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Enclosure 1 – FAO John Swinney - Concerns about SQA

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

Sent: 11 May 2021 10:21

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: FAO John Swinney - Concerns about SQA

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am a teacher at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and am also a resident of [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. I have some concerns about the Scottish Qualifications Authority and wish to bring them to your attention. Please find attached.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)].

Enclosure 1.1 - Attachment

I have some concerns regarding the SQA's lack of communication and consistency. A Higher paper was released recently which could be used as a means of assessment and gathering evidence for teachers to submit grades. A marking scheme was also issued, however when teachers looked in detail at the guidelines, there were significant changes compared to last year's marking scheme which had not been made know before its release. This meant that teachers had taught to last year's standards but pupils would be assessed on the new standards.

However, the marking scheme was withdrawn last week and then re-released as a mistake had been spotted. This has meant that teachers who have already assessed the paper as a whole, or at least the section where the change has been made, have had to remark all the scripts to reflect those changes. As far as I am aware, the redacting and reissuing of the marking scheme was not made obvious, and teachers found out about it through an online Facebook group, SAGT – Scottish Association of Geography Teachers.

This is an example of the changes in marking scheme.

Previous 2018 marking scheme:

- Plucking (1 mark) occurs when ice freezes on to bedrock, pulling loose rocks away from the valley sides, making it steeper (1 mark).
- Abrasion (1 mark) when the angular rock embedded in the ice grinds the bedrock, making the valley deeper (1 mark).

New marking scheme:

- Plucking is when ice freezes on to bedrock (1 mark), pulling loose rocks away from the sides (1 mark).
- Abrasion, when the angular rocks embedded in the ice (1 mark) grinds the valley floor, making it deeper (1 mark).

In addition to the marking instructions being reissued, the maps for the National 5 and Advanced Higher exam have had to be reprinted. They were issued early in the year when the decision was made to cancel normal SQA exams. However, the quality of the maps was substandard (the colours were faint and not as clear as they should be), and teachers felt that this would affect pupils in the exam, so asked for the maps to be reissued.

The standards which teachers have, up until now, been teaching and assessing to were released when the Higher was most recently updated. The specimen paper and marking scheme were not released until September 2018, even though many schools started teaching when the timetable changed in the previous June. This meant that all teachers had to teach beginning of the Higher course without being able to give advice to pupils how to get a mark, as the information had not yet been released.

The changes to how marks are gained in the Higher course only affected the exam and not the assignment. This meant that pupils had to be taught how to gain a mark in the exam, but how to gain a mark in a different way for the assignment; in the

exam, any valid point gains a mark, but in the assignment only a developed point gains a mark. This is extremely confusing for pupils, and disadvantages C candidates, as the new marking scheme allows them to gain marks more easily in the paper, but does not in the assignment.

Finally, it seemed last year that the SQA did not have confidence in teachers. Grades which were entered last session due to the pandemic were downgraded based on an algorithm and not teachers' judgement and professionalism. It was also apparent that grades had not been downgraded equally across Scotland; pupils who were from less affluent areas had their grades downgraded significantly more compared to those in more affluent areas. It should not have taken pupils to protest in George Square for the SQA to listen and issue grades which teachers had entered. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] On the whole I feel that the SQA have let down teachers and pupils with their lack of communication and consistency. Frequently the goal posts have changed with regards to the structure of the exam and how marks are gained. These changes are always late in coming and sometimes not communicated at all. It has resulted in teachers losing confidence in the SQA and increased stress and workload as they have to muddle on until standards are clear. I fully appreciate that this is not a normal year and that we are all under immense pressure to deliver and assess the curriculum. However, last minute changes and substandard materials are simply not acceptable. Mistakes in the marking scheme should not have been made as all papers are supposed to go through rigorous checks before being issued. If the SQA wishes to change how marks are allocated, why can't they inform teachers in time for the new academic year i.e. August? Why do they make the changes at the end of a year once the course has been taught and assessed as they have this year?

The SAGT are an active group of passionate teachers who have many concerns about the SQA, and as they have done in the past, plan to bring up the most recent concerns. As teachers we want to deliver the highest standard of teaching to pupils so they can achieve their potential, but we cannot do this without confidence in the SQA.

Enclosure 2 – FW Exams Impact on Pupils

From: First Ministers Website Mailbox <FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot>
Sent: 19 May 2021 12:42
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Exams Impact on Pupils

From: [FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot]
Sent: Sunday, 16 May 2021 13:08:20 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: First Ministers Website Mailbox
Subject: Exams Impact on Pupils

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.com
Subject: Exams Impact on Pupils

Message Body:

Dear Nicola,

I am a [Redacted s38(1)(b)] constituent and am writing to express my great concern about what is being done to Scottish pupils in the name of the alternative model for SQA qualifications this year. I feel that, while the SQA and political leaders talk of taking a 'holistic' approach and putting young people's mental health at the heart of what we are doing, the reality is quite the opposite.

I teach in an independent school [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. In both sectors we see pupils, even those whom we might expect to cope well with exam stress in a normal year, struggling with anxiety and panic attacks and feeling quite overwhelmed. The demand for counselling services is far outstripping supply. My sense is that what pupils have found most stressful is the fact that they were told they would not have exams and that assessment would be teacher-led when in fact what they are going through right now is a diet of prelims followed immediately, with no time for remediation, by a diet of 'exams' in everything but name. This is profoundly unfair and is affecting state and private pupils alike. However, I would emphasise one significant difference: the fact that the winter lockdown has exacerbated the already enormous gap between pupils in state and independent schools - something your government has pledged to reverse. Pupils at my school have had all their lessons provided live online. This has not been the case in most schools, despite the best efforts of teachers in the state sector. Therefore, pupils at state schools now face exams they did not expect to sit, having had significantly less teacher input than their peers at private schools. Surely, the way out of this is to allow more flexibility, as was granted last year when pupils had had far more teacher input, and to rely on teachers' professional judgement in awarding grades to the class of 2021.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on the First Minister of Scotlands website (<https://firstminister.gov.scot>)

Enclosure 3 – FW Teacher's non contact time

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of**
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Sent: 24 May 2021 12:30
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Teacher's non contact time

Upload to MiCase as OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] to Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
T: 0131 24[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: cabsecES@gov.scot
The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House, Regent Road, EDINBURGH EH1
3DG

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From [Redacted s38(1)(b)] < [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@Parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of**
Somerville S (Shirley-Anne), MSP
Sent: 22 May 2021 17:10
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Teacher's non contact time

Good afternoon,

Please find below an email we have received at Shirley-Anne's which is for her ministerial office. We have received many of these and will continue to forward them on. Please advise if you need anything else from us when we send these emails on to you.

Best

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.com>
Sent: 20 May 2021 18:07
To: Somerville S (Shirley-Anne), MSP <Shirley-Anne.Somerville.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Teacher's non contact time

Thursday 20th May 2021

Dear Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills,

I am a Principal Teacher [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. The past year has been one of the most challenging in my teaching career. Currently myself and colleagues have considerable additional workload due to the Alternative Certification Model which has been put in place for this year. There is a lot of discontent in the profession at the moment regarding the workload and the £400 pro-rata payment as it doesn't compensate fairly for the additional workload we find ourselves doing this year. I emailed the Deputy First Minister in December to suggest it wasn't a blanket payment but instead based on level, course and number of pupils you are involved in assessing. This system has been used in the past for the SQA to pay teachers who used to have to internally assess coursework which went towards the pupil's grade. How can it be fair that a teacher who has responsibility for no certificate classes or a small number of pupils gets the same payment as someone [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who teaches Advanced Higher [Redacted s38(1)(b)], Higher [Redacted s38(1)(b)], Higher [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and National 5 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]? It doesn't take into consideration the marking demands of different subjects. Also it isn't fair that the payment is pro-rata as I know plenty part-time staff who have more responsibility for SQA classes than full-time teachers.

During the election campaign the SNP pledged to reduce teachers' contact time by an hour and a half per week. This manifesto promise was welcomed by myself and colleagues. An extra hour and a half of non-contact time would definitely be a help with the marking and moderation of SQA certificate courses at the present time. Schools are in the process of devising teachers' timetables for next year. Can you confirm if the reduction in contact time will apply from the 2021/22 session? This will have an impact on staffing as teachers will not be able to teach as many periods. Another SNP policy was to recruit additional teachers so this would obviously help and give teachers without stable employment a job. We will be dealing with the effects of Covid-19 for the foreseeable future and more time to prepare for classes and give feedback on work would certainly go some way towards closing the attainment gap.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

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

Enclosure 4 – Email: FW Vaccination

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: 07 June 2021 10:18
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Vaccination

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Office of the First Minister
Scottish Government
5TH floor/St Andrews House/Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG
Tel 0131-24[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Mobile [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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From: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 07 June 2021 07:54
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Fwd: Vaccination

Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Glasgow Southside
Constituency Office (for constituent queries only)
Govanhill Workspace
69 Dixon Road
Govanhill Glasgow
G42 8AT
0141 424 1174

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] <@yahoo.co.uk>
Sent: Sunday, June 6, 2021 9:57:14 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Vaccination

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

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I am writing to you to express my concern about [Redacted s38(1)(b)].

[Redacted information not in scope]

A bit about me: I am a depute Head Teacher [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and have worked throughout the pandemic, manning our school hub, working with pupils and their families and avoiding all socialising personally, in order to ensure that i have not missed my work at all. I am the school timetabler and SQA Coordinator, meaning that I have had to write several timetables to accommodate changing Scottish Government scenarios and the changing requirements of ensuring that pupils are able to attain their relevant SQA awards this year.

[Redacted information not in scope]

I do believe that I am doing my utmost, in the circumstances [Redacted information not in scope]

I would be interested to hear your views on this case.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 5 – Email

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

From: First Ministers Website Mailbox <FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot>

Sent: 03 June 2021 23:03

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Website@firstminister.gov.scot]

Sent: Thursday, 03 June 2021 23:02:31 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London

To: First Ministers Website Mailbox

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<@yahoo.co.uk>

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

Message Body:

Firstly I really hope you take the time to read this. [Redacted information not in scope] I am a secondary school teacher [Redacted s38(1)(b)], and my young people had been through enough disruption and they mean the world to me. The last term was one of the toughest terms I have ever taught, but we all kept going, I put myself at risk daily [Redacted s38(1)(b)], then we went into another lockdown and I worked the full way through. Coming back after the lockdown and we headed straight into SQA and exam diet stress, with a workload damn near impossible. In order to open schools, young people did not have to social distance but wear masks, (if they are with someone who has the virus mask or not after 15 minutes they need to isolate), [Redacted information not in scope] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 6 – Teachers one off Payment for NQ Marking

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@live.co.uk>

Sent: 25 May 2021 18:46

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: Teachers one off Payment for NQ Marking

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

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to enquire if the one-off payment of £400 for carrying out the marking and verifying of National Qualification courses this year will also be paid to teachers in the private sector?

I understand the payment will be made in the summer salary payment for state sector teachers but I cannot find any information as to how it will be paid to private sector teachers- if at all? Could you advise please if we are included and how the payment will be made to teachers like myself who are not paid by the government.

Many of my colleagues and indeed myself are markers for the SQA courses year after year. Many are team leaders for SQA course marking and this year we are very much using our experience and expertise to advise other schools, teachers and are involved in cross marking or verification for schools across Scotland in both the private and state sectors.

I do hope we are to be included in the one off payment scheme this year as we have also given our all this year for our pupils under stressful and changing times.

Any information on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]