

<p>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.</p>	<p>Consider as a future project as part of our research strategy in education</p>	<p>We note this recommendation but do not consider this to be a priority for our improvement activity at this stage. Our main focus is on learning lessons from 2020 and making arrangements for the 2021 national qualifications. We will pass this recommendation to the team who consider a range of projects for inclusion in our research in education strategy.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>ACCEPT</p>	<p>Work is continuing within SQA to consider digital forms of assessment and we are investing in SQA's digital systems to support this.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

**Enclosure 09 – Email: 2021 Qualifications -Letter from Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 06 October 2020 23:42  
**To:** fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk  
**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** 2021 Qualifications -Letter from Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and

Dear Fiona,

Please find attached a letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

Kind regards

[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) | Tel: 0131 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Mob: 07[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Email: [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot)

*All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to another 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 primary 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)*

**Enclosure 09.1 – Attachment: PDF**

Leas Phrìomh Mhinistear agus Rùnaire a' Chaibineit  
airson Foghlam agus Sgilean  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

John Swinney BPA/MSP  
F/T: 0300 244 4000  
E: dfmcse@gov.scot

Fiona Robertson  
Chief Examining Officer  
Scottish Qualifications Authority

By email: [fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk](mailto:fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk)

6 October 2020

Dear Fiona

As you are aware, current circumstances and the continued impact of COVID-19 present the significant risk of disruption to the running of the exam diet in 2021. We have discussed this risk and options that exist in relation to it in detail and I am grateful to you for your advice on these matters.

It remains vitally important that we provide clarity to schools, colleges, young people, parents and the wider system on how the exam diet will proceed. I will set out detail on this in a statement to the Parliament tomorrow. After careful consideration of the risks and the views of stakeholders, and taking account of the recommendations made to me by Professor Mark Priestley following his independent review, I have decided that there should be no exams for National 5 qualifications in 2020-21.

I am asking that you cancel exams for National 5s in 2021 for a number of reasons. In my view there is a sound case in the current circumstances for prioritising examinations for Higher and Advanced Higher courses as exit qualifications for the majority of candidates. Cancelling exams for National 5s will create significant space to assist the successful and safe delivery of Higher and Advanced Higher examinations, both of which involve smaller numbers of candidates, which can be dispersed more readily across school and college buildings, therefore, enabling social distancing and other COVID-19 safety mitigations. This approach will also allow additional time for learning and teaching for Higher and Advanced Higher courses as you have confirmed that not having National 5 exams will allow the diet to start slightly later in the spring of 2021. Furthermore, a focus on exams for courses with smaller numbers of entries is more consistent with public health advice.

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire  
Maireamach fo chumhachan Achd Coitcheanachd (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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This approach also allows additional time for learning and teaching in late spring/summer of 2021 for the cohorts that have entered S3 and S4 this academic year and who have already experienced disruption to teaching time at the end of the 2019-20 academic year.

In the absence of exams for National 5s, I am asking that the SQA collaborates with education stakeholders to develop an alternative approach to awarding National 5 qualifications that is based on teacher and lecturer judgement, supported by validated assessments. The approach should include the provision of:

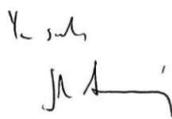
- clear guidance for teachers, lecturers and exams centres on evidence gathering and estimation, with a clear focus on quality rather than quantity of that evidence;
- clear National 5 subject specific guidance that, where possible, includes absolute clarity on 2-4 key pieces of work that young people will complete for each course, which will be assessed in the classroom, to inform their final grade; and
- a support plan developed by the SQA, with Education Scotland, local authorities, regional improvement collaboratives and others to support a national approach to moderation and quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.

Alongside this, to ensure standards are maintained, I expect the SQA to work alongside exam centres during the year on the quality assurance of learners' work.

Public health conditions allowing, the exam diet for Higher and Advanced Higher courses will proceed in 2021. This will be subject to the modifications that the SQA have identified following your consultation. You are also developing contingency plans in partnership with the education sector to allow awarding to go ahead in the event that Higher and Advanced Higher exams cannot proceed.

Finally, I wish to confirm that I will be publishing the report on the review completed by Professor Priestley tomorrow, along with the Government's response to his recommendations. In doing so, I will reaffirm a commitment to clear communication about the way forward for awarding in 2021, and I know you share my commitment to that.

I appreciate that these continue to be very challenging times and that you and colleagues at SQA have been working incredibly hard and with great commitment, both in relation to 2020's qualifications and in relation to 2021. I remain very grateful to you and your staff for this.



**JOHN SWINNEY**

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an Luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire  
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**Enclosure 10: Email: RE: Examples of coursework assignments**

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 12:37  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Examples of coursework assignments

No problem [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. Just one thing re the reference below to the release of 2020 exam papers – just to say that the actual form of assessment support has not been finalised. As an alternative it could be we provide resource around the chunking (or tagging) or key topics in our past papers for appropriate subjects etc.

Cheers

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 11:43  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Examples of coursework assignments

Thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)], that's great, and thanks for setting it out clearly, I still feel I'm on a bit of a learning curve with some of the details.

I'll pass this on to the DFM.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 07 October 2020 11:41  
**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Examples of coursework assignments

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Rather than use the term coursework - which imply research based projects etc – it is probably best to say assessments for N5. The assessments will mainly mirror the current course assessments – so for example in English there would be a reading assessment, a piece of writing and some literature analysis assessment. Our advice states that the most compelling evidence will mirror the standard and assessment conditions of the actual SQA course assessments – so in the examples above, the reading and literature assessments will be closed book and the writing will done over time with appropriate tutor supervision. The generic estimates guidance gives examples of the types evidence that would be appropriate and this will be followed up by subject specific advice.

Cheers

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 11:20

**To:** Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** Examples of coursework assignments

Morning all

I've had a request from the DFM to see some examples of likely coursework assignments that N5 learners may be asked to sit and be graded on due to the proposed cancellation of N5 exams. I know that you have said that the 2020 exam papers will be released to schools to assist with this, but have you an idea as to how they would use them e.g. as an in-school exam, or open book assessment of parts of the exam, or not at all as a graded assessment? Are there any further detail as to what other assignments being considered may look like, or is that a matter for the centres? My apologies for the rather basic questions and probable lack of understanding, but anything you could share urgently would be great as DFM is looking for this to see before this afternoon's debate.

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Curriculum, Qualifications and Gaelic - Learning Directorate

Scottish Government

(0131 24) x. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

**Enclosure 11 – Email: IN CONFIDENCE - DFM Statement and SG Response to Priestley Review**

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

**Sent:** 07 October 2020 14:23

**To:** Fiona Robertson (fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk) <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>

**Cc:** Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>

**Subject:** IN CONFIDENCE - DFM Statement and SG Response to Priestley Review

Fiona

In confidence at this stage, please find attached the final version of DFM's statement (now scheduled to be given at 16:00) and the SG response to the Priestley Review recommendations. The latter will be published on the SG website along with the Report when DFM gives his statement and we will send you a link to that then.

Best wishes

Malcolm

**Malcolm Pentland** | Deputy Director

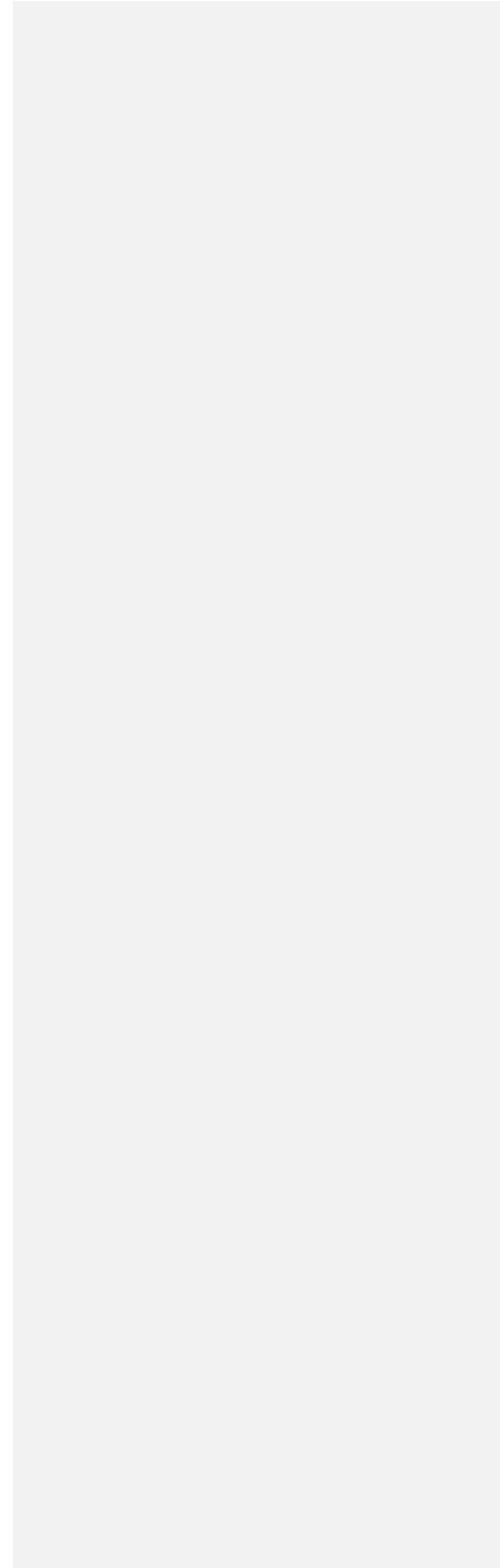
Curriculum, Qualifications and Gaelic Division | email: malcolm.pentland@gov.scot | tel:+44(0) 131 244 0047

Learning Directorate | Area 2B North | Victoria Quay | Edinburgh | EH6 6QQ

Buidheann-Stiùiridh an Ionnsachaidh | Raon 2B Tuath | Cidhe Bhictòria | Dùn Èideann | EH6 6QQ

**Enclosure 11.1 – Attachment: DFM statement to Parliament**

[Redacted s25(1) – this information is publicly available on the Scottish Government website:  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/deputy-first-ministers-speech-sqa-awards-2021/>]



**Enclosure 11.2 – Attachment: SG response to Priestley review**

[Redacted s25(1) – this information is publicly available on the Scottish Government website:  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/rapid-review-of-national-qualifications-experience-2020-our-response/>]

