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* Enclosures 30 and 31 form part of a campaign. There were 36 emails in total which have not been presented in full for the purposes of servicing this FOI request. There were 2 versions of the campaign email, examples of which have been included.

Enclosure 1 - Email from Grandparent to DFM

Tue 13/10/2020 10:10
202000102627

AO - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

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

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-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 12 October 2020 19:42
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Message from Scottish Parliament website

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
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-----Original Message-----

From: noreply@parliament.scot <noreply@parliament.scot>
Sent: 12 October 2020 19:28
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website

name:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

address:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] West Lothian

postcode:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

email:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] yahoo.co.uk

telephone:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

message:

Can you please explain to our parents in Scotland why our children are not doing NAT5 exams after saying they would go ahead, but on the advice of Mark Priestly you have changed this. The rest of the UK announced today that their kids will do GCSEs (Nat5) and all Highers across UK go ahead. What is wrong with our Kids doing their NAT5 in line with the UK. If the 3 tier system is in place to align us with the rest of the UK why on earth is this one year group of exams not allowed. The fiasco will happen again as we have just went thru experience of a teacher no communicating and marking down grades who is an A star pupil. and you want us to rely on these marks. I dont think so. This needs to be relooked at. Your advisor has got it wrong, all teachers in UK say exams are the true result. I have put this out on public media as this needs to be addressed. Thank you. A very angry grandparent. Scottish kid should be treated the same, delay the exams not cancel.

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[twitter.com/scotparl](http://twitter.com/ScotParl)<<http://twitter.com/ScotParl>>

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Enclosure 2 - Email from member of the public to DFM

13 October 2020

202000102596

AO –[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
OR please

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

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 13 October 2020 10:57
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Scottish National Exams 2021

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: ☐ [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.co.uk>
Sent: 13 October 2020 10:52
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Scottish National Exams 2021

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Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you as the Minister for Education in the Scottish Government to express my concern and extreme surprise that the teachers of Scotland and their leaders are unable to organise examinations for S4 pupils to sit their National 5 exams this academic year like their counterparts are in England and Wales. Surely to goodness if England can manage to arrange for their children to sit these exams which are so important in the development of these children to become part of the adult world then we here in Scotland can do so too. These children have already been badly let down by the Scottish Education System and all you are doing is limiting their future even more. Children need to aspire to reach goals in this world not to make do with second best. The teachers leaders should be ashamed of themselves they are there to get the best from their pupils not just to make do and be hide bound by rules and regulations.

I trust you will take the feelings of parents and guardians and do the best for our young people and give them a first class education.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]Stirlingshire [Redacted s38(1)(b)]Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

" email is like an electronic postcard - anyone who wants to read it does"

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Enclosure 3 - Email from teacher to DFM

8/10/20

20200097010

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

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

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 08 October 2020 12:57
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Exam Diet 2020-21

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 08 October 2020 09:24
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: 2021 Exam Diet

Dear Sir,

Can someone in your office please explain to me why it is appropriate for all pupils to attend school in the same classes, but not to sit in an exam room socially distanced? Surely it's either safe for young people to be in school or it isn't? It is entirely possible to organise an exam diet that sees no overlap of any N5 and higher subjects so I do not understand why the decision has been taken to cancel the exams? I am a teacher myself and while I see others applaud this decision, I cannot understand the double standard? Exams are not just used for the purpose of gaining a qualification, they are used as a way to prepare for harder exams in the future. The idea that you can just miss a step and automatically catch up may be the case for some candidates, but is not the case for all. There are a significant minority of candidates who will be adversely disadvantaged by being denied the opportunity to 'practice'.

I understand this decision is being taken out of an abundance of caution, but I believe there are alternatives that would allow all exams, or at least some form of summative assessment, to take place.

Regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 4 - Email from parent to SG/DFM

8/10/20

20200097703

Dear Scottish Government,

I am writing with great concern to the announcement that was made by Mr J Swinney regarding the cancelling of the exams for National 5 exams. I find this very upsetting baring in mind this may of been the only opportunity for some pupils to actually sit an exam as they are legally allowed to leave education at 16.

I also fear that this could be a start of things to come post Covid as i know in the past it has been mentioned that exams should be replaced with course work only!

I understand why it has been chosen for the year 4 pupils to have there exams cancelled but where do we stop as i feel this could be the argument next year and before we know it year 4 pupils never actually sit any exams!

I feel it is important for pupils to sit exams as it gets them ready for adult life with regards to studying taking notes etc. I feel just doing course work and teacher assessments does not have the same effect.

My other concern is that employers in the future will treat some of these students in the future differently and unfairly as they know that the individual may never of sat any exams. I also have a concern that you may also cancel the higher and advanced higher if the numbers increase to high!

If England, Wales and Northern Ireland actually have a full exam year next year then i would say that Scotland has made a big mistake and failed our pupils.

regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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Enclosure 5 - Email from parent to DFM

8/10/20

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

20200100010

OR please

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

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @ymail.com>
Sent: 08 October 2020 00:50
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Education Exams

Dear Mr Swinney

I am hugely disappointed in Wednesday's announcement on the Nat 5 exam diet for 2021. I understand the decision made would not have been an easy one and I have no doubt that you considered all possibilities and outcomes, before making this decision that will undoubtedly have a huge impact on all our young people. It is deeply regrettable that our young people will not be allowed to sit their exams and feel the sense of achievement and satisfaction that comes from having worked hard, studied harder, and reaped the rewards. Instead, for many, there will be intense pressure on them to continue to work hard and achieve exceptional grades for the duration of the course, and in particular, all year from now until exams. This could have a massive impact on stress levels and mental health for many. While they should be doing this anyway on nat 5 course, the pressure of knowing every single piece of work will be important, is actually enough to have the reverse effect. Our government has robbed our young people of the chance to feel a sense of achievement in passing exams after all the hard work has been completed, and yet, it appears to be OK for those sitting highers and advanced highers to have this privilege. I can not understand this at all. Surely if it is considered acceptable to make allowances for these exams, nat 5 should be no different.

I understand the pandemic might well have caused 2021 exams to be cancelled anyway, and that would have been acceptable, but at least let them have a chance for that to happen and let 2021 exams all go ahead until something happens preventing it. Give them a chance to actually earn their grades in the time mannered fashion they always have done.

I realise you believe are doing your best for the young people, but I am not sure I agree. I am absolutely downhearted by the decision taken and I am certain many parents and young people will be too. What measures have been considered to ensure a more positive outcome

than this year exam fiasco? How will young people be graded? Will prelims still go ahead?
Parents and young people will need to know all this.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

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Enclosure 6 - Email from parents to DFM

8/10/20

202000101032

Ao – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

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

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 08 October 2020 14:56
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Nat 5 cancellation

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: ☐ [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 08 October 2020 14:22
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Cc: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Nat 5 cancellation

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon First Minister,

I am not a member of Usforthem & you may have seen headlines quoting that 'Parents are furious' at the cancellation of the Nat 5 exams for 2021.

Parents are not furious. We are parents of a current S4 & we think this is the best & fairest decision for them. We have spoken to many other parents since yesterday & without exception, they feel as we do.

Our son himself is immensely relieved to have this one pressure lifted from him given what he is already having to cope with & the uncertainty of the future.

He should have started his Nat 5 coursework back in May, & although his teachers put in a commendable effort with online schooling, it was not the same as the face to face teaching our son feels he needs.

We are confident that a rigorous assessment process together with teacher opinions should ensure our son ends up with the grades he deserves & I know he appreciates the clarity of now knowing what he is working towards.

Please expect your inbox to be inundated with correspondence from the 'furious' members of Usforthem.

This group do not represent all parents. They do not even represent a majority of parents, being only 10k in membership.

With our grateful thanks as the parents of a much happier S4.

Kind regards

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

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Enclosure 7 - Email to DFM

8/10/20

202000101528

AO - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

FOR OR PLEASE

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 08 October 2020 20:04
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: National 5 Exam Cancellation

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
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-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.com>
Sent: 08 October 2020 19:57
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: National 5 Exam Cancellation

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir

I am writing to express my disappointment at your decision to cancel the National 5 exams in 2021. I believe this sends the wrong messages to our young people. We should be encouraging our youngsters to push on in the face of adversity. We must allow them the opportunity to sit these exams and meet an important milestone that they have been working towards for years. An experience that will prepare them for subsequent exam requirements and as well as for challenges presented throughout life.

I believe you have underestimated our young people and their ability to rise to the challenge of proceeding with exams in these trying times. I urge you to reconsider, lead by example and also to rise to the challenge by allowing the National 5 exams to go ahead in 2021.

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

Sent from my iPhone

Enclosure 8 - Email to DFM

9/10/20

20200010551

AO - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

FOR OR PLEASE

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 09 October 2020 18:30
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Exams

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
 Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 09 October 2020 17:45
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Exams

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi John

The talk about exams are that national 5s are having no exam. But is there a prelim and if so what is the difference?

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

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Enclosure 9 - Email to FM fwd to DFM

10/10/20

202000101569

AO –[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
FOR OR PLEASE

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 10 October 2020 19:15
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: National 5 examinations 2021

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: ☐ [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 10 October 2020 12:44
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: National 5 examinations 2021

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I write with regard to the cancellation of National 5 examinations in 2021. Both parents and pupils are very angry at your decision and wonder why you have made it now when the examinations are still more than six months away ?

Continuous assessment with grading from teachers will always be subject to partiality and suspect accordingly. These grades will not be recognised and those leaving at 16 will do so with no qualifications.

Do you suppose, perhaps, that your decision has something to do with the current malaise in the state system in Scotland ? There are an astonishing number of teaching vacancies advertised and year groups are being taught together. Does the virus, perhaps, provide an excuse to cancel examinations and avoid some embarrassing results ?

I would ask you to reconsider your decision and let external examination take place in Scotland as they do in the rest of the UK.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 10 - Email to DFM

13/10/20

202000102164

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

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

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 12 October 2020 18:50
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Exams

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Swinney

I am emailing in regard to your decision to cancel the Nat 5 exams next year. This decision is nothing short of shocking.

The First Minister stated 'judge me on education', well we are judging.

This decision is ruining our children's future. How can you make a decision to cancel the exams for next year?

Throughout this whole pandemic we have seen nothing but failings on the part of the SNP.

How could you honestly expect to run an independent country if you fall at the first hurdle.

I voted for independence because I believed in a better country for myself and my children.

I would never vote for independence again.

I truly hope that you reinstate the exams or we find more able leaders to create a better future for us.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 11 - Email to DFM

FOR OR PLEASE

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 11 October 2020 12:55
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: National 5 exams in 2020

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
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-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@virgin.net>
Sent: 11 October 2020 12:51
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: National 5 exams in 2020

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Dear Sir

I would like to suggest a method of achieving some standardisation in national 5 exams in 2020 which I believe will be assessed internally in schools. Could the SQA, for whom I worked as a setter from 1995 to 2013, send out exam papers to all schools so that all pupils sit the same examination. The SQA would send out detailed marking schemes for each exam. The teachers in school would mark the papers. To ensure that bias is eliminated the marking would be carried out by a teacher different to the class teacher. The class teacher could then review the marking to see if it was fair. Once marking was completed the raw marks could be submitted to SQA to decide grade boundaries.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]@virgin.net

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPad

Enclosure 12 - Email to DFM

7/10/20

202000100048

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 07 October 2020 19:40
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Announcement 07/10/2020

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: ☐ 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswineymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.co.uk>
Sent: 07 October 2020 19:28
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Announcement 07/10/2020

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Swinney,

Thank you very much for your announcement today – it must have been difficult.

Care should be taken that any moderation or verification of course work does not increase teacher workload. Maximisation of learning and teaching opportunities is indeed a priority – thank you for doing everything to keep the schools open.

Please review your decision about the SQA Unit Assessments. They require some modernisation/alignment with course content (Sciences/English/History) and a different approach to marking but remain reassuring assessment tools which reflect the national standard.

Thank you again for your commitment to education and your professionalism.

Kind Regards,

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

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

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Enclosure 13 - Email

202000102848

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

MR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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

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From: FitzPatrick J (Joe), MSP <Joe.FitzPatrick.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 13 October 2020 14:01
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Constituent Query -[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Good Afternoon,

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

Please see below an email I have received from [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. I would be very grateful for your thoughts on this.

Thank you,

Joe FitzPatrick MSP (Dundee City West)

a: 37 Dock Street, Dundee, DD1 3DR

t: 01382 843244

w: joe.fitzpatrick.scot

----- Original Message -----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)];
Received: Tue Oct 13 2020 13:49:36 GMT+0100 (British Summer Time)
To: FitzPatrick J (Joe), MSP; Joe FitzPatrick MSP; Joe FitzPatrick;
Subject: Letter from your constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dundee

Angus

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Phone: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@[yahoo.co.uk](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.co.uk)

Tuesday 13 October 2020

Dear Joe FitzPatrick,

I'm currently attempting to make National 5 Maths and SVQA 6 assessments free and have submitted a petition to parliament but they require I talk to my MP first. If you don't mind, I'll just copy and paste exactly what I wrote in the petition as it explains everything.

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to Make National 5 Maths and SVQA 6 English assessments free, including learning resources.

I've spoken to Dundee university, Aberdeen university and looked into grants and bursaries. There are a couple of services that "may" offer some finances towards the costs of these courses but competition is extreme and impractical. SAAS does not cover the costs and they have to be paid in full (£120 for resources and £260 for assessment for each topic) and there are no options to pay a little every month.

As I personally qualify for disability, speaking to Disability at Dundee University, there is still no option to have free assessments or pay them up.

Some links to these services are dead links or outdated and others have so many restrictions that mature students like myself do not even qualify for application.

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make National 5 Maths and SVQA English 6, free, for everyone. I'm currently trying to save up to take National 5 Maths and SVQA 6 English which is a pre-requisite for Primary School teaching (that is a post-graduate course for me) and I'm struggling during Covid 19 to save the funds required which is around £800 for the test and for learning resources from Aberdeen University who Dundee University site as the establishment that delivers these courses. I know many adults who are at a point in their life where they've worked as 1 thing all their days only to find their job security is under threat. They may already have a degree meaning they can re-train as Primary teachers in 1 year as long as they have National 5 maths or equivalent and SVQA 6 English, which most do not.

I myself have had a very ropey employment history and am currently on PiP and ESA Support but am desperate to abandon it. I was finally, after decades of issues, diagnosed in March 2020 with Bi-polar 2 and OCD amongst other mental health issues that cause issues with stable employment but now I know that I'm essentially sane but with actual mental health issues, I feel confident enough to become a teacher which was always a dream for me but I find the costs of the assessments to be an issue and I can't even pay it up!

National 5 Maths is such an important qualification to hold, even more than the Degree in Computer Arts I currently hold as National 5 Maths

for mature students and people looking for a career change is a major component but it is not covered by most grants or SAAS.

Covid 19 has shone a light on a lot of employment issues and people are finding themselves in desperate situations financially. Others are also finding opportunities that were possibly thought to be unattainable but with Covid 19 closing small businesses down, financial stability has become an issue or, self-reflection while in isolation has allowed time to reassess their lives. Either way, I feel that many people would benefit from holding a National 5 Maths qualification and SVQA 6 in English as these are the building blocks and requirements for further education and training.

With Covid 19 forcing many people to re-evaluate their lives, opportunities to re-train are prevalent and most courses, including Teaching which is very popular, requires us to attain a "B" pass in National 5 Maths and SVQA 6 in English.

These courses for a lot of us cost around £800. They also have to be paid in full. For people who are unemployed for whatever reason, on any benefits or working with little extra income to put aside, this cost is a barrier to employment yet is necessary for many employment opportunities.

The assessments can be completed online or delivered over a period of time and although I personally have no knowledge of what is involved in assessments for National 5 Maths or SVQA 6 English, I'm assuming it comes down to matching your answers with an answer sheet as shown on many Youtube channels or on web pages.

Mr.FitzPatrick, thankyou for reading and considering this for action.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]BA

Enclosure 14 – Email from pupil to DFM

202000100998

AO –[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]<[\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\]<.uk>](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@uk)>
Sent: 08 October 2020 14:32
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: SQA Assignment Removed

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am contacting yourself regarding the course changes for 2020/2021 which have recently been published by the SQA.

I am truly delighted that higher exams are going ahead. It was a real sense of normality returning to school for many after such a rough 6 months. To now know that my exams will be taking place is such a relief. But unfortunately, not everything is happy days.

On October 8th, 2020, the SQA published the course changes for 2020/2021 exams. I am very disappointed to say that most Assignments have been removed for Higher courses. For pupils who do not perform as well in their exams as they could do, these assignments were their safety net, a bit of reassurance. These assignments could get them the grades that they need to get them into University, which is already a struggle as it is. To put it simple, student's safety nets have been destroyed.

Considering you did not get the exam grades right this year, don't you want to get them right next time? I assume so as the humiliation of getting them wrong next time would be unbearable. Getting this right means bringing assignments back. It is simple. I am sure many other students will contact you with the same doubts and concerns as myself, and I hope that our voices will finally be heard.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] (S5 pupil)
[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]Scotland

Enclosure 15 – Email from parent to DFM

202000100444

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\]@gmail.com](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com)>

Sent: 08 October 2020 09:59

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

Subject: Higher Exams 2021

Attention John Swinney

Dear Mr Swinney

My son will be sitting his highers in 2021. I watched your speech yesterday with interest.

Can you advise what will happen should my son test positive for covid 19 when he is due to sit an exam. Similarly if he is asked to self isolate by track and trace when the exams are on.

What plans are in place should this happen?

Will he sit the exam after he has recovered or after the isolation period of 14 days?

Or will he be given a teacher assessment grade.

I would be obliged if you could confirm at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 16 – Email to SQA / DFM / others

202000100353

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]gmail.com>

Sent: 08 October 2020 20:45

To: SQA2020@sqa.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)].gov.uk;
Elaine.Smith.msp@parliament.scot; graham.simpson.msp@parliament.scot;
Monica.Lennon.msp@parliament.scot; Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot;
Margaret.Mitchell.msp@parliament.scot; Richard.Lyle.msp@parliament.sco;
Mark.Griffin.msp@parliament.sco; alison.harris.msp@parliament.scot; Deputy First Minister
and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; First Minister
<firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: New SQA update blunder

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

To whomever has made this mistake,

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)], I am a student at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] High School currently studying Higher RMPS (Religious Moral and Philosophical Studies).

For the past three months, my peers and i have been studying, practicing essays, and ruthlessly revising part of the course (morality, environment and global issue topic) which has now been unfairly, unjustly and irresponsibility AXED. We acknowledge you have faced many challenging problems in the current times, I'm sure you will be the first to admit mistakes have been made along the way and we forgave you for the last blunder. However, we may not be so forgiving this time if this mistake is not rectified, and who knows, this might be represented in future polls.

The fact is, we have been put at a disadvantage for an exam that is meant to be fair and equal for all. We are not angry, we are disappointed. We are disappointed a government that is supposed to value education can be so willy nilly with our future. We are disappointed that the education secretary has once again failed us.

There are many solutions that could be taken, one being a change in the layout in the exam so that there is now two questions (10 marker and 20 marker) for each of the sub sections of this course: Environmental issue, Social issue and Economic issue. This would allow us, the students, the opportunity to choose which section to answer. This solution would show that the wellbeing and educational prospects of the student are put first.

The Tories would never.

I would appreciate a response ASAP as this issue is extremely time sensitive.

Respectfully,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 17 – Email to DFM

202000100115

From: @gov.scot> On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Sent: 08 October 2020 07:08

To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Highest/Advanced Higher

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.co.uk>

Sent: 07 October 2020 16:51

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Cc: Stewart Stevenson MSP <msp@stewartstevenson.scot>; MSP Greene J

<Jamie.Greene.msp@parliament.scot>; [REDACTED]; MSP

Greer R <Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@npfs.org.uk

Subject: Highest/Advanced Higher

Dear Mr Swinney

Following your announcement today that Higher and Advanced Highers exams will go ahead in May can you provide answers to the following questions please:

If a pupil has Covid or has to self isolate in May what will happen to them? Will they be able to sit the exam at home? Will they be given a fail? Will they be given an award based on their prelim/coursework?

None of those outcomes seems fair.

If a pupil who is isolating is given a grade based on their prelim/coursework is that fair to pupils who do sit the exam and might just have a bad day after performing well all year?

What appeals process will be in place for pupils who do have a bad day and will it be free of charge?

If a pupil has been performing well all year and has a high estimated grade what is the incentive for them to sit an exam? If a reliable appeals process is not in place would it not be wiser for them to state that they have to self isolate?

If a pupil is given the opportunity to sit the exam later is that fair on other pupils as it is likely that they could become aware of the exam content? If they are given a different exam paper to sit is that fair as it would mean different pupils being marked on different papers?

I'd expect that before you have made this announcement that these scenarios will have been considered so I look forward to a prompt response.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 18 – Email from student to DFM

202000100110

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Or please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\]@gmail.com](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com)>
Sent: 07 October 2020 17:34
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: SQA Higher Exams 2021

Dear Mr Swinney,

As you have recently announced that National 5 exams will be cancelled, but both Higher and Advanced Higher exams will continue as normal, however being delayed by two weeks. In this email, I want to explain my concerns as a student, at [Redacted s38(1)(b)], myself to your previous announcement.

Firstly, I want to thank the effort from yourself and the SQA for giving students their original predictions by teachers and not the grades that the majority of us, as students, were awarded on the 4th August. Plus allowing schools to reopen after the summer holidays, very helpful. However, I know that I can speak upon many students that we were not prepared to even think about doing exams next may let alone ever again (for current S6 students) and that I believe the majority of us students were indeed hoping to have our grades based on evidence and predicted grades, or indeed the system that you have set out for the National 5 exams for this coming year.

Since being at school, and can speak of truth and experience, teaching has been a different environment than what we were previously used to. Exceptionally, when online learning started as some students find it rather difficult to learn from home and find it easier in a school classroom. Teachers themselves didn't know what was going to happen with exams, assignments, or practical activity. Making them have to work around restrictions and have to change what to teach in ways as they didn't actually know what was happening. And sorry but giving teachers 2 extra weeks to teach what we missed, is 1. not enough time and 2. pretty stupid.

Due to this announcement, a lot of students, including myself, are now worried about how they will perform in the upcoming exam period as most classes haven't done assessments in a long time plus having to catch up on work that may have been missed due to the late announcement. Not just for the students, but teachers have had to come back to school very anxious after the summer to be able to teach their student for a qualification that they don't even know will go through with an exam or coursework.

I'll conclude the email here and a question for yourself if there is going to be a possible change to the announcement that was made in the last hour if so it would be very thankful.

Thanks,

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

Enclosure 19 – Email from parent to DFM

202000100101

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.co.uk <
Sent: 07 October 2020 17:41
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: National 5

Dear Mr Swinney,

Can you explain your announcement to cancel 2021 National 5 examinations?

Exams run from the beginning of May to mid June. Surely it would be workable to extend the exam season into late June and run National 5s in May and Highers in June or even later?

This highlights the imperative to return to normal, and not further disadvantage our children by implementing blunt Covid strategies, with no coherent end game.

It has been embarrassing to watch the decline of the Scottish education system over the years, as highlighted by the declining PISA scores since 2003.

You stated,

"Our ambition remains to run a 2021 examination diet"

You may have lost your ambitions, but our youth have not lost their's.

Feel free, if you wish to contact and explain your position to my daughter directly.

Is running away from challenges an example you want to set for our young people?

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Scone

Enclosure 20 – Email from parent to DFM

202000100021

AO –[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.co.uk>
Sent: 07 October 2020 20:48
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: National 5 exams 2021

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you to express my utter outrage at the cancelling of National 5 exams in 2021 eight months before they are due to be taken.

I have a child in S4 who is due to sit these exams who is devastated. The lack of any standardised assessment across the whole country will make any qualifications they do gain almost worthless. When everyone gets an A everyone fails.

I cannot believe the defeatist attitude. You have 8 months to prepare, if you cannot put plans and mitigations in place to ensure that the exams can take place then you are simply not capable of doing your job and should resign.

Scottish children were failed this year when all exams were scrapped and you are now preparing to fail a generation of pupils again.

I would be grateful if you could tell me how you will ensure that children are assessed in the same way across all schools and what measures will be in place to prevent grade inflation?

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 21 – Email to student from DFM

202000099898

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 07 October 2020 16:33
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Message from Scottish Parliament website

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Tel: 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk
 Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

-----Original Message-----

From: noreply@parliament.scot <noreply@parliament.scot>
Sent: 07 October 2020 16:33
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website

name:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

address:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

postcode:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

email:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [@aol.com](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@aol.com)

telephone:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

message:

I would like to ensure you that students taking advanced higher subjects this year and horrified by the decision made today as there has been nothing done to aid our success, there was no announcement about the projects we will be undertaking this year, the extra two weeks we have been given before our exams will not make up for few months of missed new content and therefore our courses should have been modified in a fair and equal way, I am extremely disappointed in the information supplied to us over our qualifications this year considering you have made us wait over a month for these decisions !

Enclosure 22 – Email for DFM

202000099314

From: Public Engagement Unit

Sent: 16 October 2020 07:56

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Subject: FW: Your recent correspondence with Scottish Government and partner agencies - 202000089934

Good morning,

Please see below for your reference and let us know if you want this to be added to MiCase as a new case.

Kindest regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]Deputy Manager

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>

Sent: 15 October 2020 20:05

To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>

Subject: Re: Your recent correspondence with Scottish Government and partner agencies - 202000089934

Thank you for your response.

My idea was for the SQA to provide (1) the material for schools to use to standardise assessment and (2) fixed dates so that there could be no chance of students having an advantage. This could be done for Nat 5 as well as H and AH. I liked having these during the Higher Still era. I know from experience how variable standards can be if departments are left to their own devices. It is a great relief to have nationally approved and accredited tests that cannot be questioned.

I understand you go to your so called experts for advice. I would contend that the recent history of educational development in Scotland would suggest a more pragmatic approach is now required. You cite Curriculum for Excellence apparently unaware that this is a major part of the problem. It has led to a severe watering down of rigorous standards. Ask any teacher.

Anyway I'm retired though still interested in returning to some semblance of national rigour. But as ever the future of education is always placed in the hands of people who don't actually understand at first hand what is required. Look at Standard Grade, 5 to 14, Scotvec (which I rated), Higher Still and, worst of all Curriculum for Excellence. After all that is it not time to find someone who understands the needs of the youngsters above political ideology?

The answer, obviously, no.

Disaster next spring awaits as again even more students have to be given inflated awards because simply you will have nothing else but teacher assessment to rely on.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 23 – Email from parent to DFM

202000097725

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)].com>
Sent: 07 October 2020 21:50
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: N5 EXAMS 2020 DECISION

Dear Mr John Swinney, MSP

I am a parent of 14 and 16 year old daughters who are both due to sit their N5 and Highers respectively this year. I personally appreciate the decision you have taken to waive the N5 exam in order to redirect resources to the final year students. These are unprecedented times and such forward thinking would not have come at a better time.

While you consider the decision to use teacher based assessments, I would suggest that all schools sit the same paper per subject which would be marked by the respective subject masters. In this way, the testing would be fairer for students as this would eliminate irregularities caused by varying levels of complexity and/or academic inconsistencies.

As a parent I desire to see my child perform well in their learning, and their excellence can only be as clearer and fairer as the performance barometer used to establish the pass mark.

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

Enclosure 24

202000097723

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 08 October 2020 08:07
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Exams

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 07 October 2020 20:26
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Exams

You should hang your head in shame.

How is Scotland ever going to be taken seriously when exam grades are effectively handed out like confetti.

I suggest you try and innovate instead of just lying down.

You are an embarrassment to this great nation.

Enclosure 25 – Email from pupil to DFM

202000097575

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\]@parliament.scot](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot) > **On Behalf Of** Swinney J (John), MSP
Sent: 07 October 2020 16:33
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Exams

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills

Tel: ☐ 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk

☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\].edin.org](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)].edin.org) >
Sent: 07 October 2020 16:23
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Exams

Dear John Swinney,

It has come to my attention that National 5 Exams are due to be cancelled in 2021. As an S4 pupil this decision has made me very upset and left me feeling like I'm at a huge disadvantage compared to previous years.

Before the pandemic I was doing very well in school and was getting over 80% in most tests in my subjects. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in me falling behind in some subjects and consequently I've had a series of disappointing test results in class. Now I am worried that these results will impact the grades I receive at the end of this year.

I just want to sit an exam. Please. I'm begging you. Let me sit an exam.

Enclosure 26- Email from student to DFM

202000097012

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 08 October 2020 12:57
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Exam Diet 2020-21

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 08 October 2020 10:04
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: 2021 Examination Update

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am writing to you to voice concern following your update on the 2021 exam diet. I am a sixth-year student and had many issues and questions following this update. A few of these questions I have, were in fact asked by other members of the Scottish government, however, I did not feel the answers were adequate and would like further clarification.

Firstly, I would like to explain my situation to give a better understanding of where my points come from. I am studying three Advanced Higher subjects (Maths, Physics and Drama) and one Higher (English). These will all affect my university application this year and I was hoping for some certainty after this, especially considering I am an early applicant. This announcement not only created more questions than I already had but damaged the little confidence I had in the handling of my education.

The first point I would like to address is the point you made, based around the cancellation of the National 5 exam diet. You stated that this would clear up to fifty percent of the full exam diet leaving us with a significantly lower number of students taking exams. My main thought here is that during the exam diet most National 5 exams happen on their own. So how does cancelling them reduce any risks to the Higher and Advanced Higher Students? The same amount of Higher and Advanced Higher students are across the country are still taking the same exam. Still the same number of students in the hall filling in the same exam paper. Still the same amount of people who have to prepare to sit in a hall against all advice. I ask how can you permit only 20 people to attend a funeral, yet up to 50 or more students can sit and ake an exam together? Examinations were put in place to ensure a standardised evaluation of student's attainment. If it is necessary to cancel any exams, then surely all students should have fair and equal treatment through the cancelation of all exams or by delivering a

full exam diet. How can students prepare fully when the level of education they receive is constantly changing?

Currently in my school, and I assume across the nation, there are small breakouts of the virus among a number of the pupils. Many of these students are still required to sit the exam but their education is interrupted for two weeks. I understand that the work is uploaded online for the student to complete but remote learning is so different when compared to learning in the classroom environment. This is not a standardised education so how can we take an exam in these situations. To loosely quote you “An A in Aberdeen needs to be the same as an A anywhere else” This will not be apparent if the exam diet is run. Students in one school let alone on a National level are receiving variants of an education and will not be able to prepare for an exam effectively and in the same form nationally.

Learning remotely for students is also a problem. Some students do not have internet access and any paperwork would not be able to be marked due to cross contamination. Some students cannot focus in a home environment when work is set online, so they are therefore disadvantaged. Some students are struggling with stress and anxiety of the constantly changing environment so are struggling to concentrate in class. I ask, how is this a fully comprehensive, standardised, education? These mass inequalities are not fully considered and were not addressed by you as they should have been in your position of Cabinet Secretary for Education in the Scottish Government. While the Government may have confidence in you, Mr Swinney, I can inform you on an extremely large scale, students, and potential voters, are rapidly losing confidence.

This statement had so many further issues and points of question, however, I feel thousands of the main points will have already been addressed by the hundreds of outraged students. I ask you Deputy First Minister, how do you feel this is an adequate approach? For students across Scotland, how can this constant state of uncertainty for students studying Highers and Advanced Highers, that is causing sickening amounts of distress, anxiety and leaving students in a stressed state be the best approach. This nauseating ideal will in fact reduce attainment as students learning is harmed by the state we have been put in and disadvantages students. I feel there is no longer a suitable effort being made to enable students to do the best they can and feel that this approach is harming the success students can achieve and damaging their futures.

You, as a government, are meant to provide an education system and awarding scheme that will ensure the best is found in students and currently, there is no case that this is the case. Therefore, I ask you Deputy First Minister to at least take a further look into this situation and actually think of the student's lives that you are changing, publicly hold yourself responsible for the degradation of hundreds of student's mental health and to at least attempt to give us a confident thorough certainty to what will actually happen with the exams. Stop this 'two prong' approach and look not only at public health but the mental effects your decisions will have on thousands of young adults.

Regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]High School

Enclosure 27 – Email to DFM

20200097010

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\]@parliament.scot](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot)>
Sent: 08 October 2020 12:57
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Exam Diet 2020-21

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] <louise.m.burton@gmail.com>
Sent: 08 October 2020 09:24
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: 2021 Exam Diet

Dear Sir,

Can someone in your office please explain to me why it is appropriate for all pupils to attend school in the same classes, but not to sit in an exam room socially distanced? Surely it's either safe for young people to be in school or it isn't? It is entirely possible to organise an exam diet that sees no overlap of any N5 and higher subjects so I do not understand why the decision has been taken to cancel the exams? I am a teacher myself and while I see others applaud this decision, I cannot understand the double standard? Exams are not just used for the purpose of gaining a qualification, they are used as a way to prepare for harder exams in the future. The idea that you can just miss a step and automatically catch up may be the case for some candidates, but is not the case for all. There are a significant minority of candidates who will be adversely disadvantaged by being denied the opportunity to 'practice'.

I understand this decision is being taken out of an abundance of caution, but I believe there are alternatives that would allow all exams, or at least some form of summative assessment, to take place.

Regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 28 – Email from student to DFM

202000097008

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to 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 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [@parliament.scot](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot)>
Sent: 08 October 2020 12:58
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Exam Diet 2020-21

Name: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [@gmail.com](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com)
Phone: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Address: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Post Code: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Subject: SQA Exam Diet

Message: Did you take into consideration that some 6th year pupils have already booked their magaluf holidays for the very start of June???? And you want to move exams back two weeks??? This puts us in a really difficult situation to then decide do we want to sit our exams or do we want to go to magaluf. And also how you seem to think that coronavirus is far too dangerous for National 5 exams to go ahead, but it is perfectly safe for Higher and Advanced Highers to go ahead. Because that just makes sense. I hope you will re-think the decision you have made and either move the exams back to the usual dates or cancel all of them.

Enclosure 29 – Email to DFM on behalf of constituent

202000100955

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear Minister,

I have forwarded on concerns from my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding Wednesday's announcements about the 2021 SQA exam diet.

I would be grateful if this could be considered and responded to as a matter of urgency. Pupils and their families have had an extremely difficult year already and further confusion and stress must be avoided.

Kind regards,
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP

0131 541 2145

danieljohnson.org.uk

Constituency Office

134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

Daniel would like to keep you up to date with his activities in Parliament and in the constituency. You can sign up to receive regular updates and his eNewsletter [here](#).

Your data privacy will be taken seriously. Read Daniel's privacy notice [here](#).

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent: 7 October 2020 16:57

To: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP

Subject: Scottish school examinations

Dear Daniel

I have just heard that John Swinney wants to cancel nat5 examinations for S4s in 2021.

I am horrified at this potential betrayal of school children and the principle of education.

My son only recently left the woollyness of CfE primary school. It is a relief for him to be a secondary school where there is still some semblance of gaining a body of knowledge. But if exams are to be binned I fear this is the final nail in the coffin for the Scottish education system. If John Swinney thinks he can get away with dumping rigorous examination in S4 then I don't doubt that Highers will be next.

How are children to learn revision skills and study time management without any practice? How will children from Scottish schools compete with young people from countries that have a robust structured education system? Many Europeans have excellent English language skills.

The current administration seems drunk on the power this virus has given them.

I daresay after last academic years exam fiasco and subsequent grade inflation it will be difficult to get back on track with exams. But how far down the road does Swinney expect to kick this can?

When will the Scottish Parliament resume? When will the opposition parties hold these people to account?

In case I haven't made myself clear, I feel strongly that testing a child on their knowledge in exam conditions is good for them and the education system as a whole.

Yours concernedly

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 30

Version 1 – no longer SNP voter

I am a member of Us For Them Scotland, the only organisation standing up for our children at a time when adults in authority are utterly disregarding them and their futures.

I WAS also a voter for the SNP. No longer.

I am writing to you to express in the strongest terms possible the importance for S4 pupils to sit National 5 exams this academic year like their counterparts are in England and Wales.

You are taking away the opportunity for the 80,000 young people, who are also voters, to sit these incredibly important exams.

Given that it is possible for Highers and Advanced Highers to be run, why can National 5s not be similarly run? There has been no plausible reason given as to why National 5s cannot be run.

Since there has been no answer given to this critical question, all the following arguments are in reality superfluous!

Clearly cancelling National 5s is a compromise position the Scottish Government has reached with teachers unions who have been pressing for exams to be cancelled and for Blended Learning. Why should our children accept the Scottish Government's poor compromise?

Changing the way pupils are awarded their Nat 5s mid curriculum is a recipe for disaster.

Teachers don't know what they will have to do in order to have the material required to make their estimated grade for pupils.

- When will they know this?
- How much extra work is this going to create for teachers?
- Will they be able to and have the time to do it?

Last years failed efforts demonstrate that there was a significant issue with inflated grades. We suspect that, given the inflated grades last year, that we will see an increase in inflated grades.

- How is the issue of grade inflation going to be addressed?

Exams offer pupils a chance for an evidence based chance for assessment free of any bias from teachers. To strip this away from pupils is extremely unfair.

There are no clear Lessons Learned document that has come out of last academic years exam results fiasco that gives us confidence that there will be effective standardisation for this years pupils.

- Why is there going to be effective standardisation this year, when clearly there wasn't effective standardisation last year? Yes, teachers have more time but that is not the same issue as effective standardisation.

The terrible position Highers pupils are in this year is that they are now sitting a set of critically important exams, perhaps the most important exams they will ever sit. They are doing this having not sat their National 5s and as such are woefully under prepared. The National 5s are an important set of exams for pupils going on to Highers to prepare them for the rigours of Highers.

If they take National 5s they will go for Highers. The Scottish Government has failed to ringfence Highers in their latest statement. We fully expect the next push by the teachers unions to be the cancellation of Highers.

The majority of the 6,000 pupils who will leave at the end of S4 will be going on to further training. They will leave school having never sat a full set of exams. Many will go on to have to sit exams as part of their further training and career development and they will be disadvantaged by having never sat a set of proper exams at school.

There seems to be an underlying assumption from many people that if you leave school at S4, you're a no hoper and that never having sat exams will have no material impact on them. This is completely wrong. It is very common to see people who left school in S4 who progressed their career vocationally. They go on to take positions in senior management and operations. These people subsequently have to sit repeated exams as they progress from the tools up the ladder.

To rob these young people, many of whom struggled within the school system, of the opportunity to sit exams at school is a terrible thing. These young people deserve this opportunity. These young people go on to be hugely important members of companies, business owners, members of our society and important tax payers!

There are arguments for and against exams as a method of issuing certification to our young people. If there were to be a change from exams to continual assessment then this should be voted on, researched, trialled, piloted, extensive training given to teachers before it could be rolled out nationwide. This would be a process that should rightly take years. All of these stages have been missed. This is why it is doomed to be a disaster. Any change to the education system is risky. A change such as this brought in overnight with no planning is going to be a disaster for our young people. Anyone who believes that this transition is going to be easy and problem free is living in la la land.

National 4s are not valued by employers and other organisations as they are internally assessed. I fear that if we continue down this path the National 5s will be the new National 4s.

There is question as to whether pupils will be in a position to sit exams given the amount of lost time due to self isolation. The solution to this problem is not to cancel exams. The solution is to stop excluding healthy pupils from school.

Exams are an important part of the curriculum. They are an opportunity for young people to work to present themselves in a set of circumstances that many will find themselves in repeatedly over the years. Like many rites of passage they are challenging but we have to go through them and we know that they're achievable when we have done them.

We must do MORE for our young people not the LESS that seems to be coming down from the Scottish Government and teachers unions. We can change the exams to allow for current circumstances without doing away with exams altogether!

Last academic year European schools sat all their exams - we did not. The Scottish Government has decided for reasons that are unclear that our young people cannot sit exams in 6 months time. I cannot see any other European countries not sitting exams in 2021.

We have to ask ourselves, why is the Scottish education system so poor that you cannot arrange for exams in 2021? All we hear is CAN'T DO from the Scottish Government and teachers unions.

For myself, my child is in S4 and although they are planning to sit Highers, we consider National 5s to be part of their critical path, like it has been for generations of children. The first exams these young people sit will be their Highers. You are not giving them the chance to prepare and work through the exam process before they sit their Highers.

My child has worked extremely hard to catch up after the disaster that was Home Schooling. They have been focused on the National 5s for 2 years. You have now taken this away from them for reasons that simply don't stack up to anyone, least of all a 16 year old whose focus has been on these exams as the central point of their education for years.

- Why are you allowing pupils in Scotland sitting the Scottish education system to be disadvantaged compared to pupils in England and Wales?

If Highers can be sat, why can National 5s not be sat?

- Are you going to cancel Highers on the basis of the vague and unverifiable statement of "public health".
- What would the "public health" be such that you would cancel Highers?

It is absolutely unacceptable that our young people are having their futures tossed away so casually by a government that lacks the political will to give to our children what they deserve.

You said that you want to be judged on you Government's performance on education – quite frankly you have failed. I award the Scottish Government a "U".

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 31

Version 2 – SNP voter

Dear First Minister,

I am a member of Us For Them Scotland, the only organisation standing up for our children at a time when adults in authority are utterly disregarding them and their futures.

I am also a voter for the SNP.

I am writing to you to express in the strongest terms possible the importance for S4 pupils to sit National 5 exams this academic year like their counterparts are in England and Wales.

You are taking away the opportunity for the 80,000 young people, who are also voters, to sit these incredibly important exams.

Given that it is possible for Highers and Advanced Highers to be run, why can National 5s not be similarly run? There has been no plausible reason given as to why National 5s cannot be run.

Since there has been no answer given to this critical question, all the following arguments are in reality superfluous!

Clearly cancelling National 5s is a compromise position the Scottish Government has reached with teachers unions who have been pressing for exams to be cancelled and for Blended Learning. Why should our children accept the Scottish Government's poor compromise?

Changing the way pupils are awarded their Nat 5s mid curriculum is a recipe for disaster.

Teachers don't know what they will have to do in order to have the material required to make their estimated grade for pupils.

When will they know this?

How much extra work is this going to create for teachers?

Will they be able to and have the time to do it?

Last years failed efforts demonstrate that there was a significant issue with inflated grades.

We suspect that, given the inflated grades last year, that we will see an increase in inflated grades.

How is the issue of grade inflation going to be addressed?

Exams offer pupils a chance for an evidence based chance for assessment free of any bias from teachers. To strip this away from pupils is extremely unfair.

There are no clear Lessons Learned document that has come out of last academic years exam results fiasco that gives us confidence that there will be effective standardisation for this years pupils.

Why is there going to be effective standardisation this year, when clearly there wasn't effective standardisation last year? Yes, teachers have more time but that is not the same issue as effective standardisation.

The terrible position Highers pupils are in this year is that they are now sitting a set of critically important exams, perhaps the most important exams they will ever sit. They are doing this having not sat their National 5s and as such are woefully under prepared. The National 5s are an important set of exams for pupils going on to Highers to prepare them for the rigours of Highers.

If they take National 5s they will go for Highers. The Scottish Government has failed to ringfence Highers in their latest statement. We fully expect the next push by the teachers unions to be the cancellation of Highers.

The majority of the 6,000 pupils who will leave at the end of S4 will be going on to further training. They will leave school having never sat a full set of exams. Many will go on to have to sit exams as part of their further training and career development and they will be disadvantaged by having never sat a set of proper exams at school.

There seems to be an underlying assumption from many people that if you leave school at S4, you're a no hoper and that never having sat exams will have no material impact on them.

This is completely wrong. It is very common to see people who left school in S4 who progressed their career vocationally. They go on to take positions in senior management and operations. These people subsequently have to sit repeated exams as they progress from the tools up the ladder.

To rob these young people, many of whom struggled within the school system, of the opportunity to sit exams at school is a terrible thing. These young people deserve this opportunity. These young people go on to be hugely important members of companies, business owners, members of our society and important tax payers!

There are arguments for and against exams as a method of issuing certification to our young people. If there were to be a change from exams to continual assessment then this should be voted on, researched, trialled, piloted, extensive training given to teachers before it could be rolled out nationwide. This would be a process that should rightly take years. All of these stages have been missed. This is why it is doomed to be a disaster. Any change to the education system is risky. A change such as this brought in overnight with no planning is going to be a disaster for our young people. Anyone who believes that this transition is going to be easy and problem free is living in la la land.

National 4s are not valued by employers and other organisations as they are internally assessed. I fear that if we continue down this path the National 5s will be the new National 4s.

There is question as to whether pupils will be in a position to sit exams given the amount of lost time due to self isolation. The solution to this problem is not to cancel exams. The solution is to stop excluding healthy pupils from school.

Exams are an important part of the curriculum. They are an opportunity for young people to work to present themselves in a set of circumstances that many will find themselves in repeatedly over the years. Like many rites of passage they are challenging but we have to go through them and we know that they're achievable when we have done them.

We must do MORE for our young people not the LESS that seems to be coming down from the Scottish Government and teachers unions. We can change the exams to allow for current circumstances without doing away with exams altogether!

Last academic year European schools sat all their exams - we did not. The Scottish Government has decided for reasons that are unclear that our young people cannot sit exams in 6 months time. I cannot see any other European countries not sitting exams in 2021.

We have to ask ourselves, why is the Scottish education system so poor that you cannot arrange for exams in 2021? All we hear is CAN'T DO from the Scottish Government and teachers unions.

For myself, my child is in S4 and although they are planning to sit Highers, we consider National 5s to be part of their critical path, like it has been for generations of children. The first exams these young people sit will be their Highers. You are not giving them the chance to prepare and work through the exam process before they sit their Highers.

My child has worked extremely hard to catch up after the disaster that was Home Schooling. They have been focused on the National 5s for 2 years. You have now taken this away from them for reasons that simply don't stack up to anyone, least of all a 15 year old whose focus has been on these exams as the central point of their education for years.

· Why are you allowing pupils in Scotland sitting the Scottish education system to be disadvantaged compared to pupils in England and Wales?

If Highers can be sat, why can National 5s not be sat?

· Are you going to cancel Highers on the basis of the vague and unverifiable statement of "public health".

· What would the "public health" be such that you would cancel Highers?

It is absolutely unacceptable that our young people are having their futures tossed away so casually by a government that lacks the political will to give to our children what they deserve.

You said that you want to be judged on you Government's performance on education.
Yours sincerely