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## Enclosure 1 Email to Deputy First Minister

Tue 20/10/20 09:55  
202000106359

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

To:  
John Swinney MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Our ref: CM1234

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

### Relative rating in educational assessment

Please see the email, below, from a retired school teacher who has concerns about the use of 'relative rating' in assessing the grading's of pupils. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] believes this practise disadvantages pupils from poorer backgrounds who attend lower performing schools and he asks the question as to whether the practise of relative rating has now been abolished?

Much of the recent outcry over exam grading's concerned the perception that high performing pupils in low performing schools were being downgraded unfairly and that the reverse was true of pupils attending high performing schools. May I therefore ask if you are able to provide an update on whether the recent review of the exam and assessment procedures has looked at this practise and if it will continue as part of the assessment procedures?

Your advice would be welcome.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Christina McKelvie MSP

Barncluith Business Centre  
Townhead Street  
Hamilton  
ML3 7DP

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

*Work pattern Tues & Thurs*

Please note: Due to the ongoing restrictions put in place because of the Covid19 virus, I am currently working from home but can still be contacted via email.

Your name: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Email address: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Address:  
Telephone:  
Comments or issues:

Dear Christina,

I was disappointed to learn that the SQA used a crude tool in arriving at final grades – downgrading based on a school’s past performance.

You may recall that I worked as a teacher of Modern Studies for 14 years ([Redacted s38(1)(b)] ) in [Redacted s38(1)(b)] –[Redacted s38(1)(b)]”. I used to mark the Prelims and each year the SQA would pull the marks down a grade in the final exam. This happened in all subjects and resulted in very few of [Redacted s38(1)(b)] pupils gaining “A” grades at Higher.

The appeals process was no better – there was a procedure called relative rating. This meant if a pupil in a high performing school appealed they had a much better chance of getting upgraded. I assumed this had been abolished. Has it?

The process in the past was unfair for the pupils and had a terrible effect on my morale. I am still angry to this day when I think about it. The pupils this year were assured they would not be penalised for the Covid situation. I feel they have been let down badly.

I trust you will raise this at the Scottish Parliament and you can use this e mail if you so wish. I also want to know what steps will be taken to make sure this does not happen again.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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## Enclosure 2 Email to Deputy First Minister

Mon 19/10/20 11:20  
202000105305

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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]<

Sent: 19 October 2020 11:16

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

Subject: FW: Message from Scottish Parliament website

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

From: noreply@parliament.scot <noreply@parliament.scot>

Sent: 17 October 2020 14:51

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)]

telephone:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

message:

Dear Mr Swinney,

I would ask you to consider running some Nat 5 exams in 2021, it will be very hard for pupils to succeed at Higher if they have never sat an exam. There are some subjects that traditionally have little/no assessment in-school, particularly maths, science and perhaps languages - surely SQA could run exams in these with little difficulty. COVID plans could easily be drawn up by schools to ensure spacing, and arrange extra rooms if need be. I speak as a maths teacher of many years experience - and there will be pressure on teachers

to give generous estimates. Only an exam marked and set by SQA is a fair and true test of pupils' ability.

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## Enclosure 3 Email to Deputy First Minister

Wed 14/10/20 13:15  
202000103021

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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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

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

Sent: 14 October 2020 13:13

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

Subject: Cancellation of Nat 5 exams

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you as a classroom teacher of 30 years' experience, perplexed by your (gov's) decision to cancel the Nat 5 diet of exams this session.

We were asked to return in August as per 'normal' with no compromise or concession made. We have since faced on a daily basis in S1, 2 a class maximum of 33 (i.e. up to 34 households mixing in a room) and in S3,4,5,6 a max. of 30 (i.e. up to 31 households in one classroom) and with the young people sitting - in all Glasgow schools - at double desks i.e. shoulder to shoulder with no social distancing whatsoever. The one and only time in the course of an academic year our young people are seated socially distanced is when they are seated apart for SQA exams, the very time you have decided is "more risky"... how is this any more risky than what we do everyday in the classroom? This appears to be somewhat of a contradiction.

Perplexed

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Modern Languages Teacher

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

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## Enclosure 4 Email to Deputy First Minister

Thu 17/09/2020 09:01  
202000102052

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

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 16 September 2020 21:50  
**To:** Swinney J (John), MSP  
**Subject:** Exam concern

**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 a concerned parent, an ex-teacher and a member of Us For Them Scotland group and I am very concerned regarding the uncertainty surrounding next years exam diet.

Exams are critical for our young people and they must be sat, the level of uncertainty for them right now is causing huge levels of anxiety. It has been previously stated only a couple of weeks ago that next years exams WILL go ahead - this must not be changed Our schools must stay open to give all our young people a fair chance at exam success and to achieve the grades they deserve. We must stop excluding healthy children from school because another person has tested 'positive' there needs to be a more sensible approach that keeps children in the classroom learning.

Why are pupils being forced out of their school when they are not ill and may have a False Positive test? Given that the number of positive tests is not translating into increased hospital admissions, ICU occupancy or death rates, why are you treating our children in this disproportionate and harmful manner?

We expect more from people who should be advocating on behalf of our children. Please ensure that our young people are not let down any further - exams next year must go ahead as planned! They deserve better.

Yours sincerely,  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

## Enclosure 5 Email to Deputy First Minister

05 November 2020 07:04  
202000111752

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education  
and Skills  
Sent: 05 November 2020 07:04  
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: PROBLEMS ARISING FROM COVID IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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official records of such e-mails or attachments.

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] > On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 05 November 2020 01:33  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: PROBLEMS ARISING FROM COVID IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Personal Assistant 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: [Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)] <  
Sent: 04 November 2020 18:34  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: PROBLEMS ARISING FROM COVID IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir,

I am a retired Principal teacher of Chemistry ( 17 yrs retired ) but more important at the moment a Granda !!!

I as a former teacher I have a real concern at what is going on in my granddaughter's secondary school which is [Redacted s38(1)(b)]School in [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

As a result of COVID , the staff of a whole Maths department have not been in school, no fault of theirs whatsoever. However between staff being absent and pupils been sent home to self isolate , large portions of the Higher Maths course is not being covered. My concern is that if the powers that be are not aware of this , then prelims are going to be set with pupils being asked to answer material that has not been covered!!!

If , God forbid , the Pandemic prevents Higher Exams being held , then I assume course work , including Prelim Exams will be used. If this is the case and many pupils have poor prelim grades due to parts of the course not being covered ,then I would find this grossly unfair and damaging to children's futures .

Is it possible to put Prelim Exams back as well as the official SQA exams ?

I look forward to hear your opinion and views on the issuesI have raised

Yours Sincerely

Mr [Redacted s38(1)(b)] BSc Hons

Sent from my iPad

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## Enclosure 6 Constituency email to Deputy First Minister

04 November 2020 13:18  
202000111713

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

**Sent:** 04 November 2020 13:18

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

**Subject:** FW: Changes to the Assessment Structure for Exams A11350/2020/CK Please quote this reference on all correspondence

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: DFMCSSE@gov.scot

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**From:** Private - Rennie W (Willie), MSP <Willie.Rennie2@parliament.scot>

**Sent:** 04 November 2020 13:02

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

**Subject:** Changes to the Assessment Structure for Exams A11350/2020/CK Please quote this reference on all correspondence

John Swinney MSP  
Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
The Scottish Government  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

### Sent by Email

4 November 2020

Ref: A11350/2020/CK Please quote this reference on all correspondence

Dear John

### **Re: Changes to the Assessment Structure for Exams**

I have been contacted by one of my constituents highlighting their concerns regarding the SQA plans for the reviewed exam plans for the exam diet.

My constituent has explained that having now seen the SQA plans for the reviewed exam plans they have a number of concerns. They tell me that, overall, they agree with an adapted exam for Higher and Adv Higher but they are concerned about the plans for Maths. They tell me that the 'options' put in place are very imbalanced in terms of difficulty as well as not very beneficial since we are two months into courses when a lot has been covered already.

In terms of the National 5 decision my constituent tells me that there are also a number of issues. They have explained that most schools and subjects will need to have a 'final exam' of some description where consistency will be a massive issue. My constituent has explained that consistency in terms of awarding of grades even with a lot of guidance from SQA but interpretation of this will vary school to school.

Another issue my constituent has become aware of in recent days is Track and Trace in schools. He would appear to be the case that Senior Management Teams in schools are carrying out the process when there's a positive case in a school. This is being done during the holiday week and at weekends as well putting additional pressure on everyone in the school. My constituent is concerned that Deputes and Head Teachers are not trained in this process and mistakes are almost inevitable.

My constituent tells me that overall they feel that teachers are becoming more and more disillusioned with the job with all the additional pressures on them this year. My constituent is an experienced teacher and loves teaching but they tell me that this year has been getting tougher and they have been seeing that their colleagues are feeling the same. My constituent has further explained that teachers and support staff feel like they are being forgotten about with schools being kept open full time considering the number of cases now being encountered.

I would be very grateful if you could seek to address the issues raised and provide a response I can share with my constituent.

Kind regards  
Willie

Willie Rennie MSP (North East Fife)  
Leader, Scottish Liberal Democrats  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  
Tel: 0131 348 5804

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## Enclosure 7 Constituency email to Deputy First Minister

02 November 2020 13:40  
202000111605

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 02 November 2020 13:40  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: SQA Produced Prelims A11512/2020/CK Please quote this reference on all  
correspondence

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](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot)

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**From:** Private - Rennie W (Willie), MSP <Willie.Rennie2@parliament.scot>  
**Sent:** 02 November 2020 12:54  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** SQA Produced Prelims A11512/2020/CK Please quote this reference on all  
correspondence

John Swinney MSP  
Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
The Scottish Government  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

### Sent by Email

2 November 2020

Ref: A11512/2020/CK Please quote this  
reference on all correspondence

Dear John

### Re: SQA Produced Prelims

I have been contacted by one of my constituents highlighting his concerns that SQA have  
advised that SQA produced prelims will not be made available for each subject.

My constituent has explained that they are a Physics school teacher of many years' experience. He tells me that last week, it was announced that the SQA exams for N5 were cancelled and would be assessed internally within centres. A decision he tells me that he would heartily support.

Following this announcement he emailed the SQA, asking that, when the resources for subjects were released, would SQA produced prelims be made available for each subject, so that every teacher would be using the same meter stick. My constituent feels that given that the SQA has at least one, and probably two, future papers ready to go this is not an unreasonable expectation.

However, my constituent tells me that he has since received a response from SQA advising that there is no intention to provide an SQA prelim for each subject.

I would be very grateful if you could seek to address this issue and provide a response I can share with my constituent.

Kind regards  
Willie

Willie Rennie MSP (North East Fife)  
Leader, Scottish Liberal Democrats  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  
Tel: 0131 348 5804

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## Enclosure 8 Copy correspondence to the Deputy First Minister

04 November 2020 13:42  
202000111426

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 04 November 2020 13:42  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Replacement for N5 exams 2021

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

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 04 November 2020 13:36  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Replacement for N5 exams 2021

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 04 November 2020 12:57  
**To:** MyCentre <mycentre@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: Replacement for N5 exams 2021

You do not seem to see the issues.

The one for authorities (or schools with devolved budgets) is you are not providing printed  
exams, invigilators, postage, marking fees, etc. providing a substantial saving to you while  
apparently still charging the same fees which covered this.

For the rest of us:

You have publicly stated that there is no exam for N5 to reduce pressure on pupils, schools,  
etc. but the guidance effectively states that you expect us to base our estimates on one  
(whether yours or one created by ourselves) creating more work for staff and schools and  
not reducing any pressure on pupils.

To carry out these exams (assessments or whatever you want to call them) covering the course we will need to do them at the end of the course. To do them under proper conditions we need to do them in the facilities normally used for exams. You moved the Higher exams later, so that means the facilities are in use then so we are going to have to do this earlier.

So it means that we are doing an exam at the time of the original SQA ones and have to do all the organisation and marking ourselves, while still preparing pupils for the Higher and AH courses

So this measure to help staff, schools and pupils will deliver:

- No benefit for pupils
- Increased work for staff and schools
- Ease the work of and save money for the SQA

**From:** MyCentre <mycentre@sqa.org.uk>

**Sent:** 04 November 2020 11:40

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

**Subject:** RE: Replacement for N5 exams 2021

Good Morning

Thank you for contacting SQA.

Please see the response below from the qualifications team.

There will be no additional payments made to centres or teachers. It is not a requirement for centre to use the materials provided.

The National 5 Mathematics guidance on gathering key evidence reads as follows:  
[https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/guidance-estimates-n5-mathematics.pdf](https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/guidance-estimates-n5-mathematics.pdf)

The National 5 question papers will only be available on SQA's secure website — you must treat these confidentially, in the same way as other live assessment materials.

You should carefully consider how best to use these materials to support candidates, to integrate with your programme of learning, and to help you collate evidence of candidate attainment.

If you use a question paper in part or in its entirety as an examination, you should remind candidates that they must not discuss the content of the paper with anyone, including friends, family or on social media.

Kind regards

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

SQA

The Optima Building

58 Robertson St

Glasgow

G2 8DQ

Telephone No: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Fax No: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
International Tel: +44 (0) [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
International Fax: +44 (0) [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Email: mycentre@sqa.org.uk - **FAO SQA Staff - Send any MyCentre responses to this email, not personal email - thanks.**  
Website: www.sqa.org.uk  
<https://www.facebook.com/ScottishQualificationsAuthority>  
<https://twitter.com/sqasupport>  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]SQA  
Fòn: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Facs: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Fòn Eadar-nàiseanta: +44 (0) [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Facs Eadar-nàiseanta: +44 (0) [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Post-dealain: mycentre@sqa.org.uk  
Làrach-lìn: www.sqa.org.uk

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\]@sqa.org.uk](mailto:[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 03 November 2020 16:01  
**To:** Customer <[customer@sqa.org.uk](mailto:customer@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Replacement for N5 exams 2021

We have just received the information from the SQA on what you want us to do for N5 Mathematics this year.

Basically the N5 exam that the SQA said they were not doing will still need to be done but internally and we are doing all the admin and marking you would normally pay for?

Does that mean you are going to pass on the savings in marking fees, printing and postage as a reduction in the fee they are charging schools?

Or are you going to pay all the teachers doing the additional marking?

Have the teaching Unions been consulted on the workload issue?

---

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Dh'fhaodadh fiosrachadh sochair, a tha a-mhàin airson an neach gu bheil am post-dealain air a chur, a bhith an seo. Ma tha thu air am post-dealain fhaighinn mar mhearachd, gabh ar leisgeul agus cuir fios chun an neach a chuir am post-dealain agus dubh às am post-dealain an dèidh sin. 'S e beachdan an neach a chuir am post-dealain a tha ann an gin sam bith a thèid a chur an cèill agus chan eil e a' ciallachadh gu bheil iad a' riochdachadh beachdan Chomhairle Shiorrachd Obar Dheathain.

## Enclosure 9 Email to Deputy First Minister

22 September 2020 07:57  
202000102130

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] <On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills>  
**Sent:** 22 September 2020 07:57  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: 2021 Exam Diet

OR please

| 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: DFMCS@gov.scot

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
**Sent:** 21 September 2020 08:17  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Subject:** FW: 2021 Exam Diet

[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](http://www.johnswinneymsp.com) / [\\_www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <  
**Sent:** 21 September 2020 07:16  
**To:** Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
**Subject:** 2021 Exam Diet

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Dear Mr Swinney  
I am a member of Us For Them Scotland group and I am very concerned regarding the uncertainty surrounding next year's exam diet.

Exams are critical for our young people and they must be sat, the level of uncertainty for them right now is causing huge levels of anxiety. It has been previously stated only a couple of weeks ago that next year's exams WILL go ahead - this must not be changed  
Our schools must stay open to give all our young people a fair chance at exam success and to achieve the grades they deserve.

We must stop excluding healthy children from school because another person has tested 'positive' there needs to be a more sensible approach that keeps children in the classroom learning.

Why are pupils being forced out of their school when they are not ill and may have a False Positive test?

Given that the number of positive tests is not translating into increased hospital admissions, ICU occupancy or death rates, why are you treating our children in this disproportionate and harmful manner?

We expect more from people who should be advocating on behalf of our children. Please ensure that our young people are not let down any further - Exams next year must go ahead as planned!

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

**[Redacted s38(1)(b)]**  
**Teacher of Maths**

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

--

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[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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## Enclosure 10 Email to Deputy First Minister

12 October 2020 08:49  
202000101588

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]> On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
Sent: 12 October 2020 08:49  
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: National 5 exams in 2020

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

FOR OR PLEASE

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]< 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: 0131 [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)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]<  
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)][Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]Fife

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPad

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## Enclosure 11 Email to Deputy First Minister

22 September 2020 07:56  
202000089934

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] < On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
Sent: 22 September 2020 07:56  
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: Exams

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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Sent: 20 September 2020 22:02  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: Exams

This might seem presumptuous but I have a workable solution for next year in case of further  
disruption through Covid.

It involves basically the SQA arranging for mini tests to be delivered to schools on fixed  
dates so that all Scottish pupils can sit them at exactly the same time. To my mind this would  
be a better system anyway. Instead of leaving it up to schools to provide prelims which can  
never be guaranteed to match the standards of the SQA, and which, being marked by  
teachers in that school, are always open to inconsistency, it would be far better to introduce  
a system of assessment which was controlled by the body most fit to oversee it - the SQA .

Another advantage to students is that they can sit a test which examines what they have just  
learned instead of cramming at the last minute.

All that has to be done is for all, say, maths departments to agree which elements of the  
course will be taught in which order. The tests will be posted to the school (perhaps soon  
done online) and students will sit them over say a week. Each test will be shorter than the  
main exam because only a part of the syllabus will be being examined.

The marking could be done in different ways, either via a trained accredited teacher there, or by sending away to SQA as of now, or having a trained and accredited local teacher to mark all the tests in one area. As a former PT English and examiner/group leader at AH level English I would be capable of marking all the scripts for my local ward.

The marks are therefore likely to be much more reliable than school-based assessment which had to be accepted for last year's cohort, leading to a dilution of standards.

This is the very basis of an idea that could transform assessment and make it at a stroke more reliable and consistent. I would even suggest that in future hopefully normal years, the final exam would only be used by students who, having done more poorly than they would have liked, can have a second chance in June.

Just imagine how much stronger a position you would be in, politically as well educationally, with these accredited assessments 'in the bank'. As for the composition of such tests, the SQA have them now in the form of last year's made up papers.

The only problem is the late start this year. The programme would be better starting in June with the first test in October but this year the first realistic date would have to be January to let schools know which elements of the course should be taught to be ready for assessment.

I'm not naive. I know how hard it is to get anything past your advisors. And also from past experience how negative and obstructionist some elements of bureaucracy can be. But if it ever reaches you, I hope you will see the present and future merits of this scheme.

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

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## Enclosure 12 Follow-up correspondence

16 October 2020 08:09  
202000099314

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<[Redacted s38(1)(b)]>  
**Sent:** 16 October 2020 08:09  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Your recent correspondence with Scottish Government and partner agencies - 202000089934

Hi

Yes. Please allocate it to me on MiCase.

Cheers

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Policy Officer

0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)](at present I have no telephone access, but can be contacted by email)

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Learning Directorate, The Scottish Government, Area 2B North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Raon 2B Deas, Cidhe Bhictòria, Dùn Èideann, EH6 6QQ

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**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)]



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

**Public Engagement Unit**

Ministerial Private Office

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

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

On Thu, 15 Oct 2020, 16:50 , <casehandling.service@gov.scot> wrote:

Please find attached a response to your correspondence.

\*\*\*\*\*

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## Enclosure 13 Email to Deputy First Minister

06 October 2020 07:32  
202000098501

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 06 October 2020 07:32  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Sqa moderation

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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 04 October 2020 10:02  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Sqa moderation

I wish to express my deep concern and anger at the sqa moderation process for the national exams. I am a Principal Teacher of ASN at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and my son has just completed his national 5 at [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. This day last year [Redacted s38(1)(b)] during results day [Redacted s38(1)(b)] HNC in engineering at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] alongside higher and advanced highers. This was a celebration of vocational and academic subjects working together and of a vision of an inclusive education system that creates opportunities. However, what was experienced on Tuesday was the opposite. Although my son achieved As he was downgraded in 3 subjects. This was due to [Redacted s38(1)(b)] historical performance not his efforts or ability. The message that he has been left with is if he lived somewhere less socially mixed he would've received different results. Also moving forward for higher he realises that he has to be achieving straight way and he has to be out performing his peers at [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. Other pupils in less socially mixed areas will not have this pressure under the current system and it will be significantly easier to achieve results. I know what the national data says but when we zoom in on individual school and subjects different pupils in different school have had different opportunities to achieve. I also understand the appeal process is there but teacher in schools that have been affect are now facing massive increase in workload as well as having to support the pupils who will need the most help in returning to school.

Please recognise that the present system has flaws, take the time to work out a fairer system if we are faced with no exam diet next year. This would give the message to pupils that your work and effort matters. It is not just where you live. Otherwise you are saying that only pupils from less socially diverse school can achieve the top results. Scotland would risk

losing the opportunity of a cohort of leader not just from SIMD 1 to 3 but 4,5,6 who have grown up in social diverse community. Scotland needs these pupils to be our leader and in our professions if we are to build a successful compassionate social democratic country

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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## Enclosure 14 Email to Deputy First Minister

08 October 2020 13:19  
202000097010

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 08 October 2020 13:19  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Exam Diet 2020-21

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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
<[Redacted s38(1)(b)]>  
**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)]>  
**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)]\*\*\*\*\*

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## Enclosure 15 Email to Deputy First Minister

22 September 2020 13:36  
202000090686

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]< On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
Sent: 22 September 2020 13:36  
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: Message from Scottish Parliament website

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

OR please

[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: DFMCS@gov.scot

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 22 September 2020 11:34  
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: 22 September 2020 11:33  
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)]

Edinburgh

postcode:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

email:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

telephone:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

message:

As a former headteacher I am appalled that there is thought of cancelling this years SQA diet. There are hundreds of unemployed people who could be recruited as invigilators and a myriad of church halls, nightclubs etc which could be utilised as exam venues. a little more imagination required. Please stop the anxiety of the young.

I realise this is a terrible time for you and sympathise but the young must be a priority.

\*\*\*\*\*

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## Enclosure 16 Email to First Minister

22 September 2020 12:57  
202000090618

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)] <On Behalf Of Coronavirus Public Enquiries>

**Sent:** 22 September 2020 12:57

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

**Subject:** SQA exam diet 2021 -[Redacted s38(1)(b)]- 21/09/2020

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Kind Regards,

The Scottish Government

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)] Correspondence Triage Team for Coronavirus Public Enquiries

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

**Sent:** 21 September 2020 07:18

**To:** First Minister

**Subject:** SQA exam diet 2021

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I am a member of Us For Them Scotland group and I am very concerned regarding the uncertainty surrounding next year's exam diet.

Exams are critical for our young people and they must be sat, the level of uncertainty for them right now is causing huge levels of anxiety. It has been previously stated only a couple of weeks ago that next year's exams WILL go ahead - this must not be changed

Our schools must stay open to give all our young people a fair chance at exam success and to achieve the grades they deserve.

We must stop excluding healthy children from school because another person has tested 'positive' there needs to be a more sensible approach that keeps children in the classroom learning.

Why are pupils being forced out of their school when they are not ill and may have a False Positive test?

Given that the number of positive tests is not translating into increased hospital admissions, ICU occupancy or death rates, why are you treating our children in this disproportionate and harmful manner?

We expect more from people who should be advocating on behalf of our children. Please ensure that our young people are not let down any further - Exams next year must go ahead as planned!

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

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

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The contents of this message are intended for the addressee only. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and the contents do not form a legal binding contract.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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**Enclosure 17 Email to First Minister**

22 September 2020 10:10

202000090325

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<[Redacted s38(1)(b)]> **On Behalf Of** Coronavirus Public Enquiries

**Sent:** 22 September 2020 10:10

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

**Subject:** Exam concern - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- 16/09/2020

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Kind Regards,

The Scottish Government

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]Correspondence Triage Team for Coronavirus Public Enquiries

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

**Sent:** 16 September 2020 21:52

**To:** First Minister

**Subject:** Exam concern

Dear Ms Sturgeon, I am a concerned parent, an ex-teacher and a member of Us For Them Scotland group and I am very concerned regarding the uncertainty surrounding next years exam diet.

Exams are critical for our young people and they must be sat, the level of uncertainty for them right now is causing huge levels of anxiety. It has been previously stated only a couple of weeks ago that next years exams WILL go ahead - this must not be changed Our schools must stay open to give all our young people a fair chance at exam success and to achieve the grades they deserve. We must stop excluding healthy children from school because another person has tested 'positive' there needs to be a more sensible approach that keeps children in the classroom learning.

Why are pupils being forced out of their school when they are not ill and may have a False Positive test? Given that the number of positive tests is not translating into increased hospital admissions, ICU occupancy or death rates, why are you treating our children in this disproportionate and harmful manner?

We expect more from people who should be advocating on behalf of our children. Please ensure that our young people are not let down any further - exams next year must go ahead as planned! They deserve better.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]My EML-L09. On O2.

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## Enclosure 18 Email to Deputy First Minister

22 September 2020 07:53  
202000089931

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 22 September 2020 07:53  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Press Rumours of Cancellation of National 5 exams

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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 20 September 2020 18:4  
**To:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Press Rumours of Cancellation of National 5 exams

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am a maths teacher in Aberdeen and read with alarm today that there are proposals being considered to cancel next year's National 5 exams. Please don't do this, it would provide a complete disincentive to pupils to study. To rely purely on coursework favours girls over boys as they are generally more conscientious in producing good coursework.

For my subject, maths, there is no coursework – just the final exam. If you take that away, then what are our pupils working towards? It's almost impossible to set coursework in maths and be sure that the work is actually the pupils own, there are so many good apps available today that can do the work for them. Only by having pupils sit an exam can you be sure that the work is their own.

Please provide clarity to the teaching profession and dismiss these rumours that are being spread in today's press.

Yours sincerely,

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

## Enclosure 19 Email to Deputy First Minister

22 September 2020 07:51  
202000089928

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] < > On Behalf Of Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills  
Sent: 22 September 2020 07:51  
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: SQA Examinations

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

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] < > On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 20 September 2020 13:35  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: SQA Examinations

[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

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Sent: 20 September 2020 11:09  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: SQA Examinations

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or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am writing to you as a teacher and a parent who is deeply concerned at the prospect and expectation of exams going ahead this year.

As a teacher, our priority is to nurture and prioritise the wellbeing of our children during this pandemic not to prepare children for an exam.

The pressure on teachers just now to get it right for every child is insane, especially as so many youngsters have had such varying experiences during lockdown. To ask those very children to sit an exam in 10 months time will do more damage than good.

As a parent, I have watched my son mentally struggle with Lockdown to the extent he required counselling. He is mentally becoming stronger each day. However, something that niggles at him everyday is his awareness that he has already missed May and June's National 5 learning.

He has returned to school, however, we are currently in isolation due to an outbreak of cases in his school and Track and Trace contacting us.

Unfortunately, and no fault through the school, his high school have had outbreak after outbreak of covid since the first week of return.

To put this into perspective, his Nat 5 maths class had 3 pupils present on Friday, the rest were off through Track and Trace.

I feel for the school. There is no way they can deliver the full programme of work during times where 14 cases have been confirmed and more than half a year group have been told to self isolate.

You can appreciate my sons niggles continue as he is still to properly start receiving his full programme of education in preparation for his National 5 results.

My concern is the variation in experience between each school. One school could have outbreak after outbreak of covid cases while another school could have no interruption to their learning. That universal exam at the end of the year will have no modification or reflection on the education experience each child has had prior to exams.

I am proud of the Scottish Education system. It is excellent, we strive for equality, equity and closing the poverty attainment gap but in this situation the pandemic is making it virtually impossible to achieve our aims.

Please consider creating a criteria of expectations for teachers to work to just now. Set what is expected and prepare teachers to know what evidence is expected and what the criteria is for each grades just now. Support teachers and give them the credit teachers deserve in making the professional judgement of grades.

This pandemic is making our future unpredictable. It would be catastrophic if we went ahead with exams and we have another surge in cases causing another lockdown.

If however, we know that folios and mini assessments are required then this can be continuously worked on at a time that suits each school, based on their personal circumstances around dealing with the pandemic.

Please Mr Swinney, listen and speak to the people that matter, our educators and learners. I appreciate there is parent pressure but in this occasion the experts are the children and teachers.

I look forward to hearing your views on my concerns.

Please believe me when I say this, I want us to get this right for every child.

Many thanks,

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

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## Enclosure 20 Email to Deputy First Minister

Received date: 7 September 2020  
20200084946

Your Reference:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)],  
[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 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] E: DFMCS@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP

Sent: 31 August 2020 01:03

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

Subject: FW: Education Issues

[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](http://www.johnswinneymsp.com) / [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

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

Sent: 30 August 2020 22:51

To: Swinney J (John), MSP

Cc: First Minister

Subject: Education Issues

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you as Education Minister with two issues in relation to education.

I am a secondary mathematics teacher and was also on the shielding register, which was paused at the end of July 2020.

My first concern is in relation to schools returning. From the outset I was in favour of pupils going back to school and

supported the return. Although I was previously shielding, I felt that with proper mitigations I would be able to return

safely to the classroom to undertake the job I absolutely love. For me, I had to push the school, in which I teach, for

an Occupational Health risk assessment (I have a COVID age which places me in the highest risk category). This

was eventually undertaken and now it is in place, I do feel safe in the bubble the school has created for me. I am

teaching a full timetable (maximum pupil contact) and I am impressed at the consideration given by pupils to my

safety.

My first concern is the statement made by you last week in relation to face masks in schools. This was a welcome development and I know from the pupils I teach that they felt it was overdue. You stated however, that masks were not necessary in class as there was social distancing. This is not true. I have spoken to a number of teacher friends in schools throughout Scotland and they describe a very similar situation to mine. My classroom holds up to a maximum of 33 pupils and all desks are double desks that cannot be separated. I teach 6 different year groups and with the exception of two of these, which have around 16 pupils, all other classes have over 30 pupils in them. It is not humanly possible to have social distancing with large numbers of pupils. There is no simple solution to this given that all pupils have returned to school, however, misleading statements should not be made. Pupils in my charge were astonished with this, as they cannot see social distancing in classrooms. I feel that there has not been proper planning for schools going back and we are making it up on a daily basis as we go along. I feel that those making decisions about schools, either have little or no experience of teaching or they have spent so little time in a classroom that they are not aware of what the optimal solution to keep both teacher and pupils safe. Teachers are frustrated as they are being kept in the dark about developments and systems seem to change daily. I would say that most teachers I know are supportive of schools going back, they just want consistency and proper planning. That is totally lacking from headteacher level to local authority to Scottish Government. Given that we are back and do not want to see schools closing again unnecessarily, I think it is now time to listen to teachers and pupils; they are the ones who are living with this day to day. Then quite quickly produce a set of workable guidelines that must be applied in all schools. That is what is missing at this moment in time. My second concern is in relation to SQA. In this respect my previous experience with them puts me in a position where I feel I am more than eminently qualified to make the following comments. I worked as an appointee for SQA from 1989 to 2012, holding every senior examining position from setter, senior verifier, senior examiner and principal assessor. I know of no other person, before or after me, with the same level of experience as I had. I was reading the latest release form SQA, sent out via Education Scotland. I do not know why SQA did not send this directly to schools themselves, but that is a question to be answered at another time. The proposal for Higher Mathematics has caused me great cause for concern. I fully understand that this current academic year is uncertain and no one knows how this virus will progress as we head into winter and await the development of a vaccine. That aside, SQA have not shown themselves to be able to make decisions that teachers

are confident or happy with. Planning should have started well in advance of schools going back to prepare for all possibilities. To receive an email with a proposal last week is totally unacceptable. The academic year has started and this week is week 3 of normal teaching for all schools. Teachers have little time to adapt courses once an academic year has begun. Yet again, as with schools returning, planning seems to be at best ad hoc. This is totally unacceptable.

The position suggested for Higher Mathematics, in my experience, has not been thought through. The topics where there would be a choice would lead to many pupils not being prepared for studying mathematics or mathematics based courses at Advanced Higher or beyond. I know that SQA will state that the whole course can still be taught, although in reality, if young people have a choice, they will only study those topics they are choosing to answer questions on.

One of the topics, Recurrence Relations, which SQA was suggesting could be optional, will have already been taught in many schools. There is a better solution to the one suggested by SQA which would see all topics covered with non-essential sections being trimmed. That would be a much more acceptable solution for schools.

No information has been issued yet on National 5 and Advanced Higher. Information coming from SQA is far too late and this should have been undertaken at the end of last session. It is no wonder many teachers have lost faith in SQA.

Both of these issues show the lack of appropriate planning and guidance for schools and teachers. This is what is causing stress and worry among teachers. It is time that both the Scottish Government and SQA started planning well in advance; issuing appropriate information to schools and teachers.

Hence my reason for writing to you. Please do the right thing for schools; for both teachers and young people. They deserve so much better than they are currently. It will make what I consider to be the best job in the world less stressful than it needs be.

I am happy to discuss the content of this email with you and if required provide further information.

Kind regards

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

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## Enclosure 24 Email to First Minister and Deputy First Minister

29 September 2020 07:21  
20200094722

**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
**Sent:** 29 September 2020 07:21  
**To:** Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** FW: Exam and Assessment Guidance

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

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**From:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 28 September 2020 19:08  
**To:** First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Exam and Assessment Guidance

First Minister, Depute First Minister,

I am a teacher in a Scottish secondary school, and I am tired. In fact, every teacher I know is tired. I know we are not the only ones, but we need some clarity, quickly.

Since March, we have adapted to, and, mostly, overcome the challenges that the last few months have sent. We provided, without much guidance or the opportunity to sit with colleagues, estimates for the 2019/20 cohort of exam candidates. We did this, without complaint, because we desperately care about our pupils. We did this at the same time as continuing to teach on-line, many of us regularly doing on-line lessons from our homes and many also manning hubs. We had to adapt resources that we have produced for classroom use, for use online. We answered more than double the number of emails that we usually do, trying to reassure pupils, trying to ensure that they were fine. They were, and continue to be, our priority. We are still trying to ensure that we support pupils who remain at home, as well as produce resources, and teach lessons, that can, if necessary be quickly adapted to online lessons.

We are beyond tired. We desperately need some clarity about this session's exams. I understand that it is impossible to say whether our young people will be able to sit exams, but we need clarity about the options. Surely, it's not too much to ask to know what evidence we should be collecting and what the alternative will be should the exams not take place?

Surely, it's not too much to ask that we be told what changes are actually being made to assessments?

The summer break was not at all restful. Every few days, there was yet another change or addition to the plans for the return to school in August. Since we started back, almost eight weeks ago, it seems we have had to deal with yet another change every week. I understand the changes, I understand that the situation is constantly evolving. However, it is exhausting. My school finishes for our October break on Friday. Frankly, I don't feel as if it's going to be much of a break because we don't have that clarity.

I have the greatest sympathy for you, First Minister, and you Deputy First Minister. I would not be in your positions for all the money in the world. However, the teachers of this country are expected to placate pupils and parents, to deal with questions about what is going to happen, and we have no answers. We wanted to hit the ground running, to make sure that our pupils are as prepared as they can be, whatever scenario we find ourselves in, and the reality is that we are floundering, without guidance, without information and, it feels, without respect. Please, please ensure that, at the very least, we have a definite date when the information we need will be available to us.

Yours Respectfully,

Ms [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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