Higher, but also FE/HE).</li> <li>• [Redacted – not in scope]</li> <li>• Concerns raised on: the potential for N5 to be seen as a less valuable qualification if there were to be no exam (not dissimilar to the</li> </ul>

		opinions previously expressed around N4); [Redacted – not in scope]
[Redacted – not in scope]		

[Redacted – not in scope]

**COPY OF STIRLING UNIVERSITY NEWS RELEASE**



**Media release: Do not issue until further notice**

**DRAFT: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**\*STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2:30pm\***

## **University of Stirling education experts complete exam review**

A team of Stirling researchers led by education expert Professor Mark Priestley has completed an independent review into the handling of this year's Scottish National Qualifications.

The review investigated the process through which National Qualifications were awarded in 2020, after exams were cancelled by Scottish Education Minister John Swinney, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The review, which makes nine recommendations, advises that next year's National 5 examinations should be cancelled to create additional space for Higher exams, and calls for the development of a nationally recognised system for moderation of centre-based assessment.

Professor Priestley, University of Stirling, said: "This year presented an unprecedented challenge and the SQA, the government, local authorities and schools, faced an extremely difficult set of circumstances, with no easy solutions. While, with hindsight, we acknowledge that it would have been a near impossible task to adopt a perfectly working system that would have pleased everyone, it is vitally important we look back and learn so we can be prepared for the future, and avoid a similar predicament in 2021."

Working with Professor Priestley were Stirling academics Dr Marina Shapira and Dr Andrea Priestley, and Research Assistants, Michelle Ritchie and Dr Camilla Barnett, who undertook the research and completed the report within 6 weeks. Titled: *Rapid Review of National Qualifications Experience 2020*, it draws upon a range of evidence, including stakeholder testimony, generated in panel and individual interviews, and analysis of relevant documentation.

During a statement to Parliament today (**Tuesday 6 October**), Mr Swinney extended his gratitude to Professor Priestley and the Stirling team for carrying out such a large task in a short time frame.

**Quote from John Swinney – To be taken from his statement to parliament (advised this will take place at 2:20pm-2:30pm on Tuesday)**

The full recommendations of the report are:

1. Suspension of the National 5 examinations diet in 2021, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.
2. The development of a nationally recognised, fully transparent and proportionate system for moderation of centre-based assessment.
3. The development of more extensive approaches to collaborative decision making and co-construction by professional stakeholders of assessment practices related to National Qualifications.
4. A commitment to embedding equalities in all aspects of the development of qualifications systems.
5. The development of more systematic processes for working with and engaging young people, as stakeholders and rights holders in education.
6. The development of a clear communications strategy, co-constructed with stakeholders, to ensure that the extraordinary arrangements for 2021 are as fully as possible understood by all parties.
7. A review of qualification appeals systems, including consideration of the rights and roles of young people, in the context of the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scottish law.
8. The commissioning of independent research into the development and application of the 2020 ACM, involving full access to anonymised attainment data and the statistical algorithms used to moderate grades.
9. The development by SQA and partners of digital materials and systems for producing, assessing and moderating assessment evidence, to ensure that operational processes for gathering candidate evidence for appeals is less reliant on paper-based systems.

**Ends**

Media enquiries to Sarah Manning, Communications Officer, on 07341 052 750 or [sarah.manning@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.manning@stir.ac.uk)

**Notes to editors**

**University of Stirling**

The University of Stirling is ranked fifth in Scotland and 40th in the UK for research intensity in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. Stirling is committed to providing education with a purpose and carrying out research which has a positive impact on communities across the globe – addressing real issues, providing solutions and helping to shape society.

Interdisciplinary in its approach, Stirling's research informs its teaching curriculum and facilitates opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration between staff, students, industry partners and the wider community.

The University's scenic central Scotland campus – complete with a loch, castle and golf course – is home to more than 14,000 students and 1500 staff representing around 120 nationalities. This includes an ever-expanding base for postgraduate study.

The University received a Queen's Anniversary Prize in the latest round of awards, in recognition of the quality and innovation exhibited by its Institute of Aquaculture. The University is the UK Sports University of the Year 2020, as conferred by The Times / Sunday Times Good University Guide.

[@stiruni](http://www.stir.ac.uk)

[Redacted – not in scope]

## **SCOTTISH GREENS NEWS RELEASE**

Sun 20 Sep, 2020

Scottish Greens Education Spokesperson Ross Greer MSP has called on John Swinney to cancel the entire 2021 exam diet, following media reports that the Education Secretary is planning to drop National 5 exams but go-ahead with Highers.

The Scottish Greens, alongside teaching unions the EIS and SSTA, have made the case for months that proceeding on the basis that exams will definitely go-ahead next May presents an unacceptable risk, either due to disruption and school closures throughout the year or last minute cancellations, as happened earlier this year.

Ross Greer MSP said:

"Highers are a critical qualification for tens of thousands of young people, so leaving even part of those grades up to exams which the Education Secretary cannot guarantee will go ahead is a huge risk.

"John Swinney himself has already acknowledged the huge logistical challenge presented by attempting to run exams, given all pupils must sit the exam at the same time but a maximum of only 50 pupils can be in any exam hall. This doesn't even take into account the impact of any future local or national lockdowns, the huge workload that preparing for both exams and an alternative contingency would place on teachers or the reality that a month's learning and teaching time in June has already been lost.

"The only reliable solution is to cancel the 2021 exams now and grade pupils based on their work throughout the year, avoiding both the risk of exams taking place during a pandemic and the chaos of last month's grading scandal. The Scottish Greens worked hard to secure a fix this year which saw 75,000 pupils' grades restored, we'd prefer to avoid the need to do so again next August."

## **SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVES NEWS RELEASE**

Sunday 20 September 2020

The SNP government must commit to a “plan A” of going ahead with next year’s Scottish exams and exhaust all avenues before scrapping them, the Scottish Conservatives said today.

Following reports that Scottish National 5 exams may be cancelled in 2021, with a “scaled back” version of Highers going ahead, calls have been made for an urgent statement from the SNP’s education secretary.

The Scottish Conservatives are bringing forward a schools debate at Holyrood on Wednesday and will raise the future of exams in the parliament the day before.

John Swinney is expected to outline his plans, for around 80,000 pupils to be awarded certificates based on coursework alone, before the October school holidays.

But education spokesman Jamie Greene has urged the SNP to “make every effort” to save National 5 and Higher exams.

He has warned that a repeat of the SQA grades fiasco cannot be allowed.

**Scottish Conservative education spokesman Jamie Greene said:**

“Going ahead with exams must be plan A.

“The SNP should make every effort to save National 5 and Higher exams.

“All other options should be exhausted before exams are scrapped.

“Nobody is pretending it will be easy, but it must be our central goal to give pupils a return to as much normality as possible.

“And if the virus does impact plan A, we also need credible contingency plans, which we didn’t have this year.

“We will be demanding John Swinney sets out his plans in parliament on Tuesday.

“Pupils and parents shouldn’t be left in the dark guessing what may happen any longer.

“We cannot afford to fall into another mess like last year.”

Last month, John Swinney was urged to resign after thousands of Scottish children — many from deprived areas — found out their predicted grades submitted by teachers had been lowered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Ends

**Enclosure 52 – Email: FW: Updated SQA/Exams FMQ - Deadline 13:30**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 11:56  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Updated SQA/Exams FMQ - Deadline 13:30  
**Importance:** High

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – I'd appreciate an early review of this. [Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

---

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 10:56  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Updated SQA/Exams FMQ - Deadline 13:30  
**Importance:** High

Thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – [Redacted – not in scope]

Could we get a revised version with this in it for 13:30 please?

## Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[See Enclosure 50 for remainder of email chain]

**Enclosure 52.1 – Attachment: Word document**

**FMQ: Assessment Approach for National Qualifications in 2021**

[Redacted – not in scope]

**ISSUE 20 September:** Media reports that N5 exams will be cancelled, and Higher and Advanced Higher exams will go ahead this year, but no reporting of source of story. Positive and negative stakeholder reaction to this story.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted – not in scope]

- To support the sitting of Higher and Advanced Higher exams we are asking the SQA to cancel all National 5 exams and to slightly delay the start of the remaining exam diet.

[Redacted – not in scope]

- In line with the recommendation made by Professor Priestley, the Deputy First Minister has asked SQA to cancel National 5 examinations in 2021.

[Redacted – not in scope]

- In taking this decision on National 5 exams - which constitute more than half of all exams taken - it means that we can build an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers that is as safe as it possibly can be.
- Higher and Advanced Higher exams tend to be the qualifications that most pupils leave school with, determining their path into work, college, or university.
- It also means that we can use the time in the school year freed up by cancelling the National 5 exams to make up some of the time pupils lost at the end of last year.

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Priestley Review**

- [Redacted – not in scope]
- The eight accepted recommendations are:
  - (1) Suspension of the 2021 National 5 exam diet, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.
  - [Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Enclosure 53 – Email: RE: Ministerial Statement - Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot > **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:48  
**To:** Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans <MinisterPBV@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Gorman G (Gayle) <Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Johnston P (Paul) <Paul.Johnston@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; McKay D (Denise) <Denise.McKay@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Ministerial Statement - Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Apologies, but can you use this version please? Just correcting a small typo.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills | The Scottish Government | Web: www.gov.scot |  
📞 0300 24 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Mobile: 0044 (0)7[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Email: DFMCSE@gov.scot |  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
5N.07 St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot > **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:11  
**To:** Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans  
**Cc:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) ; Gorman G (Gayle) ; McAllister C (Colin) ; Director of Learning ; Johnston P (Paul) ; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot ; McKay D (Denise) ; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot ; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot ; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills ; First Minister  
**Subject:** Ministerial Statement - Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21

Good afternoon

Please find attached a copy of DFM's statement – FM has cleared.

I note that DFM's statement will now be from **16:00 - 16:30**.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills | The Scottish Government | Web: [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot) |

📞 0300 24 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Mobile: 0044 (0)7[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Email: [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot) |  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

5N.07 St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

**Sent:** 06 October 2020 15:48

**To:** First Minister <[firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)>

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

<[DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot)>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <[Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot](mailto:Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot)>; Gorman G (Gayle) <[Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot](mailto:Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot)>; McAllister C (Colin) <[Colin.McAllister@gov.scot](mailto:Colin.McAllister@gov.scot)>; Director of Learning <[DirectorofLearning@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofLearning@gov.scot)>; Johnston P (Paul) <[Paul.Johnston@gov.scot](mailto:Paul.Johnston@gov.scot)>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; McKay D (Denise) <[Denise.McKay@gov.scot](mailto:Denise.McKay@gov.scot)>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** FOR CLEARANCE: Ministerial Statement - Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21

FMP

Please see attached draft of DFM's Statement on 'Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21'. DFM is due to deliver this in the Chamber tomorrow at 16:00 – I'd be grateful if you could share this with the First Minister for clearance if possible.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills | The Scottish Government | Web: [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot) |

📞 0300 24 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Mobile: 0044 (0)7[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Email: [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot) |  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

5N.07 St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

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**Enclosure 53.1 – Attachment: Word document**

**DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER SPEAKING NOTE  
ASSESSMENT OF SQA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN 2020-21**

[Redacted – not in scope]

N5s

I have therefore asked the Chief Examining Officer to take an alternative approach to National 5 accreditation in 2021 rather than the usual exams. .

The alternative approach to awarding National 5 qualifications will be based on two key recommendations by Professor Mark Priestley. These recommendations are, and I quote:

1. Suspension of the National 5 examinations diet in 2021, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.
2. The development of a nationally recognised, fully transparent and proportionate system for moderation of centre-based assessment.

So, the alternative approach will be based on teacher judgement, supported by assessment resources, and quality assurance.

This will include, where possible, specifying between 2 and 4 pieces of work per subject that will form the basis of arriving at a final award.

The SQA will today publish broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation, with a very clear focus on quality rather than quantity of that evidence. That will be followed after the October break by subject specific guidance on the key pieces of work that young people will need to complete.

And, to support the process, the SQA will work with Education Scotland, local authorities, regional improvement collaboratives and others to support a local and national approach to moderation and quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.

Obviously, we must seek to maintain standards. Therefore, the SQA will work with schools and colleges during the year on the quality assurance of their pupils' work.

This will include SQA looking at a sample of work within each school and college and feeding back to the teachers and lecturers to ensure standards are maintained. The SQA will build this system of quality assurance in collaboration with the education system, drawing on its existing expertise.

Put simply, an A in Aberdeen has to be the same as an A in Annan or anywhere else.

But, I want to be very clear to Parliament, given the controversies of the last awards process, what will not happen.

First and foremost, awards will not be given – or taken away - on the basis of a statistical model nor on the basis of a school's past performance. There will be no algorithm.

Awards will be based on the progress of our young people and their work. This work and the judgement of the teacher, supported by appropriate quality assurance to maintain standards, will be the evidence on which grades are based. .

### Highers /Advanced Highers

In taking this decision on National 5 exams, we also need to think about Highers and Advanced Highers.

In a standard exam year, the National 5's constitute more than half of all exams taken.

From a public health point of view, not having these exams significantly reduces the risk of the exams as a whole. It means that we can build an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers that is as safe as it possibly can be, using all the coronavirus mitigations we have sadly become so familiar with, including physical distancing and enhanced cleaning.

That means that the exams determining the results that most pupils leave schools with, the exams that determine most people's future path into work, college, or university, can go ahead as long as the public health guidance allows it.

It also means that we can use the time in the school year freed up by cancelling the National 5 exams to make up some of the time pupils lost at the end of last year.

As a result, I can confirm that Higher and Advanced Higher exams will begin on 13 May, later than normal and giving pupils back approximately two weeks of the learning time they lost this year. Certification day will remain as 10 August.

This additional time, in conjunction with the course assessment modifications that SQA have made following its consultation, give the greatest chances of these exams being implemented fairly.

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Enclosure 54 – Email: RE: Draft social media posts**

**From:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:48  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @educationscotland.gov.scot  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft social media posts

Happy

Regards

**Colin McAllister**  
0131 244 3248  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot).

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:42  
**To:** Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Draft social media posts

These posts and attached slides follow the wording in the release; happy to hear any comments.

Thanks  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Tweet 1**  
Education Secretary @JohnSwinney today confirmed plans for SQA awards 2021 → Higher and Advanced Highers exams will go ahead if safe to do so, with contingency plans developed

→ National 5 exams to be replaced with awards based on coursework and teacher judgement

See: *link to NR*

Graphic 1  
SQA Awards 2021

[Redacted – not in scope]

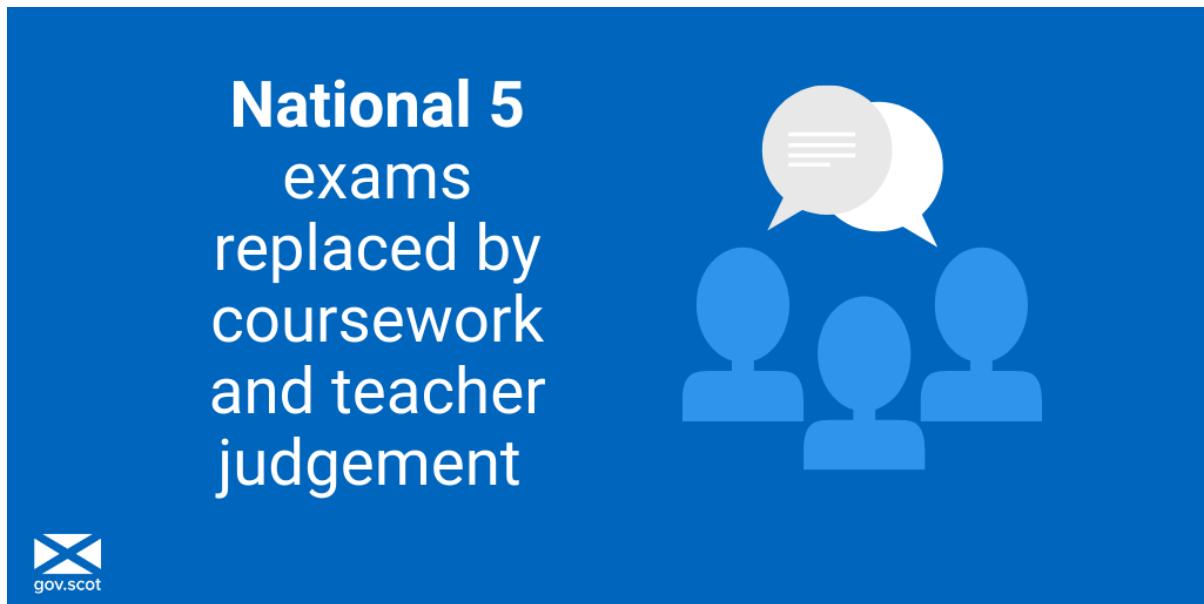
**Tweet 3**

National 5 exams will be replaced with awards based on coursework and teacher judgement, @sqanews will publish guidance for teachers and the key pieces of work young people will need to complete

Graphic 3  
National 5 exams replaced by coursework and teacher judgement

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Enclosure 54.1 – Attachment: PNG** (other 2 .png files not in scope)



**Enclosure 55 – Email: RE: Urgent: SQA exam diet 2021**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:32  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>;  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Gorman G  
(Gayle) <Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)  
<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Johnston P (Paul)  
<Paul.Johnston@gov.scot>; McKay D (Denise) <Denise.McKay@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: SQA exam diet 2021  
**Importance:** High

G – added to OneNote

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Apologies for the delay – see attached (correct attachment this time!).

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is also going to call you.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] National Qualifications Team, Scottish Government, Area 2B North,  
Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ. Call: 07824 102793 Email: [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

**PLEASE NOTE MY WORKING PATTERN IS MONDAY-THURSDAY.**



**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 12:18  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and  
Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Gorman G  
(Gayle) <Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)  
<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Johnston P (Paul)  
<Paul.Johnston@gov.scot>; McKay D (Denise) <Denise.McKay@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: SQA exam diet 2021

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

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 11:53

**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Gorman G (Gayle) <Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Johnston P (Paul) <Paul.Johnston@gov.scot>; McKay D (Denise) <Denise.McKay@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Urgent: SQA exam diet 2021

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted – not in scope]

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[See Enclosure 51 for remainder of email chain]

**Enclosure 55.1 – Attachment: Word document**

[Redacted – not in scope]

1. In light of the decision to move to an alternative assessment approach for National 5, as opposed to exams, SQA are still working on the detail of the approach, but we understand it will mirror current course assessments.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

DLEARN: Curriculum, Qualifications & Gaelic Division  
07/10/2020

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Enclosure 56 – Email: FINAL VERSION OF STATEMENT**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:50

**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

**Subject:** FINAL VERSION OF STATEMENT

**Enclosure 56.1 – Attachment: Word document**

**DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER SPEAKING NOTE  
ASSESSMENT OF SQA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN 2020-21**

[Redacted – not in scope]

N5s

I have therefore asked the Chief Examining Officer to take an alternative approach to National 5 accreditation in 2021 rather than the usual exams. .

The alternative approach to awarding National 5 qualifications will be based on two key recommendations by Professor Mark Priestley. These recommendations are, and I quote:

1. Suspension of the National 5 examinations diet in 2021, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.
2. The development of a nationally recognised, fully transparent and proportionate system for moderation of centre-based assessment.

So, the alternative approach will be based on teacher judgement, supported by assessment resources, and quality assurance.

This will include, where possible, specifying between 2 and 4 pieces of work per subject that will form the basis of arriving at a final award.

The SQA will today publish broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation, with a very clear focus on quality rather than quantity of that evidence. That will be followed after the October break by subject specific guidance on the key pieces of work that young people will need to complete.

And, to support the process, the SQA will work with Education Scotland, local authorities, regional improvement collaboratives and others to support a local and national approach to moderation and quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.

Obviously, we must seek to maintain standards. Therefore, the SQA will work with schools and colleges during the year on the quality assurance of their pupils' work.

This will include SQA looking at a sample of work within each school and college and feeding back to the teachers and lecturers to ensure standards are maintained. The SQA will build this system of quality assurance in collaboration with the education system, drawing on its existing expertise.

Put simply, an A in Aberdeen has to be the same as an A in Annan or anywhere else.

But, I want to be very clear to Parliament, given the controversies of the last awards process, what will not happen.

First and foremost, awards will not be given – or taken away - on the basis of a statistical model nor on the basis of a school's past performance. There will be no algorithm.

Awards will be based on the progress of our young people and their work. This work and the judgement of the teacher, supported by appropriate quality assurance to maintain standards, will be the evidence on which grades are based. .

### Highers /Advanced Highers

In taking this decision on National 5 exams, we also need to think about Highers and Advanced Highers.

In a standard exam year, the National 5's constitute more than half of all exams taken.

From a public health point of view, not having these exams significantly reduces the risk of the exams as a whole. It means that we can build an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers that is as safe as it possibly can be, using all the coronavirus mitigations we have sadly become so familiar with, including physical distancing and enhanced cleaning.

That means that the exams determining the results that most pupils leave schools with, the exams that determine most people's future path into work, college, or university, can go ahead as long as the public health guidance allows it.

It also means that we can use the time in the school year freed up by cancelling the National 5 exams to make up some of the time pupils lost at the end of last year.

As a result, I can confirm that Higher and Advanced Higher exams will begin on 13 May, later than normal and giving pupils back approximately two weeks of the learning time they lost this year. Certification day will remain as 10 August.

This additional time, in conjunction with the course assessment modifications that SQA have made following its consultation, give the greatest chances of these exams being implemented fairly.

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Enclosure 57– Email: RE: Ministerial Statement - Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21**

**From:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:58  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** SGLD School Education <SGLDSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Ministerial Statement - Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21

Thanks, superfluous 'be' removed.

Time for L&T freed up for all senior phase pupils.

M

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:33  
**To:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** SGLD School Education <SGLDSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Ministerial Statement - Assessment of SQA National Qualifications in 2020-21

Two points – for what they are worth.

Section in yellow is typo and should be 1 or the other:

This will include, where possible, specifying between 2 and 4 pieces of work per subject that will **be form** the basis of arriving at a final award.

In relation to the sentence:

It also means that we can use the time in the school year freed up by cancelling the National 5 exams to make up some of the time pupils lost at the end of last year.

I am not sure what cohort that is referring to . Is that higher and A Higher students? It comes under that heading but perhaps seems relevant to all pupils? You may want to consider the emphasis. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[See Enclosure 53 from Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills' email of 07 October 2020 at 13:11 for remainder of email chain]

**Enclosure 58 – Email: RE: Urgent: SQA exam diet 2021**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:03  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Gorman G (Gayle) <Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Johnston P (Paul) <Paul.Johnston@gov.scot>; McKay D (Denise) <Denise.McKay@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: SQA exam diet 2021

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

To see updated briefing [Redacted – not in scope]

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:45  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot ; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills ; Pentland MK (Malcolm) ; Gorman G (Gayle) ; McAllister C (Colin) ; Director of Learning ; Johnston P (Paul) ; McKay D (Denise) ; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot ; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: SQA exam diet 2021

Thanks for this [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[See Enclosure 55 for remainder of email chain]

**Enclosure 58.1 – Attachment: Word document**

[Redacted – not in scope]

1. In light of the decision to move to an alternative assessment approach for National 5, as opposed to exams, SQA are still working on the detail of the approach, but we understand it will mirror current course assessments in terms of type of assessments and provisional contribution to final grade.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

DLEARN: Curriculum, Qualifications & Gaelic Division  
07/10/2020

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Enclosure 59 – Email: RE: URGENT - query from DFM**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:03  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - query from DFM

We can look at the number of entries at National 5 in subjects with an exam and do the same across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher to calculate a %.

Based on this approach, and using 2020 data, we'd estimate that cancelling National 5 exams takes around 280,000 exams (almost 60% of exams across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) out of the system.

I know [Redacted s38(1)(b)] has contacted SQA separately - we can consider how any figures they provide match up with the above when we see them.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Education Analysis | Scottish Government

e-mail: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:09  
**To:** Director of Learning ; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills ; Pentland MK (Malcolm) ; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot ; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - query from DFM

Hi Graeme

Extending copy list to Analysts who may be able to help with this one.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Scottish Government, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ. Call: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

[Redacted s38(1)(b)].



**From:** Logan G (Graeme) <Graeme.Logan@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Director of Learning

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:06

**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** URGENT - query from DFM

Malcolm, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I've just taken a call from DFM regarding this afternoon's statement.

One question he had was what number of exams cancelling N5 takes out of the system, in terms of the number and % of the total number of exams which would otherwise be running if there were a full diet. Are these figures in the pack? If not, can we get them as a matter of urgency from SQA?

[Redacted – not in scope]

Thanks  
Graeme.

**Enclosure 60 – Email: RE: FOR CLEARANCE: SQA award news release**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot > **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:49  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; DG Education, Communities & Justice <DGECJ@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: FOR CLEARANCE: SQA award news release

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

DFM has noted and is content to clear.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills | The Scottish Government | Web: [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot) |  
☎ 0300 24 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Mobile: 0044 (0)7[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Email: DFMCSE@gov.scot |  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
5N.07 St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:14  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; DG Education, Communities & Justice <DGECJ@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FOR CLEARANCE: SQA award news release

PO

Please find a draft news release on the exams diet for Mr Swinney's comments/clearance please, this has been cleared with policy and spads. I am aware DFM has asked for confirmation on the point highlighted and officials will get back shortly.

I also attach the tweets and slides for @scotgovedu which follow the wording in the release.

[Redacted – not in scope]

Many thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

### SQA awards 2021

Plans for Highers to go ahead; National 5 exams replaced.

Plans have been announced for Higher and Advanced Higher exams to go ahead in 2021, while National 5 exams will be replaced by a system where grades are awarded based on coursework and teacher judgement.

It means the volume of exams that will take place will be reduced by half, lowering public health risks and allowing plans for Higher and Advanced Highers to proceed.

[Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing the National 5 exams makes space in the timetable to push the Higher and Advanced Higher exams back until May, making up some of the lost learning time.

[Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing National 5 exams was recommended by Professor Mark Priestley in his independent review into the events following the cancellation of exams in 2020. His report has also been published today.

Mr Swinney said:

[Redacted – not in scope]

"In a normal exam year, National 5s constitute more than half of all exams taken. From a public health point of view, not running these exams significantly reduces risk. National 5 pupils will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers, with robust quality assurance. We have learned lessons from this year's initial SQA gradings - there will be no algorithm for moderating grades in 2021.

"By replacing National 5 exams, we can hold an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers if public health guidance allows – these are the qualifications most pupils leave schools with that determine paths into work, college, or university.

[Redacted – not in scope]

"My decisions on the 2021 exam diet were informed by Professor Priestley's recommendations, widespread consultation by the SQA on the exams timetable and course assessment modifications, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders.

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Tweet 1**

Education Secretary @JohnSwinney today confirmed plans for SQA awards 2021  
→ Higher and Advanced Highers exams will go ahead if safe to do so, with contingency plans developed  
→ National 5 exams to be replaced with awards based on coursework and teacher judgement

See: *link to NR*

Graphic 1  
SQA Awards 2021

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Tweet 3**

National 5 exams will be replaced with awards based on coursework and teacher judgement, @sqanews will publish guidance for teachers and the key pieces of work young people will need to complete

Graphic 3  
National 5 exams replaced by coursework and teacher judgement

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Communications DFM & Education  
Desk: 0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Scottish Government | [news.gov.scot](http://news.gov.scot)

**Enclosure 61 – Email: RE: Draft news release**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:55  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Many thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)].  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Communications DFM & Education  
Desk: 0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Scottish Government | [news.gov.scot](http://news.gov.scot)

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:50  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

[Redacted s38(1)(b)],  
This is correct, you could even say “more than half”  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:03  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

[Redacted s38(1)(b)],

As discussed, we are checking with SQA and Analysts on the reference highlighted below. They understand the urgency on this one. Will keep you posted.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Scottish Government, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ. Call: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:55  
**To:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Thanks all. Taking on board the comments, this is the final news release that I will send to DFM in the next 10 minutes.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

## SQA awards 2021

Plans for Highers to go ahead; National 5 exams replaced.

Plans have been announced for Higher and Advanced Higher exams to go ahead in 2021, while National 5 exams will be replaced by a system where grades are awarded based on coursework and teacher judgement.

It means the volume of exams that will take place will be reduced by half, lowering public health risks and allowing plans for Higher and Advanced Highers to proceed.

[Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing the National 5 exams makes space in the timetable to push the Higher and Advanced Higher exams back until May, making up some of the lost learning time.

[Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing National 5 exams was recommended by Professor Mark Priestley in his independent review into the events following the cancellation of exams in 2020. His report has also been published today.

Mr Swinney said:

[Redacted – not in scope]

“In a normal exam year, National 5s constitute more than half of all exams taken. From a public health point of view, not running these exams significantly reduces risk. National 5 pupils will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers, with robust quality assurance. We have learned lessons from this year’s initial SQA gradings - there will be no algorithm for moderating grades in 2021.

“By replacing National 5 exams, we can hold an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers if public health guidance allows – these are the qualifications most pupils leave schools with that determine paths into work, college, or university.

[Redacted – not in scope]

“My decisions on the 2021 exam diet were informed by Professor Priestley’s recommendations, widespread consultation by the SQA on the exams timetable and course assessment modifications, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Communications DFM & Education  
Desk: 0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Scottish Government | [news.gov.scot](http://news.gov.scot)

**From:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:47  
**To:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Thanks Colin. [Redacted – not in scope]  
Malcolm

**From:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:32  
**To:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Malcolm

A view on each point below from me (in red)

Regards

**Colin McAllister**

0131 244 3248

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot).

**From:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:26

**To:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)].

A few comments:

[Redacted – not in scope]

- In saying “By replacing National 5 exams..’ should we not say ‘with an alternative approach to assessment’ or something similar. Again, appreciate this adds words but think we need to be clear. I would rather not. It is clear from the context and is said elsewhere. We don’t need the repetition

Malcolm

**From:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:16

**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm)

<Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Works for me

Regards

**Colin McAllister**  
0131 244 3248  
07[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot).

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 13:13  
**To:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Thanks Colin. This is the final version I intend sending up to DFM – can I confirm that everyone is content with this?

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

#### **SQA awards 2021**

Plans for Highers to go ahead; National 5 exams replaced.

Plans have been announced for Higher and Advanced Higher exams to go ahead in 2021, while National 5 exams will be replaced by a system where grades are awarded based on course work and teacher judgement.

It means the volume of exams that will take place will be reduced by half, lowering public health risks and allowing plans for Higher and Advanced Highers to proceed.

[Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing the National 5 exams makes space in the timetable to push the Higher and Advanced Higher exams back until May, making up some of the lost learning time. [Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing National 5 exams was recommended by Professor Mark Priestley in his independent review into the events following the cancellation of exams in 2020. His report has also been published today.

Mr Swinney said:

[Redacted – not in scope]

"In a normal exam year, National 5s constitute more than half of all exams taken. From a public health point of view, not running these exams significantly reduces risk. National 5 pupils will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers, with robust quality assurance. We have learned lessons from this year's initial SQA gradings - there will be no algorithm for moderating grades in 2021.

"By replacing National 5 exams, we can hold an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers if public health guidance allows – these are the qualifications most pupils leave schools with that determine paths into work, college, or university.

[Redacted – not in scope]

"My decisions on the 2021 exam diet were informed by Professor Priestley's recommendations, widespread consultation by the SQA on the exams timetable and course assessment modifications, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Communications DFM & Education

Desk: 0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Scottish Government | [news.gov.scot](http://news.gov.scot)

**From:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 12:40

**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot; Montgomery L (Lana)

<Lana.Montgomery@gov.scot>; Director of Learning

<DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm)

<Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

Sorry to make a further change...but further changes below.

Regards

**Colin McAllister**

0131 244 3248

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 12:34  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Draft news release

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted – not in scope]

Best wishes

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 11:33  
**To:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Draft news release

Hi all

Here is the latest version of the news release [Redacted – not in scope]

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Plans have been announced for Higher and Advanced Higher exams to go ahead in 2021, while National 5 exams will be replaced by a system where grades are awarded based on course work and teacher judgement.

## SQA awards 2021

Plans for Highers to go ahead; National 5 exams replaced.

Plans have been announced for Higher and Advanced Higher exams to go ahead in 2021, while National 5 exams will be **replaced by a system where grades are** awarded based on course work and teacher judgement.

It means the volume of exams that will take place will be reduced by half, lowering public health risks and allowing plans for Higher and Advanced Highers to proceed.

[Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing the National 5 exams makes space in the timetable to push the Higher and Advanced Higher exams back until May, making up some of the lost learning time. [Redacted – not in scope]

Replacing National 5 exams was recommended by Professor Mark Priestley in his independent review into the events following the cancellation of exams in 2020. His report has also been published today.

Mr Swinney said:

[Redacted – not in scope]

"In a normal exam year, National 5s constitute more than half of all exams taken. From a public health point of view, not running these exams significantly reduces risk. National 5 pupils will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers, with robust quality assurance. We have learned lessons from this year's initial SQA gradings - there will be no algorithm for moderating grades in 2021.

"By replacing National 5 exams, we can hold an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers if public health guidance allows – these are the qualifications most pupils leave schools with that determine paths into work, college, or university.

[Redacted – not in scope]

"My decisions on the 2021 exam diet were informed by Professor Priestley's recommendations, widespread consultation by the SQA on the exams timetable and course assessment modifications, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Communications DFM & Education

Desk: 0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Scottish Government | [news.gov.scot](http://news.gov.scot)

**From:** McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 10:34

**To:** Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Media Releases

I have dropped the text into a word doc and then tracked my changes for ease.

I am keen not to put too much detail into this – most of the audience for the NR do not need to be in the weeds – so have sought to strip it back a little. I have however brought the public health rationale more to the fore in the preamble.

Happy to discuss if any of the changes cause serious probs (minor probs I can live with today!)

Regards

**Colin McAllister**

0131 244 3248

07[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot).

**From:** Logan G (Graeme) <Graeme.Logan@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Director of Learning

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 09:31

**To:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

**Subject:** RE: Media Releases

[Redacted – not in scope]. Graeme.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[See Enclosure 49 for remainder of email chain]

**Enclosure 62 – Email: FW: 2021 Qualifications - Letter from Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, SQA**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 15:19  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: 2021 Qualifications - Letter from Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, SQA

Fi

[Redacted – not in scope]

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**From:** Logan G (Graeme) <Graeme.Logan@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Director of Learning  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 15:02  
**To:** Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: 2021 Qualifications - Letter from Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, SQA

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk> **On Behalf Of** Fiona Robertson  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 15:00  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** 2021 Qualifications - Letter from Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, SQA

Dear Deputy First Minister

In response to your letter of 6 October, please find attached letter from Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, SQA.

Kind regards,

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

## Enclosure 62.1 – Attachment: PDF



7 October 2020

John Swinney MSP  
Deputy First Minister and  
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

By email: DFMCSE@gov.scot

Dear Deputy First Minister

Thank you for your letter of 6 October. I can confirm that we have discussed these issues in recent days and your letter reflects those discussions.

It is your decision to cancel National 5 exams this year. As you request, and in close consultation and collaboration with the education system, SQA will develop alternative certification arrangements. Your letter sets out your broad expectations on how that will be done and I can confirm that we will take work forward to do so. Broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation will be published today, with subject specific guidance to follow. We will also work to provide assessment resources to schools and colleges.

Your letter also sets out that the diet for Higher and Advanced Higher should proceed. We will work on that basis, alongside the further development of contingency arrangements with stakeholders should they be needed. The diet will commence on 13 May, to allow for further learning and teaching time, and certification day will remain as 10 August. Our modifications to assessment for 2021, following extensive consultation, and also published today, should also help relieve pressure on the system this year.

We have discussed the need to ensure that standards are maintained in 2021, in fairness to learners across Scotland. To achieve this, there is an important role for everyone across the education system, through a commitment to quality assurance, guidance and support. The role of SQA is critical, and we will work on the support plan you identify, but this cannot be achieved by the actions of SQA alone. I will provide an update to you on this work as soon as possible. We will also continue to engage with officials on our budgetary position in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ  
An Togalach Optima, 58 Sràid MhicDhonnachaigh, Glaschu, G2 8DQ

T: 0345 279 1000 F: 0345 213 5000  
E: [customer@sqa.org.uk](mailto:customer@sqa.org.uk) W: [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)

Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD  
Lowden, 24 Shawfair an Iar, Dal Chè, EH22 1FD

Chairman: David Middleton CBE  
Chief Executive: Fiona Robertson

07 October 2020

I am very grateful to your officials for sharing an advance copy of Professor Priestley's Review and the Scottish Government's initial response to it. Following consultation with the SQA Board of Management, I will provide a more detailed response to the Scottish Government in the coming days.

To conclude, these have been very challenging times for SQA. We worked incredibly hard to deliver on your commission for 2020, and in truly exceptional circumstances, but it led to a Ministerial direction. I will keep you closely informed on our progress during the course of the year, to ensure SQA continues to fulfil its statutory functions, and with the commitment and agreement of partners and the support of learners.

Above all, as Chief Examining Officer, I want to ensure arrangements for this year deliver for learners across Scotland and maintain the integrity and credibility of qualifications in Scotland.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Robertson  
Chief Executive

**Enclosure 63 – Email: RE: Briefing request: DFM Four Nations Call - 2021 Exams 08/10**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 17:52  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** DG Education, Communities & Justice <DGECJ@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@educationscotland.gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Briefing request: DFM Four Nations Call - 2021 Exams 08/10

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Please find attached a briefing note for the Four Nations call tomorrow morning.

Malcolm Pentland will provide official support.

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Senior Phase Unit | Learning Directorate  
Scottish Government | Area 2-B North | Victoria Quay | Edinburgh EH6 6QQ  
T: 0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | M: 07[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 06 October 2020 16:04  
**To:** Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Briefing request: DFM Four Nations Call - 2021 Exams 08/10

Hi All,

We have just scheduled a call with the Four Nations Education Ministers, as requested by the Secretary of State, for 09:00 on Thursday Morning this week. The call is to discuss 2021 Qualifications/Exams. I would be grateful if we could please have some briefing for DFM (similar to the briefing kindly provided for his call with the Secretary of State yesterday) by COP tomorrow as well as official support on the call.

I would really appreciate confirmation that this is being taken forward and on who will be supporting DFM on the call. Please let me know if there are any questions or issues relating to this request.

Many thanks,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] John Swinney MSP | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | Tel: 0131[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

**Enclosure 63.1 – Attachment: Word document**

**BRIEFING: DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER AND CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

<b>Event</b>	Four Nations Education Ministerial Conference Call Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education Peter Weir, Education Minister, Northern Ireland Assembly Kirsty Williams, Education Minister, Welsh Assembly
<b>Date and Time of Event</b>	Thursday 8 October 2020 at 09:00
<b>Purpose</b>	It is anticipated that the discussion will focus on respective approaches to assessment of National Qualifications in 2021.
<b>Official Support</b>	Malcolm Pentland, DD – Curriculum, Qualifications & Gaelic; 07[Redacted s38(1)(b)].
<b>Contents</b>	Annex A: Key lines [Redacted – not in scope] Annex C: Review of National Qualifications Experience 2020 [Redacted – not in scope]

**ANNEX A**

[Redacted – not in scope]

- To support the sitting of Higher and Advanced Higher exams we have cancelled all National 5 exams and to slightly delay the start of the remaining exam diet.

[Redacted – not in scope]

**ANNEX C**

**RAPID REVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS EXPERIENCE 2020**

[Redacted – not in scope]

**Summary of recommendations**

1. Suspension of the National 5 examinations diet in 2021, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.

[Redacted – not in scope]

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO RAPID REVIEW OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS EXPERIENCE 2020

Recommendation	Decision	SG Response
1. Suspension of the 2021 National 5 exam diet, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.	ACCEPT	<p>Due to the level of disruption already caused and the level of disruption likely to be faced by some or all pupils and students this academic year, the risks of holding a full diet in 2021 are too great.</p> <p>In view of the recommendation, and having consulted widely, including through the Education Recovery Group and with learners, teachers and parents, the Deputy First Minister has decided to cancel National 5 examinations in 2021.</p> <p>On this basis, the Deputy First Minister and has asked Scotland's Chief Examining Officer to develop an alternative approach to awarding National 5 qualifications that is based on exam centre estimates, based on teacher/lecturer judgements and supported by assessment resources and quality assurance at national and local level.</p> <p>Higher and Advanced Higher examinations in 2021 will go ahead. They will start on 13 May 2021, slightly later than is normal, therefore, allowing some additional learning time this academic year to make up for some of that lost at the end of 2019-20. Modifications to course assessment will also be made by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) following its consultation in order to maximise learning and teaching time. A clear contingency plan is being developed for Higher and Advanced Higher exams. This will include key check points up to the February break to assess public health advice and, if needed, Higher and Advanced Higher courses will be awarded based on teacher professional judgement, taking account of normal assessment evidence, and subject to quality assurance to ensure standards are maintained.</p>
[Redacted – not in scope]		

[Redacted – not in scope]



**Enclosure 64 – Email: RE: SPAD view - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 11 October 2020 15:00  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: SPAD view - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

I think we should reintroduce a version of the line you cut and reorder again. See version below:

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

While they will not sit exams National 5 pupils will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers. This approach ensures that they will be able to work towards a qualification while helping to protect the safety of both staff and pupils.

Our decision to replace National 5 exams with grades based on teacher judgement and coursework assessment was informed by Professor Priestley's independent review, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders. The SQA will work with Education Scotland, local authorities, and others to support a national approach to deliver robust quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 11 October 2020 14:50  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: SPAD view - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

Hi david, are you able to suggest something for Jeanette's request?

**From:** Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 11 October 2020 14:46  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** News Desk <Newsdesk@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; Morrison E (Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Wilson M (Mick)

<Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Head SFIO  
<HeadSFIO@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education  
<CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: SPAD view - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

Thanks

I think we should be a bit more robust here - leaving without an exam is not the same as leaving without a qualification and id like something added in please along lines that this approach ensures best way for pupils to work towards a qualification during these times

Thanks

JC

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 11 October 2020 14:33  
**To:** Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** News Desk <Newsdesk@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew)  
<Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>;  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam)  
<Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; Morrison E  
(Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol)  
<Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Wilson M (Mick)  
<Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Head SFIO  
<HeadSFIO@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education  
<CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted  
s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** SPAD view - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

Thanks, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – I've trimmed a little just to avoid duplication

Hi Jeanette,

We've been asked to comment on the below Us For Them news release – which says cancellation of Nat 5s will mean thousands of children will leave school without any experience of exams. The group, which has repeated its assertion that it is crowdfunding to challenge the cancellation, says this will greatly affect children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We've discussed with officials. Grateful for views on suggested lines.

Thanks

**[Redacted s38(1)(b)]**

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

“Our decision to replace National 5 exams with grades based on teacher judgement and coursework assessment was informed by Professor Priestley’s independent review, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders.

“The SQA will work with Education Scotland, local authorities, and others to support a national approach to deliver robust quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.

“We must always be mindful of public health advice to protect the safety of staff and pupils, and not running these exams significantly reduces risk.”

## Background

Professor Mark Priestley’s independent review recommended that National 5 exams are replaced with grades based on teacher judgement and coursework assessment. Higher and Advanced Higher exams will go ahead if it is safe to do so.

## Concern over 6000 S4 pupils who will leave school with no exams

Thousands of children, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, will leave school without sitting a single exam if the Scottish Government presses ahead with its controversial National 5s plan.

UsForThem Scotland said around 6000 pupils in S4 would leave school at the end of this year planning to go onto college and work.

But following education secretary John Swinney’s announcement last week, those taking National 5s won’t be able to sit exams at the end of the course.

The organisation said that would hamper those pupils, many of whom would be expected to take on further education or apprenticeships without the experience of exams, and having sat a course which some experts now say will “lack credibility”.

UsForThem, which has 11,000 members across Scotland, also confirmed it was starting a fundraising campaign to launch legal action against Mr Swinney’s decision following consultation with its members.

**Jo Bisset, organiser for UsForThem Scotland, said:**

“We know from historic trends that around 6000 children will leave school at the end of S4 next year.

“They will all now have to do so without sitting an exam.

“That does not stand them in good stead for the future, especially for the 50 per cent or so who go straight to college where exams are a key part of most courses.

“Many of those who leave school at the end of S4 will be from disadvantaged backgrounds – they already have enough going against them without the government spoiling their education too.

“Parents aren’t taking this decision lying down which is why so many are behind our initial plans for legal action.

“If the government won’t listen to parents, then perhaps they’ll have to listen to the courts.”

**Notes to editors:**

**Statistics on school leavers are available here:**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-2-2020-edition/>

The show the following number of pupils left school at the end of S4:

2018/19 – 5919  
2017/18 – 5646  
2016/17 – 5975  
2015/16 – 5786  
2014/15 – 5814  
2013/14 – 5970  
2012/13 – 6370  
2011/12 – 6210

**In 2018/19, those S4 pupils went to the following destinations:**

Further education – 52.1 per cent  
Employment – 24.5 per cent  
Other positive – 12.2 per cent  
Other destination – 10.7 per cent  
Higher education – 0.5 per cent

**Education experts have warned National 5 courses with no exams will lack credibility:**

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-in-scotland-dropping-n5s-hits-prospects-of-the-most-disadvantaged-zj6x52zc2?shareToken=69c810c83ec69ee5bf1bc624a5c4c60a>

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 11 October 2020 14:23

**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** News Desk <Newsdesk@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; Morrison E (Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Head SFIO <HeadSFIO@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: media query - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

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

I have had a look at various briefs and think these lines are fine. I have added a sentence in red which aims to tackle the credibility point and did a little reordering of the second para.

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Scottish Government

Learning Directorate: Teacher Education, Leadership and Reform

“Our decision to replace National 5 exams with grades based on teacher judgement and coursework assessment was informed by Professor Priestley’s independent review, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders.

National 5 pupils will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers, with robust quality assurance. **The SQA will work with Education Scotland, local authorities, regional improvement collaboratives and others to support a national approach to quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.**

We must always be mindful of public health advice to protect the safety of staff and pupils, and not running these exams significantly reduces risk. “

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 11 October 2020 13:44

**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** News Desk <Newsdesk@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; Morrison E (Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Head SFIO <HeadSFIO@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** media query - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

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

Hope you're well.

We've been asked to comment on the below Us For Them news release – which says cancellation of Nat 5s will mean thousands of children will leave school without any experience of exams. The group, which has repeated its assertion that it is crowdfunding to challenge the cancellation, says this will greatly affect children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

I've suggested starter from DFM's statement to party – grateful for input, pls. The journalist asked for response by 4pm so grateful for urgent returns.

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

## Concern over 6000 S4 pupils who will leave school with no exams

Thousands of children, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, will leave school without sitting a single exam if the Scottish Government presses ahead with its controversial National 5s plan.

UsForThem Scotland said around 6000 pupils in S4 would leave school at the end of this year planning to go onto college and work.

But following education secretary John Swinney's announcement last week, those taking National 5s won't be able to sit exams at the end of the course.

The organisation said that would hamper those pupils, many of whom would be expected to take on further education or apprenticeships without the experience of exams, and having sat a course which some experts now say will "lack credibility".

UsForThem, which has 11,000 members across Scotland, also confirmed it was starting a fundraising campaign to launch legal action against Mr Swinney's decision following consultation with its members.

**Jo Bisset, organiser for UsForThem Scotland, said:**

"We know from historic trends that around 6000 children will leave school at the end of S4 next year.

"They will all now have to do so without sitting an exam.

"That does not stand them in good stead for the future, especially for the 50 per cent or so who go straight to college where exams are a key part of most courses.

“Many of those who leave school at the end of S4 will be from disadvantaged backgrounds – they already have enough going against them without the government spoiling their education too.

“Parents aren’t taking this decision lying down which is why so many are behind our initial plans for legal action.

“If the government won’t listen to parents, then perhaps they’ll have to listen to the courts.”

**Notes to editors:**

**Statistics on school leavers are available here:**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-2-2020-edition/>

The show the following number of pupils left school at the end of S4:

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**Education experts have warned National 5 courses with no exams will lack credibility:**

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## POSS starter

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

“Our decision to replace National 5 exams with grades based on teacher judgement and coursework assessment was informed by Professor Priestley’s independent review, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders.

“We must always be mindful of public health advice to protect the safety of staff and pupils, and not running these exams significantly reduces risk. National 5 pupils will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers, with robust quality assurance.”

## Background

Professor Mark Priestley's independent review recommended that National 5 exams are replaced with grades based on teacher judgement and coursework assessment. Higher and Advanced Higher exams will go ahead if it is safe to do so.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Newsdesk

Scottish Government

Ext [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Enclosure 65 – Email: nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Sent:** 11 October 2020 15:56  
**To:** Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science <MinisterFEHES@gov.scot>; Richard.Lochhead.msp@parliament.scot  
**Cc:** News Desk <Newsdesk@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; Morrison E (Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Head SFIO <HeadSFIO@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit <FMcovidbriefingunit@gov.scot>; Minister for Children and Young People <MinisterCYP@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

For the benefit of the copylist, the Minister has cleared.

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
**Sent:** 11 October 2020 15:37  
**To:** Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science <MinisterFEHES@gov.scot>; Richard.Lochhead.msp@parliament.scot  
**Cc:** News Desk <Newsdesk@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; Morrison E (Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Strang F (Frank) <Frank.Strang@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Tannahill C (Carol) <Carol.Tannahill@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Wilson M (Mick) <Mick.Wilson@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Head SFIO <HeadSFIO@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Campbell J (Jeanette)

(Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit <FMcovidbriefingunit@gov.scot>; Minister for Children and Young People <MinisterCYP@gov.scot>

**Subject:** line to clear - nat 5 cancellation - us for them NR - Daily Mail

Minister/PO,

As per DFM's leave arrangements, I'd be grateful for clearance to issue the below statement. SpAds and policy are content. The Daily Mail and Scotsman asked for a response today.

Thanks,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

#### QUERY

We've been asked to comment on the below Us For Them news release – which says cancellation of Nat 5s will mean thousands of children will leave school without any experience of exams. The group, which has repeated its assertion that it is crowdfunding to challenge the cancellation, says this will greatly affect children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### LINE

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

"While National 5 pupils will not sit exams, they will receive awards based on their coursework and the judgement of their teachers – this approach ensures that they will be able to work towards a qualification while helping to protect the safety of both staff and pupils.

"Our decision to replace National 5 exams with grades based on teacher judgement and coursework assessment was informed by Professor Priestley's independent review, and by listening to the views of pupils, teachers, parents, education experts, local authorities and other stakeholders. The SQA will work with Education Scotland, local authorities, and others to support a national approach to deliver robust quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.

"We must always be mindful of public health advice to protect the safety of staff and pupils, and not running these exams significantly reduces risk."

#### News Release

**Concern over 6000 S4 pupils who will leave school with no exams**

Thousands of children, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, will leave school without sitting a single exam if the Scottish Government presses ahead with its controversial National 5s plan.

UsForThem Scotland said around 6000 pupils in S4 would leave school at the end of this year planning to go onto college and work.

But following education secretary John Swinney's announcement last week, those taking National 5s won't be able to sit exams at the end of the course.

The organisation said that would hamper those pupils, many of whom would be expected to take on further education or apprenticeships without the experience of exams, and having sat a course which some experts now say will "lack credibility".

UsForThem, which has 11,000 members across Scotland, also confirmed it was starting a fundraising campaign to launch legal action against Mr Swinney's decision following consultation with its members.

**Jo Bisset, organiser for UsForThem Scotland, said:**

"We know from historic trends that around 6000 children will leave school at the end of S4 next year.

"They will all now have to do so without sitting an exam.

"That does not stand them in good stead for the future, especially for the 50 per cent or so who go straight to college where exams are a key part of most courses.

"Many of those who leave school at the end of S4 will be from disadvantaged backgrounds – they already have enough going against them without the government spoiling their education too.

"Parents aren't taking this decision lying down which is why so many are behind our initial plans for legal action.

"If the government won't listen to parents, then perhaps they'll have to listen to the courts."

**Notes to editors:**

**Statistics on school leavers are available here:**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-attainment-initial-leaver-destinations-no-2-2020-edition/>

**The show the following number of pupils left school at the end of S4:**

2018/19 – 5919

2017/18 – 5646

2016/17 – 5975

2015/16 – 5786

2014/15 – 5814  
2013/14 – 5970  
2012/13 – 6370  
2011/12 – 6210

**In 2018/19, those S4 pupils went to the following destinations:**

Further education – 52.1 per cent  
Employment – 24.5 per cent  
Other positive – 12.2 per cent  
Other destination – 10.7 per cent  
Higher education – 0.5 per cent

**Education experts have warned National 5 courses with no exams will lack credibility:**

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-in-scotland-dropping-n5s-hits-prospects-of-the-most-disadvantaged-zj6x52zc2?shareToken=69c810c83ec69ee5bf1bc624a5c4c60a>

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