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Enclosure 01: Email, Enquiry from Nicola Sturgeon MSP

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 09 November 2020 13:32
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Enquiry from Nicola Sturgeon MSP

Good afternoon,

Please see the email below from one of Nicola Sturgeon MSP's constituents for response from Mr Swinney.

Many thanks,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Nicola Sturgeon | MSP for Glasgow Southside
Oifis Sgìre-Pàrlamaid Nicola Sturgeon | BPA airson Glaschu Taobh a Deas

Govanhill Workspace
69 Dixon Road
Govanhill
Glasgow
G42 8AT

0141 424 1174

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

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From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.co.uk>
Sent: Friday, November 6, 2020 5:36:40 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Letter from your constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

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

Friday 6 November 2020

Dear Nicola Sturgeon,

I am writing to you in your capacity as my constituency MSP.

I am a teacher of [Redacted s38(1)(b)] in a large, deprived school and a head of department in the same school. The published SQA advice for my subject area for 'Alternative Certification' removes only around 15% of the final mark, while published advice for 'Accepted Evidence' for this alternative certification requires an (almost full) exam paper for each pupil, marked and moderated in a unpaid manner from the classroom teacher.

Could the following be raised, addressed and answered from the Deputy First Minister's office in his capacity as Education Minister:

- 1) If the SQA are not capable of running the National 5 exams this year, why does the alternative certification outline de facto internal exams during a pandemic?
- 2) Why are class tests, homework, etc presented as "less desirable" evidence than exam-hall/prelim style papers during a pandemic when exam-hall style papers are harder to negotiate?
- 3) Will teachers be paid or re-numerated for doing the SQA's job this year - setting exam papers, invigilating, marking, moderating and awarding grades? Everything but the printing of the certificates!
- 4) What assurances are being offered that the basically "full" exam that SQA want teachers to undertake aren't negatively impacting workload?
- 5) What assurances are being offered that the moderation of the above (as SQA have outlined is preferred) will be re-numerated to teachers and/or won't impact teacher workload?
- 6) What is the threshold for school closure/pupil absence at which the above certification model is no longer valid and what are the alternatives in that circumstance?
- 7) The SQA have released brief outlines of preferred evidence, but no mention has been made of grade criteria (i.e. this is whatan A is, etc) - when will these be released?
- 8) What options are open to schools/authorities when staffing is not possible due to a lack of candidates (i.e. the Recovery jobs being offered are short contracts of less than six months, etc) and undesirable?

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 02: Email, Letter from Ivan McKee MSP

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

Sent: 18 November 2020 13:29

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

Subject: Letter from Ivan McKee MSP

Dear Deputy First Minister's office
please find attached a letter from Ivan McKee MSP.
Many thanks
Best wishes

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Office of Ivan McKee MSP

Àrd-Oifigear Pàrlamaide, Oifis Ivan McKee BPA

Room [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | The Scottish Parliament | Edinburgh | EH99 1SP

Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | www.Ivanmckee.scot

Enclosure 02.1: PDF attachment

Dear John

Student issues

A constituent, a student in a local secondary school, has written to me to outline his concerns regarding the cancellation of the National 5 exams in 2021. I have reassured him that the decision was not taken lightly and emerged as a recommendation from the Priestly Review and was subsequently further consulted on before being finally confirmed. It would be helpful to me to be able to explain to my constituent a bit more about that consultation process – specifically regarding the involvement of learners. I note the Education Recovery Group has a member of the Youth Parliament on it, also that the Scottish Learner Panel is to be assigned a role in future in terms of advising the Education Recovery Group. It would be very helpful to have an explanation about how these bodies are expected to interrelate, going forward. It would also be helpful to know if there are routes for “ordinary students” to feed into the thinking.

Finally, my constituent explained he was confused about how his coursework would be organised in the coming months. I have explained that there is an intention to issue clear and detailed guidance and support to schools so that everyone involved, not least the students, know the process and what is expected of them. Could you provide an indication of what that might contain and when it can be expected to be issued?

I look forward to hearing from you
Best wishes

Enclosure 03: Email, SQA higher and advanced higher exams 2021 (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Daniel Johnson MSP <daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 30 November 2020 12:15
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: SQA higher and advanced higher exams 2021 (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding 2021's SQA exams. I would be grateful if the Scottish Government could respond to the concerns in the email below and provide information regarding assurances that exams will be marked with balance and fairness, as well as on clarity around what mechanisms would be put in place to allow students the chance to criticise and scrutinise the process should they wish to. I would also be grateful for clarity on the 2021 diet and information as to how these exams will go ahead.

Kind regards,
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP
0131 541 2145
danieljohnson.org.uk
Constituency Office
134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

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

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 29 November 2020 18:18
To: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP
Subject: SQA higher and advanced higher exams 2021

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

Dear Mr Johnson,

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)], I am a sixth year [Redacted s38(1)(b)] student.

Five months ago I awoke to a damning set of exam results. To say my heart jumped from my body and to say I felt incapable of anything remotely educational would be an understatement to how I truly felt. I have never ever ever felt more crushed in my life.

I am not stupid. I study as hard as I possibly can, daily as well as swimming to a competitive level, in my national 5s in 2019 I achieved two As, two Bs, a D and I passed NPA engineering skills with flying colours. When it came round to my higher's I felt confident, confident that I would pass and get into university, especially passing national 5 mathematics- a subject I have always had a lot of difficulty with. By the time march came I agreed with Swinney's decision to cancel exams, it was the right thing to do to protect my own health, my schools health and everyone else's health; the most important

thing I had was trust that he could deliver a fair awarding system for all the work I had put in throughout the year. I was wrong, very very wrong. I didn't understand how one could possibly think it would be a good idea to use an algorithm to decipher my future; not even mentioning the algorithm was classist.

This resulted in my mental health declining, I felt incapable, helpless and as if the five years of going to school daily was useless. I was stressed beyond anything, I couldn't sleep with the crushing thought that I might not go to university. Although Swinney's news of retracting exam results and teacher estimates being used was welcomed, it still couldn't rid my anger.

The exam fiasco resulted in me having to take up three advanced highers, as well as two highers in my final year of school, as im sure you can understand this is know easy task. I am already stressed with the upcoming prelim exams, to then read an article stating that higher and advanced higher exams could be cancelled after all killed me.

How can someone say that exams would go ahead and then 4 months say he might change that. Me and my friends are all working towards a common gaol of exams going ahead; our motivation to work hard will go if exams are cancelled.

This is what I ask I guess...

1. An absolute assurance that you will criticise and lobby the government against cancelling SQA higher and advanced higher exams.
2. A promise that Scottish students will feel supported by someone, feel like someone cares for our future and our mental health.
3. If highers and advanced highers do get cancelled, awarding will be fair and balanced and each student in Scotland will have a chance to criticise and scrutinise the process as suitable.

Enough is enough, the SNP has failed too many times in this pandemic, they are diverting attention away from immediate issues such as exams for their weird obsession with independence.

I will go to university, I will achieve my dreams, I will do it to show someone who though me as incapable that I am capable.

Just thought I'd also say I'm a massive fan of everything you do for the beautiful side of Edinburgh we live in.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 04: Email, SQA Highers timetable - positively cruel

From: Richard Lochhead MSP <richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 01 December 2020 12:03
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: SQA Highers timetable - positively cruel

AO– [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear John,

I have been contacted by my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding her concerns about the proposed SQA timetable for the exams scheduled for May. I understand that you've also received this email but I a copy of her original correspondence is below for your convenience.

I promised my constituent that I would raise her concerns directly with you and would welcome your feedback on the points she's raised. Could you also provide me with an update on any discussions you've had with the SQA with regards to plans for the exams? I'd welcome assurances that schools will be provided with the resources they need to support young people through assessments and exams over the next six months, given the challenges they have faced this year.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Richard.

Richard Lochhead MSP for Moray

Moray Constituency Office | 80 South Street | Elgin | Moray | IV30 1JG
t: 01343 545077 | e: richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot
Twitter: @RichardLochhead
[facebook.com/RichardLochheadMSP](https://www.facebook.com/RichardLochheadMSP)

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

Sent: 19 November 2020 08:09

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP, scottish.ministers@gov.scot, Lochhead R (Richard), MSP

Subject: SQA Highers timetable - positively cruel

Dear Nicola, John and Richard,

As you may be aware, the timetable for the SQA exams this year is spread over 3 weeks instead of 5.

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/exam-timetable-2021.pdf - exams run from Monday 10th May - Friday 4th June

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] exams ran from Thursday 25th April - Friday 31st May

This means that the exams are much closer together which is causing a great deal of anxiety amongst students. Students who continue to suffer terrible mental health as a result of lockdown and who are already stressed enough about taking Highers because they didn't gain experience of sitting their National 5's. I suggest that the exam timetable for 2021 is positively cruel.

For example, my daughter is to take the following exams;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

If she had taken these exams in 2019 her timetable would have looked like this;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

As a [Redacted s38(1)(b)] I cannot emphasise enough how awful the effect of lockdown has been on the mental health of the young people we teach and care for which is why I am delighted that you plan to keep the schools open. So many of our pupils are finding things really, really tough. Please can you have a word with the SQA and ask them to spread the exams out.

Many thanks,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

(PS, I would normally be at school by now but this morning I am staying at home to support my daughter with her CAMHS appointment. My daughter who achieved straight A's in her National 5's, is working on her gold D of E, loves scouting and playing cricket but is now crippled with anxiety as a result of lockdown. And this is such a common and absolutely heart-breaking story. Quite how we are going to get through the exams I don't know.)

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 05: Email, Cancellation of Examinations

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@Parliament.scot>
Sent: 10 December 2020 11:17
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Cancellation of Examinations

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

E-Mail on Behalf of Neil Findlay MSP

Please find attached letter for the attention of John Swinney

Best wishes

Neil Findlay MSP

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 05.1 PDF attachment

10/12/2020

Dear Deputy, First Minister

I have been contacted by one of my constituents [Redacted s38(1)(b)] regarding your announcement to cancel examinations.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is a concerned teacher and wishes to share the following concerns:

- My primary concern is over his claim that the cancellation of examinations increases fairness in the awarding of qualifications in the session 2020/2021. It is expected that there will be varying levels of self-isolation in the interest of public health in response to covid-19, however, cancellation of examinations is not a simple fix to this issue of equity. For a Scottish qualification to be awarded it is expected that learners reach certain examination standards, as such teacher estimates should be based on attainment. However, in questioning the Cabinet Secretary said that teacher estimates would be based on “assessment of student potential”. Does this mean that the Cabinet Secretary is expecting that students will be awarded qualifications in this session without completing the entirety of courses? Is there a cut off where a student’s lack of participation in the course should preclude them from achieving an award?
- In response to students missing sections of courses I believe that there was an opportunity in the format of examinations to provide “get outs” for small sections of qualifications which may have been missed by students. This could easily have been achieved by following a similar model of examination to those of universities. In my curriculum area of Chemistry throughout my undergraduate qualification I was faced with a choice of questions at various points in papers and a model like this would have provided opportunities for those who have missed out on sections of courses to still attain across a course and achieve a qualification.
- My second main concern is related to this. By the cancellation of examinations, we are abdicating our responsibility to Scotland’s young people on two counts. Firstly, they are not being prepared through the process of examination to develop their methodology of study and revision, which would usually be gained prior to further study. Secondly, we are potentially telling young people that they have achieved qualifications and are ready to move on to more complex study when they as yet have not gained required knowledge and skills. Again, in my curriculum area, as students head into university laboratories they run the risk of serious danger, let alone considering the potential for unnecessarily increasing mental health problems in Scotland’s young people as they discover that they are not ready for the rigour of tertiary education.
- Finally, my concern is that the choices made by the Cabinet Secretary are seeking to lay blame for non-attainment of qualifications, or a widening of the poverty related attainment gap, at the feet of teaching staff across the country. Is there a mechanism in place whereby if a student has missed enough of a course, they will be encouraged to continue studies in the following session, rather than

simply being estimated a grade based on a small segment of a much larger course? (As the reason given for the cancellation of examinations was due to students missing sections of the course). This should not be regarded as a failure, either of education or for Scotland's young people, but a reality in the face of a challenging 18 months.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] would be grateful for a response to his concerns listed above.

I look forward to hearing from you

Enclosure 06: Email, School exam diet and year assessment (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Roseanna Cunningham MSP <Roseanna.cunningham.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 21 December 2020 11:31
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: School exam diet and year assessment (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Good morning,

Ms Cunningham has been copied in on the message to Mr Swinney from her constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] below. Ms Cunningham would be grateful to receive a copy of Mr Swinney's response to [Redacted s38(1)(b)] in due course.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Many thanks in advance,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Roseanna Cunningham MSP

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 9 December 2020 11:55
To: "Cunningham R (Roseanna), MSP"
Subject: School exam diet and year assessment

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Dear First minister, John Swinney and
Roseanna Cunningham.

I am writing to you today to ask you for a fair and balanced school SQA assessments to be gathered and submitted to the local authority and SQA at the end of the year course and that no evidence should be gathered before the Xmas holidays. The reason I ask this of you is that my son has been off school ill a couple times, one time went for Covid test but was negative. His school app was not working for four weeks. Despite two emails and a call to the school this was not fixed promptly this caused him anxiety and stress after being off ill. I would like to hope it wasn't intentional but the teacher couldn't get it on his phone either and they went together to see the principle teacher in charge of the app who fixed it until it suddenly stopped working again when he phoned the office the office staff could not help him get on in the afternoon either so caused further delay until being issued a new code.

My issue is that without the app my son is put to an educational disadvantage. He and I are working hard to catch up on homework but we are not there yet. It would be unfair for any assessment or prelim gathered before the winter break as evidence to be submitted would be unfair on us and perhaps others with illness or technology difficulties. My son works from a phone, he does not own a laptop although we are hoping to invest in one for his Xmas present to help with this. I am still working on the case of my older S6 son where he was not given fair and accurate grades by the school. They obviously hadn't submitted his experiment and coursework handed in before the schools finished up for lockdown. He had no knowledge of poor assessment grades and neither did I. Quite frankly year on year he has depended on his own self study for grades his teachers have never favoured him or helped him he says more so against him with awkward and unbalanced prelims results not always on what had been delivered that term and was always unpredictable.

I'm afraid the teachers judgements are not reliable enough for making up grades and why I suggest that you should scrap Assessments and tests but only produce prelim exam results as this is proves retained knowledge of what's been taught instead of this week system of gathered information , I need it that no evidence is gathered before the break and that would be fair to all pupils. This way giving pupils catch up and revision time. That's all I request . The teachers will cherry pick who to pass and pass well anyway on parent pleasing and friendships. My son had two teachers for four years who hates him and will do anything to disadvantage him how can that be a good reflection on his ability!

I am trying my best to complain to school and council but it appears to be ignored especially by council blocking communication! Seems rather odd to me.

I had looked in law society for a lawyer but I didn't get a law firm who deal in education . Any recommendations would be appreciated .

Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 07: Email, SQA Exams

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

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

Sent: 21 December 2020 16:12

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

Subject: FW: SQA Exams

Dear Deputy First Minister,

Please find below correspondence Alison received from a constituent. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] requested that we forward this to you for your response and would be most grateful if you could address her concerns.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)],

Alison Johnstone MSP

Telephone: 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

Address:

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

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

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

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

Sent: 16 December 2020 12:06

To: Johnstone A (Alison), MSP <Alison.Johnstone.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: SQA Exams

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

Dear Ms Johnstone

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I am an s6 pupil at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I have a few concerns regarding the new assessment criteria for the SQA exams.

Assessment 3 which will be an SQA paper (I am presuming the unused 2020 paper) will be used as part of our predicted grade. How will this be fair when it is basically an exam? It will be in a class environment and also going to be at least a month early with no study leave, can you say this is even fair?

There are many schools in west lothian and if these assessments are not taken on the same date and time in all schools there will be an advantage in schools who take the test at a later date. I would like

to know how the first minister, SQA or education board think this is an acceptable, equal and fair way of assessing. Majority of us are trying to get into universities however we will be greatly disadvantaged considering the exam basically is still happening but just in completely unfair circumstances.

Solutions to this would be that we at least get a few days prior to each assessment to have study leave and everyone who is sitting this assessment will do so on the same date. I would like this to be brought up at first minister questions if possible.

Kind Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] and majority of the S5/6 pupils

Enclosure 08: Email, Letter from Ivan McKee MSP

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

Sent: 22 December 2020 14:43

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

Subject: Letter from Ivan McKee MSP

Dear Cabinet Secretary's office

Please find attached a letter from Ivan McKee MSP.

Many thanks

Best wishes

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], **Office of Ivan McKee MSP**

Àrd-Oifigear Pàrlamaide, Oifis Ivan McKee BPA

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | The Scottish Parliament | Edinburgh | EH99 1SP

Tel: 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | www.Ivanmckee.scot

Enclosure 08.1: PDF attachment

Dear John

Exam cancellation – assessment timetable

Following the cancellation of all school exams, a constituent has asked me to ask you to reconsider the timetable for alternative assessments and deadlines. My constituent considers that the early decision to cancel exams is sensible and allows for proper planning of alternate assessments. She points out that, under ordinary circumstances, the regular course teaching would end at or around the end of March, but work by pupils taking exams would not have ended, and they would continue revision throughout the exam period, so ending schooling in late May. And their final assessment would be effectively the exam itself.

On the revised timetable, all assessment and coursework ends in late March. My constituent notes that this gives pupils, who have already experienced reduced course time, between four and eight weeks fewer to prepare and improve and continue to learn.

In light of this, my constituent asks if the Government would be prepared to consider allowing additional time for course learning and preparation before requiring final assessments from teachers. If this is not going to be possible, it would be helpful to know the reasons why.

Enclosure 09: Email, Higher Exams 2021

From: Private - Rennie W (Willie), MSP <Willie.Rennie2@parliament.scot>
Sent: 22 December 2020 15:06
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Higher Exams 2021

Dear John

Re: Higher Exams 2021, Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I have been contacted by one of my constituents highlighting their concerns regarding the decision to cancel the 2021 Higher examinations.

I have enclosed a copy of the email I received from my constituent as they have raised several detailed points:

To devise in place of the cancelled Highers an internal system of assessment which is fair to all candidates, is likely however to prove extremely difficult, particularly in such a short time scale. The Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA), to whom the task will presumably fall, is unfortunately not held in high esteem by many teachers and appears complacent and indifferent to their well-founded concerns. The internal tests demanded by the SQA, for instance in Modern Languages, are arid, time-consuming for both pupils and teachers, inefficient as a diagnostic assessment tool for evaluating student progress, a demoralising and stressful experience for the disadvantaged pupil, and ultimately a disincentive to persevere with what ought to be an intriguing and fascinating subject.

I fear that an atrocious burden already placed on teachers will become heavier. Now in the case of Higher, as already with the National exams, teachers see themselves as being “asked to do the work of the SQA”. Teachers tell me of working sixty hours a week, much of which has to be devoted to creating and marking internal assessments, and for class-coverage for colleagues on Covid-related absence. I suggest that this situation is unsustainable.

It is certain that over the last forty years Scottish education has laid enormous weight on assessment. This was a necessary corrective for previous inattention to the needs of disadvantaged pupils. It can be argued that this well-meaning approach led to an over-emphasis on assessments, and on internal assessments in particular, and that the latter were in practice burdensome, uninspired and unimaginative, and crowded out opportunities for more interesting and rewarding learning experiences. The immediate problem, though, is that in Scotland we have an examining body, the SQA, which to carry out its functions, is – increasingly now by the force of circumstances – dependent on a vast amount of work by classroom teachers. Yet this body has no responsibility for the workload and conditions of employment of the teachers on whom it relies. And it has never, so far as I know, instigated a formal approach to teachers in order to seek their guidance and expertise on

appropriate and profitable assessment models, and of course to eliminate totally unreasonable demands on their health, time and energy. This top-down ethos is quite misplaced.

I would be very grateful if you could provide a response to the concerns highlighted by my constituent.

Yours sincerely

Willie Rennie

Liberal Democrat Member of the Scottish Parliament for North East Fife

Enclosure 10: Email, Fergus Ewing MSP - SQA and Secondary schools

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Sent: 07 January 2021 15:07
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: SQA and Secondary schools

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

FOR MR PLEASE

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Ewing F (Fergus), MSP
Sent: 07 January 2021 15:05
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: SQA and Secondary schools

John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Dear John,

Please find below email from my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who is a Physics Teacher. He has raised valid concerns and questions, issues which I am sure you are already considering if not already taken decisions on. I would be most grateful if you can provide a reply which I can relay to him.

Many thanks as always.

Yours sincerely,

Fergus Ewing MSP
Inverness and Nairn

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]**On Behalf Of** Ewing F (Fergus), MSP
Sent: 07 January 2021 15:02
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Subject: RE: SQA and Secondary schools

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

Thank you very much for your email. I am responding as your constituency MSP and I will take up the issues you have raised with John Swinney as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and revert back to you as soon as I have the information.

Thank you for all you do.

Best regards,

Fergus Ewing MSP Inverness and Nairn

The Office of Fergus Ewing MSP will process data only to the extent necessary in order to perform the duties of an MSP. Any personal information you share with Fergus Ewing MSP or his office will be kept confidential and will be stored securely. This information will only be shared when it is needed to pursue your case or enquiry with other organisations.

The Office of Fergus Ewing MSP processes data under the lawful basis of "Public Task". In instances where this lawful basis is not sufficient and explicit consent is required, a member of the office will contact you to establish your consent before taking further action. The Office of Fergus Ewing MSP is committed to ensuring that any information collected and used is appropriate for the purpose, and does not constitute an invasion of your privacy. We will explain what actions we are taking that involve your information and will keep you updated throughout the progress of any case.

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You may request details about the information we hold about you and you may ask us to stop using your information at any time. For further information on this, please see our [Privacy Statement](#).

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

Date: 7 January 2021 at 13:31:45 GMT

To: "Davidson R (Ruth), MSP"

<Ruth.Davidson.msp@parliament.scot>, "Rennie W (Willie), MSP"
<Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot>, "Lochhead R (Richard), MSP"
<Richard.Lochhead.msp@parliament.scot>, "Grant R (Rhoda), MSP"
<Rhoda.Grant.msp@parliament.scot>, "Leonard R (Richard), MSP"
<Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot>, "McArthur L (Liam), MSP"
<Liam.McArthur.msp@parliament.scot>, "Stewart D (David), MSP"
<David.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot>, "Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP"
<Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>, "Swinney J (John), MSP"
<John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>, "Wishart B (Beatrice), MSP"
<Beatrice.Wishart.MSP@parliament.scot>, "Cameron D (Donald),
MSP" <Donald.Cameron.msp@parliament.scot>, "Ewing F (Fergus),
MSP" <Fergus.Ewing.msp@parliament.scot>, "Finnie J (John), MSP"
<John.Finnie.msp@parliament.scot>, "Forbes K (Kate), MSP"
<Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot>, "Halcro Johnston J (Jamie),
MSP" <Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot>, "Mountain E
(Edward), MSP" <Edward.Mountain.msp@parliament.scot>, First
Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SQA and Secondary schools

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.

Re my earlier e-mail to you on Jan 5th,

My home postcode is [Redacted s38(1)(b)] ([Redacted s38(1)(b)]) and
My work postcode in [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (Moray)

Thankyou,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

Sent: 05 January 2021 18:49

To: Ruth Davidson (ruth.davidson.msp@parliament.scot)

<ruth.davidson.msp@parliament.scot>; Willie Rennie

(Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot)

<Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Richard.Lochhead.msp@scottish.parliament.uk'

<Richard.Lochhead.msp@scottish.parliament.uk>;

'Rhoda.Grant.msp@parliament.scot'

<Rhoda.Grant.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot'

<Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Liam.McArthur.msp@parliament.scot'

<Liam.McArthur.msp@parliament.scot>;

'David.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot'

<David.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot'

<Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>;

'John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot'

<John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Beatrice.Wishart.msp@parliament.scot'

<Beatrice.Wishart.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Donald.Cameron.msp@parliament.scot'

<Donald.Cameron.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Fergus.Ewing.msp@parliament.scot'

<Fergus.Ewing.msp@parliament.scot>;

'John.Finnie.msp@parliament.scot'

<John.Finnie.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot'

<Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot'

<Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot>;

'Edward.Mountain.msp@parliament.scot'

<Edward.Mountain.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: SQA and Secondary schools

Dear Madams / Sirs,

I am contacting you with respect to the SQA deadlines for exam estimates for the present academic session.

Whilst I completely understand the need for an extended school closure at present, I am concerned about the lack of time available for staff to accumulate sufficient evidence for which to make an estimate of a student's grade and of greater importance, the possible detrimental effect on the wellbeing of our students.

At present we effectively need to have this done by the end of March to allow these to be uploaded mid-April for National 5. The dates for Higher and Advanced Higher have not yet been communicated to us. It will be school staff that have to collect and moderate evidence more thoroughly that would normally take place in exam diet (5 weeks in May/June) so therefore school staff should be given more time to provide that estimate more in line with what was required in May 2020. In addition we will have students in class when study leave would normally have occurred. It is fine promising the money that markers would have been paid in lieu of this but money can't buy back time.

Many of are concerned that our students will have 2 months in which they'll be hit with up to 4 assessments for each subject (on average 5 to six), when normally they'd have a prelim diet and the final exam. To be sure, end of topic tests would normally occur and there would be an exit prelim in March BUT there would be less pressure on these. Prelims often give students a chance to trip up and get their act together. We recognise the need to gather (and moderate) evidence but it is the compressed time scale we worry about, with each assessment "counting" and putting more pressure on students when they have a lot to deal with already. We feel that we (students and staff) may be in a worse place than we were last year.

At present I believe exam results will be issued on or around August 6th. Do they really need to be issued then other than it is "aye done" then ? Perhaps the results can be issued later. Remember we were told H/AH exam were put back by two weeks, to allow students extra learning time for that missed in May/June, now they have been cancelled we still do not know when evidence needs to be presented for them.

To be sure we are in challenging times and staff will do all they can to support students learn and achieve they qualifications they have worked for but we do feel more flexibility in timescales in required. One final point. Should Lockdown extend to March it would be reassuring to know that plans and timelines for that are being drafted.

Yours in education,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]PT Physics.

Enclosure 11: Email, Cancellation of Higher Exams ([Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Tom Arthur MSP <tom.arthur.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 12 January 2021 16:09

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

Subject: Cancellation of Higher Exams ([Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Good afternoon,

Please find attached correspondence from Tom Arthur MSP.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Tom Arthur MSP
Renfrewshire South

49 High Street, Johnstone, PA5 8AJ
Tel: 01505 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

To sign up for Tom's regular newsletter, please click this link:
<http://eepurl.com/czrwpz>

Details of how the office of Tom Arthur will use your information is available on his website at <http://www.tomarthur.scot/privacy-notice/>

Enclosure 11.1: PDF attachment

Dear John,

Re: Cancellation of Higher Exams

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)].

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] states that her son has worked extremely hard on his dissertation and is concerned that his hard work will have been in vain. Therefore, my constituent would like to ask if this important piece of work will be an allowable piece of evidence in assigning his grade.

Thank you for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 12: Email, Iain Gray MSP - Prelims Letter (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Iain Gray MSP <Iain.gray.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 19 February 2021 12:57
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Prelims Letter (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

AO- [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find a letter from Iain Gray MSP to the Education Secretary attached for attention.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 12.1: PDF attachment

Dear Mr Swinney

2021 Preliminary Exams

I am writing to highlight the emerging situation in Scotland's schools in relation to the undertaking of preliminary exams as part of the alternative assessment arrangements for pupils studying towards qualifications in this current academic year.

As you know the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has told schools "there is no necessity to undertake prelims", and you also confirmed that it is "up to schools to make that particular judgment".

Regrettably, if not predictably, this has created an unfair and inequitable postcode lottery for pupils across Scotland.

The lack of national guidance from the SQA and the Scottish Government is leading to hugely varying assessment methods between schools and in some areas I understand there are cases where schools are embarking on a second round of prelims while others are taken the decision to hold none at all.

With the cancellation of the exam diet this year, the necessity of prelims as mock exams has become less necessary and as the EIS have set out, a move away from the exam diet this year towards continual assessment may be better facilitated by a consistent approach in favour of not undertaking prelims.

The lack of national guidance on prelims has caused yet more uncertainty and anxiety for thousands of pupils, teachers and parents who fear that they may be disadvantaged by their schools decisions to either proceed with prelims (cutting into teaching time) or to not proceed (leading to less evidence for teacher judgement).

I therefore believe that further national guidance from the Education Secretary would be welcome to provide greater consistency and fairness for pupils across the country and additional assurances and evidence that the inconsistent approach that has been allowed to develop will not negatively impact on students attainment this academic year.

I hope to hear back from you soon and that pupils across Scotland will have greater clarity on the impact of prelims this year on their educational achievement.

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 13: Email, Richard Lochhead MSP - Students and their future

Richard Lochhead MSP,
richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot
From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 26 February 2021 16:28
To: Lochhead R (Richard), MSP
Subject: Students and their future

Hello there,

I wanted to get in contact to ask what is going on with schooling? I'm in S6 at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and having had my final results last year suffer due to how we were graded, I cannot fathom why this year it is being made worse for students?

Let me explain how I see this from a students perspective.

Last year by the time the schools were shut down in March I had completed all coursework for all of my higher classes and as a result of the exam cancellation we had to gather evidence to support our grades with teachers estimates based on our progress. We were allowed to use homework pieces, class/unit tests, prelims and exit prelims which we were given to complete at home under timed submission deadlines. This worked except some teachers perceived the guidelines differently so if you had one really bad grade earlier in the year it could cap your potential end grade.

As mentioned before I had completed all coursework for my classes as had almost the entire school meaning that realistically last year we faced little to no disruption to our learning. This year we lost a month at the start of the academic year, my school was fortunate to only have one COVID shut down, and we have not returned to school since December and for most of us we won't be back until after the Easter holidays. This means a few things for us pupils, we haven't been able to do any prelims or assessments, we are completely out of the school cycle and mentality, many are falling behind on work and by the time we are back after easter we will have completed most of our courses and won't have been in school this year for an elapsed time of around five months. So clearly we will have faced much more disruption to our education than last year which is why I cannot understand why we are not allowed to use homework pieces, unit tests and teacher estimates this year.

We were told we were not going to have an exam this year but that is a complete and total lie because we have been told that when we return to school we will do "assessments" for each of our courses as it is the only evidence the SQA will accept.

This made sense back in December for returning to school in January as we could have prelims and exit prelims with continual assessment but now it is just a whole course exam set by the school for which not a single pupil I have spoken to feels prepared to take given the circumstances.

Regardless of how well any student knows their subjects, they will not perform to as high a standard this year as in previous years purely due to their personal situation.

Student mental health is at an all time low yet currently the plan is to force them through these exams which many are not mentally equipped to handle currently. The purpose of exams is that they are fair and equal giving everyone the same chance after the same year of teaching as everyone else but that is not true of this year as each school will have different "assessment" papers, each student has a different home life where they may be a carer for a family member or have no private space in their home to study in peace or be taken from their studies by parents who do not care for their schooling and maybe students are suffering with their own mental health in the face of this new world and their personal issues.

In addition to all of this, teaching is unequal across schools too as some schools have online classes everyday and others have none, personally I get a YouTube video on how to fill my notes with some questions to do and later in the week there will be a tutorial to ask questions if you don't understand something. This is the most important year of all for thousands of students around the country yet they are being disadvantaged further and further for every second that passes that nothing is done to help them or to change how they will be assessed. The answer is not to give more homework or give more teaching hours to have online classes but to have even the smallest amount of compassion for the students and a little understanding of the stress they are personally being put under not only by the school but also family and accommodate for that stress to truly help them. Many of us are stepping off into the world at the end of this year and many of us will not be able to go to our planned destinations for many reasons such as lockdown, suffered grades, suffering mental health and essentials such as driving licences which there are thousands of people trying to get with no tests going ahead or available. I need my driving licence to go to the police or RAF which are my planned destinations however I also need a licence if I have to get a part time job in the mean time because I live several miles from the nearest towns and the nearest bus stop is over 4 miles away. I cannot go to work without a licence, I can drive but can't get a test. Why is it that teachers who teach us a course for assessment and qualifications are allowed to decide whether we pass or fail as a professional but driving instructors in a similar position cannot make the same judgement temporarily about their students to allow us to start our lives?

Personally I think having the driving instructor decide if we are allowed to have a licence or not in their expert opinion would be better as they know if we can drive or not and can make sure we are capable of driving safely and competently and if you give them a checklist can check off more driving manoeuvres and techniques in a few lessons than you would get to cover in a forty minute test. This ensures that arguably these would be more competent drivers than those who do a test. I would further back up this point by saying that a driving instructor would have no reason to pass a student if they were not truly capable because once a student passes the instructor loses part of their income and why, especially in a time of economic hardship, would an instructor cut off the hand that feeds them without good reason?

I've never written to any representative before but I feel that my fellow students and I have been pushed far too far during this Pandemic and someone needs to do something about it regardless of what party you are in. This is the lives of real people and it is time that parties stop arguing and work together for what's best for us based on facts. I hope you can help push for something to be done about these issues and

provide some answers or evidence that something is being done to ensure a whole generation of pupils will not be disenfranchised.

Thanks,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Member of Parliament for Moray

Constituency office: 63 High Street, Forres IV36 1DP

Telephone 01309 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.uk

Enclosure 14: Email, FAO Mr Swinney

From: Gray I (Iain), MSP <Iain.Gray.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 05 March 2021 10:28

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

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

Subject: FAO Mr Swinney

AO Nikki Milne

Dear John,

I have had concerns raised with me by constituents, members of the [Redacted s38(1)(b)] regarding the pressure which will be placed on senior phase pupils as they return to school by the SQA alternative assessment model. The flavour of their concerns can be seen in the quote below;

‘ S4 to S6 kids will be returning full time to school 19/4 to be bombarded with 2 to 4 assessments per subject and the results will go toward their final grades.

Parents are outraged that after 4 months of online learning and kids experiencing all sorts of anxieties during lockdown, that kids are being put into a cesspit of pressure having to sit all these assessments.

Scot gov say looking after mental health and well-being of kids is their top priority and at the same time the SQA come up with this ludicrous plan to bombard them with internal assessments after 4 months without face to face learning.

Parents are outraged, concerned, worried and shocked that this is happening.

This is madness and the SQA need to have a major re think.

If Scot gov truly care about kids well being then they need to have a re think as the SQA plan seems poorly thought out.

Have they any idea how difficult this lockdown has been for children? How can throwing them in at the deep end with all these assessments after 4 months out of school be in the best interests of the child?’

I would be grateful if you could consider these concerns and respond to them so I can share that with my constituents.

Yours sincerely

Iain

Enclosure 15 – Iain Gray MSP - FAO Mr Swinney

From: Gray I (Iain), MSP <Iain.Gray.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 08 March 2021 10:35

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

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

Subject: FAO Mr Swinney

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

Dear John,

Please see the message below from a Parent Council in my constituency. I would be grateful for your response so that I can share it with them.

Yours sincerely

Iain

Iain,

I am the current Chair of the Parent Council for [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I am writing to you to express and note our concerns around the upcoming SQA arrangements for senior phase students in S4-6 and the lack of clarity around their situation.

At our most recent Parent Council meeting, it was discussed that there are growing concerns within the parent body around the lack of clarity surrounding the number of assessments that young people will be expected to undertake in each subject and the arrangements for these following their return to school. A significant part of this concern is the implications and outcomes arising from inequalities in accessibility and engagement in the home learning process. Across the country, there have been challenges caused both through lack of ongoing engagement in home learning during this most recent period and lack of equality of opportunity for engagement. Substantial concerns exist around the educational context to which the senior phase students will be returning in the coming weeks.

As a parent body, we would appreciate this matter being raised and open to discussion and input from yourself. Likewise, we would appreciate an understanding of how effective decisions can be made to better benefit our children and young people in the upcoming SQA assessment period.

Best wishes,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] on behalf of [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (Chair)

Enclosure 16: Email, Daniel Johnson MSP - John Swinney's Action (No Confidence) (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Daniel Johnson MSP <daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 19 March 2021 15:13
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: John Swinney's Action (No Confidence) (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Minister,

I have forwarded on concerns from my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding SQA exams 2021.

I would be grateful for full consideration of the concerns in the email below.

Kind regards
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP
0131 541 2145
danieljohnson.org.uk
Constituency Office
134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

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

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 16 March 2021 18:58
To: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP
Subject: Re: John Swinney's Action (No Confidence) (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Importance: High

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 Daniel Johnson,

Thank you so much to your response as it means so much for children, but what's important is that these upcoming assessments which are to be used in the National Qualifications 2021 must not be used.

Assessments are a key factor in driving children's mental health as you can see the statistics these days are very high and there must be something that can be done, the best thing is to get assessments out of the heads of children as that is the best alternative. Coming back to my point about the National Qualifications is that we must use (Classwork, Homework, small tests and overall performance) to ensure that children are not disadvantaged at all due to COVID-19.

Currently, it seems that John Swinney has not updated anything about exams and this is very concerning, there must be something he can do, now not later before it becomes unbearable for children.

Many Thanks.

From: Daniel Johnson MSP
Sent: 16 March 2021 17:31
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Subject: Re: John Swinney's Action (No Confidence) (Case Ref: DJ11540)

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

Thank you for getting in touch to raise this. I absolutely share these concerns and will continue to do what I can to challenge on this going forward.

Kind regards
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP
0131 541 2145
danieljohnson.org.uk
Constituency Office
134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

Daniel would like to keep you up to date with his activities in Parliament and in the constituency. You can sign up to receive regular updates and his eNewsletter here <https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fdanieljohnson.us3.list-manage.com%2Fsubscribe%3Fu%3Dc63ba734de919cc630f0f68dc%26id%3D775db9dd10&data=04%7C01%7Cdaniel.johnson.msp%40parliament.scot%7C0b698a13987a488f514908d8e8ad6f3d%7Cd603c99ccfd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637515178906845231%7CUnknown%7CTWFPbGZsb3d8eyJWljoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBtI6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=h7NuBZrzdM YAvOiD6lcnC9I5IDPaaVL0iO%2Ffle7wY2l%3D&reserved=0>.

Your data privacy will be taken seriously. Read Daniel's privacy notice here <https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fdanieljohnson.org.uk%2Fprivacy-policy%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cdaniel.johnson.msp%40parliament.scot%7C0b698a13987a488f514908d8e8ad6f3d%7Cd603c99ccfd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637515178906855227%7CUnknown%7CTWFPbGZsb3d8eyJWljoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBtI6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=wyngrCrTrCETuDQYGuxqtPiCyDBHMhbj17vFYF9Za0g%3D&reserved=0>

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 8 March 2021 14:03
To: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP
Subject: John Swinney's Action (No Confidence)

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

Hi Again,

I'm writing to you to let you know how frustrated we are against John Swinney, Education Secretary's actions with assessments and the fact he isn't doing anything about it. The way he mentioned about children's mental health is getting worse and it's important to them, a driving factor for mental health declining is the prospect of exams which is true.

We want a "Teacher assessed grades" just like in England and Northern Ireland it's shocking and I've

had students coming up to me in distress and it's a real shame this is still going on. It shouldn't even be up to school in the first place to handle all this stress, more needs to be done before children will face more mental health and we would not want that, the fact that nothing is being done about it really is bringing an uproar which action must be taken.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19133323.covid-19-education-teachers-students-face-intense-period-assessments/https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.heraldscotland.com%2Fnews%2F19133323.covid-19-education-teachers-students-face-intense-period-assessments%2F&data=04%7C01%7CDaniel.Johnson.msp%40parliament.scot%7C941202877c304748cdce08d8e23ae72d%7Cd603c99ccfdd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637508089902705516%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=H8NAI8UI0u34w%2FKXG4cRvZjsM8oNnRazVo2CnftGsf4%3D&reserved=0https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19133323.covid-19-education-teachers-students-face-intense-period-assessments/https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.heraldscotland.com%2Fnews%2F19133323.covid-19-education-teachers-students-face-intense-period-assessments%2F&data=04%7C01%7CDaniel.Johnson.msp%40parliament.scot%7C941202877c304748cdce08d8e23ae72d%7Cd603c99ccfdd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637508089902705516%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=H8NAI8UI0u34w%2FKXG4cRvZjsM8oNnRazVo2CnftGsf4%3D&reserved=0>

Enclosure 17: Email, Ben Macpherson MSP - [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - 2020/21 exam diet

From: Macpherson B (Ben), MSP <Ben.Macpherson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 24 March 2021 16:39
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- 2020/21 exam diet

Dear John,

I hope this find you well.

I have received contact from the above constituent - which I believe you have too, as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills - regarding her daughter's experience of this year's exam diet. I have summarised the points she included in her correspondence, below.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] has raised concerns that her child, who is undertaking National 5s in seven subject this year, has been faced with ongoing uncertainty over the shape that these would take. After these were cancelled in October of last year and replaced by teacher assessment using a variety of methods, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] was told at a S4 parent evening that all work tested and completed throughout the year would not count and final grades would be based solely on exams at the end of the school year.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] expressed that her child was tested within the first few days back after the 2020 summer holiday and that this continued until 22nd December. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] understanding was that this constant assessment was done "just in case" evidence was required as in 2019/20 session. Her child was also told that these tests, some feeling more like formal exams, would help form a judgement and consideration on their final grade.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] received the SQA windows of exams which comprised of 21 formal assessments, often scheduled after school holidays. She was of the view that it was important for her child to have a break from study and an opportunity to refresh, as they would in an average school year when you can plan effectively for the final exams in May. After having spent the Christmas holiday revising for the formal assessments, however, due to the lockdown, these did not go ahead but rather than cancelling them, the school did not notify parents at all. They were then told that any lockdown work examined may not be weighted as heavily. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] has advised that she worked to make sure she understood the content and process of the continual "SQA windows of assessments" but that these were constantly postponed and no confirmation of whether they were going ahead or not was provided by the school.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] has commented that these changes have caused heightened tension for her young person and that, usually, pupils would have a period of four weeks of study leave from Easter to help them prepare for the stress of exams. She has raised concerns that her daughter's exams are squashed into one week with

more than one on the same day and, in particular, following a year of intermittent distance learning like no other.

For these reasons it is not her understanding that the exams have been cancelled and she has queried why she has been informed that teachers will not be estimating her daughter's grades this year.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is also aware that the school year may be extended into June and is worried that this will not only be tiring for her child but detrimental to their higher year, potentially losing three weeks of coursework.

Any information you can provide on these issues would be very much appreciated.

Best wishes,

Ben

Ben Macpherson MSP
Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency

Telephone: 0131 600 0134

Constituency Office: 34 Constitution Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6RS

Enclosure 18: Email, John Scott MSP - Final assessments

From: Scott J (John), MSP <John.Scott.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 29 March 2021 15:13
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Final assessments

Dear John

I am writing to you on behalf of several local pupils in South Ayrshire who have expressed to me their concerns over the fact that with exams having been cancelled, they have at short notice been advised that they will now have a "final assessment", which they have described to me as being 'an exam in all but name.'

I am sure you will be aware of the petition which has been launched and signed by school pupils, which those young people who have contacted me are supporters of and which can be viewed here:

https://www.change.org/p/john-swinney-sqa-to-reconsider-final-assessments?recruiter=1189150801&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_initial&utm_term=psf_combo_share_initial&recruited_by_id=46b60140-8e46-11eb-82e4-cd6d4b44aab3

Given the concerns expressed to me, which in the circumstances are not difficult to understand, I would be grateful for your consideration of and response to them.

Kind regards,

John

Enclosure 19: Email, Fergus Ewing MSP - Exams for Highers - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: Fergus Ewing Campaign Team
Sent: 02 April 2021 10:52
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Subject: Exams for Highers - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear John/Education Directorate,

I am writing as the SNP Candidate for Inverness and Nairn following receipt of the below email to my MSP account regarding the arrangements for Higher exams this year.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] state that students were clearly told that exams were cancelled due to the pandemic but now, almost at the end of the academic year, students are being told a completely different message. The news that there will be in-class 'assessments' has thrown them into total confusion. These 'assessments' will apparently vary depending on which school/college students attended. Therefore there will be no parity of assessment or fairness.

As you can read, they request that you revert to the arrangements that were first announced so that students can have clarity and some level of fairness and not be subjected to the stress caused by a change of plan.

I would be grateful for your clear response to this please?

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Fergus Ewing
SNP Candidate for Inverness and Nairn

From: Ewing F (Fergus),
Sent: 02 April 2021 10:41
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Subject: RE: Exams for Highers

Dear [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Thank you for your email, I will raise this issue with John Swinney right now and revert back to you as soon as I have a clear reply on this crucial matter.

Yours sincerely,

Fergus Ewing
SNP Candidate for Inverness and Nairn

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Date: 1 April 2021 at 23:36:17 BST
To: "Ewing F (Fergus), MSP" <Fergus.Ewing.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Exams for Highers

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 Fergus,

We have never written to our MSP before but feel so strongly that we must express our opinion on the shambles of the arrangements for Higher exams this year.

Students were clearly told that exams were cancelled due to the pandemic but now, almost at the end of the academic year, students are being told a completely different message. The news that there will be in-class 'assessments' has thrown them into total confusion. These 'assessments' will apparently vary depending on which school/college students attended. Therefore there will be no parity of assessment or fairness.

On one hand government say that they recognise an epidemic of mental health problems of stress and anxiety in our young people, then they heap uncertainty about exams on them while they remain extremely vulnerable from an extraordinarily difficult year.

It seems that government have learned absolutely nothing from the utter debacle of exams last year. We are completely astonished that your party are doing even worse this year by subjecting our young people to completely unnecessary confusion and unacceptable stress.

We would appreciate if you could raise this with Mr Swinney and request that he immediately revert to the arrangements that were first announced so that students can have clarity and some level of fairness and not be subjected to the stress caused by a total change of plan.

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

Enclosure 20: Email, Michael Russell MSP - Education Assessments

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

Sent: 07 April 2021 12:17

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

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

Subject: Education Assessments

Good afternoon

Michael has been contacted by one of his constituents who is very concerned at the system put in place to assess pupils this year. Her email is as follows:

"I am writing to you about the current 'exam' situation. In December, we were told exams were cancelled and that different evidence would be gathered to give us our final grades. However, it has appeared that this isn't the case. Although not formally being called exams, we were told that after the Easter holidays we would be given assessments. These assessments resemble exams almost exactly. These assessments are practically the same as exams - we will be given an exam paper to be completed in the same time an exam would take place. These are essentially the same as exams except for the fact they are being held in a classroom.

I understand that assessments are one of the only ways in which the SQA can assess us and gather evidence as quickly as possible but to have them all in an exam like period and to be only given a short notice I think it is highly unfair and the amount of pressure and stress added is tremendous. For many of us these exams will determine whether we will be accepted into university and/or will determine what we do afterwards and our future, so I urge you to re-consider how we are being assessed as many of us are currently just not coping. I feel as though it is part of your responsibility to bring this forward and help all the young people of Scotland. I enjoy school and learning and take great pride in my education and feel privileged to be living in a country where the education system is of high quality, like many it is challenging at times, but I think that overcoming these challenges will help us in the future. However, the 'exam' or as it's been called assessments that have basically been sprung on us with only a few weeks to study for almost a years' worth of content that we have only been in school to be taught about for a number of months is unacceptable. I struggle with panic attacks, mainly at school, and I fear alongside others what this current studying period but mainly when we go back for the assessments is going to do to every pupil's mental health.

Please consider a different way to gather evidence as we are being given, what seems like an impossible task, of exams to make sure evidence is being collected. I hope you can understand where I, on behalf of every pupil, is coming from about these rather unexpected 'exams'.

I wish you the very best and I hope we will come up with a solution soon to prevent the uncertainty and preventable heartache of this current environment and help all those who have suffered enough already without the risk of their future being jeopardised."

Michael would be grateful if you can respond to the concerns she has raised.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Telephone: 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Mobile: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

michaelrussellmsp.scot |@Feorlean | FB: Michael Russell–Argyll & Bute SNP

*I work Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays *

Enclosure 21: Email, Anas Sarwar MSP - Reps from Anas Sarwar - 2021 Exams

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Sarwar A (Anas), MSP
Sent: 12 April 2021 14:19
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Reps from Anas Sarwar - 2021 Exams

AO [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education

Good afternoon,

Several pupils and parents have recently contacted me regarding the SQA's plans to determine final grades for young people this year.

We know the pandemic has been especially tough on school pupils, and after months of disruption and part-time blended learning, pupils and parents understood that there would be no national exams this year.

While pupils and parents were expecting final grades to be decided by teachers' estimates, and a quality assurance procedure overseen by the SQA, it is now clear that in many areas this will not be the case.

While all schools were advised by the SQA that the most robust way to gather evidence for grades was through class tests, there are huge variations in how these tests will be carried out. I understand that some schools are planning to do these tests spread over different class times while others are setting them up much closer to a traditional exam diet - but without study leave.

For example, a pupil who has been in touch with me will be sitting 22 assessments to determine her National 5 grades over a 5 week period.

With no uniform policy in place for assessing pupils' grades, I share pupil and parents' concerns that young people are not being given a fair chance at this hugely important moment in their lives. Scottish Labour have repeatedly made the case for clear national guidance to be given to schools so that teachers and pupils would have proper time to prepare. It is extremely worrying that the SQA and government appear to have not learnt the lessons from last year's exams scandal.

A national qualifications system must have national integrity - what assurance can you provide to pupils that the system put in place by the Scottish Government is fair and will not result in different experiences for young people in schools across the country?

Kind regards,

Anas Sarwar
Leader of the Scottish Labour Party

Enclosure 22: Email, Daniel Johnson MSP - 2021 education qualifications - SQA failures (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Daniel Johnson MSP <daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 13 April 2021 11:52
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: 2021 education qualifications - SQA failures (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Minister,

I have forwarded on concerns from my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding the 2021 qualifications plan. It was implied that grades would be given based on continuous assessment this year, but it appears now that this will be done by mini exams, which is concerning.

I would be grateful for a response to the concerns in the email below and any other relevant information that would be useful in this case.

Kind regards
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP
0131 541 2145
danieljohnson.org.uk
Constituency Office
134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

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

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 10 April 2021 16:23
To: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP
Subject: 2021 education qualifications - SQA failures

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 Johnson,
When is an exam not an exam? When the SQA decides they are to be called formal assessments!

I am writing to you again after receiving communication from my son's school the Wednesday before the Easter break, that his National 5 qualifications will be determined by exams taking place starting 10th May, roughly 6 weeks notice. This is after students, parents and schools were told in October 2020 that there would be no exams for National 5s in 2021 and grades would be determined by continuous assessments being performed and the best 2-3 would be submitted as evidence for the grade awarded. Apparently now it is solely these exams/assessments that are being sat in May that will be the basis for the grades to be awarded. We have been lied to by the SQA and the Scottish Government. The SQA must have been the only organisation in the world not to have a backup plan for a second lockdown but apparently everything they do is reactionary rather than proactive.

Further, those students sitting Highers and Advanced Highers and were originally told they would sit exams, then told in December 2020 that the exams would not happen, have also been told that they too are to sit exams in May. The SQA says they are not exams but formal assessments. As the students at my son's school have been issued with what is effectively an exam timetable with assessments over the course of 3 weeks, whether the SQA wants to kid itself that students are sitting

"formal assessments", the fact is that students have been blindsided by this announcement. The levels of anxiety and stress are through the roof as you can imagine.

The students are not getting study leave as would normally happen and some of these exams/assessments/tests are 2 or 2.5 hours long. They have had no practice sitting exams of that duration, only those that can be done within a class period of 50 minutes.

What is even more worrying is that it would seem that not all council regions are following the same process. We have heard that students in the Glasgow area for example, will still be doing lots of assessments of shorter duration with which, the results from these together with the assessments that were carried out since last August, will be consolidated to become one grade.

If this is true then how can any of the qualifications in 2021 be deemed national if each council is doing it differently?

Someone needs to hold the SQA and Scottish Government accountable for this absolute shambles that is affecting all senior secondary school students. I have seen no evidence that the SQA actually cares about the impact of their decisions on students - they seem more interested in keeping the system going than how best to assess and award qualifications to young people in the fairest way possible during these unprecedented and trying times. Further, with the goalposts changing continually, teachers have additional workload with little notice and schools constantly having to adapt and unfortunately not always in a way that benefits the students. Case in point is the phased return to school the 3 weeks before Easter as all online live lessons stopped as well as teachers being available to assist students because they were in school teaching 10 at a time only! The only benefit was that students had some social interaction with friends and teachers.

Please can you raise this with the Scottish Government - we owe it to our young people to ensure they are not severely affected by the pandemic, and the SQA seems hellbent on making things worse. This is not an issue that should be political or points scoring by any party, but everyone working together to look after the next generation.

Thank you.

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

Enclosure 23: Email, Willie Rennie MSP - Evidence for SQA

From: Willie Rennie <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]>
Sent: 19 April 2021 11:36
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Evidence for SQA

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

19 April 2021

Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (please quote this reference on all correspondence)

Dear John

I have been contacted by one of my constituents highlighting their concerns regarding the gathering of evidence for estimates to be submitted to SQA for certification.

My constituent has explained there is growing concern, especially among young people and their parents over the form that this evidence will take. My constituent's concerns are in relation to Mathematics only.

I have enclosed the email I received as my constituent has included several detailed points:

- ***In several schools these papers have been printed out and staff given a paper copy, which they can take home. This in my view affects the integrity of the paper. In my view the more people who have copies of these papers, the greater a chance of them becoming known to others.***

- ***In one school, the curricular leader was not sharing the assessments with staff. After a complaint by a member of staff, the curricular leader was instructed, by a depute head, to give staff access to the assessments. This member of staff insisted they had a right to see the paper. The reason given was that their friends were discussing these papers on social media and they could not join in the conversation! In this school, the papers are now available to all members of staff in the department google drive; even those who do not teach any of the levels these assessments cover. There must be many schools in which a remarkably similar situation occurs and this to me is extremely worrying in relation to security of the assessments.***

- ***In several schools, pupils are being informed of the topics in each paper and being directed to specific questions from past papers to help prepare for this. This defeats the purpose of keeping the papers confidential. In light of this one mathematics teacher, I believe a curricular leader, posted on an open access site.***

This is in relation to the N5 Assessment and the other levels had been promised. This link has now been deleted; however, my concern is that this is happening in many schools across Scotland.

These are just a few of the many examples that I know of in relation to the assessment papers placed onto the SQA secure site for Mathematics. Given that you are asking

young people to keep these papers confidential once undertaken, I feel that a similar message now needs to go out to schools in relation to what they can do with these assessments and when.

I do understand that from SQA's perspective they were being kept confidential. The examples I give challenge that belief. As I have already said, these are not normal circumstances for anyone, however, this is no excuse for standards to fall. I do understand that there may need to be some professional dialogue in relation to these papers. Personally, I do not think this should be between teachers in different schools: it should be contained within each department. I also think that teachers do not need access to these papers prior to young people undertaking each assessment. They would only need them afterwards for marking purposes. Obviously if the assessments are to be amended, those making the amendments would need prior access.

Academic session 2020-21 is unprecedented in many ways and the world is in the grasp of a pandemic unlike any experienced in any of our lifetimes. Everyone is finding it difficult, and I am in no way complaining about SQA and what they have provided under these exceedingly difficult circumstances. No matter what you do, not everyone will be happy. The main concern for me is consistency and a 'level playing field' for all. In this respect, I am writing to seek clarification on the above scenarios that I have outlined. Are these, as given, acceptable and if yes then I think that your advice to candidates about keeping the papers confidential is no longer relevant. If they are not acceptable, I think a clear message now needs to go out to all centres clearly indicating how these assessments are to be used and what is and what is not acceptable.

I would be very grateful if you could respond to the points highlighted by my constituent.

Yours sincerely
Willie

Willie Rennie
Leader, Scottish Liberal Democrats

Enclosure 24: Email, Oliver Mundell MSP - My constituent - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- My Ref [Redacted s38(1)(b))]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Mundell O (Oliver), MSP
Sent: 21 April 2021 12:04
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Subject: My constituent - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- My Ref: OM[Redacted s38(1)(b))]

Dear Cabinet Secretary

I have been copied in on an email my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] sent to you, the First Minister and some others regarding SQA higher exams. For ease I attach a copy below (in red) and I would be grateful if you could let me have your comments regarding this matter.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours

Oliver Mundell

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

The Office of Oliver Mundell will process (collect, store and use) the information you provide in a manner compatible with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We will endeavour to keep your information accurate and up to date, and not keep it for longer than is necessary. The office of Oliver Mundell is required to retain information in accordance with the law, such as information needed for income tax and audit purposes. How long certain kinds of personal data should be kept may also be governed by specific requirements and agreed practices. Personal data may be held in addition to these periods depending on individual needs. A full copy of the privacy policy of Oliver Mundell is available on request.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 17 April 2021 14:47
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>; Douglas.Ross.MSP@parliament.scot; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Rennie W (Willie), MSP <Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot>; Mundell O (Oliver), MSP <Oliver.Mundell.msp@parliament.scot>; Sarwar A (Anas), MSP <Anas.Sarwar.msp@parliament.scot>; Harvie P (Patrick), MSP <Patrick.Harvie.msp@parliament.scot>; customer@sqa.org.uk; ChiefEducationOfficer@dumgal.gov.uk; DirectorSkillsEducationandLearning@dumgal.gov.uk
Subject: SQA Higher examinations

To everyone,

Irrespective of which political party is in power, the current SQA exam situation advocated by an SNP administration is completely unacceptable. The people of

Scotland have been lied to with regards to school exams and pupils are about to suffer a great injustice.

Firstly pupils were told that exams were cancelled and grades would be based on classroom based evidence. Then they were told in mid-March (when still homeschooling and doing self-directed learning) that they will undertake assessments over two different time windows in April and May. Now they are told that final grades will be based solely on assessment performance and coursework completed during the year will not be considered. These assessments will be under timed, exam-style conditions, albeit in the classroom, while not having yet completed the full course in some cases, not benefiting from any study leave, and unlike previous years, in many subjects, coursework does not count.

While it is up to individual schools and education authorities to determine the assessment contents, it would appear that some are choosing to use papers issued by SQA, which are last year's unused exam papers. Pupils will not have sight of these beforehand. Is this not an exam by a different name?

There is a distinct lack of consistency in how pupils are being assessed because some schools may choose to set their own assessments, and as such a lack of equality and fairness. There is now a differential attainment gap depending on the school or region and while some pupils may thrive, others will be penalised.

The lack of a consistent message and lack of clear and public communication by the SQA and indeed the Scottish Government regarding these changing goalposts, is completely unacceptable, must not be tolerated, and will jeopardise the young people of Scotland's futures.

This information has been swept under the carpet and glossed over, possibly as we are approaching an election. SQA and the SNP government must be held to account, especially after last year's results disaster.

Unfortunately parliament is now in recess, however I would appreciate if my email could be acknowledged and acted upon as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 25: Email, [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- MSP Enquiries

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

Sent: 23 April 2021 17:06

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

Subject: MSP Enquiries

Good afternoon,

Please find attached 2 enquiries from Keith Brown, one regarding the awarding of SQA grades and Covid-19 in schools, and the other regarding mobile hair dressers. If I can be of any assistance with the enquiries, please do let me know.

Best wishes,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Clackmannanshire and Dunblane
01259 219333

Enclosure 25.1: PDF attachment

Dear John

Reopening of schools and awarding of SQA results

As MSP for Clackmannanshire and Dunblane, I have been contacted by constituents who are concerned about the lack of certainty surrounding the reopening of schools for in-classroom teaching and how SQA results will be awarded.

My constituents have been reassured to hear that getting children and young people back into the classroom as quickly and safely as possible has been the first priority of the Scottish Government. They, however, are seeking clarifications on a number of points regarding the return to in-person teaching and how the SQA will award results to young people this year.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)] have shared with me their concerns about the lack of certainty surrounding the reopening of schools for full-time in-classroom teaching. They have told me that while they are pleased schools are now open, but they are worried that the Scottish Government has not yet officially confirmed that secondary schools will be open for full-time in-person learning after the Easter Holidays. Can you please therefore guarantee that secondary schools in Scotland will return to full-time in-person learning after the Easter holidays?

My constituents were concerned to hear that close contact personal services, such as haircuts, had a confirmed date for resumption of services before it was confirmed that all secondary school pupils would return to full-time in-classroom teaching after the Easter holiday. They believe that the economy should be opened up as soon as possible because they feel that keeping the economy and society locked down is “causing damage in untold other ways” but they feel that the Scottish Government should have fulfilled its promise to prioritise education as it said it would. My constituents were therefore disappointed that close contact services resumed before all Scottish school pupils returned to the classroom.

My constituents are also concerned about the practicalities of physical distancing in secondary schools. While they appreciate the need to reduce the transmission of Coronavirus in all aspects of our lives, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)] are concerned about the impact physical distancing can have on the quality of teaching delivered. Could you please explain to me the Scottish Government’s reasoning for requiring physical distancing in secondary schools? For instance, what data informs the Scottish Government’s decisions on this topic? Furthermore, is the Scottish Government confident that it will not negatively impact the quality of teaching?

Furthermore, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)] are concerned about the requirement for secondary school pupils to wear face coverings for extended periods of time in school. They argue that wearing face coverings for prolonged periods can be uncomfortable and distracting and exemplary attention must be paid to not touching the mask for the face covering to be effective in preventing the spread of Covid-19 in school. My constituents believe that numerous scientific studies reinforce this view. Has the Scottish Government considered the implications of young people in secondary schools not wearing their face masks correctly could have on transmission? Furthermore, has the Scottish Government considered the implications on young people’s ability to learn when required to wear a face covering throughout the school day?

The uncertainty about exactly how SQA results will be awarded is another concern for my constituents. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)]’s son is sitting exams this year and they are concerned about how the lack of certainty is affecting him. While his school ensured

that pupils sitting SQA exams sat prelims before their Christmas break, my constituents are aware that not all schools will have been in a position to do so for various reasons. They would therefore like to better understand how the Scottish Government and the SQA are working to ensure that all pupils and teachers across Scotland receive guidance on how exams will be graded, and that pupils will receive grades that reflect their achievements and hard work in very difficult circumstances.

I look forward to your full and prompt response, which I will share with my constituent.

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 25.2: PDF attachment

Out of Scope

Enclosure 26: Email, John Scott MSP - Urgent - Key Assessment Timetable

From: Scott J (John), MSP <John.Scott.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 23 April 2021 17:59
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Urgent - Key Assessment Timetable

Dear John

I have been contacted by my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who, as you will see, has asked me to pass on to you her concerns as set out below, about the 'key assessments' due over the coming weeks.

I would be grateful for your consideration of the points she makes, and for any response that you can make to them in due course.

Kind regards,

John

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]>
Sent: 23 April 2021 15:59
To: Scott J (John), MSP <John.Scott.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Urgent - Key Assessment Timetable

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

Good afternoon John,

Hope you're well and sorry to bother you at such a busy political time but I feel this needs urgent attention. Please read the e-mail below and pass onto the Education Secretary please. I am sure you will share in my concern and frustration.

Thank you as always,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Good afternoon Mr Swinney,

I hope this e-mail finds you well. My apologies for contacting you at such a busy political time but I feel this needs urgent attention.

I had been in touch with you before via my local MSP regarding my concerns about the secondary school education system, in particular blended learning and I thank

you for your response back to me. I feel it is imperative however that we communicate again to allow me to make you aware of what is happening **now** at the coal face surrounding the timetabling of sitting of “Key Assessments”. I have already contacted the school directly and am awaiting their response.

My twin sons, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] are S5 students at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I am writing to you to express my strong concern regarding the planned Higher “Key Assessment” Timetable, and the effects this will have on my sons’ mental health given the stresses of the last two school years.

As you are well aware, students have been terribly disadvantaged during this, and last, scholastic years. I am of the understanding that “key assessments” (examinations by another name) will be delivered in class time between 11th May and 10th June 2021. I also understand that “normal examination conditions will apply”. I apologise if these statements are not correct.

Please let me share with you my boys’ timetable for sitting their Higher exams:- (this applies to both my sons as they are taking exactly the same subjects)

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Considering the time scale given for delivering these examinations, (11th May-10th June) I simply do not understand why they are so closely compressed together? (I realise this timetable has been set by [Redacted s38(1)(b)] but feel it is very important you are made aware of this) You state, “A timetable will be produced to minimise the number of assessments a learner will sit on any given day.....care must be taken to not overload learners with over-assessment”.

Since the 22nd December 2020, my sons will have had less than 20 days of in school attendance before they sit their first exam. The pressure put on them by this timetable is unacceptable. Their last exam is on the 26th May, some considerable time before the end of the window on 10th June.

You will see from the above that they not only have more than one day with multiple exams, but also on one of those days, they move immediately from one exam to the next without any reflection time whatsoever. I challenge anyone in the education system, or the mental health environment, to find this an acceptable situation.

I am asking for your assistance please as I’m sure you will agree with me that this is just unacceptable. Given that the grades my sons will achieve will be based on these exams, and thus their future aspirations in further education or employment, I hope you agree with my view of how severe this situation is.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 27: Email, Christina McKelvie MSP - 2021 Qualifications system school issues

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

Sent: 13 May 2021 10:20

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

Subject: 2021 Qualifications system school issues

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Please find attached a copy of a letter for your attention from the office of Christina McKelvie, MSP for Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Christina McKelvie MSP

for Hamilton, Larkhall & Stonehouse

(Working Pattern Mon, Tues, Wed)

Tel 01698 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Fax 01698 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Barncluith Business Centre, Townhead St, Hamilton ML3 7DP

<http://www.christina-mckelvie.org>

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.

Up to date information from the Scottish Government on COVID-19 can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/> or at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>

Enclosure 27.1: PDF attachment

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I write to you on behalf of a constituent, who has contacted me, concerning the present situation within secondary education and the qualifications system this year. I have been advised that my constituent, as a teacher, does not feel that the decision to have pupils' grades based on teacher's professional judgement is actually what is occurring.

They have advised that they have been told that they must provide evidence for all grades, they are not allowed to project what grades pupils would have got in a normal year. They believe this is leading to a scramble to provide full evidence and is leading to pupils sitting assessment after assessment to provide what the SQA is demanding they provide. They have advised that they feel that pupils are crumbling under the pressure.

In addition, they advise that they are not allowed to take into consideration any exceptional circumstances when providing these grades. They feel that if this is the case then why are pupils just not sitting exams as normal? They believe that pupils have been seriously disadvantaged, for example, they have one pupil who missed 12 weeks of school between August and December due to both having to self-isolate due to contact and then having COVID-19 themselves. They indicate that the SQA are saying that they can only give them the mark that they can provide hard evidence for, but their professional judgement says this pupil would achieve at least a B in their Higher, based on prior attainment. This pupil is working hard to catch up but has missed out on all that in-school learning. He may end up failing through no fault of his own. This story is repeated in various forms for many pupils throughout their school.

They are unhappy that they have to assess every element of the course, despite pupils not being face to face taught for 4 months. Pupils have returned to school full time after the Easter holidays straight into assessments while still being taught aspects of the course that the SQA say must be covered.

I have been additionally advised that there is a belief that the Scottish Government are not fully understanding the crisis unfolding in schools, and feel that this urgently needs to be looked at closely as this issue and the reality of what they consider the SQA is doing to pupils and staff. They also advise of teaching online involving having to work long into the night and through weekends for most staff and they have now returned to school exhausted but with the hope of ensuring their pupils do not suffer any more than they already have and are not disadvantaged going forward.

They have advised that they believe that the SQA is making unfair decisions and demands while still saying publicly that grades are based on teacher's professional judgment. Also, the SQA say they are checking/moderating marking in schools. The whole thing has just added extra workload and/or is meaningless. They had explained that in their school, the SQA are 'moderating' 4 subjects, all 4 of them being practical subjects. Therefore, the ones with the least available evidence due to COVID-19 regulations.

With what I have been advised social media would suggest this is similar in all schools. I would be grateful if the Scottish Government can urgently look at this issue and consider whether the claim for this year's qualifications system that teacher's professional judgement is being followed up on appropriately

Enclosure 28: Email, Beatrice Wishart MSP - MSP correspondence: Alternative Certification Model

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Wishart B (Beatrice), MSP
Sent: 14 May 2021 10:59
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: MSP correspondence: Alternative Certification Model
Importance: High

Dear John,

The alternative arrangements imposed by the SQA for this year's exams are clearly and indisputably causing harm to young people and their teachers.

Few would have thought it possible to see a system do more damage than last year. But reports from constituents make it clear that there is every likelihood this year's arrangements could be worse, in terms of equality, fairness and mental health.

Pupils who were told exams were off are now finding lots of them crammed into a short period of time, at short notice. One reported that a pupil "has 40 assessments in 8 weeks which averages at 1 a day for 8 weeks." A constituent described this as "the worst outcome that could ever possibly have happened". Teachers and pupils are exhausted. I'm told many are unable to sleep because of stress, and that anxiety is on the increase.

To claim, as the First Minister has, that the SQA's demand for evidence based grading is the same as teacher judgement shows either a serious misunderstanding of your government's policies on the ground, or shows an active desire to mislead the public about what is being asked of teachers and pupils.

Teachers are being asked to produce examinations and all for less than minimum wage because the extra payment is so small. They have to produce the exams themselves, they have to create the marking schemes, they have to mark the exams, they have to quality assure, and then they have to translate those marks into grades. It is unclear why the SQA have removed themselves from so many of their normal responsibilities.

These reports bring a troubling sense of déjà vu with them. Last year all warnings were ignored by yourself and the SQA until the damage had been done. I worry the same has happened again. The unminuted meetings between yourself and the SQA do nothing to put those concerns to rest.

Decision makers need to be upfront and accountable. As soon as parliamentary business resumes, there must be a parliamentary statement to explain and justify why staff and pupils have been put through such needless turmoil.

I look forward to your timely response.

Kind regards,

Beatrice

Beatrice Wishart

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP

T: [0131 348 6296](tel:01313486296)

and

Shetland Parliamentary Office, [171 Commercial Street, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0HX](https://www.shetland.gov.uk/171-Commercial-Street-Lerwick-Shetland-ZE1-0HX)

T: [01595 690044](tel:01595690044)

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

<https://www.beatricewishart.org.uk/privacy>

Enclosure 29: Email, Neil Gray MSP Enquiry - [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: GRAY, Neil <neil.gray.mp@parliament.uk>

Sent: 17 May 2021 09:24

To: parliamentaryenquiries@northlan.gov.uk; Central Enquiry Unit <CEU@gov.scot>

Subject: Neil Gray MSP Enquiry - [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to both North Lanarkshire Council and the Scottish Government on behalf of my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)], of the above address, with regards to her concerns over how this year's Higher examinations have been handled.

I would appreciate if you could both please read over the emails from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] below and address the respective concerns which have been raised.

Understandably, this situation has caused a great deal of concern for [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and many others, and any help or advice you are able to offer regarding this matter would be greatly appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you both soon.

Kind regards,

Neil

Neil Gray

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Neil Gray resigned as a Member of Parliament on 24th March 2021 and is now winding up the office, so cannot take on new cases.

In order to successfully follow up on constituency cases and enquiries it will be necessary in most instances for us to pass on your details to the relevant body. If this is not agreeable, please let us know as soon as possible.

This e-mail is confidential to the intended recipient. If you have received it in error, please notify the sender and delete it from your system. Any unauthorised use, disclosure, or copying is not permitted.

This e-mail has been checked for viruses, but no liability is accepted for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this e-mail.

Also other Schools have done their modern studies assessments completely different from ours not to mention among other subjects. St. Andrew's high school in Coatbridge for example were given 2 sessions to complete 1 essay from one topic in the modern studies paper, another 2 sessions to complete another one and then another 2 sessions to complete the third essay. Where as in my school, we were given 1 hour and 40 minutes to complete 3 essays. This I feel at a serious disadvantage with as it's completely not fair compared to other schools

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

Sent: 14 May 2021 14:39

To: GRAY, Neil <neil.gray.mp@parliament.uk>

Subject:

Hi their yes I would greatly appreciate if you could do that for me!

My address is [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

You can contact me on either phone number [Redacted s38(1)(b)]or [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

My email is [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

My school is [Redacted s38(1)(b)]and the subject complaint of mine is higher modern studies !

I would greatly appreciate if you could either take the percentage for an A down to atleast 65% or below either this or let me be able to put forward one recent piece of class evidence supporting the argument that I deserve an A !! Thank you very much

Hi their I am emailing on the regards of the handling on this years higher exam results . I am absolutely appalled at the condition in which they have been done . We have done multiple “ evidence gatherings “ throughout these past few weeks all in which have been VERY close together and most of them on the same day as other subjects . No logic has been put into the handling of these exams you have replaced 5 higher exams with 25 tests . These results will indicate what university condition offers we receive and out future . I feel as tho it is a complete competition between us and you and you all purposely want us to fail this year. It hasn't been fair on any of us atall some of us struggle with really bad mental health and not to mention issues at home and some on the other hand have just had a bad day! and you have the nerve to have an A mark band this year sitting at 70% which is absolutely out of order . I've sat the papers and have spoke to multiple of my teachers and other fellow pupils who'm all agree it is unachievable this year considering we have not been in school the majority of the year , and online learning on the other hand was a joke . I also who'm many pupils will agree with in some cases that we have taught our selfs the work this year . I would greatly appreciate on behalf of me that you would consider bringing the A mark down to AT LEAST 65% and if you can possibly lower this year especially for modern studies I do not feel in any justification that it was a fair representation of what we could have Gotten had it been a proper exam setting year . I feel the sqa have to be a lot more Leient and easy on pupils this year considering the year we have gone through and we all need support during this hard time of covid 19, not to be competing with each other as I feel that's what you wish we do , this is not the hunger games we are in and we do not wish to be competing to see who gets the highest mark and I feel that metaphor is a great way of putting to you how we all feel this year . I also don't feel as if the SQA have the right to be putting the marks where they are considering the back lash you all received last year on the handling of the exams which you cannot afford this year as it will be a direct reflection on you and not us the people . This email may come across rather rude or harsh but I am infuriated about the issue at hand and just don't feel as if 70% this year of all years is achievable and I'm sure you have seen the petition on Facebook to change it with nearly 10,000 signatures applied . I would have great appreciation if you would take this email under consideration and get back to me ASAP! Thank you kind regards [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 30: Email, Jamie Hepburn MSP - Enquiry (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Jamie Hepburn MSP <Jamie.hepburn.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 17 May 2021 11:48
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Enquiry (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear John,

Please find below a copy of an email I have recently received from my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)], raising her concerns at the end of year assessments in secondary schools in North Lanarkshire this year and the pressure they are placing on young school pupils.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is concerned that despite being told that there would be no exams these effectively are exams and have resulted in a huge increase in workload for young people. She is also concerned that this appears to vary from school to school.

I would appreciate your consideration of, and response to, this situation and for your consideration as to whether improvements can be made to reduce the pressure on young people.

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Hepburn MSP
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]>
Sent: 15 May 2021 07:42
To: jamie.hepburn.msp@parliament.scot
Subject: Exams

Dear Jamie

I have never contacted an MSP before but the situation this government has placed our children in is an utter disgrace.

I work in education as did my parents, it is my passion. Education is the path to future success, reading ambition, maximising potential but before we can look at attainment we have to ensure children's well-being. We are still in a pandemic - our pupils sitting exams have had two years of disrupted education, lost out on family time, experiences with their friends and much more. We have yet to gauge the full effects this has had on their well-being. In primary we are focusing on physical and mental health as part of our recovery, and using assessment to understand where children are. Secondary have no such opportunities.

My daughters have returned to secondary and have been bombarded with homework in a desperate attempt to cover missed ground before exams - and please do not say exams have been cancelled - that is an insult and a lie! They have no study leave, more exams as they have been split up and most concerning for me / different schools are sitting different exams. My 5th year daughter achieved 7 A's in her standard grades - she was expected to achieve 5 A's (possibly a B as she is less confident at maths). She is falling apart and doesn't think she will get any of those marks now - even though she did at pre-lims and most children achieve more during actual exams. Normally if it's a difficult paper the marks are balanced by the overall performance - that can't happen this year. Normally you can appeal - again that can't happen this year. There is no fairness or equality in this year's system.

Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

Enclosure 31: Email, Mairi Gougeon MSP - School assessments (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Mairi Gougeon MSP <Mairi.gougeon@parliament.scot>
Sent: 18 May 2021 15:11
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: School assessments (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Mairi Gougeon MSP has been contacted by her constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)], who is concerned about the assessment process for school students this year. I have attached her email below. I should be obliged if you would consider the points that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] raises in her email and provide a response.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Office of Mairi Gougeon MSP

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
To: Gougeon M (Mairi), MSP
Subject: School assessments

Dear Mairi

I write regarding my deep concern for pupils and teachers in secondary schools, who are currently working their way through the 'assessments' or as both teachers and pupils are calling them - exams.

There doesn't seem to have been much thought done by the Scottish Government prior to the executing of the assessments. There appears to be no time for preparation between exams resulting in burnout in students and anxiety beyond any other. Considering the students have not long returned to school and are anxious about that, there should have been a lot more consideration. Under normal exam timetable, students have a few days between exams but at present they are sitting an exam in the morning and being expected to attend classes for other subjects in the afternoon at which time they are informed the exam for that subject will be the next day. All this is happening during National Mental Health Week and at present I don't know who's worse - students or teachers.

There doesn't appear to have been any consideration for the extra workload for practical subjects eg every music student has to have their performance recorded and with singers and students playing wind instruments this is not possible in schools due to COVID regulations.

All the assessing is being done by already very busy teachers resulting in conscientious teachers working over 12 hours daily. Has this really been thought out?

Please ask questions of John Swinney in Parliament as the present circumstances do not bode well for the results!

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 32: Email, Kate Forbes MSP - (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot

Sent: 19 May 2021 09:56

To: DFMCS@gov.scot

Subject: (Case Ref: KF11794)

Good morning,

I am writing on behalf of my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] regarding his concerns about the grading system in place across Scotland.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] has highlighted to me a situation where pupils who have been required to self-isolate at home will have the option of sitting assessments at home, or waiting until their period of self-isolation is complete.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is concerned that this will result in some pupils having more time to revise for the assessment if they delay sitting it, or if they decide to sit it at home that there is insufficient means to ensure that external assistance is not obtained by pupils at home with access to internet and adults to assist.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is also concerned that pupils between S4 and S6 will be severely disadvantaged in making University, college and job applications.

I am writing to put forward my constituent's concerns and to ask for your thoughts on his concerns?

Kind regards,

Kate

Kate Forbes MSP
Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch

Enclosure 33: Email, Neil Gray MSP - Neil Gray MSP Enquiry - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- National 5 Exams (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Neil Gray <neil.gray.mp@parliament.uk>

Sent: 19 May 2021 10:35

To: Central Enquiry Unit <CEU@gov.scot>

Subject: Neil Gray MSP Enquiry - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- National 5 Exams (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you on behalf of my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)], of the above address, with regards to her concerns regarding this year's National 5 examinations.

As you will see from the emails below, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] daughter is sitting her exams this year. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] main areas of concern are the number of assessments that are required to be done, the lack of notice regarding these and the disparity between how this is being handled at different schools.

I would be grateful if you could please read over the emails below in full and address the concerns [Redacted s38(1)(b)] has raised.

Kind regards,

Neil

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

Sent: 19 May 2021 09:05

To: GRAY, Neil

Subject: Re: National 5 Exams (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Yes please

On Wed, 19 May 2021, 09:35 Neil Gray, <neil.gray.mp@parliament.uk> wrote:

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

No problem.

Just to double check, are you happy for me to forward your email on to the Scottish Government directly and ask that the concerns raised be addressed?

Please let me know, and, if so, I will keep you updated when I receive a response.

Kind regards,

Neil

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

Sent: 18 May 2021 13:05

To: GRAY, Neil
Subject: Re: National 5 Exams (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Thank you Neil for your response.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

On Tue, 18 May 2021, 13:37 GRAY, Neil, > wrote:

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

Thank you for your email and for outlining your concerns regarding this important matter. Please accept my apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

I would be happy to forward your email on to the Scottish Government to ask that the concerns raised be looked into, and that more be done to assist pupils who are facing difficulties as a result of the current arrangement.

Please let me know if this is something you wish for me to do, and, if so, can you please provide me with your current address details.

Kind regards,

Neil

Neil Gray

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Twitter]Twitter: @neilgraymp<https://twitter.com/NeilGrayMP><http://twitter.com/NeilGrayMP> [Facebook]
Facebook:
[facebook.com/neilgrays...](https://www.facebook.com/NeilGraySNP)<https://www.facebook.com/NeilGraySNP><http://facebook.com/neilgrays...><http://www.facebook.com/NeilGraySNP>

Neil Gray resigned as a Member of Parliament on 24th March 2021 and is now winding up the office, so cannot take on new cases.

In order to successfully follow up on constituency cases and enquiries it will be necessary in most instances for us to pass on your details to the relevant body. If this is not agreeable, please let us know as soon as possible.

This e-mail is confidential to the intended recipient. If you have received it in error, please notify the sender and delete it from your system. Any unauthorised use, disclosure, or copying is not permitted. This e-mail has been checked for viruses, but no liability is accepted for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this e-mail.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]>
Sent: 15 May 2021 00:16
To: GRAY, Neil >
Subject: National 5 Exams

Hi Neil,

I am writing to you as a concerned parent. My daughter is sitting the National 5 exam diet this year and I am extremely concerned about fairness and equity across the country. My daughter returned to school following the Easter Holidays and was advised that her 'assessments' were beginning the following week. She has approx 4 assessments per subject (totalling around 24 exams) with no study

time and very little taught work over the last year. These assessments are being sat under exam conditions. The school have advised that the teachers will base their judgements on these tests. This is despite kids all sitting these tests at different times and some schools using differing ways of gathering evidence. Yet again I believe that this is detrimental to children in schools in Airdrie where there is a high level of multiple deprivities. Many children dont have a safe secure place to work. My daughter struggled massively due to our rural area as we do not have a fast broadband service and dont get a mobile service. Live lessons were impossible.

I honestly think that this needs to be looked at now prior to exam results as it's my opinion and that of many that we will have another exam 'fiasco' this year. I had a daughter last year sitting highers who suffered greatly due to being unfairly treated by a teacher and unable to change this due to an inadequate appeals process.

I am extremely concerned about my daughters education as the attainment gap widens and high schools in North Lanarkshire sit well into the bottom half of any league tables. This is not a reflection of the wonderful work teachers do. My daughter attends [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and it's a fantastic school with a great community and good teachers so I have to wonder why results are as poor.

I would be grateful if you could address my concerns to the education secretary on my behalf, not that it will make much difference.

I'm an SNP voter and consistently support independence but I'm afraid the current education system is concerning me and I worry about how our children will be educated going forward.

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 34: Email, Alasdair Allan MSP - Letter to Cabinet Secretary for Education (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Dr Alasdair Allan MSP <alasdair.allan.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 19 May 2021 11:57

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: Letter to Cabinet Secretary for Education (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Good morning,

Please find attached a letter from Alasdair Allan MSP to Shirley-Anne Somerville.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dr Alasdair Allan MSP
Scottish National Party – Na h-Eileanan an Iar
Post: 20 Kenneth Street, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2DR
Tel: 01851 700357 Mob: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
E-mail: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

Enclosure 34.1: PDF Attachment

Dear Shirley-Anne,

Re: Alternative Certification Model

Please accept my congratulations on your appointment as Scotland' s new Cabinet Secretary for Education.

I am receiving significant correspondence from worried parents regarding the implementation of the SQA' s alternative certification model.

Many of the parents in touch with me have highlighted the fact that pupils have gone through most of the academic year under the impression that there would be no exams. However, they contend their children are now sitting exams in all but name.

Some have pointed out that these assessments could be considered worse than exams given the lack of notice or study leave given. This is combining to have a negative impact on their stress and anxiety levels.

I have also heard from teachers who say they feel the guidance, and the SQA' s insistence on large pieces of evidence generated under exam conditions, is pushing them into assessments that are, in reality, no different from the SQA exam diet.

I was in Parliament on 14 May and listened intently to the former Cabinet Secretary for Education' s statement on this matter. However, I would be grateful if you could respond to the concerns being raised by the pupils and teachers who have been in touch with me. I would also be grateful to know whether allowing teacher judgement based on in-class assessments will be considered for grading.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosure 35: Email, Fulton MacGregor MSP - (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 19 May 2021 12:34
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Please find attached correspondence from Fulton MacGregor MSP.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Office of Fulton MacGregor MSP
SNP, Coatbridge & Chryston

Coatbridge Business Centre, 204 Main Street, Coatbridge, ML5 3RB
01236 897540 // 0131 348 5797

Fulton.MacGregor.MSP@parliament.scot

GDPR – For my Privacy Statement, please visit www.fultonmacgregor.scot/privacy

Enclosure 35.1: PDF attachment

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I write to you on behalf of young people, parents and caregivers who have contacted me to express concerns regarding the alternative certification model that has been put in place for the determination of young people's final grading in this year's National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams.

Since the country went into lockdown in March 2020, we have all faced unprecedented challenges with drastic changes to every aspect of our lives, children and young people no less so, with severe impacts on the delivery of their education.

Largely young people have coped admirably with the disruption to their lives, and have overcome the challenges presented by limited in school learning to continue to achieve, however the negative impact of this disruption should not adversely affect the grades they deserve and indeed need to fulfil their future prospects.

Those who have been in touch with me express anxiety and distress at the prospect of facing in school exams which will contribute to the grade awarded to them, despite having received limited face-to-face learning, support or prelim exam assessment, for which many feel unprepared for. Young people feel that they may not be able to evidence their attainment and achievement adequately to ensure the awards they deserve and that they are being penalised through circumstances very much out with their own control.

Each young person has the right to develop their potentials and therefore their ongoing and future education, job prospects, mental health and development and on their behalf, I would be grateful if you can confirm the safeguards that will be put in place to ensure that no young person is unfairly disadvantaged in their assessment of grades.

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 36: Email, Pauline McNeill MSP- FW: FAO Cabinet Secretary for Education FW: Concerns about unreasonable levels of stress

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

Sent: 19 May 2021 14:35

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: FAO Cabinet Secretary for Education FW: Concerns about unreasonable levels of stress induced by alternate school assessment program.

Good afternoon,

Pauline has been contacted by several constituents including the one below, with regards to the current exams regime, which has caused considerable stress among the student body.

As you can see from this email, in this and in the others which she has received, there is wide concern over the communication between the SQA and schools. It has been advised that the advice to the public does not match the instruction given to schools and that the replacement of exams with “assessments” has saw frequency of testing increase to the point which has become unbearable for many pupils at a time when their attendance at school has been critically low through no fault of their own.

Understandably many people across the country believe that this will have a hugely detrimental impact on pupils both now and into their future.

In order to assist these constituents , I would be grateful if you could advise what action the Scottish Government will be taking to prevent such a crisis.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Pauline McNeill MSP

Regional Office: 423 Paisley Road West, Glasgow G51 1PZ | T: 0141 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Please note my working days are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

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

Sent: 17 May 2021 21:37

To: McNeill P (Pauline), MSP <Pauline.McNeill.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Concerns about unreasonable levels of stress induced by alternate school assessment program.

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 McNeill

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)], 16, and I am writing to you as one of my SP representatives to raise concerns about the unreasonable levels of stress induced by the alternate assessment system currently underway.

To properly share how unreasonable and unfair I find it, I would like to draw comparison to non-COVID years and their Exams.

In the 5 subjects I currently study, I would usually be subject to 6 days of examination over the course of a month. This year that number is 20 which - taking weekends into account - is practically an exam every day for that month. I use the word "exam" because that is the most accurate choice of word. I also have 2 exams in a day on a few occasions.

Possibly more infuriating is the miscommunication between the SQA, Students/teachers and the general public - who seem to be under the impression exams are cancelled and so afford students no leeway with regards to scheduling of extra curricular activities among other things.

Some friends have even described the constant "Exams are cancelled" and "This system is flexible" rhetoric as akin to gaslighting.

I hope you will fulfill your role in raising concerns in whatever method/s you deem appropriate as to properly represent the youth of your region.

Best regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 37: Email, Liam McArthur MSP - FAO Education Secretary: Exams

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** McArthur L (Liam), MSP
Sent: 20 May 2021 13:41
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FAO Education Secretary: Exams

Dear Shirley-Ann,

Congratulations firstly on your appointment as Education Secretary and I wish you well in this new and vitally important role.

I write to raise concerns shared by constituents about this year's exams replacement and to reinforce my belief that this is the most pressing issue in your ministerial in-tray. Indeed, that would appear to be a view widely held within the sector as well as by many pupils and parents.

One constituent writes: *"I have watched as our daughter... has become increasingly weary, despondent and exhausted - and she is not alone in this group of young people. She, as with her peers, has spent the best part of the last year learning from home, with teachers uploading work online - but due to constraints on teachers, very little live lessons happened and so these youngsters have been largely self-taught. On return to school, there have been never-ending tests, forming part of the teacher's assessment process for deciding final grades. This has been a wearying and demoralising experience, no matter how motivated the student, and I believe that [she] is ordinarily very motivated, and diligent, but she has reached a really low ebb - as have many of her peers."*

Mental wellbeing has not been helped by the apparent widespread decision to avoid periods of study leave, placing even more pressure on pupils to revise while also maintaining normal schooling.

I urge you to address the issues being raised head on, and intervene to ensure that pupils best interests are put first. My colleague Beatrice Wishart has already stressed the need for quick access to counselling services for those who need them, and to make this support clearly available. I would fully support this call.

The anxiety around this years' assessments cannot be left to linger on. I hope that you will act quickly and decisively.

I look forward to hearing from you and again wish you well in your new role.

Kind regards,

Liam

Liam McArthur
Liberal Democrat, Orkney

Scottish Parliament Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Tel: 0131 348 5815 Fax: 0131 348 5807

Constituency Office: 14 Palace Road, Kirkwall, Orkney KW15 1PA

Tel: 01856 876541 Fax: 01856 876162

 [Liam McArthur](#)  [@Liam4Orkney](#)  [Liam McArthur](#)

**Enclosure 38: Email, Angela Constance MSP - (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])
SQA Assessment process**

From: Angela Constance MSP <Angela.Constance.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 21 May 2021 12:00

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]) SQA Assessment process

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Please see attached letter from Angela Constance MSP regarding a constituent's concerns about the SQA assessment process. Angela would be grateful if you could comment on this in order to allow her to respond to the constituent.

Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Angela Constance MSP

Almond Valley Constituency

Tel: 01506 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 38.1: PDF attachment

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Re: SQA Assessments

I am writing on behalf of a constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who recently contacted me regarding

concerns she has about the SQA assessment process. I have copied [Redacted s38(1)(b)] email below

and would be grateful if you could comment on her concerns.

Are you aware that the SQA at this late stage are still making adjustments to the assessment

and marking criteria for Higher and Advanced Highers?

My daughter has become a shadow of herself, she is physically unwell with the stress of these assessments. She is only sitting 2 Adv Highers and 1 Higher but has to do 14 assessments over a 5 week period. There is no study leave, she is still attending lessons everyday.

These poor kids have been through the mill due to the uncertainty they have been plunged into due to Covid. Her future hangs on the outcome of last year and this year. Yet the SQA sees it fit to keep changing goalposts and it's to the detriment of my child's health.

My daughter sat 6 assessments in the last two weeks. She has another 8 over the next two weeks. Last week when she sat these they were to make up 40% of her final grade. Today I find out because of changes by the SQA the school has had to re-evaluate this and they will now make up only 30%. The plan is the remaining 60/70% is to be made up of the "unseen" SQA papers.

Across the country schools are doing things differently. Unseen papers are being leaked on social media. Some teachers are dropping hints to pupil about the papers and others aren't. This programme of assessment is unfair. And changing the published grading/marking in the middle of the programme is a joke. The whole thing is a farce and my child's health and well-being, along with many others, is being impacted.

How has this been allowed after last year? This situation is worse than it was then at least there was reasonable excuse. There is no reasonable excuse for making my child unwell this year. There has been plenty time for planning compared to then.

This is unfair. Can you do something to stop the SQA mucking about with things? It feels like they are trying to set out kids up for failure. This situation is not their fault. Not all kids

and teachers are looking to cheat the system. They just want things to be fair and honest too. They think they know what's happening and then it's all change again. They cannot catch a break.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this enquiry and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 39: Email, Joe FitzPatrick MSP - Constituent Query - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: Joe FitzPatrick MSP <joe.fitzpatrick.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 21 May 2021 14:05
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Constituent Query - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Good Afternoon,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Please see below an email I have received from my above-mentioned constituent. I would be very grateful for any advice you could offer on this matter.

Thank you,
Joe FitzPatrick MSP (Dundee City West)
a: 37 Dock Street, Dundee, DD1 3DR
t: 01382 843244
w: joe.fitzpatrick.scot

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 17 May 2021 13:27
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Subject: "End of year assessments"

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 Fitzpatrick,

I am deeply concerned by the way in which the Scottish government has dealt with our education system over the past few months as a result of exams being announced as cancelled in September of 2020 the pupils of all Scottish high schools were given a false sense of security and I feel as if this is unfair and that the Scottish government has treated us unfairly. My concern is that due to the false sense of security we were given in September and that it has now been taken away from us not only does that affect our grades and our qualifications but it affects our mental health to, overall this could've all been dealt with a long time ago and I do not understand why we could not just work our way through this as said back in September with a system based on evidence. Not only has the Scottish government put a strain on pupils but they have also put a lot of pressure on teachers to by giving them the work that the SQA should be doing and paying them less. Overall what I am trying to say here is why put all of us under this un needed pressure when you could have found a way around this.

Much appreciated, [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Enclosure 40: email, Colin Beattie MSP - MSP Colin Beattie -SQA Assessments
(Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])**

From: Colin Beattie MSP <colin.beattie.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 24 May 2021 13:12
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: MSP Colin Beattie -SQA Assessments (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Colleagues

Please find attached a letter regarding SQA Assessments for the attention of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

Kind regards
Colin

Colin Beattie MSP
Midlothian North and Musselburgh

Scottish Parliament Constituency Office
M3.05 164 High Street
Holyrood Dalkeith
Edinburgh EH22 1AY
EH99 1SP Tel: 0131 454 0204
Tel: 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 40.1: PDF Attachment

Dear Ms Somerville,

SQA Assessments

I have been contacted by many of my constituents with concerns over this year's SQA Assessments.

Many have contacted me regarding their dissatisfaction and the pressure this now puts on their children after a period of home learning and feel their children are not adequately equipped to undertake any assessments.

Their comments go as follows:

"The current system for examinations for this year were cancelled by the Scottish Government earlier this year and we as parents were told that our children's exam results would be based on ongoing assessments throughout the school year most of which has been home learning until just recently now the students are being barraged with examinations that have been determined by the SQA not assessments by teachers as the first minister said they would be This is causing tremendous strain and stress on an already stressed student population, this fell is very unfair and against what the First Minister promised the students .

This seems to be heading in the same direction as last years unmitigated disaster to the exam results as last year this caused undue stress to my son and many others These students are the country's future and are being treated badly once again due to the disastrous way this is being handled by the SQA again this needs to be clarified are these exams assessments as the First Minister said they were are they just normal exams under the disguise of assessments."

"My daughter is in 4th year at [school] and already suffers from anxiety and depression. I can't even begin to tell you how much added pressure this has put on her. The teachers are also badly affected and whilst not meaning to are adding to the kids stress."

"I have two children in 5th year studying higher. They have returned to school in March following an absence from school from mid November due to Covid. Both my husband and I are keyworkers and like many others have tried our very best to support our children however we are not teachers especially at this stage of our children's education. I'm sure you will recognise the pressure and stress on our young people during this year however I am so concerned about this mounting pressure as I do not feel this is being recognised. I was dismayed to hear on return to school that the sqa had sent forward papers for schools to complete. We now have a timetable of formal assessments to be completed at the end of April/May with approximately 14 assessments across (5 higher). I am so concerned about what we are doing to our young people at this stage when they are already exhausted and stressed through no fault of their own.

I am also so aware that my children are fortunate as they have had support at home. I see young people around them disengaging from formal education as they have, through no fault of their own been unable to engage to complete online learning and are now completely lost. They have missed too much of the course content and will fail therefore disadvantaged children are further disadvantaged with a disastrous effect on their future and mental health and wellbeing. Surely no child should come out of this pandemic and leave school feeling a failure.

I am so concerned and scared that no one can see what is happening within schools or listening. Teachers and schools are dedicated to try and support children however the sqa guidance is so concerning and teachers assessment does not seem to be recognised."

I would be grateful if you could address the above concerns and advise:

What the Scottish Government are doing to address the stress and anxiety SQA assessments are causing children such as the above parents describe?

What support is being put in places for students?

What support is being put in places for teachers and schools?

How do we ensure no child is disadvantaged due to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Will teacher's assessment be seriously considered?

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosure 41: Email, Michael Marra MSP - Correspondence sent on behalf of Michael Marra MSP

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Sent: 24 May 2021 15:44
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Correspondence sent on behalf of Michael Marra MSP

Upload to MiCase as MR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] (she/her)
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
T: 0131 [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)]@Parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Somerville S (Shirley-Anne), MSP
Sent: 22 May 2021 17:05
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Correspondence sent on behalf of Michael Marra MSP

Good afternoon,

Please find below an email we have received at Shirley-Anne's 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)]
Sent: 21 May 2021 09:49
To: Somerville S (Shirley-Anne), MSP <Shirley-Anne.Somerville.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Correspondence sent on behalf of Michael Marra MSP

Dear Ms Somerville,

Please find below correspondence I am sending on behalf of Michael Marra MSP.

We look forward to receiving your response – I would appreciate it if Michael Marra's email address could be cc'd into any response as well.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Labour Support Unit

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

Dear Ms Somerville,

I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. I wish you well in your new role and look forward to working with you in the best interests of the country.

You will be as acutely aware as I the significant challenges within our education system. Many of these have emerged from and during the pandemic, but many – not least the vast and stubborn attainment gap - are long standing issues which have seen little progress for far too long.

SQA Assessments

The immediate priority is the current exams crisis which is impacting tens of thousands of young people, their teachers and their families right now. Your predecessors insistence that there are no exams being undertaken did a disservice to the process that young people are currently undertaking with all their effort. It is clear that lessons from last year's exams fiasco have not be learned, and that this year's alternative assessment system has the potential to be more damaging than the one used last year.

We must focus on what can be done from this point to improve the outcomes and operation of the system:

Firstly, there is an urgent need for you and the SQA to publish the appeals process. It is unforgivable that young people and their teachers have been entered into this process, with no clarity regarding how it will conclude.

Secondly, there is a need to implement a 'resit' guarantee, so that young people who feel they have been let down by the alternative processes over these two years can access a college place to sit their qualifications again.

Thirdly, government should engage with colleges and universities to ensure that there is a no detriment policy for accessing further or higher education. No young person should lose out due to the handling of the alternative system of assessment.

I am keen to work with you in ensuring improvements can be made.

Covid Guidance in Higher Education

I have been in contact with many colleagues in Higher Education who are concerned regarding their plans for campus return. Our institutions are of course seeking to use their campuses in the most efficient and safest way from the autumn semester.

There is urgent need for clarity surrounding the Covid guidance – particularly in relation to social distancing – within the sector. If you were in a position to issue an update on these matters as soon as possible, it would be gratefully received.

Best Wishes,

Michael Marra MSP

Enclosure 42: Email, Alexander Burnett MSP - Sharing of exam papers and content

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@Parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Burnett A (Alexander), MSP
Sent: 24 May 2021 17:17
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Sharing of exam papers and content

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills,

Please see below for a letter from one of my constituent's regarding leaked assessment papers across social media and the impact this may have on students' results.

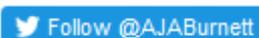
They have not yet received a response to their original letter to John Swinney MSP, the previous Cabinet Secretary, and I would be grateful if you could please issue a response to my constituent and copy me in to your reply.

All the best,

Alex

Alexander Burnett

Constituency MSP for Aberdeenshire West
Shadow Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands
Room [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP
Office: 0131 3485 642
www.alexanderburnett.com
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ajaburnett/>



From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Date: 10 May 2021 at 10:12:49 BST
To: DFMCS@gov.scot
Subject: Sharing of exam papers and content

Dear John Swinney MSP,

Please could you let me know what you are doing about the content of the current 'tests' being freely available on the internet, shared between and within schools and on tick tock. Teenagers have been through a lot lately and are now being faced with the moral dilemma of should we cheat for our exams as the content is freely available and everyone is doing it. I have found this moral dilemma difficult to deal with and yet more stress for my teenager to cope with. She has decided to not look at any exam content in advance and has turned down offers of friends wanting to share information with her but I'm sure she will now be at a disadvantage as she has chosen to do the right thing when many will not.

These exams have been poorly thought out and I would like to know what you are going to do to ensure fairness and equity, especially for those who have decided to not look at or share exam content.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

Enclosure 43: Email, Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP - Congratulations on your re-election; SQA assessments (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP <shirley-anne.somerville.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 25 May 2021 10:30

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Congratulations on your re-election; SQA assessments (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Good morning,

Please find below details of an enquiry that Shirley-Anne has received from a constituent with regard to an Education matter.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] contact details are at the foot of his enquiry, and his email address is [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

The constituent is aware that our office has passed on details of his enquiry.

With best wishes,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Shirley-Anne Somerville
MSP for Dunfermline**

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

Tel: 01383 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ShirleyAnne4Dunfermline/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/S_A_Somerville

Please sign up here to Shirley-Anne's new sletter <http://eepurl.com/cD5Aji>

For all the latest news and updates from Shirley-Anne on her work as MSP for Dunfermline.

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

Sent: 14 May 2021 18:02

To: Somerville S (Shirley-Anne), MSP

Subject: Congratulations on your re-election; SQA assessments

Dear Ms Somerville,

Congratulations on your re-election! I wish you all the best for the coming five years of the new parliament, not least with the considerable challenge of dealing with the Covid pandemic and its long-term consequences for our country and our people.

I am writing urgently to you as my constituency MSP in relation to the SQA qualifications crisis that my own son is experiencing in person as he sits his National 5 examinations this month and into next. As well as being a parent, I sit on the parent councils at [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. What has been clear to me throughout the pandemic has been the superhuman efforts that schools, teachers and pupils have put in to cope with the various lockdowns, with the challenges of online learning and with periods of self-isolation. I have been so impressed with them all, not least because they continue to have to deal with incredible and unfair pressure. At times I have myself seen senior teachers close to tears as a result of the stress. My own son, who is a bright, studious boy, has found it really tough going in

recent months. Clearly, many pupils will not give of their best as a result of what they are going through. As always, it is the most vulnerable in our society who will suffer most.

The pandemic is an unprecedented event and all we can do is the best we can to muddle through. It's inevitable that there will be plenty of 'fire fighting' and mistakes will be made. I can accept that and believe that if someone is doing their best, you can't ask for more. So the 2020 SQA exam diet was always going to be really difficult for everyone, both because there was still lockdown, but also because the SQA, local authorities and schools really did not have much time to react at all.

In my view, however, 2021 should have been completely different. As a parent, I expected to be told by the SQA when school resumed in August last year what the assessment arrangements would be under a range of lockdown scenarios – no further lockdowns, sporadic local lockdowns or – as we saw in the end – a very substantial further lockdown between Christmas and Easter this year. Under each scenario, I expected to be told what assessment would look like, i.e. whether or not there would be exams, what the timelines would be and what the arrangements for appeals would be, for example. A well-run organisation would have managed the inevitable fire fighting in the short term, but would also have done everything it could to plan ahead in order to avoid the need for more, unnecessary, fire fighting in future. That is just common sense and seemed obvious to me. As August went on and there was radio silence from the SQA, I started to worry. I became increasingly alarmed in October, when guidance from SQA was not delivered on time. When it did eventually arrive, I was disappointed with the quality of guidance but at least reassured by the SQA stating that pupils would be assessed on three or four pieces of evidence generated throughout the school year. But it did not take long for my worries to deepen again as it became clear that schools were still in the dark as to what would constitute good evidence. Then, of course, we had the complete about turn in April when the SQA decided that exams would be required after all and schools were left scrambling to try to find a way to deliver that in a way that gave pupils a fighting chance of revising in advance and not being overburdened.

Once again, I am so impressed with the way that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] have coped with this challenge, but the arrangements for exams are not what any of us would want to see. On any reasonable view, this has been a catastrophic failure of the Scottish education system, notably the SQA. And that is before we consider the alarmingly botched management of the arrangements themselves, such as the entirely predictable sharing of examination papers online which resulted from the SQA's own approach and its intemperate public statement on that matter this week. If I could see this crisis coming last autumn, why did the SQA and Ministers not see it too?

I am a big believer in taking responsibility for my actions and that is an attitude that we impress on our children. If we make a mistake, we acknowledge it, accept responsibility, learn the lesson and do not make the same mistake again. I therefore assumed that the Priestley review of the 2020 difficulties would have made recommendations that would have avoided the same – and, indeed, worse – failures recurring in 2021. Our lived experience is that the SQA, in particular, has simply not learned those lessons, let alone put appropriate measures in place to ensure that the same failures do not recur.

I am not one of those people whose reaction to any government failing is to call for someone's resignation. I recall being in a public meeting in relation to the Masterton Primary School capacity issue in the early days where an angry parent demanded to know from Douglas Chapman, then Education Convenor, who was going to get the sack as a result. I thought that was a silly reaction and it was much better to engage constructively to make the best of a bad job for my children. This I did and ended up with a very good alternative arrangement for them at [Redacted s38(1)(b)].

However, this situation is different. It is not a one off failure, but the repetition of a previous very serious failure affecting thousands of pupils, in many cases with implications that will last the rest of their lives. Given that lessons have not been learned, those responsible must be held accountable. To do otherwise will be to risk further serious failures in future. I am afraid that that means that a root and branch review of the SQA must be instituted as soon as possible and, in the meantime, both the CEO and the Chair must either resign or be dismissed. Their positions are untenable.

I also feel that Mr Swinney should step down from the education role when the First Minister reshuffles and freshens up her Cabinet. I found his answers on the topic in the parliament this afternoon, to put it kindly, underwhelming. For the avoidance of doubt, I am not suggesting that he should leave Ministerial office. I simply believe that we need a new Minister with a fresh approach, no 'baggage' and who is able to act decisively. I am sorry to say that Mr Swinney has been a

disappointing education Minister ever since he stepped back from his sensible proposals to empower schools in the face of opposition from vested interests. I believe that his talents would be better deployed elsewhere, perhaps in the economy brief, where I fear that we are facing an enormous challenge to jump start our economy and avoid significant job losses as a result of lockdown. We are where we are. We just have to muddle through and my focus is on supporting my son to do the best that he can. I am optimistic that he will emerge with results that reflect his ability. He will also have learned something about coping with adversity and coming through safely on the other side. But, like many parents, I cannot understate how angered I am with the way that Ministers, the SQA and the Scottish educational establishment have, for a second year in a row, let our young people down. The longer this issue festers with those responsible wasting time and energy trying to avoid blame, the worse it will be both politically and, more importantly, for our young people. This time, 'lessons have been learned' is not an acceptable response. We must have a fresh start.

You may well take a different view. But I can assure you that I have yet to come across a parent in a similar situation who sees matters differently from me. I hope that you will use your influence in government to press for the change that we desperately needed.

With best regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 44: Email, Ash Denham MSP - (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 25 May 2021 11:53
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: (Case Ref: AD8174)

Good morning Minister

Firstly, many congratulations on your new post. Our office looks forward to working with you on matters relevant to your brief.

I am [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and contact you today as such in relation to a young constituent of ours who wrote from the heart on the subject of his experience in S6. To preserve his message, I have copied his email in full below. We have his permission to do so.

"Dear Ash Denham,

Firstly congratulations on being re-elected as the MSP for the Edinburgh Eastern Constituency.

I'm writing to you as an S6 student of [Redacted s38(1)(b)], I believe it's an absolute scandal for all S4-S6 pupils being told in December of 2020 once again our exams would be cancelled after the previous school year missing around 3 months of education. Then from January to March of 2021 having to be taught online, which came to be a real struggle.

We are now having to sit these SQA "assessments" which I'm sorry to say are even worse than just sitting normal exams. Instead of sitting just one exam for each subject now I'm sitting three times the amount I previously would have. On top of this pupils haven't been given any exam leave to fit in the well needed revision, we have to go from class to class sitting test after test then a hopeless amount of revision at home.

I don't understand how the Scottish Parliament decided this was the best way for pupils to be assessed. After collectively all having the worst year of our lives to now being put into a situation where it's virtually impossible to do well in these tests. It's not only damaging for our mental health it's incredibly frustrating that the people who are running our country think this is the right way for us young people to be treated.

I strongly believe that this way of assessments needs to be revised and a more helpful less damaging way of getting our grades need to be constructed.

I hope you will carefully consider what I have said.

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

This is not an isolated experience and several young people, or their parents, have made contact recently about the SQA assessments and their perception that they do not sit well with the "No detriment" message from the Scottish government.

We look forward to receiving any information or advice that you may be able to offer to [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and other young people in similar circumstances. As always, your time and consideration is greatly appreciated.

Best wishes

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Ash Denham MSP
Edinburgh Eastern Constituency

Enclosure 45: Email, Oliver Mundell MSP - School assessments N5, Highers & Advance Highers.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Mundell O (Oliver), MSP
Sent: 27 May 2021 10:00
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: School assessments N5, Highers & Advance Highers.

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Please see below an email from one of my constituents highlighting concerns about his 16 year old son's school assessments.

I should be grateful if you could provide a response setting out the Government's thoughts on how to address these concerns and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

I appreciate that you have also been copied into the original email.

Regards
Oliver

Oliver Mundell MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Dumfriesshire

✉ oliver.mundell.msp@parliament.scot
☎ [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
📠 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@live.com>
Sent: 23 May 2021 15:11
To: Mundell O (Oliver), MSP <Oliver.Mundell.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Somerville S (Shirley-Anne), MSP <Shirley-Anne.Somerville.msp@parliament.scot>; Marra M (Michael), MSP <Michael.Marra.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Rennie W (Willie), MSP <Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: School assessments N5, Highers & Advance Highers.

Dear Mr Mundell

I write to you as MSP for Dumfries and Galloway.

I live in [Redacted s38(1)(b)] where he is in S4 and currently undergoing his N5 tests / exams. It is in regards to these tests / exams that I write to you specifically to seek assistance in addressing what is a wholly unfair and socially unequal decision by the SQA and Scottish Government in the manner in which pupils will be assessed this year.

The COVID 19 pandemic has led to the academy pupils being taught for large periods of the year by PowerPoint presentations. In fact, only 1 of my son's teachers actually interacted with the pupils and presented to them via zoom. As part of my employment, I have to undergo online training and know first-hand how difficult it is to understand and retain information without that personal delivery and reinforcement.

In addition to this the level of work requested by his teachers was reduced as they had concerns for the pupil's mental health. This resulted in the pupils only doing half a timetable and as such only half of the work.

Throughout lockdown there was no mention of the pupils having to sit tests IF they were to return to school. Instead, we, as parents, were led to believe that all grades would be determined by work that was submitted by them during lockdown.

It was only when my son returned to school that we discovered that within a few weeks he would be expected to sit tests which would effectively determine his future and the type of employment that he could hope to pursue for the rest of his working life.

In normal years pupils would then have been given study leave to prepare for these tests however all pupils were expected to attend all of their timetabled lessons.

In addition to this the tests are being conducted within the normal timetable so my son for example has had to attend lessons all day before sitting a maths test during the last 2 periods. Hardly effective preparation.

After the second week (there are 4 weeks in all) in which he has already completed his Maths, English and Chemistry test, he is now being told that he can have study leave for the remaining 2 weeks. This is ridiculous and has come far too late.

It is apparent to me that this whole process is setting pupils up to fail and this cannot be accepted. I base this opinion on the following points

1. there was no consideration for the difficulty that pupils may have in readjusting to school life after months of solitude and isolation after the stress that the pandemic has brought
2. pupils are being tested on topics in which they have never been given face to face tuition
3. they were not provided with sufficient warning to prepare for the tests
4. the process of requiring pupils to attend school on a full-time basis has not been conducive to allowing them to mentally prepare for the tests
5. the timing of the tests within the school day has not been properly thought out with fatigue a factor in tests completed late in the school day
6. the pressure of these tests are severely impacting on the mental health of the pupils. From a personal perspective we have experienced tearful outbursts and sleepless nights with my son worrying that he hasn't gained the marks required to achieve the grades he needs for highers

In addition to this the process appears to take no account of those pupils who are from less advantaged homes. The process has not considered those that have dysfunctional homes (for

example those that are either affected by drug, alcohol, etc.) those in poverty and without access to suitable devices and internet connections, or even households where the pupils were not encouraged to complete their online learning, instead we, as a society, as effectively 'writing these kids off'.

I am aware that those sitting highers and advanced highers will be experiencing the same issues.

As MSP I implore you to take this issue forwards and to seek, if possible, cross party support to have the manner in which the pupils are assessed changed to a fairer system where 'everyone and not the few' can succeed.

I am happy to discuss this further should you so wish.

This is not about politics but about the success of our future generation and for this reason I have copied members of SNP, labour and liberal democrats into this email.

Please contact me if you require.

Regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 46: Email, Richard Lochhead MSP - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: Richard Lochhead MSP <richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 28 May 2021 12:03
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Cc: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

FAO: Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Dear Shirley-Anne

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

I have been contacted by the above named constituent regarding his daughter's exams.

Please find below a copy of the correspondence I have received from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] which, I hope, is self-explanatory.

I have been in discussion with [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and they suggested an email to yourself, as they are also very concerned.

My daughter is currently sitting exams (despite assurances by SQA that it would not be graded this way) at school which are being graded by SQA and these will form the result she gets. The education minister as good as admitted to me that schools are being examined formally just under a different name.

My daughter [Redacted s38(1)(b)] is sitting advanced higher chemistry and this was to be done by agreement with schools at [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. It was to be a 4 hour per week course. However the [Redacted s38(1)(b)] only gave 1 hour per week and did not achieve the full syllabus. My daughter has gone from a straight A student to a C in chemistry. The school have discussed it with us and have stated that both the exams and the course were farcical. A number of high achiever students are in the same position. Let down by both [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and the SQA.

She is due to start University to study medicine in September based on 3 Bs at advanced higher (although others have a conditional on 3 Bs at higher only). Explain why higher and advanced higher are graded the same?

The promises by the SNP and the SQA that students will not sit exams is a downright lie. These are SQA exams and the kids are being graded on the results. For anyone to say these are not exams is blatantly lying.

To see such high achiever students dropping grades so dramatically is a real worry. These are students who were all set to study medicine based on conditional offers.

I would be grateful if you could investigate the points raised by [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and provide me with a response that I can then share with my constituent.

I have also raised the issues around [Redacted s38(1)(b)] daughter's advanced higher chemistry course with [Redacted s38(1)(b)].

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you.

With my best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Richard

Richard Lochhead MSP for Moray

80 South Street | Elgin | IV30 1JG

t: 01343 545077 | e: richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot

Twitter: [@RichardLochhead](https://twitter.com/RichardLochhead) | facebook.com/RichardLochheadMSP

Enclosure 47: Email, Colin Beattie MSP - National 5 Assessments (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Colin Beattie MSP <colin.beattie.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 01 June 2021 11:38

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>

Subject: National 5 Assessments (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Good Morning

Please find letter for your attention.

Kind regards

Colin Beattie

Colin Beattie MSP

Midlothian North and Musselburgh

Scottish Parliament Constituency Office

M3.05 164 High Street

Holyrood Dalkeith

Edinburgh EH22 1AY

EH99 1SP Tel: 0131 454 0204

Tel: 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

-

Enclosure 47.1: PDF attachment

Dear Jamie

National 5 Assessments

I have been contacted by constituents who are concerned at the proposals for this summer's National 5 students.

Literature sent from the schools indicate that they propose to undertake a traditional / exam based approach to assessment. My constituent advises:

...It is unclear from this correspondence how a 'final grade' will be determined - but it does seem that exam success seems to be very important and that some children will be under considerable pressure throughout May. As a result of lockdown teaching I think it is fair to say that National 5 students have not developed exam skills this year - have not had a chance to practice revision and indeed for this set of 'exams' will not have study leave in which to hone these skills.

I understand no algorithm will be applied to results this year but don't understand how a fair and representative grade can be awarded as a result of the individual and differing approaches being taken across Scotland to National 5.

Can you clarify how National 5 assessments will be carried out this year; and How inconsistency across the approaches of different schools and local authorities will be moderated?

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosure 48: Email, Joe FitzPatrick MSP - Constituent Issue (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Joe FitzPatrick MSP <joe.fitzpatrick.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 01 June 2021 16:45
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: Constituent Issue (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Good afternoon,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I have been contacted by the abovementioned constituent with the following concern.

Can you tell me exactly what the procedure is for the marking of the exams for 2021. I have heard from a reliable source that this will need the pupil's teacher, then an other teacher the same department within the school and then teacher from an external school also marking the paper before it then goes to the SQA. before a final mark is given. This does not equate to what the public are led to believe by the Scottish Government, that the marking will be done by the teacher only. I look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

If possible can you offer any information regarding the matter?

Thank you,

Joe FitzPatrick MSP (Dundee City West)
a: 37 Dock Street, Dundee, DD1 3DR
t: 01382 843244
w: joe.fitzpatrick.scot

Enclosure 49: Email, [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: Richard Lochhead MSP <richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 03 June 2021 12:57
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Cc: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear Shirley-Anne

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

I have been contacted by the above named constituent regarding his assessments.

Please find below a copy of the correspondence I have received from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] which, I hope, is self-explanatory.

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)], currently a pupil sitting Higher exams in Moray. Today I am writing to you about an issue troubling me and many other pupils throughout Scotland at the moment, our assessments.

Although the SQA said there was no need for centres to replicate a full exam diet this year, I am sitting prelims and full exams for all of my classes within an even shorter period of time than I would've sat my actual exams, and being told these are the only evidence that will contribute to my grades this year. They're not called exams, although they're literally provided by the SQA in exam format.

This stress coupled with the fact we missed multiple months of school that's affected mine and my colleagues understanding of course material, yet we're being told by the government, and teachers that were not more disadvantaged than any other year group.

It's having a negative mental health affect on many, and I mean many of my fellow students and the government hasn't attempted to offer any widespread support to students.

I just want to know how the government can justify this process, and continue to pass it off as exams have been cancelled although we're just sitting the exact same things under an alias.

I would be grateful if you could investigate the points raised by [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and provide me with a response that I can then share with my constituent.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you.

With my best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Richard

Richard Lochhead MSP for Moray
80 South Street | Elgin | IV30 1JG

t: 01343 545077 | e: Richard.Lochhead.msp@parliament.scot
Twitter: @RichardLochhead | facebook.com/RichardLochheadMSP

Enclosure 50: Email, Keith Brown MSP - MSP Enquiry: Evidence for SQA Awards

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

Sent: 04 June 2021 17:05

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Subject: MSP Enquiry: Evidence for SQA Awards

Good afternoon,

Please find attached an enquiry from Keith Brown MSP regarding a constituent's concerns about what evidence is used to assess pupils' performance in their SQA courses this year. I have also attached the text of an email the constituent sent to the SQA but is yet to have a response to.

If I can be of any assistance with the enquiry, please let me know.

Best wishes,

Shona

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Keith Brown MSP

MSP for Clackmannanshire and Dunblane

01259 219333

Enclosure 50.1: PDF attachment

Dear Shirley-Anne

Evidence for SQA awards

As MSP for Clackmannanshire and Dunblane, I have been contacted by a concerned parent who would like to see more evidence considered in the awarding of SQA awards this academic year.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] believes that SQA awards should use inferred attainment from teachers' professional judgement, taking into consideration all assessments that have been carried out throughout the academic year. Her son is currently under the care of CAMHS after having a mental health crisis in January, but his school insist that they are unable to use much of the evidence and assessments gathered before Christmas as evidence for his grades [Redacted s38(1)(b)] believes that this goes against the advice given on the SQA website, and will put many young people who were unable to fully engage with online learning at a distinct disadvantage.

My constituent does not believe that his grades should be calculated based on assessments which she considers to be exams in all but name. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] son is currently in the middle of sitting 15 assessments to provide evidence for his four Highers. She does not feel that his extenuating circumstances have been taken into consideration as he is required to sit the same assessments as his school peers who have significantly different experiences of engaging with online learning.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is deeply concerned about the strain this is placing on the mental health of all Scottish school pupils. She believes that changing the type of evidence that can be used when assessing the achievements of young people to include all assessments carried out since the start of the academic year would better serve both teachers and pupils.

I have also attached for your attention the text of the original email which [Redacted s38(1)(b)] sent to the SQA. I look forward to your full and prompt response, which I will share with my constituent.

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 50.2: PDF attachment

Text of email from constituent to SQA

Dear SQA

Please stop telling everyone that the exams have been cancelled for 2021. They have not. They might be called assessments, they might be during class time and they might be done flexibly so not a whole subject is being examined at once....but they are EXAMS.

My son had a major mental health crisis in January and wasn't able to engage fully with online learning. In fact our school did minimal actual online teaching, they just sent out hundreds of powerpoints and sets of notes. So my son tried as best as he could but struggled horrendously and the school is fully aware of this. CAMHS asked for him to be back to face to face teaching from early March but that didn't happen. CAMHS is still involved in his care.

Most of our teenagers have been at school for a maximum of 15 weeks over the last year. And yet you are expecting them to be able to answer exam style questions with minimal teaching, minimal preparation time and in much greater depth and length than a standard higher. For example higher physics is in total 3 hours long but this year but son's physics assessments are over 9 hours in total. He is having 2 hour papers on units that would normally be 3 or 4 questions. And the school is telling us that all of the assessments that they did in class (under proper test conditions) before Christmas cannot be used as the SQA says that they are not of the right level / standard.

You say that results can only be awarded on "demonstrated attainment" and that assessments are the only way that our teenagers can demonstrate their knowledge but this is putting a ridiculous amount of additional pressure on them. This is not a usual / normal year and exams / assessments should not be used to award grades. All assessments that they have done since August 2020 should be allowed to be included as evidence. Stop this nonsense of dictating to the schools and teachers as to whether a piece of work is good enough or at the right standard. When these assessments were done, Highers were still on so therefore they would have been at the right standard for that time in the course.

You have also said that allowance can be made for those young people who were not able to engage with teaching during lockdown but our school has said that there is no actual provision for this and that my son has to sit the same assessments as everyone else.

In England, the Department for Education has said that young people do not need to be examined on the elements of work that were covered during lockdown. But here our young people are having to cover everything with the papers being moderated by other schools just to check that they haven't missed anything.

Please please use teacher professional judgement and infer attainment for those young people who, through no fault of their own, were not able to be at school and be taught properly. Many were unable to engage with online learning, many others were self isolating with schools not sending out work.

There is already a mental health crisis but you are adding fuel to the fire. Our teachers are despairing that they cannot use their professional judgement this year when they were allowed to do it last year.

Come on SQA, change the type of evidence that can be used for the sake of our teenagers and before many of them decide that they cannot take the pressure any longer.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 51: Email, Richard Lochhead MSP - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: Richard Lochhead MSP <richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 07 June 2021 14:05

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

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

Dear Shirley-Anne

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

I have been contacted by the above named constituent regarding assessments for national qualifications.

Please find below a copy of the correspondence I have received from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] which, I hope, is self-explanatory.

I wanted to reach out and ask for clarity regarding this years exams for S4/S5/S6 pupils. These pupils were promised by Scottish Government that their grades this year would be the result of continual assessment and not through exams.

It has been quite a shock for these pupils to now be thrust into exams - that some insist on calling anything but exams - but which are sat under exam conditions, and being told that the grades from these exams will inform, at least in part, their final grades.

My daughter is in S4. This is her first senior exam year and she is anxious about sitting exams, particularly for some of her weaker subjects. At the start of the school year, we began dialogue with private tutors to help her feel as prepared as she could be for these exams. When the announcement was made to grade pupils this year via continual assessment, our family agreed that there was no need to pay for expensive tuition so we ceased all agreements with the tutors.

My daughter has anxiety around sitting exams and this years sudden changes have done nothing but exacerbate them. It is a huge concern for us that her anxieties are now compounded and could impact her ability to achieve as she progresses through her education. We will work hard over the coming 12 months to reverse this issue but many families will likely struggle. Indeed, I would be concerned that some children may be encouraged to give up on their education altogether. I'm sure you can agree that this was an entirely avoidable situation.

Our children have worked hard at home under some of the most challenging circumstances and have done all they have been asked. To now be foisted into exam situations, often with little to no prep time is appalling and frankly, the pressure these pupils are now under is considerable. Some exams have been set with less than 48 hours notice and without any regard as to any other last minute deadlines that have been set by other subjects.

There have been several headlines this year from Scottish Government expressing concern regarding the mental health and wellbeing of young people during the pandemic. It seems that these concerns have been disregarded entirely with no consideration given to how these last minute exams are affecting the pupils.

I am emailing today to ask why the decision was made to change from continual assessment to include a large number of last minute exams? What recourse will pupils have if the pressure of these unexpected exams caused their grades to drop below expected levels? What is being done to support the mental wellbeing of children across Scotland facing difficulties due to this unexpected change?

I would be grateful if you could investigate the points raised by [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and provide me with a response that I can then share with my constituent.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you.

With my best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Richard

Richard Lochhead MSP for Moray
80 South Street | Elgin | IV30 1JG

t: 01343 545077 | e: Richard.Lochhead.msp@parliament.scot
Twitter: @RichardLochhead | facebook.com/RichardLochheadMSP

Enclosure 52: Email, Sue Webber MSP - Sue Webber MSP - school assessments

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Webber S (Sue), MSP
Sent: 08 June 2021 14:13
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: Sue Webber MSP - school assessments

Dear Shirley-Anne,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I have been contacted by the above named constituent in my region concerned her daughter is being disadvantaged by inconsistencies in approach by schools in this year's certification process.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] daughter is undertaking Nat5 qualifications at her local high school, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] She advises, despite the cancellation of the exam diet, she has one attempt to complete the Nat5 assessment, under exam conditions, the outcome of which will form the majority of her final grade, along with the results of other assessments, however, pupils at the nearby private school, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] I am advised, are being given the opportunity to sit the assessment multiple times in order to improve their grades.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] advises this puts her daughter and other pupils at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] at a disadvantage to pupils at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] due to the differing approaches taken by the schools.

I would be grateful if you could advise what action is being taken to ensure schools are applying the guidance evenly, and providing consistency of approach between schools to ensure fairness for all pupils.

Kind Regards

Sue Webber MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Lothian Region
Shadow Minister for Drugs Policy

Room M3.11 Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP
E: Sue.Webber.msp@parliament.scot

T: 0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
www.facebook.com/SueWebberMSPLothian
<https://twitter.com/SueJWebber>

Enclosure 53: Email, Daniel Johnson MSP - Pupil survey from Daniel Johnson MSP

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

Sent: 08 June 2021 15:48

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Subject: Pupil survey from Daniel Johnson MSP

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a report from a pupil survey undertaken by Daniel Johnson MSP, in his constituency of Edinburgh Southern.

Daniel would appreciate if you could look into this as a matter of urgency and respond back to him.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Office of Daniel Johnson MSP | Edinburgh Southern

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

0131 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 53.1: Word attachment

SQA 'Assessments Process'

Edinburgh Southern pupils' responses

Daniel Johnson, MSP for Edinburgh Southern conducted a survey of local pupils who were undertaking SQA 'Formal Assessments' in his constituency in early June 2021.

There had been widespread concerns and a number of reports in the media about the strain being put on pupils by these tests, especially since both the Scottish Government and the SQA had previously stated there would be no formal examination diet. Both nationally and throughout the constituency it was becoming clear that many pupils and their parents were struggling with the pressure and felt let down by the process, especially given the experience last year.

Daniel received 230 responses to his online survey and the executive summary can be found below.

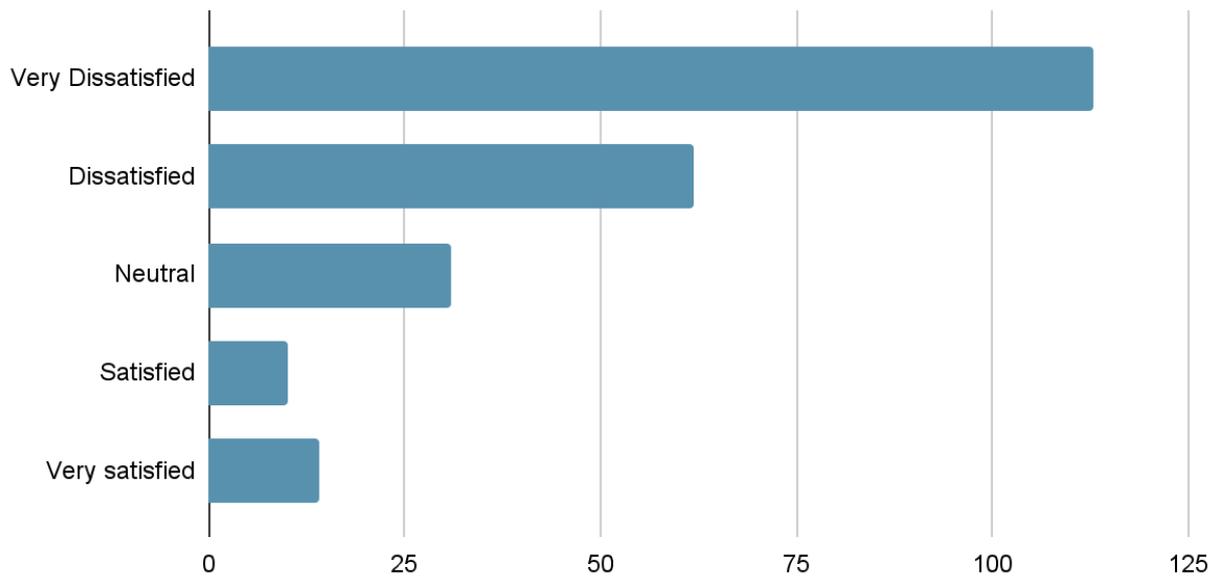
230 responses

Overall experience of SQA Assessments this year:

Very Dissatisfied	49%
Dissatisfied	28%
Neutral	13%
Satisfied	4%
Very Satisfied	6%

- 77% of respondents stated they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the SQA process this year.

How would you describe your overall experience of the SQA assessments this year?



- 73 of the responses specifically mentioned the **unfairness** in the system the past two years with 96 commenting on the **stress** and strain the whole debacle had caused them.

Having received such a large number of responses and a strong sense of feeling among the pupils in his constituency, Daniel will be writing to both the SQA and the Scottish Government to highlight the findings.

Enclosure 54: Email, Jenni Minto MSP - FW: SQA

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 16 June 2021 13:02
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Subject: SQA

THIS EMAIL HAS BEEN SENT ON BEHALF OF JENNI MINTO MSP:

Dear Shirley-Anne

I recently met with MSYP, Cameron Garrett regarding the SQA and I undertook to raise three points that he has made.

Firstly, in relation to the review of the SVQ he feels that more needs to be done to ensure that the voices of young people are heard. He is currently the only young member of the NQ Board, which he attends in a voluntary capacity, yet there are 18 board members in total, the majority education professionals. This makes it very hard to be heard and for the points he makes to be given appropriate weight. They also tend to send out the meeting notes at 6pm the evening before which give him very little time to prepare given he also works full time.

Secondly, as you will be aware, Cameron feels very passionately that there should be a change to the appeals process which ensures no detriment. This would mean that no student's grades could be downgraded from the original grade, only raised or remaining the same. This is because the SQA quality assurance should identify if there has been any significant concerns with the evidence provided and he is concerned that the fear of downgrading may put students off applying for an appeal.

Lastly, Cameron is concerned that exceptional circumstances are not being considered in these difficult times. It seem to him and those he represents that only Covid-19 can be an exceptional circumstance. He has friends who have had a parent die or are suffering from severe mental health difficulties but are being made to attend school as they will only obtain a grade of their evidence is taken in exam conditions. Would it not be possible for other coursework to be considered in these rare circumstances?

I have sympathy with the points Cameron has made and would be grateful if you could please advise what actions the Scottish Government are taking or planning to take to address these.

Kind regards

Jenni

Jenni Minto
MSP for Argyll and Bute
Email: Jenni.Minto.msp@parliament.scot
@jenni_minto | FB: JenniMintoSNP

Enclosure 55: Email, Jim Fairlie MSP - (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

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

Sent: 21 June 2021 16:43

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

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

Dear Ms Somerville,

Please find attached, a letter from Jim Fairlie MSP for your attention.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] for Jim Fairlie MSP

Enclosure 55.1: PDF attachment

Dear Shirley-Anne,

Re: Pupil assessments by teachers

I am writing on behalf of a constituent, : [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who recently contacted me with concerns about her son' s education.

: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] said her son is in S4 and sitting National 5 assessments. His teachers have written to her to suggest he should take National 4 assessments in some subjects as his results were not good.

: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] said her son is frustrated at the negative feedback and remarks he has received and she is finding it hard to motivate him to keep up his efforts. She is not convinced that her son will be able to perform any better covering some of these units again as he studied them well all year.

My constituent said her son was not given revision time and was not given prior knowledge for many assessments. She said there was no homework set and some assessments for multiple subjects were all on the same day. Her son advised that he was not well prepared and could not focus properly which reflect his work, but not his ability on these occasions.

: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] would like to ensure that her son and other young people are not held back by this assessment system and has suggested that college courses after school hours might help them catch up on grades in the evening. She said her son would welcome that opportunity as he is one of the older pupils in his year because he stayed at nursery longer due to health issues.

: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] is concerned that having him repeat the same content all over again would have a negative impact on his mental health. She mentioned that a : [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and worries that the pressure on young people in her son' s situation is immense.

She would like to see students with a failed grade in the certificate, re-do the assessments in school and perhaps get a pass in January so they don' t have to wait all year. : [Redacted s38(1)(b)] believes her son is more than capable of a pass but not under these circumstances.

I would appreciate your comments to allow me to respond to my constituent.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosure 56: Email, Michael Marra MSP- FAO the First Minister

From: Marra M (Michael), MSP <Michael.Marra.MSP@Parliament.scot>
Sent: 22 June 2021 10:11
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FAO the First Minister

Dear First Minister,

I thank you for your answer to my question at First Minister's Questions on Thursday on the subject of non-presentation of pupils to the SQA.

While non-presentation of candidates for assessment is a feature of the process in a 'normal' year - there are major structural differences in the Alternative Assessment Model this year.

Firstly, in a 'normal' year of end of term exams, the decision to not present a candidate is taken before assessment evidence is collected. This year those decisions are taken after evidence is already assessed and once the grade is known.

Secondly, the right of direct appeal is integral to the system this year, and by not presenting 'fail' judgements to the SQA, a young person has no avenue to challenge the judgement that has been made of them. You have rightly highlighted the significance of this principle.

Lastly, by not presenting 'fail' grades, there is a major question surrounding the true picture of attainment that will be available come results day.

As well as the evidence presented in *The Scotsman*, colleagues in the Parliamentary Labour Party have been receiving casework on this issue. A mother of a S5 pupil in East Lothian was in touch and cited 'many' cases of this practice amongst her son's peers. She holds deep concern, as I do, regarding the potential impact on the system if this practice is widespread. Part of the issue with the non-presentation of candidates of course is that there is no formal data capture surrounding it.

With the grades deadline this week, guidance from your Government and the SQA regarding this practice is badly needed. If the direct right of appeal that young people have this year is to mean anything, it has to be open to all young people who want to make use of it.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Marra MSP

Enclosure 57: Email, Michelle Thomson MSP - FAO Shirley-Anne Somerville re [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [UNSCANNED]

From: Michelle Thomson MSP <michelle.thomson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 22 June 2021 13:26
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: FAO Shirley-Anne Somerville re [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [UNSCANNED]

Dear Shirley-Anne,

My constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] has contacted me for clarification on the grading system for Highers as he has discovered an apparent discrepancy between what the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon announced and the way the local authority is operating. He writes as follows:

Good Morning,

I refer to the recent statement in the chamber last week by the First Minister referring to issue of grades for National 5 & Higher Grades, all indicating how these should be established.

The first minister indicated that grades would be based on assessment of pupil's work over the entire academic year & not just on the last 2 ASSESSMENTS i.e. prelim (January) & final exam (May) - these are classed as assessments however in reality they are EXAMS!

My daughter has received her grades & overall I am satisfied, however she had been [Redacted s38(1)(b)] he has indicated that this grade CAN ONLY be calculated using the 2 ASSEMENTS as per above & therefore the Grade D was indicated.

The Head of Biology has indicated that their hands are tied as they can only use these assessments AND NOT course work over the year, all to establish a grade.

The Head of Biology indicated that if they could use the entire academic year as well as the last 2 assessments, my daughter would have been awarded a C Pass in Higher Biology, as overall over the year her work would have merited a C Pass.

Obviously only basing grades on 2 "exams" & not throughout the year work is not acceptable, especially as the academic year has been heavily disrupted due to COVID - in fact the "Prelim" took place in January straight after the Christmas Break with very limited time in school before the "exam" taking place.

My daughter has a conditional acceptance for further education at [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - the offer was conditional on receiving a C pass in Biology

Obviously her D Pass award is devastating news to her & may mean that she cannot move into further education as planned.

Can you clarify how the grades should be established, as either the First Minister is not providing accurate information OR the school are not assessing grades correctly.

I look forward to hearing from you

regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I would be obliged for your consideration of this situation and clarity on what the actual position should be.

I look forward to your response.

Michelle Thomson MSP
SNP – Falkirk East Constituency

**Enclosure 58: Email, Evelyn Tweed MSP - Constituent enquiry re: exam grades
(Our Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])**

From: Evelyn Tweed MSP <Evelyn.Tweed.MSP@Parliament.scot>

Sent: 23 June 2021 15:10

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Subject: Constituent enquiry re: exam grades (Our Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Cab Sec,

Please see attached letter from Evelyn regarding a constituent who has contacted Evelyn with an issue with her SQA exam grades.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

for Evelyn Tweed, Member of the Scottish Parliament - Stirling Constituency

Enclosure 58.1: PDF attachment

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

I am writing on behalf of a constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who recently contacted me regarding her exam grades.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] feels that she has received exam grades this year that are not representative of her academic ability. In her email to me, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] states that it was predicted that she would receive an A for Higher RMPS, B for Advanced Higher Chemistry and a B for Advanced Higher Biology. This was stated on her UCAS form, and [Redacted s38(1)(b)] states that this was also verbally communicated to her throughout the year, in class and at parent's evenings.

As I understand it, this year grades were based on the results of prelims. Many students, including [Redacted s38(1)(b)], were unaware that this was how her grade would be calculated at the time of sitting the prelim. As a result of this, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] has received a BCC grade for the respective classes mentioned in the above paragraph. Naturally, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] feels that this grade is unfair, and not representative of her abilities, as the prelim was taken at a time when she and other pupils did not know that these results would be used for final grades. I am aware that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] had a wide range of other tasks ongoing at the same time as the prelims, as many other senior pupils do.

Further to this, I am aware that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] RMPS teacher gave her essay questions to complete when we were aware that the exams were cancelled in order to get more accurate evidence. However, it is my understanding that the nine essays [Redacted s38(1)(b)] completed weren't allowed to be used in the deciding of grades.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is confident that she would have been able to achieve the predicted ABB grades given that her exams had went forward as normal. She stated in her email to me that her preferred option would be to allow teachers to make judgement on their pupils abilities and allow them to submit more accurate evidence such as assignments, essays, circumstances, the pupils previous grade attainment record and their predicted grades for UCAS, as opposed to just the prelim grade.

Can you kindly advise what action you can take to support [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and help to resolve some of the issues she is experiencing?

Yours sincerely,

Enclosure 59: Email, Michael Marra MSP - Message from Michael Marra MSP

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@Parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Marra M (Michael), MSP

Sent: 23 June 2021 17:48

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Subject: Message from Michael Marra MSP

Importance: High

Dear Shirley-Anne,

I have been contacted by constituents whose daughter has recently sat her National 5 grades. The family have explained their deep concerns about the way results are being awarded this year. They have asked to remain anonymous.

I'm advised that their daughter has dyslexia and is a quiet, shy pupil, who the school made little attempt to get to know or support. The family has no confidence that the school knew their daughter well enough to predict her results accurately.

The school predicted she would fail all her Nat 5s and would block her attempts to sit Highers in 2021/22. The family believe she has been seen as an "easy fail". The pupil has had tutors in all core subjects and her tutors (themselves teachers) know her academic abilities and disagreed with her predicted results.

She has gone on to do well in her assessments and the school and local authority are maintaining she must have cheated. She did not cheat. The pupil is now being made to sit additional assessments in order to prove she is at this level, on top of the 16 she has just undertaken. Her family tell me this shambolic process has left their daughter's self-esteem at rock bottom and anxious to leave the school.

This awful situation is being repeated throughout Scotland. The family have lost all faith in the education system and want to see an end to this assessment process. Can you give assurances that pupils will be awarded the grades they achieved in their assessments or their teacher's predictions, whichever is higher?

Kind regards

Michael Marra MSP
Scottish Labour Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Enclosure 60: Email, Neil Gray MSP - Neil Gray MSP Enquiry - [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Neil Gray MSP <Neil.gray.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 30 June 2021 09:01
To: parliamentaryenquiries@northlan.gov.uk
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: Neil Gray MSP Enquiry - [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Des and Shirley-Anne,

I am writing to you both on behalf of my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] with regards to his concerns over Maths results at [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

According to [Redacted s38(1)(b)], only one pupil was successful in passing this subject, and my constituent is also concerned by the possibility that not all aspects of the subject covered in the paper had been taught to pupils.

I would be grateful if you could both please look into these concerns and advise accordingly given [Redacted s38(1)(b)] concerns about the impact this may have on students.

Kind regards,

Neil

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 28 June 2021 17:35
To: Gray N (Neil), MSP
Subject: Re: (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

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

Thank you for your expedient answer,
You have my permission to contact who you think necessary.
to try to resolve this matter.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

From: Neil Gray MSP
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: Mon, 28 Jun 2021 12:15
Subject: (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

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

Thank you for your email.

I am sorry to hear about these concerns and will do what I can to help you and to find out more and to help where possible.

With your permission I would be happy to write to both North Lanarkshire Council and the Scottish

Government to try to find out more about this matter.

Please let me know if you wish for me to do this, and, if so, I will keep you updated when I receive responses.

Kind regards,

Neil

Dear Sir

I write to you concerning the recent maths exam results at [Redacted s38(1)(b)].

I have now got the results of this exam at the school. ONE pupil passed. I also discovered that the pupils had not been taught this section of maths although private schools had, It is also my understanding that this paper was set by an outside company.

This is a large let down for pupils and especially at their age to fail this exam, which, I think you will agree will and possibly could effect their chosen careers.

If this result is effecting Scotland and the results are showing a down trend I am sure that a certain party will raise this at FMQ and make a big thing about it like they always do .

May I ask that the results for this test be examined getting details of passes in not only public schools but also private.

You may remember me, [Redacted s38(1)(b)].

Thanking you in anticipation for your assistance

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 61: Email, Jackie Baillie MSP - (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Jackie Baillie MSP <jackie.baillie.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 02 July 2021 15:51

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

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

Enclosure 61.1: PDF attachment Personal information

Dear Shirley-Anne

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I have been contacted again by the above noted constituent in response to your reply of 24 June 2021, a copy of which is enclosed for ease of reference.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] advises that her primary concern remains and that is why this process is not being followed in a consistent manner. The responsibility delegated to the school to avert the failings of last year's system, appears to have been implemented without the necessary support, governance and assurance process to provide confidence of consistent adherence which would allow those who would normally fall within the exceptional circumstances policy, sufficient and appropriate opportunity to present at their natural ability.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] wishes the Scottish Government to listen and take ownership, as expressly assured by the First Minister on the 10 May 2021, of the reality of the types of situations taking place across the country due to some schools and teachers clearly being in disarray, with the primary focus stopping at the evidence of the May exam diet. She states that it is not the case that the school has been "best placed to support" her son as seen by the following which was part of an apology email from the school.

The guidelines and statements released have been very difficult to interpret and it has been so unsettling for staff and pupils. It has also been such a tight turn around with assessments, the moderation process and then the final marking and grading process. "

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] would like a full answer as to how the two most extreme of the examples below, along with the email extract above, based on actual events rather than Ministers expectations of flexibility", is in any way a school that has been able to "manage the assessment approach" for a young learner who had significant trauma overlaid on the usual Covid disruption.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] had a grade A- level 1 prediction throughout the whole year (latest in March 2021) for Physics on the tracking forms (extracts attached) and has been awarded a C (advised on 24 June) with absolutely no indication from the school that there was a significant dip in his performance during the two blocks of exam diet in May. Contrary to page 3

of the appeals booklet – They have not had written or verbal feedback to confirm how the grades have been determined and the assessments used, therefore blind as to the appropriateness of a potential appeal. The school simply did not have sufficient time to react to provide guidance, support, feedback or further opportunity for [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to undertake further evidence and she feels very strongly that he has been severely disadvantaged and failed. She stresses that this occurred even after she had been in regular contact with [Redacted s38(1)(b)] guidance teacher enquiring about his attainment and asked if she could get advised if, at any point, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] was showing signs of deterioration.

When senior pupils were returning for practical evidence, the school advised they had sufficient evidence for him and there would not be a detrimental impact of him shielding [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. He was then advised that he would be given the class average for this aspect. If she had not had the strength to support and push for him to carry out this piece of work close to the local authority deadline of 5 June (earlier than other authorities), he would have been awarded the class average of 68% as opposed to what he did gain of 96%, which is nothing short of a disgrace.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] wishes to raise a formal complaint about these two aspects along with the September extension not being an option, which clearly prove that the hopes and wishes of Scottish Ministers are not being implemented in reality and as a result have a detrimental impact on learners during their pathway year to life choices.

I would be grateful if you would address the points raised by my constituent.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Enclosure 62: Email, Daniel Johnson MSP - SQA assessments 2021 (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Daniel Johnson MSP <daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 06 July 2021 16:12
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: SQA assessments 2021 (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Minister,

I have forwarded on concerns from my constituents, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding their concerns around this year's SQA assessments.

I would be grateful for a full response to the concerns set out in the email below.

Kind regards
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP
0131 541 2145
danieljohnson.org.uk
Constituency Office
134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

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

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 1 July 2021 18:04
To: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP
Subject: SQA assessments 2021

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

Dear Mr Johnson,
We are writing to you as constituents and concerned parents to express our concerns about the way this year's SQA assessments have been carried out. Our daughter attends [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and has just completed her 5th year undertaking her Highers examinations.

This has been a difficult time for everyone but it has been a particularly hard year for this year group who have just sat their Highers. They have been uniquely impacted by covid and the ensuing restrictions as they were also not able to sit their Nat4/5 exams and received very limited face to face teaching over these critical years.

Last year's SQA qualifications used predictions from teachers who used their knowledge and expertise to assess pupils ability based on progress throughout the year. However this year, there appears to have been much disparity between different schools on how the 'provisional' grades sent to the SQA have been decided. In [Redacted s38(1)(b)] they have focussed everything on last minute final 'assessments' with constantly changing information, limited preparation and notice time for the pupils and no study leave following very limited face to face teaching over the year. Indeed subject had only just completed the course immediately prior to the assessment. Furthermore no consideration of individual pupil's circumstances has been used either. These final 'assessments' were not undertaken completely under exam conditions but are being treated as such for decision of grades. Other schools seem to have had a more balanced view taking into consideration performance

over the year and many have allowed second attempts at obtaining the necessary evidence for the SQA. This inconsistency across the board is very unfair. In these days of social media and connectivity, pupils are well aware of what other schools and contemporaries are doing. There are reports of papers being leaked online and thus available to some pupils in advance, pupils checking phones during exams and schools doing 'resits' to help pupils who did not initially achieve what teachers expected before the submission of predicted grades to SQA.

In our personal circumstances, throughout the year our daughter was consistently told by her teachers that she was on track for 5 As in her Highers (as were we). However after her all-or-nothing one final assessment, she has been 'provisionally' awarded AAABC. We know of others at different schools who in similar circumstances were allowed to retake their 'assessment' and the higher grades subsequently submitted to the SQA. This option was not offered to our daughter and seems totally unfair.

There is an appeal process however we are led to believe that the SQA are not taking into consideration any personal/extenuating circumstances and no further information except the school provisional award (in our case based on one all-or-nothing 'assessment') are considered. This whole debacle is very shocking and distressing for the young people involved, on top of the pandemic. There must be a level playing field and we are letting this group of 16 & 17 year olds down at such a uniquely difficult time. Please can you look into this matter to ensure that justice and fairness prevails. Thank you in advance for your help.

With best wishes,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 63: Email, Alison Johnstone MSP - SQA Assessments

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 08 July 2021 10:47
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: SQA Assessments

Dear Cabinet Secretary,
A constituent of Alison Johnstone MSP has asked that we highlight their concerns below to seek the Scottish Government's response. I appreciate that the situation has developed in the time since the below was written, and would be grateful for confirmation of the latest position.

Many thanks for your consideration.
Kind regards,
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

, Alison Johnstone MSP

Email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

Address:
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

PLEASE NOTE: All correspondence with Alison Johnstone MSP's office is treated in line with the privacy policy linked [here](#).

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@icloud.com>
Sent: 11 June 2021 23:21
To: scottish.ministers@gov.scot; Boyack S (Sarah), MSP <Sarah.Boyack.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Slater L (Lorna), MSP <Lorna.Slater.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Choudhury F (Foyso), MSP <Foyso.Choudhury.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Johnstone A (Alison), MSP <Alison.Johnstone.msp@parliament.scot>; Balfour J (Jeremy), MSP <Jeremy.Balfour.msp@parliament.scot>; Briggs M (Miles), MSP <Miles.Briggs.msp@parliament.scot>; Denham A (Ash), MSP <Ash.Denham.msp@parliament.scot>; Webber S (Sue), MSP <Sue.Webber.MSP@Parliament.scot>
Subject: Re: SQA Assessments

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My contact details:
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

On 11 Jun 2021, at 23:18, [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@icloud.com> wrote:

Dear recipient,

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. I am writing to you today regarding the SQA assessments I have just completed. Since April '21 I have sat 21 assessments over 3 months it was tiring, frustrating and pretty disheartening. I no longer have trust in the SQA or the education system as a whole. I go to state school so these assessments have been done following guidance from Edinburgh Council, guidance that was given to all the schools in the authority, while, private schools have been following their own guidance which fully benefits their pupils unlike the state school guidance which doesn't really care about pupil grades at all. Instead it follows a strict approach of double marking assessments within my school then sending off to another school for moderation. These assessments have not been what I was promised by the Scottish Government or the SQA when I started my S4 year this has left distrust between education authorities and pupils as well as teachers. I will no longer have my grades based on 'teacher judgement' instead it is decided on assessments I have taken in the last couple of months which I have been informed is basically just a slightly modified 2020 **EXAM** paper. These assessments were undertaken in **EXAM** conditions and marked anonymously in a way in which **EXAMS** are marked. I have so far been appalled by the Government's response to pupil and teacher's reactions to the current situation. This is my 3rd time contacting MSPs about this issue and so far I have had no proper responses. It is your job to respond to me, one of your constituents, and raise this issue in parliament. Me and all of the senior phase high school students deserve better we have sacrificed a lot during the last couple of years including our education and social lives (and have done so to protect the vulnerable not ourselves but of course we have been selfless and followed the guidance as best as we could). We will suffer the consequences of the SQA and government's decisions over the last year. (I have attached a screenshot of how my science papers are being marked I hope this opens your eyes to the workload of teachers and the stress this model is causing for pupils)

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

Enclosure 64: Email, Ben Macpherson MSP - SQA and ACM

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

Sent: 13 July 2021 14:47

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: Ben Macpherson <Ben.Macpherson.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: SQA and ACM

Please see attached correspondence from Ben Macpherson MSP.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Office of Ben Macpherson MSP
Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency**

Please note: I only work part-time. If you have an urgent enquiry please email ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot.

Telephone: 0131 600 0134

Constituency Office: 34 Constitution Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6RS

[!\[\]\(880f5d969e2ee0765133aca546f367ee_img.jpg\) @BenMacpherson](https://twitter.com/BenMacpherson) [!\[\]\(285ee22c53829f6fbe00c1aa70115715_img.jpg\) Ben Macpherson MSP](https://www.facebook.com/BenMacphersonMSP) [!\[\]\(f2e85fe9c552704817498f847ae79e10_img.jpg\) BenMac](https://www.instagram.com/BenMac)

Enclosure 64.1: PDF attachment - N/A – no redaction required

Dear Shirley-Anne,

SQA and the Alternative Certification Model

As you have commented on several occasions since your appointment as Cabinet Secretary of Education and Skills, Scotland's young people have shown significant resilience and fortitude during the pandemic and have proven their invaluable contribution to the culture and community of our country. I also fully agree with you that the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people is paramount in our recovery out of the pandemic.

I of course warmly welcomed your regular updates to parliament on these issues and the Scottish Government's recent announcement for plans to take forward in full all 12 recommendations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Organisation (OECD) report.

Considering your ongoing considerations, however, I have been asked by one of my constituents to share both her own and her young person's experiences of this year's exam diet with you, to contribute to your deliberations on Scotland's education reforms. I am writing on their behalf in my capacity as their constituency MSP.

My constituent is concerned that the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) employed for this year's National Qualifications may still be seen by some as posing a risk to the credibility of the awards this August, despite assurances that have been given that this is consistent, fair and equitable.

They have also expressed that, in their experience, there was no standardisation in approach and that, in removing the requirements for assessment, some subjects made significant reductions to the amount of content required whilst others did not. This, my constituent has stated, could lead to the potential for discrepancy between qualifications and across schools.

My constituent is of the view that there are limitations in maintaining the confidentiality of test papers and, on this basis, has queried the reliability and objectivity of the data collated to inform the ACM. My constituent has similarly attested that they are worried this could leave schools and candidates open to penalty.

My constituent also believes that varied recording has taken place in how pupils have been informed of their provisional grades, and that some private schools in Edinburgh have not only shared these in recent weeks but also offered students the opportunity to re-sit a test (sometimes the same test) to improve their marks.

Many thanks for everything you are doing during this difficult time to ensure that Scotland's children and young people have the best possible start in life. Thank you for considering the above concerns, on behalf of my constituent, and for your consideration of the matters raised. I appreciate you have recently updated parliament on these issues. However, I would be grateful if you and your officials could provide information and/or an update on the issues raised, which I can share with my constituent.

Best regards,

Enclosure 65: Email, Elena Whitham MSP - Correspondence from Elena Whitham MSP re constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

Sent: 13 July 2021 17:27

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: Whitham E (Elena), MSP <Elena.Whitham.MSP@Parliament.scot>

Subject: Correspondence from Elena Whitham MSP re constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear Shirley-Anne,

Please find attached correspondence from Elena Whitham MSP regarding concerns raised by constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)], surrounding the impacts the current SQA awards mechanism is having on university admissions requirements and onward destinations for our young people.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Elena Whitham MSP

**Member of the Scottish Parliament for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley
Constituency**

P: M4.15

T: 013134 85494

T: 01290 319126

E [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot



Enclosure 65.1: PDF attachment

Dear Shirely-Anne,

I am writing to you regarding concerns which have been raised with me by my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)], surrounding the impacts the current SQA awards mechanism is having on university admissions requirements, and onward destinations for our young people.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] wrote to me advising of how they are about to become a first year Scottish Law student at the University of Strathclyde; and of how the poor SQA experience of the past school year has seen many students with SQA conditions to be met for university admission lose out; as well as other students being negatively impacted with regards to their planned onward destinations.

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

“My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I am about to become a first year Scottish Law student at the University of Strathclyde. During this school year, many of us students found ourselves with SQA conditions to meet from Universities. I am emailing you because the demonstrated attainment model has had a poor and negative impact on the future careers of many. I have had to watch many of my friends, and classmates go through heartbreak as they have not managed to meet the grades they need. The unjust, poorly set up method of demonstrated attainment saw many students under stress, as they were told that these were not examinations but yet this is the only evidence to be used. We have been subjected to examinations, whilst missing almost four school months and many of us denied a leave of study. The SQA have lied to it's pupils. For the second year in a row, an independent exam body has been allowed to spoil the chance at a fair shot of new opportunities, such as University, College or Apprenticeships. It is the opinion now that is held by many pupils, that we are satisfied that the Scottish Qualifications Authority is not fit for purpose. I am writing to you to ask that you can enquire to the Cabinet Secretary of Education if there will be a fair and justified solution or compensation to the poor impact the SQA have had on the future generation. A future of young, bright talent has been tarnished by the SQA and their poor choices for the second year in a row.”

I appreciate that you updated Parliament on 22nd June 2021, of the Scottish Government's response to the publication of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) independent report on the review of the implantation of curriculum for excellence; and of the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring the best possible education experience for children and young people as we emerge from the pandemic; however, I would be most grateful for your consideration on the matters raised by my constituent – specifically with regards to whether there will be a fair and justified solution to the impacts that the SQA award model has had on the 2019/20 and 2020/21 student cohorts who consider themselves to have been negatively impacted in terms their awards with regards to their conditional SQA university admissions requirements.

I thank you in advance for your review and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosure 66: Email, Oliver Mundell MSP - Exam Results - Our Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent: 14 July 2021 11:50

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Subject: Exam Results - Our Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Please quote my ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I have been contacted by a parent regarding the exam system as experienced by her son.

I attach below a copy of the text of her email so that you can read this for yourself to better understand her concerns:-

“We have 2 children who have recently experienced the absolute chaos of the Scottish Government’s exam ‘system’ - which in fact was not a system but a disgraceful washing of hands of a very difficult situation that resulted in hundreds of thousands of children being put through an unnecessarily prolonged and in some cases traumatic experience. While the issues are widely accepted - continuous changing of the goal posts (no exams/exams by another name so there was no U-turn evident) no parity (schools could administer assessments they had written themselves (and therefore teach to them) or use those provided by the SQA and allow children to sit/re-sit at will (our friend's son at a school in the same local authority had the chance to resit before our children had sat theirs), opportunities for those who wanted to to cheat via answers being available on social media... the list goes on and on, while the political arguments move in other directions there remains lasting and long term damage to our children.

The upshot of this gross mess is that many children have completely lost faith in the education system, in schools and, sadly, in their teachers who are their first point of anger and blame. Many children I know have chosen to leave school rather than continue with S6 simply because they feel utterly let down. This will obviously impact their future careers and probably the NHS at some point. The fact that the SG can allow the once esteemed notion of Scottish Education to reflect this, is shameful not just to our children but to the nation.

With this as a backdrop one of our children was too unwell - his mental health has suffered directly as a result of how the exam fiasco has played out - to sit some of his exams. The ones he did sit he insisted on doing but was in no fit state to be doing them, thus in our minds not evidencing what he is actually capable of. As Lindsay Paterson, Professor of Education Policy at the University of Edinburgh said on BBC Radio Scotland a couple of weeks ago (and I paraphrase)- the results of any child adversely affected by this will not be a valid representation of their ability.

My son was hoping to study History and English at University. Despite only sitting 3 out of the 4 English papers he achieved an A grade. He sat his History feeling very down and very angry and upset and despite his class test results being As and his teacher predicting an A, he got a C, meaning he won't currently be considered by a Uni. The school offered him to re-sit but he is still unwell and unable to take on the amount of revision required (if he'd broken his leg would they give him the chance to run a marathon??!). They've offered him (Scottish Govt guidelines again) to re-sit after the summer holidays - really? Spend the next 7 weeks revising when all he needs to do is recover his mental health? There is no special dispensation that he is covered by - ill health is not taken into consideration and this really needs revisited and adapted for those pupils to whom it applies.

As you are aware, where evidence is in short supply some schools are just offering children the average grade of the class and it is once more unbelievable that this can be allowed to happen, completely de-valuing what the children have achieved and being utterly unfair. In the absence of a grade that reflects his ability, please may my son have the average grade of his class, even though it's not as good as the one he is capable of and would have achieved if he had been well?

*The SG will say that schools made special adaptations to accommodate these pupils but my son is **still** unwell (and not currently able to sit assessments)- these resits are **not an option** for him. He doesn't need more pressure, he needs to receive the grade he actually deserves and is capable of. The SQA said the tests he had done (the only ones done this past year due to lockdown) are not able to be used as they were done before Christmas, but they were the only assessments he was given - any work he has done was graded A - his teacher expected an A and History is something he excels at. But a C grade due to ill health has potentially cost him the chance of a Uni place and possibly even more importantly, has contributed further to his continued ill health and depression caused by the injustice dished out by a government that has washed its hands of a generation.*

I have always voted SNP. I will never in my life vote for such a government again and I suspect the feelings of an entire generation may well be reflected with similar distaste in elections to come.

My question for the FM - please will you revisit the notion that pupils who continue to be unwell since the exams are granted teacher predicted grades instead of having (whilst ill) the pressure of having to use their summer to prepare for yet another assessment?"

I would be grateful if you could look in to this and I look forward to receiving your comments.

Yours
Oliver

Oliver Mundell MSP

**Member of the Scottish Parliament for Dumfriesshire
Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills**

Constituency Office: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

E: oliver.mundell.msp@parliament.scot

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

Enclosure 67: Daniel Johnson MSP - SQA assessment and appeals (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

From: Daniel Johnson MSP <daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 11 August 2021 13:43
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: SQA assessment and appeals (Case Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Dear Minister,

I have forwarded on concerns from my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding concerns around SQA assessment and appeals.

I would be grateful for a full response to the concerns in the email below.

Kind regards
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP
0131 541 2145
danieljohnson.org.uk
Constituency Office
134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

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

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 6 August 2021 06:46
To: Somerville S (Shirley-Anne), MSP , scottish.ministers@gov.scot
Cc: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP , [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Subject: SQA assessment and appeals

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 Shirley-Anne Somerville

My son has received a copy of your letter dated 26 July 2021 to Daniel Johnston MSP where you note that "Grades could be given based on assessment of evidence built up over time – and not on the basis of one sitting." This ties in with information on the SQA website on Disruption to Learning dated 10 May 2021 where it says: "in the light of such flexibility and in the interests of enabling all learners to achieve their

best, opportunities for gathering evidence should not be solely based on one-off, high-stakes scenarios” (which I read to mean that evidence should not be based on one exam).

My son received a much lower grade for his Higher Physics exam, which he sat in May, compared to the assessments he completed during the year however his school [Redacted s38(1)(b)] has said they would only submit this final exam paper if he were to appeal. The school says that class tests and assignments “are of lower predictive value as they do not meet the criteria [of the SQA] and will therefore not influence a candidate’s grade as much”. I would be grateful for your view on whether schools should only submit one piece of evidence which is one-off and high stakes (i.e. an end of year exam) or if the SQA will ask to see more evidence in order to “enable learners to achieve their best”.

The SQA appeals process is limited as a learner can only appeal one of the three grounds, and cannot submit extra information if wanting to appeal the academic outcome. In my son’s case, on the face of it, he meets all three grounds for appeal.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]. And as I’ve set out above, I feel due to getting better results during the year compared to the final exam, he has on the face of it grounds to appeal the academic judgement made. However due to the limitations of the appeals process, none of this information can be submitted and the school is at liberty to only submit the final exam paper as evidence, and so it looks like the appeals process will make no impact on his grade.

I know private schools (e.g. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] in Edinburgh) had pupils sit the SQA exam paper, let them know the exact percentage achieved for their exam result, then if a pupil was not happy with the result, they had 3 weeks study leave and were able to sit another exam (and opt to only complete the part of the exam they were dissatisfied with rather than the whole exam) to improve their grade. This is so unfair and means the opposite to information in your letter where you say that “grades are fair” and “standards are understood and maintained “. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on the equity of approach between state and private schools in the chances given to their pupils for this year’s SQA results. Some universities, e.g. Glasgow University require a certain level of results by the end of S5 and so I suspect that university places will increase to private school pupils for university entry in 2022, due to the advantage they’ve had in this year’s exam diet, so perpetuating unfairness beyond this year.

If you are able to reply by 12 August, that would be appreciated so we know whether there is an point in appealing my son’s physics grade or if the only evidence that will be considered is his final exam paper.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 68: Email, Christina McKelvie MSP - National 5 exams.

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 09 September 2021 16:54
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: National 5 exams.

To: Minister for Education.
From: The office of Christina McKelvie.

Dear Minister,

Our ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- National 5 exams

Please see the email correspondence between our office a constituent regarding the National 5 exams.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] is unhappy at the fact that his son had to sit assessments in exam like settings, which I have endeavoured to answer but, if you can add any comments on why some pupils had to go through this process when it was publicly stated that exams had been cancelled for the term then it may help us understand the vagaries that occurred from school to school. Any advice would be welcomed.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Christina McKelvie MSP

Barncluith Business Centre
Townhead Street
Hamilton
ML3 7DP

Tel: 01698 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Email [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

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.

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 09 September 2021 16:37
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Subject: RE: National 5 exams.

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

Our ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I have forwarded your points to the Scottish Government for comment and asked for any advice they can offer.

As you know the exams were cancelled because of the disruption caused by the covid lockdown. It is recognised that home schooling and online learning did not suit all pupils and in order to give each individual the best chance of achieving their appropriate grades, it was felt that where there was a lack of evidence of a pupils skills and knowledge they would be asked to complete assessments so that their achievement levels could be more accurately assessed. This is the likely reason why your son was asked to complete assessments in an exam like setting and his school should certainly be able to inform you of this.

When I have a response from the Scottish Government I will forward it onto you.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Christina McKelvie MSP

Barncluith Business Centre
Townhead Street
Hamilton
ML3 7DP

Tel: 01698 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot

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.

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 09 September 2021 15:04
To: McKelvie C (Christina), MSP <Christina.McKelvie.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Re: National 5 exams.

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

Dear Christina Mckelvie MSP.

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I'm writing to you today about the National 5 exams. I have a son who attends [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. I am aware that the National 5 exam diet has been scrapped for the last two years and that this year was supposed to be down to teacher judgements backed up by coursework throughout the last two years school work. Since the return to schooling after the Easter holidays [Redacted s38(1)(b)] under exam conditions, there's been little or no support for pupils with additional learning needs. ([Redacted s38(1)(b)]). I find this totally unacceptable that pupils have been placed under more stress and pressure than they would have if the normal exam diet had taken place. It would appear that lessons have not been learned from last years exam fiasco and young people will be more disadvantaged going forward. I hope my concerns will be noted and questions asked of those implementing the guidelines. I look forward to your reply.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]