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No.	Description	Date	Explanation of redactions	Clause
1.	Minutes of C-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) meeting	02 December 2020	Published information	25(1)
2.	SQA PowerPoint presentation for CERG meeting	02 December 2020	Information not in scope	-
3	Email: Briefing - Meeting between DFM and S5 and S6 pupils undertaking Higher and Advanced Higher courses in the 2020-21 school year - 04.12.20	03 December 17:17	Personal information	38(1)(b)
3.1	Attachment: Word document		Teleconference details	30(c)
			Personal information	38(1)(b)
4.	Draft note of meeting with S5 and S6 learners on Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications.	04 December 2020	Personal information	38(1)(b)
5.	Young people's views on COVID-19 Education Recovery	25 November 2020	Personal information	38(1)(b)
			Information not in scope	-
6.	CERG Agenda and Minutes	26 November 2020	Published information	25(1)
7.	CERG Agenda – Chair's Brief	26 November 2020	Personal information	38(1)(b)
			Information not in scope	-
8.	CERG discussion paper	26 November 2020	Information not in scope	-
9	Email: RE: DFM Session with SLS - 18 November - Readout	23 November 2020 13:41	Personal information	38(1)(b)
			Information not in scope	-

Enclosure 1 – Minutes of C-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) meeting, 02 December 2020

[Redacted s25(1) – <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-education-recovery-group-2-december-2020/>]

National Qualifications 2021

CERG Meeting
2 December 2020



Following Ministerial Statement on 7 October

- Established NQ 2021 Group
- Supporting NQ Working Group to develop an ACM for National 5 and support plan
- Learner Panel
- Key focus:
 - Resources, including generic guidance on gathering evidence and determining estimates (published), subject specific guidance for N5 (published) and additional assessment resources (being rolled out)
 - Higher and Advanced Higher 2021 timetable – now confirmed
 - The development of the ACM for National 5, with a focus on teacher/lecturer judgement and quality assurance, and support plan
 - Contingencies for Higher and Advanced Higher



[Redacted – not in scope]

Higher and Advanced Higher Contingencies

NQ working group for National 5 ACM considered scope to apply same model to Higher and Advanced Higher

They agreed:

- In principle, same model could be applied
- More flexibility would be required in assessment
- Could work to the same broad timelines as National 5
- Would need to consider sampling of candidate evidence and impact on workload
- Early communication to the system would be welcome



Discussion Points

- Delivery of fair and credible ACM for National 5, which can be broadly utilised for Highers and Advanced Highers if required
- Equality considerations
- Role of schools and colleges as part of a collaborative, empowered system, to adopt the model as intended, with support
- Workload for teachers/lecturers, including availability of appointee resources
- Importance of communications with learners and parents at every stage
- Appeals – Review and UNCRC



Enclosure 3 – Email: Briefing - Meeting between DFM and S5 and S6 pupils undertaking Higher and Advanced Higher courses in the 2020-21 school year - 04.12.20

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

Sent: 03 December 2020 17:17

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

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

Subject: Briefing - Meeting between DFM and S5 and S6 pupils undertaking Higher and Advanced Higher courses in the 2020-21 school year - 04.12.20

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

As discussed earlier please find attached a briefing note, including zoom details, for DFM's discussion with S5 and S6 learners tomorrow on Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications.

Please let me know if DFM requires anything else in advance of the call tomorrow.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Curriculum Unit | Directorate for Learning |

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] **If you need to speak to me please call my mobile on:**

07[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 3.1 – Attachment: Word document

DFM discussion with S5 and S6 Learners undertaking Higher and Advanced Higher study in the 2020/21 school term.

Date and Time of Engagement	Friday 4 December 2020 2:00 pm– 3:00pm
Where	Zoom meeting URL: Join Zoom Meeting: [Redacted s30(c)] Meeting ID: [Redacted s30(c)] Passcode: [Redacted s30(c)]
Key Purpose / Message	Meeting between DFM and a number of Senior Phase S5 and S6 pupils who are undertaking Higher and Advanced Higher courses in the 2020/21 academic year. The meeting will provide DFM with an opportunity to hear the personal reflections of S5 and S6 learners, including reflections on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on their Higher and Advanced Higher studies this year, how their studies are progressing and what their thoughts are on assessment and the impact of any disruption on their plans for further study. Learners in attendance will be supported by Young Scot and the Scottish Youth Parliament and will include learners from the newly formed Education Recovery Youth Panel and Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.
Official Support	[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Curriculum Unit – 07 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] , National Qualifications Unit - 07 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Annexes	Annex A – Meeting Agenda Annex B – Key Points and Potential Questions Annex C – Attendee List Annex D – SQA Exams FMQ Note

Meeting Agenda (all timings are approximate)

2:00 pm – 2:05 pm – Welcome and introductions from DFM

2:05 pm – 2:55 pm – Virtual Round table discussion – learners to provide feedback on their experiences and thoughts on studying for higher and advanced higher qualifications in the 2020/21 academic year and assessment.

2:55pm – 3:00 pm – DFM to thank participants and draw the meeting to a close.

Key Points

- I recognise the importance of the Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications to learners as you look to your future study and careers.
- Our ambition remains to proceed with the exam diet for Higher and Advanced Highers in May 2021.
- It must, however, be safe to do so and it must be fair to learners.
- We are monitoring the position closely and listening to all the different views on this matter, including those of learners.
- Given the potential for further disruption, contingency plans for Higher and Advanced Higher courses are being developed.
- It remains vitally important that our plans take due regard of the latest public health advice and so safeguard the health of all learners, whilst ensuring that your hard work is recognised in the awarding of qualifications.
- I have been clear that the latest point at which a decision will be taken is the February break – which is more than three months before the exams are due to begin, but that I will make a decision sooner if the evidence is pointing to that.

Potential Questions

- How has coronavirus (COVID-19) affected your studies this year, if at all, and do you think it has had an impact on what you have been able to learn?
- How do you feel about any final course exams you are due to sit around May next year (2021)? Do you feel like you will be ready and prepared for these?
- How would you feel if exams that you may be due to sit around May next year (2021) did not go ahead and your progress was assessed in another way?
- Have there been any additional challenges which have affected your learning so far this year?
- Have there been any benefits or opportunities to your learning due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) so far this year?
- How do you think any changes to your learning or anything else this year, caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) will affect your future plans - including plans for future work or study?

Meeting Attendee List

Learners from S5 and S6:

- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – Education Youth Recovery Panel member
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - Education Youth Recovery Panel member
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - Education Youth Recovery Panel member
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - Education Youth Recovery Panel member
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - Education Youth Recovery Panel member
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - Education Youth Recovery Panel member
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – Education Youth Recovery Panel member
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] MSYP [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – TBC
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – TBC
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] MSYP [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – TBC

Learner Support Staff:

- Allan Lindsay - Participation and Co-design Director, Young Scot
- Ben McKendrick – Chief Executive of the Scottish Youth Parliament

Official support:

- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – Curriculum Unit, Directorate for Learning.
- [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – National Qualifications Unit, Directorate for Learning

SQA Exams FMQ Brief

ISSUE 3 December: UK Government announced additional measures to ‘boost fairness and support students’ ahead of next year’s GCSEs and A-levels in England.

ISSUE 2 December: SQA published their National Qualifications 2020 Appeals information: A total of 664 appeal requests were made with 557 (83.9%) accepted.

- 2 requests were submitted under SQA Error, 0% were accepted;
- 565 under Centre Administrative Error, 88.8% were accepted; and
- 97 under Centre Discrimination, 56.7% were accepted (55 cases, all amended up).
- Of all appeals accepted, 79.4% resulted in grades being amended up, 4.7% amended down and 1.4% resulted in no grade change.
- The remainder (14.6%) related to new entries (requests for candidates to be entered/certified for a qualification) or withdrawn entries (requests for candidates to be withdrawn from a qualification).

BACKGROUND: On 11 August, DFM directed SQA to award candidate results based on the estimates provided by centres. The Ministerial direction also stipulated the development of an appeals process. There were three grounds for which a centre could submit an appeal: SQA Error, Centre Administrative Error or Centre Discrimination.

ISSUE 29-30 November: Mail on Sunday and Daily Mail reports claims that the SQA “whitewashed” and “is embroiled in a cover-up row” of the Priestley review report on the National Qualifications Experience in 2020, in response to data released under FOI.

ISSUE 30 November: i reports that the UK Government is ‘under pressure to make exams easier’ ahead of an expected announcement on GCSEs and A-levels.

ISSUE 28-29 November: Herald and Scotsman reports on the timing for a decision on the holding of Higher and Advanced Higher exams may be made this

TOP LINES

SQA Appeals 2020 figures show that around 0.1% of all entries resulted in a change of grade (0.3% in 2019).

- This year, to support the awarding of results the decision was taken to ensure that the post results appeals service would incur no charge.
- This year, as in previous years, it was for centres, not individuals, to lodge appeals – there has been no change in that respect.

Professor Priestley’s review into the events following the cancellation of the 2020 exam diet was entirely independent.

- Professor Priestley established the research team and led the review.
- In addition, two independent external reviewers were brought in to provide advice on processes and preliminary findings, and to review the final report.

- The review team sought feedback and considered comments from the Scottish Government and the SQA.
- The Scottish Government commented on points of factual accuracy only and did not seek or have any say in the final drafting of the report.
- We are grateful to Professor Priestley and his team for all their work on this important review.

Our ambition remains for Higher and Advanced Higher exams to proceed, as long as public health guidance allows it.

- It must, however, be safe to do so and it must be fair to learners. We are monitoring the position closely and listening to all the different views on this matter.
- In taking the decision on National 5 exams - which constitute more than half of all exams taken - it means that we can build an exam diet for Highers and Advanced Highers that is as safe as it possibly can be.
- Higher and Advanced Higher exams will begin on 10 May, later than normal, giving S5 and S6 pupils back approximately two weeks of the learning time they lost this year.
- This additional time, in conjunction with the course assessment modifications that SQA have made following its consultation, give the greatest chances of these exams being implemented fairly.
- Given the potential for further disruption, contingency plans for Higher and Advanced Higher courses are being developed.
- A final decision will be made no later than mid-February, or sooner if the evidence is pointing to that.
- It remains vitally important that our plans take due regard of the latest public health advice and so safeguard the health of all learners, whilst ensuring that their hard work is recognised in the awarding of qualifications.
- We understand that pupils working towards music exams are keen for clarity and to know their hard work will be fairly assessed.
- We would encourage them to feed their views back to the SQA, which is consulting on the proposed modifications to the assessments.

Continuing disruption and likely further disruption caused by Covid-19 means that we can no longer plan for a full exam diet in 2021.

- To support the sitting of Higher and Advanced Higher exams we cancelled all National 5 exams and slightly delayed the start of the remaining exams.
- National 5's will be certificated based on teacher judgement, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance.
- There will be no algorithm driving results and the result will reflect an individual's work rather than the past performance of his or her school.
- There is no expectation that schools or colleges hold a formal diet of prelims for National 5. The removal of the formal exam means that a range of more flexible class-based assessments can be used to maximise learning and teaching time.

In coming to this decision there has been significant engagement with stakeholders including young people, and it has been discussed by the Education Recovery Group.

- Discussions with have taken place with learners, parents, teachers, colleges, universities, local government and national bodies including the SQA and Education Scotland.
- The Deputy First Minister has taken account of the recommendations submitted to him by Professor Priestley in his independent review of the 2020 experience.
- By engaging with a wide range of stakeholders we have demonstrated our commitment to listening to the views of others to ensure that the decision taken is a fair one.
- This will be supported by the production of an EQIA and CRWIA as the final methodology is developed.

- We continue to monitor pupil attendance alongside the consideration of any necessary assessment contingency measures.
- Scottish ministers and officials are in regular contact with the other three nations of the UK, and share information regularly.

The Deputy First Minister has consistently been clear that he is keen to ensure that the approach to assessment does not in any way add to teachers' workloads.

- The SQA is working with stakeholders to further develop the approach to assessing National 5 courses. Workload is a consideration in their plans.
- These are exceptional times and the system needs to work together to ensure that the hard work of learners can be fairly assessed and recognised.

The SQA have published guidance on evidence gathering and estimation, with a very clear focus on quality rather than quantity of that evidence.

- Decisions on the content of national qualifications have rightly always rested with the SQA, whose responsibility it is to devise qualifications and we should set no precedent in changing that.
- Subject specific guidance on the key pieces of work that young people will need to complete has been published by SQA.
- To support the process, the SQA is working with Education Scotland, local authorities, and others to support a national approach to quality assurance, including the provision of assessment resources.
- This will help implement another key Priestley recommendation, for a national system of moderation.
- SQA will also work with schools and colleges during the year on the quality assurance of their pupils' work.

PRIESTLEY REVIEW

ISSUE: Professor Mark Priestley of Stirling University was commissioned to conduct a rapid, independent review of events following the cancellation of the examination diet.

- The review, and the Scottish Government response, was published to coincide with the Deputy First Minister's 7 October statement.
- Of the report's 9 recommendations, 8 are accepted. See Annex A for the 8 accepted recommendations.

The Deputy First Minister made clear lessons needed to be learned from awarding in 2020, and that is why swift action was taken to commission the rapid review of awarding.

- These were unprecedented times and there was no off the shelf solution which could be deployed, and the report notes that its observation about missed opportunities was made with the benefit of hindsight.
- The Deputy First Minister is clear that the SQA delivered an approach to certification which he asked them to do.
- The review sets out that "all parties involved in the process were found to have acted with integrity, with the best interests of students in mind" and found that "respondents generally found that SQA guidance was clear and useful."
- I am sure that the SQA will take note of the findings of this review, as well as their own lessons learned from what has happened, and will be looking to act on these.

The Priestley review recognises that a whole system approach will be vital to the success of awarding for 2020/21 and ensuring learners' achievements are fully recognised

- SQA is working with Education Scotland, education leaders, parents and young people to ensure that the assessment and moderation approaches for 2021 are clearly communicated and understood.

The Scottish Government recognises the critical place young people have as stakeholders and rights holders in education.

- A range of work is underway by the Scottish Government to further strengthen the voice of learners in our education policy.
- This includes the Scottish Learner Panel being extended until at least June 2021 to ensure a broad range of learners can work to influence discussion by the Education Recovery Group.
- Learners are also being consulted as part of the OECD Review.
- In line with the Priestley review's recommendation, we have asked SQA to work with the Commissioner for Young People to continue to embed equalities and human rights best practice in the development of qualifications.

The appeals process is a very important topic and we are confident that the SQA will conduct a review of the appeals system in a fair and transparent way.

- The Deputy First Minister has been clear that the SQA will conduct this review to ensure it best meets the needs of young people in line with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- This review should be carried out by working closely with key stakeholders and learners and their representative groups.
- This year's SQA results were awarded based on teacher and lecturer assessments, or SQA moderated teacher and lecturer estimates where these were higher.
- Guidance for teachers and lecturers making estimates instructed them to take a holistic approach which should factor in any illness, or other personal circumstances impacting on performance, during prelims or at any other time.
- Any pupil who believed their school or college was being unfair by not lodging an appeal on their behalf would have recourse to the school or college complaints procedures.

Annex A – Recommendations of the Priestley Review

The eight accepted recommendations are:

1. Suspension of the 2021 National 5 exam diet, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.
2. The development of a nationally recognised, fully transparent and proportionate system for moderation of centre-based assessment.
3. The development of more extensive approaches to collaborative decision making and co-construction by professional stakeholders of assessment practices related to National Qualifications.
4. A commitment to embedding equalities in all aspects of the development of qualifications systems.
5. The development of more systematic processes for working with and engaging young people, as stakeholders and rights holders in education.
6. The development of a clear communications strategy, co-constructed with stakeholders, to ensure that the extraordinary arrangements for 2021 are as fully as possible understood by all parties.
7. A review of qualification appeals systems, including consideration of the rights and roles of young people, in the context of the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scottish law.
8. The development by SQA and partners of digital materials and systems for producing, assessing and moderating assessment evidence, to ensure that operational processes for gathering candidate evidence for appeals is less reliant on paper-based systems.
9. The recommendation that independent research into the development and application of the 2020 Alternative Certification Model, while not fully accepted, will be considered as a potential project for inclusion in SG's research in education strategy.

Annex B - Supplementary Information

Revised SQA Results data 2020

Note: the results should not be compared to previous and future years without full consideration and disclosure of the different way they were arrived at this year.

Increases in numbers at Advanced Higher:

- total number of entries at Advanced Higher is 23,570 – up 0.5%
- total number of passes at Advanced Higher is 21,935 – up 17.8%
- pass rate for 2020 was 93.1%, up on 79.4% in 2019 (up 13.7 points)

Increases in numbers of passes at Higher:

- total number of entries at Higher is 186,214 – up 0.2%
- total number of passes at Higher is 166,208 - up 19.6%
- pass rate for 2020 was 89.3% compared to 74.8% in 2019 (up 14.5 points)

Increases in numbers at National 5:

- total number of entries at National 5 is 300,639 – up 4.2%
- total number of passes at National 5 is 267,558 – up 18.6%
- pass rate for 2020 was 89.0% compared to 78.2% in 2019 (up 10.8 points)

Enclosure 4 – Draft note of meeting with S5 and S6 learners on Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications

DRAFT

Meeting with DFM and Young People re Higher and Advance Higher Exams in 2021 – 4th December 2020

Draft Note of meeting

Welcome and introductions from DFM

- Thanked the young people in attendance for their participation at short notice.
- DFM recognised that the young people will have heard and experienced the impact of COVID on the exams.
- DFM took the decision to cancel national 5 exams in October and his judgement was to remove this from the exam timetable to reduce the risk of disruption as cannot predict what will happen next year.
- Continuing to monitor Highers and Advanced Highers and will look at developing a contingency model to take in to account that there may have to be a change of plans.
- Another approach is continuous assessment and all of the work for this has been developed for Nat 5 and has been taken forward.
- DFM is looking closely at Highers and Advance Highers and what it is boiling down to is that it must be fair to all people involved. Some parts of the country – for example in Highland have low levels with little disruption to learning and in Glasgow where there are higher levels of Covid, the level of disruption to young people has been higher.
- DFM is currently gathering data and needs to make sure that the approach taken is fair to all young people.
- DFM indicated that it is very much on his mind and he wanted to hear from the young people directly and hear their views and thoughts on what the Scottish Government should do.
- DFM assured the young people that if they were not to have the exams there would be another way of assessment and DFM would work with SQA and teachers to ensure Highers and Advanced Highers have the same creditability as other years.
- When DFM spoke to young people about Nat 5's there was a real anxiety of not sitting exams but provided some reassurance that a lot of college and university tests are done continuously and not in a formal exam setting.

Views were then invited from the young people in attendance and their comments and thoughts are detailed below -

- Learning at home has been a really big change but was lucky to offered iPad from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] before COVID. Learning from home has been hard to get used to, for example, being able to raise hands during virtual classes and there is not as much contact with teachers at home. There are also more options for interaction with teachers at school in person. Is split about the decision on exams and can see both sides. Feels that cancelling exams may lead to continuous pressure to do well in tests.
- The impact of self-isolation only gets worse each time as you have to catch up on what you miss. Has some friends who feel behind after having to self-isolate continuously. Some are have a tough time at home and coping with this and feels it is

worse being out of learning environment. Is of the opinion that if exams can go ahead they should as having not sat Nat 5's, they would be keen to sit Highers.

- Learning from home during lockdown was very varied on how much learning you got. Sometimes had to teach themselves and also had to mark own work. Was incredibly hard to teach yourself at home and would have been even harder if you have learning difficulties. Feels there is a big difference between private and state schools and that no exams may widen attainment gap. Lots of pupils home lives may affect how well they do – family life, poverty, technology, mental health. Uncertainty around exams is causing stress and some of the young people may be worried after last year as they were downgraded and would like time to work hard and know in advance about the exams.
- Pupils doing online learning may struggle with slow internet connection and could miss things that are important while doing classes. Cancelling projects in regards to Advanced Highers really helped to slow down pace of teaching as it started off rushed to begin with. Teachers have said that there will be alternatives offered if they have not done as well in certain aspects of course work. This feels like there is a load off the young people's shoulders.
- Has been really lucky not to have had to miss any school, although has experienced this indirectly. Digital inclusion is a big issue and some young people who are missing school need technology. It may seem like young people have the technology but this may not be available during the day for example their parents needs to use this for work. Any decision on exams needs to take a human rights based approach, for example, digital exclusion is a breach of UNCRC rights. These need to be tackled and we need to look at these as a bigger picture. DFM expressed clearly that this is an issue he is grappling with - where are children's human rights? if you have an erratic experience of young people missing out you need to look very closely at this.
- Has had to isolate twice and may happen again. Also has a younger sister at home and made doing work at home very hard. Testing at school has been frequent and the school should have enough evidence to assess progress but feels that young people are working harder because of the uncertainty. Feels that those at another local school where there has not been as many cases and someone who has had to isolate for 8 weeks for example should not be compared and expected to do the same exam. Varying amount of work from different teachers when learning at home and feels there should be a protocol for all teachers on what should be sent home children who are self-isolating. Has seen a difference in teachers approach and pupils have had different experiences - DFM spoke about young people sitting in an exam hall with those who have been isolating and those who have not. He indicated that this is a dilemma DFM is grappling with. DFM asked attendees how they felt about his and there was agreement from attendees that this is an important point.
- Is of a mixed opinion of whether exams should go ahead. Feels that it is not a level playing field and if exams do go ahead, periods of self-isolation should be taken in to consideration and appeals system should reflect this. It is idealistic to think that everyone can learn at home. Feels lucky to have technology in Glasgow provided by the Local Authority. Feels decision regarding exams needs to be made sooner rather than later to put pupils at ease and let teachers start to collect evidence if there are to be no exams. Feels that this call is a positive step in engaging directly with young people as young people have felt that they are being ignored and this type of engagement is so important.

- There should be protocol on how pupils learn from home and teachers should have a set of steps so that pupils get the same experience of learning at home. Protocol needs to come from the top down. Technology has been an issue as their Local Authority has not been able to provide this as budgets are an issue.
- Feels lucky to have access to teams on their iPad but learning in lockdown has been hard so a reduction in course content has been welcomed. Self-isolation does not make it fair and is really difficult for everyone. Struggling with ongoing tests and testing is bringing stress to young people. Prelims are also causing stress as prelims are not meant to be final, but do not feel like practice.
- There is supposed to be an assessment period now and this will not be able to go ahead until next year due to self-isolation in their school. Work is getting out to pupils from teachers but not always the best infrastructure to do this.
- Is in a unique situation where there have not been many cases in his area. Teachers believe that young people in his area can carry on as normal and exams next year would not to be cancelled. Was affected by grading of exams last year and is hoping to get a better result this year for his university application so feels that sitting exams are important.
- Stress of last year was heavy. Teachers in their school are preparing for both situations but there have been some pupils off for long periods of time and have missed so much work. Removing the assignments feels like they do not now have the security blanket to fall back on. Feels that they need more notice with regards to cancelling exams as this is causing a lot stress.
- Has not personally dealt with the experience of self-isolation but feels that there is a lack of technology for home learning and Wi-Fi in rural areas is an issue. Feels like they can teach themselves at home but others may struggle. Would like exams to go ahead but recognises that it is not fair to compare their school to those who have been off. Worried about University applications and sitting no Highers but in a position this year with more evidence to back grades. Feels this has made young people work harder.
- Hard to find a solution that suits all and difference in prelims needs to be taken in to consideration as there has been a lot of difference in how and where prelims are sat. There have been developments over the school year and feels an assessment sat at the start of the year won't have the same value as those sat at the end of the year.
- Perhaps sitting exams that have been pushed back so that young people have had time to learn the material may be beneficial. There needs to be a more direct appeals system needed for everyone this year. Feels there will be a big effect on mental health with either decision with regards to exams.
- Worried about the credibility of awarded grades and believes that direct communication with young people would help instead of finding out in press. Projects being cancelled was welcome but afraid of the effect this will have in later years. They are struggling with the continuous pressure of doing well.

- In areas of high deprivation it is noticeable to see how these people have been affected and unfair to put them in an exam hall with someone from different background.

Close from DFM

Points put to DFM are strong and he is taking away from conversation a great deal.

Key points for DFM to consider –

1. Must be a level playing field – making sure everyone has an equal chance.
2. Difference in experience in terms of personal circumstances that have been made worse during COVID.
3. There is a desire to know what is going on and for this to be communicated – taking this very seriously
4. Wellbeing – COVID has taught us anything – essentiality of our wellbeing is fundamental and it is good to hear from young people on this.

Curriculum Unit
4th December 2020

Enclosure 5 – Young people’s views on COVID-19 Education Recovery

As [Redacted s38(1)(b)] of the democratically elected voice of Scotland’s young people, I am delighted to represent the views of young people on CERG.

Part of my role, and the roles of all 160 MSYPs, is to represent the views of young people aged 12-25 across the country. This paper reflects those views, as expressed to me and my colleagues this year from various sources.

Meaningful participation

We feel strongly that *all big decisions about young people should be made with young people.*

An MSYP on the CERG is a fantastic example of that, and sends a message that our voices matter- especially as the secretariat have worked with SYP to ensure the process is a meaningful one.

We feel strongly this approach needs to be taken in all key policy areas affecting young people- not least because the likely incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law will make this a legal requirement in due course.

We feel that there have been some occasions during the pandemic where young people have not been listened to, in a meaningful sense. One of the most obvious examples of this was the decision-making around the 2020 exams diet, where young people felt let down and not listened to. Working together, we are hoping that we can avoid those issues this year.

We consult with young people through a variety of different methods on an ongoing basis, using methods including focus groups. During a focus group for the SQA carried out before the decision on the 2020 Exam Diet was made, a young person said:

“Consider how this will impact that attainment gap, it will really disadvantage those from poorer areas and this will show in the results. Now that there are no exams [this year] this discrepancy will be heightened. This will disadvantage those who are already disadvantaged.”

Another young person said more recently this year:

‘All of the pupils who’ll be sitting Highers this year have never sat an SQA exam in their senior education (due to exam cancellation last year), so sending us all into the exam hall after COVID, after finding out our coursework assignments are scrapped so the exam counts for everything - we’re all going to end up freaking out because we’ve never sat an exam before and I don’t think they’ve thought about the impact it’s going to have on our mental health.’

Young people need to have a “seat at the table” on issues like this. So, while we welcome SQA’s decision to convene young people’s advisory panels this year, we also **feel that a young person should have a seat on the SQA’s National Qualifications 2021 Group, and on similar or equivalent bodies to this on other policy areas with particular relevance to young people.** SYP, or other young people’s organisations could support this.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] MSYP

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Scottish Youth Parliament

Enclosure 6 – CERG Agenda and Minutes, 26 November 2020

[Redacted s25(1) – <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-education-recovery-group-minutes-26-november-2020/>]

Enclosure 7 – CERG Agenda – Chair’s Brief

C-19 Education Recovery Group 1515 – 1615, Thursday 26 November 2020

NB: There is a lot on this agenda and time management will be important to ensure we get through it all. Indicative timings have been provided below.

[Redacted – not in scope]

3. Weekly feedback/ongoing monitoring [10 mins]

This agenda item is in two parts:

[Redacted – not in scope]

2) Member feedback

[Redacted – not in scope]

Member feedback

Paper 2b includes a summary of member feedback on key issues following correspondence from the secretariat this week.

The feedback paper provides an initial secretariat response to some of the key issues raised.

There are five main themes that have been highlighted by members this week which you may wish to raise (further detail on these points are set out in the paper):

- [Redacted – not in scope]
- Qualifications (focus of the next CERG meeting on Wednesday 2 December)
- [Redacted – not in scope]

4. The young person’s view [Paper 3] [15 mins]

Members received a paper by the Scottish Youth Parliament which provides an overview of this item. Invite [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to give a verbal update.

Part of [Redacted s38(1)(b)] role as [Redacted s38(1)(b)] of the Scottish Youth Parliament, and the roles of all 160 MSYPs, is to represent the views of young people aged 12-25 across the country. This paper reflects those views, as expressed to himself and colleagues from various sources.

[Redacted – not in scope]

6. AOB and plans for next meeting [< 5mins]

The next meeting of the group is scheduled for Wednesday 2 December from 10:00 – 11:00. You may wish to flag to Members that this meeting has changed from the usual Thursday morning slot due to parliamentary business.

The provisional agenda includes a single item for discussion on:

- National Qualifications 2021

[Redacted – not in scope]

Enclosure 8 – CERG paper

Feedback summary

[Redacted – not in scope]

National/strategic issues (Note: These are issues that members have suggested are national/strategic issues in respect of which CERG discussions/guidance updates may be required)

Note: The secretariat has added notes to provide relevant information on action/context where possible in the time available. Feedback and responses/actions will be retained in a log which we propose to bring to CERG for periodic updates.

[Redacted – not in scope]

SQA assessment and exams

- A request for information/views from HTs/officers in relation to the H and Adv H diet was sent to all LA.s on Friday (20th) with a response time of Monday (23rd). The timing, and turnaround requirements, seem unnecessarily tight.
- Concern that equity is falling by the wayside with some pupils having to self-isolate more frequently than others so, despite the best efforts of staff, they are falling behind in course work and ongoing assessment.
- A growing concern that any relaxation of restrictions for Christmas could have a significant knock on impact to assessment plans in the new year. Significant planning and expectation is building around assessment in the term post-Christmas and the concern is we could be constantly adapting and the validity of assessment will be variable. If numbers absent are significant this will have work load implications for staff
- So that we can plan for it we need to know what the SQA's alternative will be if we cannot hold the May exam diet. Young people want "normality around prelims and the May diet so any alternative would need to be flagged early to prepare them for the change.
- The pressure young people and staff feel under to secure any evidence is significant. Pupils describe it as "every piece has to be your best – just in case we have to lockdown again"
- Very basic procedural issues e.g. Invigilation

Note from secretariat: Update on qualifications on the agenda for 2 December.

[Redacted – not in scope]

[Redacted – not in scope]

Enclosure 9 – Email: RE: DFM Session with SLS - 18 November - Readout

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

Sent: 23 November 2020 13:41

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

Cc: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anon@gov.scot>; Morrison E (Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: DFM Session with SLS - 18 November - Readout

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Thank you for your email – DFM is content with the readout.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

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

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

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

Sent: 18 November 2020 17:15

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

Cc: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Drought A (Andrew) <Andrew.Drought@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; Anson S (Sam) <Sam.Anon@gov.scot>; Morrison E (Elizabeth) (Education Scotland) <Elizabeth.Morrison2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; CERG <CERG@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: DFM Session with SLS - 18 November - Readout

[Redacted s38(1)(b)],

Please find below for DFM's consideration the readout from the session with School Leaders Scotland (SLS) on 18 November. The session took the form of opening remarks from the DFM followed by questions from attendees posed on their behalf by SLS President, Graham Hutton. The questions and DFM's responses were as follows. For the benefit of colleagues, I've grouped the questions by theme:

National Qualifications

- The first question asked focused on the anxiety and stress being caused to staff in relation to changes to assessment procedures. There was an ask for reassurance that all is in order in relation to these changes. **DFM confirmed that the SQA are working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders, including SLS, as recommended by the Priestley report. He suggested that all assessment arrangements should now be with schools, or will be very shortly, as the deadline was 19 November. He confirmed that further information in relation to estimates will be coming out and that active discussions are ongoing with Directors of Education in relation to the Higher and Advanced Higher exam diets.**
- He was then asked about addressing the equity issues arising from the need for young people to self-isolate. **The DFM said that this issue was currently under consideration. He acknowledged that some areas and individuals are more disrupted than others and that some young people are now in their second period of self-isolation. He stressed the need for young people to have access to online learning materials when self-isolating but acknowledged that when it comes to the assessment that he needs to be sure that this has been available in all circumstances. He confirmed that intelligence is being gathered on this just now.**
- There was then a further question relating to assessment along the lines of, why delay the inevitable cancellation of Higher and Advanced Higher exams until February? **DFM replied pointing out that while there was a broad consensus around the approach to National 5 at the time of that announcement, the same was not the case for Higher and AH. He stressed that February is just the latest point at which the decision could be made and that he will not hold off making a decision until the last minute. He shared feedback from young people suggesting that they want the exam diet to go ahead. He stated that the evidence gathered will be reviewed in coming to a decision.**

[Redacted – not in scope]

Yours,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Scottish Government, Learning Directorate
Workforce, Infrastructure and Reform Division
2B North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ
07[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot | [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

