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No.	Description	Date	Explanation of redactions	Clause
1	Email: FW: Imminent National Qualification 21 Group on disruption to learning	17 May 2021 12:29	Personal information	38(1)(b)
1.1	Attachment: Word Document		Personal information Free and frank exchange of views Formulation or development of government policy	38(1)(b) 30(b)(ii) 29(1)(a)
2	Word Document - Minutes of meeting between officials and First Minister to discuss awarding of National Qualifications in 2022 – 17 May 2021	17 May 2021	Personal information Free and frank exchange of views	38(1)(b) 30(b)(ii)

Enclosure 1: Email: FW: Imminent National Qualification 21 Group on disruption to learning

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** First Minister

Sent: 17 May 2021 12:29

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

Cc: DG Education & Justice <dgej@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Imminent National Qualification 21 Group on disruption to learning

Copying [Redacted s38(1)(b)], who will now also attend this afternoon's call on behalf of FMPDU given the potential for this topic to figure in the FMQ and FM Covid Briefing space in coming weeks, and the wider relevance to the work of FMPDU on attainment going forwards.

Thanks,

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

Office of the First Minister

5th Floor | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | 0131

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



Office of the First Minister of Scotland

FirstMinister.gov.scot

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

Sent: 13 May 2021 17:12

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Cc: DG Education & Justice <dgej@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@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>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Imminent National Qualification 21 Group on disruption to learning

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
To see the paper as requested.
Thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: 13 May 2021 10:35
To: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Cc: DG Education & Justice <dgej@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Imminent National Qualification 21 Group on disruption to learning

All,
Thanks for the ongoing work around this. I'll circulate call details for tomorrow afternoon at 1330, via Teams. Provisional attendee list stands at *DFM, Graeme Logan, Malcolm Pentland* and [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] – let me know if there are any issues with the briefing being with us by COP today, as agreed.

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

Office of the First Minister

5th Floor | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | 0131
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]



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From: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>
Sent: 12 May 2021 11:44
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Cc: DG Education & Justice <dgej@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Communications DFM & Education <CommunicationsDFM&Education@gov.scot [Redacted s38(1)(b)] McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Imminent National Qualification 21 Group on disruption to learning

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

Can you please pull together a short and succinct paper on the current key concerns/ issues in relation to the alternative certification model to support this discussion with FM and DFM. Please also include current mitigations/ actions to address these, and some bullet points on potential further steps that we could take (particularly on comms). Please share this in draft with me in the first instance. Thanks, Graeme.

Enclosure 1.1: Attachment: Word Document

BRIEFING FOR THE FIRST MINISTER

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS – DELIVERY OF THE 2021 DIET

14 MAY 2021

Purpose: Internal meeting requested by the First Minister to discuss the key concerns being raised in relation to the National Qualifications Assessment.

When: Friday 14 May, 13:30.

Who: The meeting will be attended by:

- Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
- Joe Griffin, DG Education and Justice
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning
- Malcolm Pentland, Deputy Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Gaelic

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Briefing: Briefing covers the following areas:

- Key facts
- Concerns/issues
- Current mitigations/actions
- Potential further steps

KEY FACTS

- The 2021 Exam Diet was cancelled and an alternative model based on **teacher judgement of demonstrated learner attainment** is being used.
- A National Qualifications (NQ) 2021 Group was established to co-produce the **Alternative Certification Model (ACM)** and oversee implementation. This, together with an associated working group, has met weekly since it was established in October 2020. Members of the Group are:
 - the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
 - Colleges Scotland
 - Education Scotland
 - the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
 - School Leaders Scotland (SLS)
 - the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)
 - Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
 - the Scottish Government
 - National Parent Forum of Scotland, and
 - the Scottish Youth Parliament.

- **Provisional results for National 5, Higher and Advanced Highers are to be submitted to SQA by 25 June 2021**, with results published on 10 August 2021. Provisional results are expected to be shared with learners prior to submission.
- **Results will not be moderated and no algorithm will be applied**, with SQA undertaking clerical checks for any administrative errors only.
- In advance of the submission of provisional results **SQA will undertake sampling of grading evidence across all centres** to provide assurance on understanding of standards and this will be supported by local quality assurance processes (deadline for evidence submission 16/17 May, with reports issued to centres by w/c 7 June at the latest).
- Education Scotland are undertaking a review of individual local authority quality assurance processes and are due to report in mid-May.
- SQA are currently **finalising the proposed appeals process** for 2021. [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Concerns/issues

- [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]The media articles/comments this week included:
 - **BBC article:** *"Covid in Scotland: Pupils at "breaking point" over school assessments"* (11 May)
 - **Prof Mark Priestley (author of a Rapid Review of National Qualifications Experience in 2020)** commented on Twitter about the BBC article: *"Another national qualifications debacle unfolding. The reliance on concentrated exam conditions testing would have been reduced, had removal of coursework not reduced the evidence base so much – as Marina Shapira and I pointed out in our review"*
 - **Labour press release:** *Michael Marra has written to John Swinney to demand clarity and equity in the appeals process for school assessments this year, as he warns that John Swinney and the SQA are "sleepwalking into a crisis"* (12 May)
 - **BBC article:** *"Scottish schools warned over "exam" question sharing on TikTok"* (11 May) (similar stories now running for GCSE and A-level papers)
 - **Scotsman** (12 May) incorporating quote from Head of Strategy for the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, Gina Wilson: *"...after the disruption to two educational years, we are now in a situation where young people are sitting numerous assessments with no idea about the appeals process should they need to use it. We are hearing about the huge additional stress and anxiety that this is causing. Young people*

should not be disadvantaged by disrupted access to their right to education during the pandemic."

- **Scotsman** (13 May): "SQA consistently marked down poorest students" (relating to local breakdown of 2020 results which have been published recently, [redacted s.30(b)(ii)])
- **SSTA comments** stating that there needs to be more reliance on general teacher judgement rather than assessment evidence based teacher judgement. [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]
- Reporting in the media has been accompanied by a significant volume of negative social media comment on the fairness of the ACM.
- There has been no public reporting to date, but we have also received a letter from CONNECT highlighting a similar range of concerns of learners and the need to address them.
- More broadly, there is a "live" petition on change.org calling for "SQA to re-consider final assessments" with just under 9,000 signatures.
- There is also a public petition that has been sent to the Scottish Parliament calling for a change to the ACM to instead "use teacher assessed grades to award national qualifications in 2021", which we take to mean teacher judgement without additional assessment or evidence.
- Concern has also been expressed as to the security of assessment materials with instances this week of material (not SQA material) being shared on TikTok. SQA have issued a communication to centres reminding them of security requirements, and they are continuing to monitor this issue. However, there is some evidence that this issue has impacted negatively on confidence in the model.
- [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Current mitigations/actions

[redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

rUK approach

[redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Potential further steps

- The National Qualifications 21 Group has produced, at the request of DFM, a joint statement reaffirming their support for the ACM which will likely be published on Friday 14 May (a draft copy is included at annex A). This attempts to state some key facts about the approach to address some current mis-reporting. It also includes the key message of reassurance to learners: your grades will be judged by your teachers, based on your assessment evidence. The SQA will not change the grades of individual learners during

the moderation process in May and June. Teachers and schools will reach final judgements, which will be subject to the appeals process in August.

[redacted s.29(1)(a)]

Curriculum, Qualifications and Gaelic

13 May 2021

National Qualifications 2021 – a message from organisations working across Scottish education – 14 May 2021

In recent days there have been concerns raised about arrangements for awarding National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses this year.

We know this is a challenging time. We want to reassure schools, teachers, parents and pupils that everyone in Scottish education is working hard to ensure learners achieve fair and credible grades, while ensuring steps are taken to ensure young people's wellbeing is protected through the process.

The National Qualifications 2021 Group, established last autumn, chaired by the Chief Examiner and including key representatives of young people, parents and teachers, has been meeting weekly to develop the Alternative Certification Model for this year following the cancellation of the SQA examinations diet.

The model has been designed to be based on teacher and lecturer judgement of pupil and student achievement, over a number of assessments, rather than an end-of-year exam.

Demonstrated attainment through these assessments is important in ensuring results are based on evidence of learning and skills. Due to the extended period of remote learning because of the pandemic, many learners are undertaking assessments over a shorter period of time in schools and colleges than originally planned.

It is important, however, to highlight the following facts about the model:

- the model has the flexibility around the timing and nature of assessment to ensure that, as far as possible, there is maximum opportunity for learners to undertake the required learning and be given the best chance to succeed in any course assessments.
- the timeline for schools, colleges and training providers to submit provisional results has been extended to 25 June, providing more time for consolidation of learning and teaching and assessment.
- most subjects have had their evidence requirements reduced, assessment components removed and/or content and context reduced.
- subject-specific guidance has been published on the appropriate assessment evidence for all subjects and optional assessment resources have been published to help inform assessment planning and evidence gathering.
- local and national support is in place to ensure provisional results are based on national standards.
- the SQA is working with schools, colleges and local authorities to ensure grades are fair. Feedback from the SQA will be important in informing the judgements that teachers and lecturers make but the SQA will not change individual learners' grades as a result of the moderation process in May and June.

- the support available on national learning platform e-Sgoil has been extended to learners who, for a variety of reasons, have experienced extreme disruption to their learning.
- a later certification contingency is being developed for those learners who have incomplete assessment evidence due to extreme disruption
- an appeals process for learners is being developed and will be published shortly.

In summary, our key message to learners is: your grades will be judged by your teachers and lecturers, based on your assessment evidence.

We all remain committed to continuing to work together to deliver for Scotland's learners in the circumstances faced this school year, ensuring that learners get the national qualification grades that they deserve.

Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Colleges Scotland, Education Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPF) School Leaders Scotland (SLS), the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the Scottish Government and the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP).

Enclosure 2 – Word document - Minutes of meeting between officials and First Minister to discuss awarding of National Qualifications in 2022 – 17 May 2021

Minutes of meeting between officials and First Minister to discuss awarding of National Qualifications in 2022 – 17 May 2021

Attendees

First Minister
Colin McAllister
Joe Griffin
Graeme Logan
Malcolm Pentland
[Redacted s38 (1)(b)]
[Redacted s38 (1)(b)]
Gayle Gorman
FM private office
DFM Private office

Minute

Officials met with the First Minister to discuss the awarding of National Qualifications this year.

The First Minister was interested in understanding aspects of the Alternative Certification Model (ACM), and how any issues would be identified and what options there may be to respond to any issues.

Officials discussed recent media stories and social media content.

[redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Officials discussed the actions being taken including the issuing of communications by the National Qualifications 2021 Group; planned communications outlining support available to learners to promote well-being; and planned discussions regarding HE and FE admissions for the 2021/22 academic year.

The planned appeals process was also discussed and the need for this to be agreed and published as soon as possible.