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21	Email RE: Meeting with SQA and Universities Scotland about priority appeals and conditional offers	04 November 2022 16:16	Personal Information Free and frank exchange of views	s38(1)(b) s30(b)(ii)

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Enclosure 01 – Email RE: SQA 2022-23 Annual Business Plan

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 05 July 2022 13:18
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: SQA 2022-23 Annual Business Plan

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Hope you are well.

Please find attached SQA's 2022-23 Business Plan. We are working on creating a design for publication, I'll let you know when it is ready before we go ahead and publish it in our web.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Corporate Planning Manager
Strategic Planning & Governance, Finance and Corporate Services

m: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ

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Scottish Qualifications Authority

www.sqa.org.uk
postmaster@sqa.org.uk

Enclosure 01.1 – Attachment: Word Document

[Redacted s25(1)] https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/sqa-annual-business-plan-2022-23.pdf

Enclosure 02 - Email RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

[Redacted – information not in scope]

From: Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ)

Sent: 15 August 2022 15:56

To: 'Jean Blair' <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

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

Subject: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Hi Jean

Following your conversation with [Redacted s38(1)(b)] on Friday morning, is there any update on whether or not it would be operationally feasible for SQA to process and release the outcome of priority appeals relevant to conditional offers associated with St Andrew's, Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities earlier than others (i.e. by 31 August rather than 5 September)? Is there a way of SQA even identifying learners whose priority appeals relate to conditional offers at these universities?

ALS colleagues are in contact with Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council and the individual institutions to try and ascertain the rationale behind the 31 August cut off. Ministers have been made aware of the issue.

Many thanks

Laura

Enclosure 03 - Email RE: FW: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

[Redacted – information not in scope]

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 25 August 2022 10:01
To: Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Hi Laura,

Hope this email finds you well.

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

Your help with this would be much appreciated.

Jean

Jean Blair
Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: Jean Blair
Sent: 23 August 2022 20:53
To: 'Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot' <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Hi Laura,

Thanks for your email.

There's some release required for the priority for those limited number of subjects which require face to face to look at physical evidence, such as Art & Design. [Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

[Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

[Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

Regards

Jean

Jean Blair
Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Sent: 23 August 2022 17:14
To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Hi Jean,

Thanks for the update – as you say, significantly higher numbers than the planning assumption. Are there particular challenges you can foresee where we (SG) might be able to help? We are keen to do so if we can. For example, if there are any issues in getting sufficient appointees released within the necessary timescales etc

Happy to have a quick chat if helpful.

Cheers

Laura

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 23 August 2022 16:41
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

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

The planned number was 600 and we would normally be sitting around 400. So yes, the number is more than we planned for, but we have been working carefully through the numbers and on paper, have sufficient experienced appointees to turnaround these appeals to meet the UCAS deadline.

However, it probably goes without saying that it will remain challenging.

Regards

Jean

Jean Blair
Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** jean.blair@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>
Sent: 23 August 2022 16:16
To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Hi Jean

Thanks for confirming the numbers. I note that, understandably given the approach this year, they are substantially higher than in 'normal' exam years. Is this within the planned for numbers this year or do they cause any concern in terms of capacity to deliver within the current deadlines?

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

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 22 August 2022 16:49
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Good afternoon [Redacted s38(1)(b)],

Apologies for the delay getting back to you today. I've been chairing meetings for most of the day.

1374 priority appeals were validated by centres by the deadline. 73 were still to progress and we have been chasing these today and I know making progress.

Please see below the contacts that have been made in relation to centres asking for early release of Priority Results before 5th Sept (6th sept via UCAS)

7 in total

Date of release requested	Requests
31 st August	5 ([Redacted s38(1)(b)])
18 th August	1 ([Redacted s38(1)(b)])
2 nd September	1 ([Redacted s38(1)(b)])

Kind regards

Jean

Jean Blair
Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** jean.blair@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>
Sent: 22 August 2022 12:05
To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Hi Jean

Further to our recent discussions, and now that the deadline for submitting priority appeals has passed, are you able to confirm what the final priority appeals numbers are, and whether you have managed to capture any intelligence on numbers of learners and their institutions where the timescales for issuing the outcomes may be an issue?

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Best regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], Head of National Qualifications Team, Education Reform Directorate, Scottish Government, Area 2B North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

Please note my working pattern is 9.30am to 4.45pm Mon to Thursday and 9.30am to 3.30pm Friday.

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 16 August 2022 10:22
To: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

That's correct, Fiona.

All awarding bodies negotiated an extra day with UCAS – it's a UCAS deadline.

Regards

Jean

Jean Blair
Director of Operations

t: 0345 [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** jean.blair@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

Scottish Qualifications Authority
24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 16 August 2022 09:57
To: Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Thanks for this Laura

This is set in the context of an SQA timeline when in fact it's the UCAS deadline that we are all working to. Jean or I would be happy to discuss further with you and ALS colleagues if helpful.

Fiona

Fiona Robertson
Chief Executive
Scottish Qualifications Authority

w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ | 24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Sent: 16 August 2022 09:19
To: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Morning Both,

Thanks for outlining the position. The letter that Cab Sec sent to Scottish universities last Tuesday is attached for info.

Best wishes

Laura

From: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 16 August 2022 08:56
To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: FOR RESPONSE: conditional places for students and priority appeals

Laura

I agree with Jean. [Redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Happy to be involved in any further conversations, if helpful.

In the meantime, could we see a copy of the letter that the Cab Sec sent on this issue (last week)? Would be helpful to see.

Many thanks.

Fiona

Fiona Robertson
Chief Executive
Scottish Qualifications Authority

w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ | 24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden,
Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

Enclosure 04 – Email RE: Appeals feedback

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk<
Sent: 22 September 2022 12:05
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot<
Cc: Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: Appeals feedback

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Following on from CPG this morning please find our standard line and Q&A that will be added to our website in relation to appeals feedback enquiries.

Q&A – for use on FAQ web page:

Can I get feedback on my appeal result, or challenge the result of an appeal?

The 2022 appeal process includes a clerical check of your exam paper and SQA marked assignments, as well as a review of the assessment evidence submitted by your school, college or training provider. Your estimate is not included in the review, which is carried out by experienced SQA appointees who are practicing teachers and lecturers. This helps to ensure fairness for all learners submitting an appeal. Results are final, and we cannot provide feedback about individual appeals.

Enquiry response:

The 2022 appeal process involves a clerical check of the learner's exam script and externally marked assignments, as well as a review of the assessment evidence submitted by the school, college or training provider. The learner's estimate is not included in the review, which is carried out by experienced SQA appointees who are practicing teachers and lecturers. This helps to ensure fairness for all learners submitting an appeal. Results are final, and we cannot provide feedback about individual appeals.

As with other procedures, we will note any particular themes that become apparent and share this where appropriate through our Understanding Standards programme of work. To view the latest Understanding Standards materials please visit www.understandingstandards.org.uk

****ENDS****

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Senior Customer Communications Manager
Communications & Engagement, Communications Directorate

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
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The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ

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postmaster@sqa.org.uk

Enclosure 05 – Email RE: Correspondence– draft response

From: Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 10 October 2022 17:49

To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: 202200319561 - Correspondence - draft response

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

We are developing our communication plan around appeals- Kat leads on that – this will include key themes – we have been discussing internally to understand what would be helpful and what is possible

We are also conducting an evaluation of 2022 which will include appeals – Margaret is leading on this – as part of this we will carry out a quantitative and qualitative review of the contingency appeals process we operated in 2022. This will be published once ready but the findings from this will help inform the way forward in 2023

Hope this is helpful

Gill

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 06 October 2022 17:14

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

Subject: RE: 202200319561 - Correspondence - draft response

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

Just to advise that we are looking at providing some general feedback on the appeals outcomes.

As you can see, I'm copying in Gill who will need to work with her team and senior appointees on the content of that.

Gill, just wondering if you might want to suggest some wording that might help Scot Gov colleagues with any future enquiries about appeals feedback?

Thanks

Jean

Jean Blair

Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | e: jean.blair@sqa.org.uk | w: http://www.sqa.org.uk
Scottish Qualifications Authority
24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 06 October 2022 16:06
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: 202200319561 - Correspondence - draft response

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Thanks for the below clarifying and expanding on the position around why no specific feedback will be available on any differences between estimates and awarded grades. I'd understood from discussions at the NQ Working Group that there may be some general feedback provided on appeals in terms of key themes arising. Is that correct, and can we point to that in any responses?

I'm on leave tomorrow but [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)] around if it would be helpful to have a discussion on what we can say on this.

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)], Education Reform Directorate, Scottish Government, Area 2B North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ
* email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot (mobile: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]: url: www.gov.scot

Please note my working pattern is 9.30am to 4.45pm Mon to Thursday and 9.30am to 3.30pm Friday.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 06 October 2022 11:25
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: RE: 202200319561 - Correspondence - draft response

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Please see the below.

For 2022 appeals, senior SQA appointees are reviewing alternative assessment evidence from centres and independently determining the grade worthiness of this evidence. This exercise is completed without knowledge of the learner's estimate or their actual grade awarded via the SQA assessment – therefore no comparative analysis against the estimate can be captured. This is similar to SQA marking, where we do not capture why a particular grade was awarded.

[Redacted s.30(b)(ii)] We agreed and published roles and responsibilities for the service in advance, as well as our guidance to centres, which confirm that no feedback would be provided.

Many thanks.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Correspondence Advisor
Corporate Office

e: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk | w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ

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

Sent: 06 October 2022 11:08

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot

Subject: RE: 202200319561 – Correspondence - draft response

Hi both

Further to my email below, grateful if you could let me know if there's anything more we can add to responses about 2022 appeals outcomes to indicate that, while individual feedback won't be provided, general feedback will be available to support teacher understanding going forward. We have several responses waiting to issue and would be helpful to include something on this if possible.

Many thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

Sent: 03 October 2022 11:19

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>; 'Jean Blair' <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: 202200319561 - Correspondence - draft response

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)] , and copying in Jean for awareness/comment.

Many thanks for coming back on the below case. On the following provided paragraph:

“With the considerable demands on the wider system to deliver the Appeals 2022 service, I can confirm that there is no opportunity to provide feedback regarding appeal outcomes. In addition, as the outcomes are academic judgement made by subject experts there is no further appeal route.”

While SQA is not providing individual appeals feedback, will there be any general feedback provided to the system as part of appeals reporting in December or any other routes that could be pointed to in the response in terms of ensuring teachers understand where variances have arisen between estimates and awarded grades following appeal?

Many thanks,
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 30 September 2022 16:40
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: 202200319561 - Correspondence - draft response
Importance: High

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Please see the attached copy with edits.

Many thanks.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Correspondence Advisor
Corporate Office

e: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>
Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 30 September 2022 11:42
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: 202200319561 - Correspondence - draft response

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

We have received an appeals query as set out in the attached, along with my draft response. I understand that the individual has also written directly to SQA. This appears to be a constituent of Mr Hepburn, Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, so we are currently handling as a Ministerial Reply. To inform our response, I'd be grateful if you could confirm whether you have responded to the individual and whether there is any further background information you can share. Also, grateful if you could review the currently drafted response and advise if there are any additions or amends you would suggest.

Appreciating the short timescales, a response today would be much appreciated as the constituent has been back in touch with the Minister's constituency office and he has asked for an early reply. However, please let me know if this timescale causes any difficulty.

Many thanks,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

* email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot (mobile: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]) : url: www.gov.scot

Please note my working pattern is 9.30am to 4.45pm Mon to Thursday and 9.30am to 3.30pm Friday.

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Enclosure 06 – Email RE: 2023 Approach

From: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 12 October 2022 17:13

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Margaret Farragher <Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>

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

Subject: RE: 2023 Approach

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

We've pushed back the awarding 2023 comms into early November to get the appeals 2022 outputs (31 Oct) and the 2022 teacher estimates publication (2 Nov latest) out of the way.

[Redacted – information not in scope]

Thanks

John

John Booth

Director of Communications

Scottish Qualifications Authority

twitter: @johnbooth224 | email: john.booth@sqa.org.uk | website:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk>

[Redacted – information not in scope]

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Enclosure 07.1 – Attachment: Word document

[Redacted – Information not in scope]

Enclosure 08 – Email RE: SG Micase - appeals

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

Sent: 26 October 2022 09:50

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

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

Subject: SG Micase - appeals

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I hope you are well.

Attached is a draft response to a learner who contacted us as she was not eligible for an appeal – the original email is also in the attachment for reference.

I'd be grateful if you could sense check this draft.

I am on annual leave from Thursday afternoon so a response before then would be great so I can get this sent out this week.

I appreciate that's not a lot of time so if you could copy in my colleagues when you respond that would be much appreciated and they can send when I am on AL.

Best wishes,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | National Qualifications Team | Curriculum and Qualifications Division | Education Reform Directorate | Scottish Government |

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

Enclosure 08.1 – Attachment: Word document

Draft Response:

Thank you for your enquiry of 10 September to Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, about the National Qualifications in 2021-22. As an official with policy responsibility for the National Qualifications I have been asked to respond.

You may be assured that the Cabinet Secretary understands that studying toward qualifications can be stressful at the best of times and appreciates the disappointment that learners face when they do not get the grades that they had expected.

While there was a return to exams this year, Ministers recognise it was not a return to normal. In recognition of the disruption that learners have faced over the last two years, and the different approaches to assessment, SQA took a more generous approach to grading than in a normal exam year. SQA experts – experienced teachers and lecturers – took an expert judgement based on a wide range of evidence as they do every year.

In addition, acknowledging the disruption this year, the appeals approach goes further than in recent pre-pandemic years. Where a learner received a lower grade than the estimate submitted by their school, they could request an appeal.

The collective view of the National Qualifications Strategic Group, including representatives from parents and learners, was that this approach to reviewing centre evidence was fairer to learners than the post results service of marking reviews. The service was provided in the context of disruption as a result of the global pandemic. Also, it was the first examination diet for three years, meaning learners may not perform as well as expected, given it would be their first experience of sitting national examinations.

You have noted that you are unable to appeal your grade for Higher Mathematics. It is important to note that the operational delivery of the appeals process is a matter for SQA, and Scottish Ministers are unable to intervene in individual cases. However, I have checked the general position with the SQA and I have set this out below.

SQA provided centres with guidance for determining estimates for 2022, and this can be accessed at: National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates ([sqa.org.uk](https://www.sqa.org.uk)). You should have been informed of your estimates when they were submitted in June, with the opportunity to discuss and resolve any concerns at that point.

In relation to Prelim exams, it is important to note that although they are commonly used, they are not a formal part of the process for awarding SQA qualifications. SQA does not set, mark, grade or quality assure Prelims and, accordingly, they vary in standard and in breadth of course coverage between different centres. As such, while they may have been used by your teachers to determine your estimate alongside other assessment evidence gathered during the year, the marks and grades awarded for Prelims by centres have no formal standing in the SQA awarding process.

Staff in schools and colleges are best placed to provide individualised advice and information. I would encourage you to discuss any questions regarding appeals or any other concerns about any aspect of your learning, support, or assessment with teaching or support staff at your school, or with the head teacher.

I hope you find this reply helpful and wish you every success in the future.

Original Correspondence:

Dear Education Secretary,

After receiving my SQA results I was happy with them apart from Higher Maths as it had displayed that I achieved a C grade when I was hoping for a B grade despite calculating the marks. Both question papers of the Higher Maths for Paper 1 and Paper 2 was posted online after the exam and I had checked like everyone else the marks needed to achieve the grade I want and it came to a grade B.

I am very sure that I should have achieved a grade B I have calculated all the marks and remember every answer and working I had put. I believe it could be the marker's error of harsh marking or a fault within the system as I am certain it is. This is demonstrated attainment from the SQA papers which is higher than my appeal grade resulting myself unable to appeal.

Could there be anyway if you can ensure that due to the disruption to education we can appeal like in a normal year not based off evidence as we have already demonstrated attainment in the exam papers, it used to be that we can appeal not based on evidence. I am only 11 marks away from a B I think it is worth the SQA checking as despite the grade boundaries being lowered I am very certain I have hit that 70/120. I know markers are checked throughout and quality assurance is there but it is still hard to believe and it seems suspicious despite calculating and checking that I have achieve a grade B. We should not be disadvantages due to harsh marking as each marker is different with their generosity.

During our Prelim examination time, I had an event which was unavoidable and I told my department head of mathematics but she was unable to change the prelim date and that represents unfairness and inequality as I wasn't given the same opportunity as everyone else to revise and I could of gained a higher mark and also other people got to delay their prelim exam to revise more whilst I was not allowed.

I look forward to your response for a solution, many thanks.

Enclosure 09 – Email RE: Appeals outcomes

From: Stephen Price <Stephen.Price@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 31 October 2022 13:43
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Appeals outcomes

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

Apologies, crossed wires here.

We will publish some high-level stats on appeals on Thursday. I'd have thought we can let you have a copy by the end of the day tomorrow but waiting for a steer on that.

Cheers,
Stephen

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 31 October 2022 09:21
To: Stephen Price <Stephen.Price@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: Appeals outcomes

Hi Stephen,

I've heard from my colleagues that there may be plans to bring forward the publication of appeals outcomes to this week. Do you know if this is correct? I'm not sure whether they were talking about publishing the full statistical report that is currently planned for December or something else.

Grateful if you can shed any light on this.

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Performance and Attainment Statistics Team
Education Analysis | Scottish Government

e-mail: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

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Enclosure 10 - Email RE: Scottish Government – Micases – SQA Appeals / Complaints

[Redacted – information not in scope]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 26 October 2022 11:09
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot
Subject: Scottish Government - Micases - SQA Appeals / Complaints

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

My name is [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I work alongside [Redacted s38(1)(b)] , [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)] in the National Qualifications team.

Attached are two draft responses to a learner, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and a parent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - regarding SQA Appeals. The original emails from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)] are within the attachments for reference.

I'd be grateful if you could sense check these drafts and provide any further guidance on the below queries:

- On [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – are you able to provide any background on why an estimated A resulted in no change from an awarded D?
- On [Redacted s38(1)(b)] – are you able to provide any further information / lines on the point raised about the invigilator during the exam?

It would be great to get these out by the end of the week if you are able to take a look before then.

Many thanks,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | National Qualifications | Education Reform Directorate | Scottish Government | Area 2B North | Victoria Quay | Edinburgh | EH6 6QQ |

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Enclosure 10.1 – Attachment: Word document

Draft response:

Thank you for your email of 20 September 2022 to the First Minister, regarding your experience with the National Qualifications this year. As an official with policy responsibility for the National Qualifications, I have been asked to respond and I apologise for the delay in coming back to you.

Firstly, I am sorry to hear about your ongoing health issues throughout the course of your fifth year at school and the disruption that you experienced during your [Redacted s38(1)(b)] exam. I understand that you will be very disappointed that you did not receive the result that you had hoped for in your [Redacted s38(1)(b)] exam.

Acknowledging the disruption this year, the appeals approach went further than in recent pre-pandemic years. Where a learner received a lower grade than the estimate submitted by their school, they could request an appeal.

The collective view of the National Qualifications Strategic Group, including representatives from parents and learners, was that this approach to reviewing centre evidence was fairer to learners than the post results service of marking reviews. The service was provided in the context of disruption as a result of the global pandemic. Also, it was the first examination diet for three years, meaning learners may not perform as well as expected, given it would be their first experience of sitting national examinations.

It is important to note that the operational delivery of the appeals process is a matter for SQA, and Scottish Ministers are unable to intervene in individual cases. However, I have checked the general position with the SQA and I have set this out below.

Learners should have been made aware of their estimates prior to them being submitted in June, with the opportunity to resolve any concerns at that time. As you have noted, you achieved a greater result than estimated by your school therefore, you would be unable to appeal. While incredibly sensitive to individual situations, SQA processes do not consider context and personal circumstances as part of the awarding process. Did you raise your concerns regarding the invigilators with SQA directly or advise about the problem with regarding this in your exam?

SQA provided centres with guidance for determining [estimates](#) for 2022. SQA also published [roles and responsibilities](#) for Appeals 2022 on their website. These documents outline the evidence gathering approach with regards to estimates as well as what is expected of SQA, centres and learners during the Appeals 2022 process.

In relation to Prelim exams, it is important to note that although they are commonly used, they are not a formal part of the process for awarding SQA qualifications. SQA does not set, mark, grade or quality assure Prelims. As such, while they may have been used by your teachers to determine your estimate alongside other assessment evidence gathered during the year, the marks and grades awarded for Prelims by centres have no formal standing in the SQA awarding process.

You mention that as well as facing physical health issues, your mental health has been impacted which has also affected your responsibilities as a young carer. If you feel you require any additional support for your mental health, I would recommend contacting your local GP to discuss your concerns in the first instance. Additionally, Your GP, district nurse, health visitor or social worker can put you in touch with a carer centre, which can provide you with support where you can talk with trained staff, volunteers and other carers who understand your situation. [Carer centres | Care Information Scotland \(careinfoscotland.scot\)](https://www.careinfoscotland.scot)

You can also obtain confidential mental health support from the following source: YoungMinds Textline which provides free, 24/7 text support for young people across the UK. All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors. Texts are free from EE, O2, Three, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus. Text YM to 85258.

I hope you will find this reply helpful and I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Original Correspondence:

Dear first minister,

[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]. I don't wish to inconvenience you but at this moment in time i see this as my only option.

I have had a very bad experience with the SQA following the return to externally assessed exams this year -[Redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

The SQA claims that their policy this year is comprehensive, but it is in fact highly illogical with multiple flaws. [Redacted s.30(b)(ii)] This year the physics papers have been weighted so that paper 1 contributes more to your overall grade than normal, this was in an attempt to make it fairer due to teaching disruptions caused by Covid-19, in my case it has not been fair at all. [Redacted s.30(b)(ii)] (i cannot find any statistics on sqa appeal results, but in England a candidate tends to gain around 5/6 marks on a paper after a remark). The SQA has acknowledged and apologised for the issues caused by the invigilator and how these have impacted my academic attainment, however, this does nothing to help my progression to further education.

As a young person who was working hard and looking forward to moving onto further education, this has had a detrimental impact on both my physical and mental health, and in turn, [Redacted s.30(b)(ii)].

I am sorry that my attempt to explain the situation has turned into a long email, I would greatly appreciate your support and being able to discuss this further to find a resolution.

Best wishes,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 10.2 – Attachment: Word document

Draft Response:

Thank you for your email of 7 October 2022 to Nicola Sturgeon MSP, First Minister, regarding the SQA assessment process and appeal service. As an official with policy responsibility for the National Qualifications, I have been asked to respond.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I understand that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] will be very disappointed that her [Redacted s38(1)(b)] result did not reflect the grade that she had hoped for or had been estimated. Additionally, I appreciate the stress and uncertainty that can occur while awaiting any appeals outcomes - particularly when this has potential implications for onward progression.

When [Redacted s38(1)(b)] portfolios are assessed during the examination diet, quality assurance measures are put in place to ensure all work is assessed fairly and to the national standards. For [Redacted s38(1)(b)], this includes a 'double-blind' marking process. This means that all portfolios are independently assessed by two different examiners. If there is any discrepancy between the two examiners final judgements, a senior examiner will assess the work for a third time to ensure the candidate receives the correct mark. SQA examiners are experienced [Redacted s38(1)(b)] teachers who receive full training before assessing any candidate work, and they are monitored and supported by the senior examining team throughout the marking process. I have provided a link to the SQA Estimates Guidance

Fairness was at the centre of decisions around the National Qualifications this year. Acknowledging the ongoing disruption, the 2022 appeals approach went further than in recent pre-pandemic years. Where a learner received a lower grade than the estimate submitted by their school, they could request an appeal.

These measures were discussed and fully supported by the National Qualifications Strategic Group representing a broad range of stakeholders, such as local authorities, teaching professional associations, college representatives, Universities Scotland, parental and learner representatives, Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

It is important to note that the operational delivery of the appeals process is a matter for SQA, and Scottish Ministers are unable to intervene in individual cases. However, I have checked the general position with the SQA and I have set this out below.

In relation to Prelim exams, it is important to note that although they are commonly used, they are not a formal part of the process for awarding SQA qualifications. SQA does not set, mark, grade or quality assure Prelim exams. As such the marks and grades awarded for Prelims by centres have no formal standing in the SQA awarding process. Because Prelims are not quality assured by SQA they vary in standard, as well as in breadth of the course coverage, between different centres. This means it is not possible, when they are used in the appeal process as evidence of attainment, for SQA to accept the marks and grades applied by centres without additional checks.

As well as conducting a clerical check on the examination script, for each appeal SQA appointees (experienced subject teachers) will have reviewed alternative assessment evidence that learners have completed through the year. If, following this review of evidence, the appointee assessed that a higher grade had been achieved, then this will have been awarded. As per the fifth provision in the

attached SQA pages relating to Appeals, '(if) a clerical check confirms there is no change required to the grade on your certificate and your alternative assessment evidence does not demonstrate a higher grade', then 'the grade will remain the same'. SQA Appeals 2022 - what you need to know

SQA provided centres with guidance for determining estimates for 2022. SQA also published roles and responsibilities for Appeals 2022 on their website. These documents outline the evidence gathering approach with regards to estimates as well as what was expected of SQA, centres and learners during the Appeals 2022 process.

The National Qualifications Group have been clear that demonstrated attainment is a key principle in ensuring credibility and fairness of the qualifications. As such, while incredibly sensitive to individual situations, SQA processes cannot consider context and personal circumstances as part of the awarding process

The evidence provided by [Redacted s38(1)(b)] school in support of her appeal would have been reviewed by SQA appointees (an experienced art teacher). They would have assessed this against the national standard and would not have been made aware of the estimated grade or the awarded grade.

With the considerable demands on the wider system to deliver the evidence-based Appeals 2022 service, SQA have advised that there is no opportunity to provide individual feedback regarding appeal outcomes. In addition, as the outcomes are academic judgement made by subject experts there is no further appeal route.

I hope you will find this reply helpful and I would like to wish [Redacted s38(1)(b)] every success in her future studies.

Original Correspondence:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Dear Nicola, I hope you are well. I write as a concerned member of the public, parent and government employee over a number of years regarding the assessment process being carried out with the SQA.

[Redacted s.38(1)(b)] How this happened no one will ever know, not really. She has worked on her portfolio of Art for some time, over 2 years, [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] in her subject, and sent her best work along with all the other [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] children with predicted high grades from school. I ask myself how can a young adult work [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] in [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to produce excellent work and [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]??

Her teachers for all students, and parents concerns have appealed but having spoken to an open and forward speaking person at the SQA only 10 minutes ago, I am told the SQA assessors will not be even reviewing the comments to support the individuals work, this includes a large number of children from one school, but having now spoken on the parents forum online this seems to be a pattern throughout a number of schools in the [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] area. No doubted, this appears to be a theme or trend, due to lack of resources, time constraints or for what ever reason, these results coming out of the SQA third week in October etc. I hear from our head master that the SQA markers are teachers from the schools taking out of their normal job, I only hope they use [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Teachers to Assess [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Work.

The SQA have had issues over the years, with an IT system not able to calculate properly, putting the future of our children at risk not gaining the valuable qualifications they need, no matter what the schools do. Covid impacted their studies, making it more of a challenge for them, even with help, these young impressionable individuals went through a traumatic time, not dissimilar to many other people. [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

We are taught to be fair, just, fairness to all, the behaviours of the SQA are unjust, unfair and tragic, I want an investigation into there practices, marking and operations. They as the SQA caller stated, we have been told what to say, "not to go into detail, ignore head teachers questions, pleas, same for the parents. Their word is final, there will be no follow-up."

My daughter was to qualify with the grades to get into [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] this year, she had a [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] from her school. Her marks were all [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] but [Redacted s38(1)(b)] after [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] years work gained a [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]? There is a problem here, discrimination, unfairness, unjust behaviour and equalities act as nearly all were females. I hope you reply to me, as I will continue to challenge this behaviour from the SQA and supporting governing bodies.

Regards

[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 11 –Email RE: Ministerial Correspondence : – SQA appeals – Formal complaint

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

Sent: 01 November 2022 13:25

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

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

Subject: RE: Ministerial Correspondence - 322830- SQA appeals - Formal complaint

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Hope you are well.

Please see attached my response to [Redacted s38(1)(b)] , which takes account of the fact that SQA have also written to her. I am confident that there is no clash or conflict between my response and that of SQA.

[Redacted – information not in scope]

Best regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 31 October 2022 12:41

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

Subject: RE: Ministerial Correspondence - 322830- SQA appeals - Formal complaint

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Please see the attached response that was sent out to [Redacted s38(1)(b)] on our end.

Do you wish to read over ours first in the meantime in case you would like to re word it? Or would you still like me to have your copy checked as well please?

Many thanks.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Correspondence Advisor

Corporate Office

e: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

Scottish Qualifications Authority

The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ

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

Sent: 31 October 2022 12:33

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Ministerial Correspondence - 322830- SQA appeals - Formal complaint

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Hope you are well.

I have attached a case which I am looking to get checked by the relevant area within SQA.

The respondent says she has written to yourselves as well as us, so I am keen to ensure that there is no conflict in relation our relative responses.

I recall seeing an email last week to one of my colleagues where you said it might be middle of this week before we can get a response from your side for drafts, is that still the case?

This [Redacted s38(1)(b)]case has been entitled as a formal complaint and was due 27 October, so a quick turnaround would be greatly appreciated if possible.

Best regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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Scottish Qualifications Authority

www.sqa.org.uk
postmaster@sqa.org.uk

Enclosure 11.1 –Attachment: Word document

Thank you for your email of 27 September regarding your daughter's complaint about the SQA appeal process. As an official with policy responsibility for the National Qualifications, I have been asked to respond.

I understand that studying toward qualifications can be stressful at the best of times, and appreciate the disappointment that learners face when they do not get the grades that they had expected.

While there was a return to exams in 2022, it was not a return to normal. In recognition of the disruption that learners have faced over the last two years, and the different approaches to assessment, SQA took a more generous approach to grading than in a normal exam year. SQA experts (also known as appointees) – experienced teachers and lecturers – took an expert judgement based on a wide range of evidence as they do every year.

Fairness was at the centre of decisions around the National Qualifications this year. Acknowledging the ongoing disruption, the 2022 appeals approach went further than in recent pre-pandemic years. Where a learner received a lower grade than the estimate submitted by their school, they could request an appeal.

These measures were discussed and fully supported by the National Qualifications Strategic Group representing a broad range of stakeholders, such as local authorities, teaching professional associations, college representatives, Universities Scotland, parental and learner representatives, Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

SQA provided centres with guidance for determining [estimates](#) for 2022. SQA also published [roles and responsibilities](#) for Appeals 2022 on their website. These documents outline the evidence gathering approach with regards to estimates as well as what is expected of SQA, centres and learners during the Appeals 2022 process.

It is important to note that operational delivery of the appeals process is a matter for SQA, and Scottish Ministers are unable to intervene in individual cases. However, I have checked the general position with the SQA and I have set this out below.

I also note that you have written to SQA separately regarding this matter and have received a response. I hope you will find their reply informative.

As the SQA stated in their response to you, in relation to Prelim exams it is important to note that, although they are commonly used, they are not a formal part of the process for awarding SQA qualifications. SQA does not set, mark, grade or quality assure Prelim exams. As such, while they may have been used by your daughter's teachers to determine her estimate alongside other assessment evidence gathered during the year, the marks and grades awarded for Prelims by centres have no formal standing in the SQA awarding process.

As well as conducting a clerical check on the examination script, for each appeal SQA appointees (experienced subject teachers) will have reviewed alternative assessment evidence that learners have completed through the year. If, following this review of evidence, the appointee assessed that a higher grade had been achieved, then this will have been awarded.

The evidence provided by your daughter's centre in support of her appeal would have been reviewed by an SQA appointee who would have applied their professional judgement to the standard and coverage of evidence against the national standard.

As per the fourth provision on page 8 of the following SQA pages relating to appeals, " (if) a clerical check confirms there is no change required to the grade on your certificate and your alternative assessment evidence does not demonstrate a higher grade ", then " your grade will remain the same ". [SQA Appeals 2022 - what you need to know](#)

With the considerable demands on the wider system to deliver the evidence-based Appeals 2022 service, SQA has advised that there is no opportunity to provide individual feedback regarding appeal outcomes. In addition, as the outcomes are academic judgement made by subject experts there is no further appeal route.

I am sorry to hear that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] was unable to offer any flexibility in their entry requirements for the [Redacted s38(1)(b)] course.

There are a number of resources available for learners who are seeking support in regard to careers advice, as well as options for further learning opportunities.

Scotland has an all-age Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service which is accessible to all regardless of age or setting, with access to professional careers advisors at Skills Development Scotland (SDS) via their dedicated telephone helpline (0800 917 8000) or online through My World of Work: <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>. All support is free and impartial.

The My World of Work portal, designed and established by Skills Development Scotland and the Open University, provides links to a coordinated programme of free open learning materials, and allows users to search for online, distance and part-time courses being provided by colleges and universities across Scotland: <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train/find-free-online-courses>.

I would also like to point out the fact that Scottish Careers Week runs from 7 to 11 November. Details relating to this can be accessed via the My world of work website mentioned above.

I hope you will find this reply helpful, and I would like to wish your daughter every success in her future endeavours.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Tuesday 27th September 2022

Ref: Formal Complaint

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in order to raise a formal complaint regarding a recent series of events whereby, the SQA has failed to follow the SQA code of practice Also, having failed to deliver on its promises in a fair and concise manner. (*1a)

[Redacted - information not in scope]

I now wish to highlight the main element of my complaint, and this also is around the systems and the failings of the duty of care towards myself.

Over the past two years, I have successfully applied and been offered a conditional place on the [Redacted s38(1)(b)], I was unable to attain the required academic qualifications at school due to my [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

The SQA promised to be generous with their marking, quote Fiona Robertson (*1b), whereby it had been agreed that the SQA would consider the impacts of the pandemic. I feel the SQA have not fulfilled this promise. In the spirit of your statement, I'm concerned that the statements have not been considered.

After completing my final exam for [Redacted s38(1)(b)], this was submitted to the SQA, with my appeal. (*1c, grades given by [Redacted s38(1)(b)]) They were as dismayed as I was with the final outcome of the appeal. Both Lecturer & Head of the department are fully supportive of my appeal and support my Grade [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. Within the appeals literature it states that the appeals process involves looking at both my evidence and my final exam. The SQA promises to award the higher grade. However, for me to be given a [Redacted s38(1)(b)], must be a result of my pre-lim examinations being down marked, by the SQA accessor. This clearly acknowledges that my lecturer and head of Science from the Centre, have incorrectly marked my pre-lim exams, which myself and the Centre disagree with. This downgrading also supports that the promise of marking generously has not come to fruition. I believe I should have been awarded the [Redacted s38(1)(b)] grade; the outcome was far from generous. (*1d)

I received a response from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] (*1e), in relation to not being successful with the appeal. I must add here that I feel there is a proven problem with this system, which also does not provide any feedback or any opportunity to complain to the appeal subcommittee, even my college are unable to pursue feedback. It's totally unfair that someone has this power over my future, and it has left me lacking trust in the SQA. [Redacted – information not in Scope]

I trust my complaint will be thoroughly investigated and my hope is for an amicable resolution, considering the above system failure.

I await your response,

Regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Appendix

1a)

Section taken from SQA Code of Practice

Fairness Questions, items or tasks and their supporting Marking Instructions will be developed to pose no unnecessary barriers that could have an adverse impact on candidates on grounds of any of the protected characteristics. All SQA assessments (live and exemplar) will be subject to quality assurance checks to ensure that the assessment of SQA qualifications is valid, reliable, fair and accessible and meets national standards year on year. Process SQA is responsible for planning and delivering the cycle of external assessment. All external assessment procedures will be published in good time and will be communicated to centres involved in the external assessment of SQA qualifications. SQA will ensure sufficiently trained appointees are available to carry out specialist roles in the administration of external assessment. Marking teams will be managed to ensure that a common standard is maintained by providing training and a system of quality control. SQA will scrutinise the quality of work of each marker and takes action where required. Centre resources for external assessment Centre resources must be sufficient to support external assessment. Centres involved in the external assessment of SQA qualifications must provide suitable accommodation and facilities to meet the assessment needs of candidates. Chief invigilators must ensure that examination materials and candidate assessments, including scripts and electronically stored evidence, are securely stored until dispatch. Centre-devised assessments Validity and reliability SQA's verification processes will ensure that internally assessed evidence has been assessed in accordance with the relevant assessment specification, and that assessment decisions are valid, reliable and in line with the national standard. SQA will ensure that standards and conditions for internal assessment are specified and communicated to all centres carrying out internal assessment of SQA qualifications.

“Centre-devised assessments Validity and reliability SQA's verification processes will ensure that internally assessed evidence has been assessed in accordance with the relevant assessment specification, and that assessment decisions are valid, reliable and in line with the national standard. SQA will ensure that standards and conditions for internal assessment are specified and communicated to all centres carrying out internal assessment of SQA qualifications.”

1b)

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/100512.html>

Taken from document published – Feb 1st 2022

This process also maintains the integrity and credibility of the qualifications and ensures learners are awarded the results they deserve. This is of vital interest to all

those who hold qualifications now, for those who will achieve them in the future and for further and higher education establishments and employers.

In recognition of the disruption that learners have faced over the last two years, and the different approaches to assessment, this year we are prepared to be more generous in our approach to grading than in a normal year to factor in the impact of the pandemic on learners. In line with the approach being taken across the rest of the UK, SQA therefore expects that the overall outcomes in 2022 will represent an intermediary position between 2021 and pre-pandemic years.

1b)

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/102227.html>

Taken from document published - August 9th 2022
Fiona Robertson, SQA - CEO

This is the first time that exams have taken place since 2019, but this year does not mark a return to normal – learners have faced further disruption from COVID-19, on the back of the two previous years of disruption from the pandemic.

“That is why SQA, teachers, lecturers and partners across the education system put in place a wide-ranging package of support this year – everyone has pulled together to help mitigate the impact on learners and to give them the best chance of performing to the best of their abilities.

“Together, we have delivered fairness for learners while maintaining national standards – and learners can have confidence in their grades.

1c) Grades and outcomes given by [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

1d)

Appointee outcome review	Final grade decision
A clerical check demonstrates that you have achieved a higher grade than the grade on your certificate.	You will be awarded the higher grade.
A review of your alternative assessment evidence and SQA coursework demonstrates a higher grade than the grade on your certificate.	You will be awarded the higher grade.
A clerical check highlights that you have achieved a lower grade than the grade on your certificate; however, your alternative assessment evidence demonstrates a higher grade than the grade on your certificate.	You will be awarded the higher grade.
A clerical check confirms there is no change required to the grade on your certificate and your alternative assessment evidence does not demonstrate a higher grade.	Your grade will remain the same.
A clerical check highlights that you have achieved a lower grade than the grade on your certificate; however, your alternative assessment evidence demonstrates the same as your certificate.	Your grade will remain the same.
A clerical check highlights that you have achieved a lower grade than the grade on your certificate and your alternative assessment evidence supports a lower grade.	Your grade will go down.

1e)

Email response from [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: "ContactUs" <[ContactUs@\[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\].ac.uk](mailto:ContactUs@[Redacted s38(1)(b)].ac.uk)>

To: [redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Sent: Fri, 23 Sep 2022 at 16:56

Subject: Re: : Result

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

I have now discussed your situation with the Undergraduate Admissions Manager and, unfortunately, given that your appeal has been unsuccessful, we cannot change our decision.

We already applied some flexibility when we agreed that we would consider [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest in studying at the [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Kind Regards

UG Admissions

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

Sent: 29 September 2022 13:54

To: complaints@sqa.org.uk; fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk

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

Subject: Formal Complaint submitted on behalf of [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a formal complaint, dated 29th day of September 2022.

I forward the complaint to SQA on behalf of my daughter [Redacted s38(1)(b)], whilst also attaching consent to act on her behalf.

Please kindly acknowledge receipt of the complaint to [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Regards,

- [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 12 – Email RE: Appeals Correspondence

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

Sent: 01 November 2022 14:50

To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; margaret.farragher@sqa.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Appeals Correspondence

Hi Jean/[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

We had previously responded to the parent on their general concerns and I attach a copy of this response for your reference.

Happy to set up a call to discuss if that would be helpful.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

* email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot (mobile: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]: url: www.gov.scot

Please note my working pattern is 9.30am to 4.45pm Mon to Thursday and 9.30am to 3.30pm Friday.

Enclosure 12.1 – Attachment: PDF

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Our Ref: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Your Reference - 202200322508
31st October 2022

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Ms. Somerville,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]- UNSUCCESSFUL APPEAL TO SQA WHICH SOUGHT TO INCREASE GRADE AWARDED IN ADVANCED HIGHER [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- FROM A 'B' TO AN 'A'

Thank you for your letter of 28th October 2022 in response to my e-mail of 22nd September 2022 in connection with the above-mentioned subject. I am very disappointed with the generality of the response received and its non-specific nature insofar as [Redacted s38(1)(b)] particular and specific circumstances are concerned.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], as I have previously advised, was awarded a B Grade in her summer SQA examinations falling 2% below the boundary for an A Grade. Her school, [Redacted s38(1)(b)] lodged an appeal against the result as a priority case to the SQA supported by evidence from Prelim examinations she had sat. Since last writing to you we have established that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] sat two Prelim examinations, referred to by the school, as FAB 1 and FAB 2. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] achieved 92% in the FAB 1 examinations which covered 75% of the course and 90% in the FAB 2 examinations which covered 100% of the course. The school have recently advised us that the papers sat by [Redacted s38(1)(b)] in her FAB 2 Assessments have now been reviewed by four [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- teachers, three from within the school and one external to the school. All four teachers have advised, in their professional opinions, that the FAB 2 papers which [Redacted s38(1)(b)] sat were considered appropriate as evidence to support an appeal when compared to the guidance issued by schools/centres by the SQA, to which I will make further reference later. The school have also advised that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] FAB 2 paper has been re-marked by a [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- teacher external to the school who awarded her 87% rather than 90% but still well within the boundaries for which any reasonable person would expect a B to be upgraded to an A.

You have stated the following in your letter of 28th October 2022;

'In relation to Prelim exams, it is important to note that although they are commonly used, they are not a formal part of the process for awarding SQA qualifications. SQA does not set, mark, grade or quality assure Prelim exams. As such the marks and grades awarded for Prelims by centres have no formal standing in the SQA awarding process. Because Prelims are not quality assured by SQA they vary in standard, as well as in breadth of the course coverage, between different centres. This means

it is not possible, when they are used in the appeal process as evidence of attainment, for SQA to accept the marks and grades applied by centres without additional checks.

As well as conducting a clerical check on the examination script, for each appeal SQA appointees will have reviewed alternative assessment evidence that learners have completed through the year. If, following this review of evidence, the appointee assesses that a higher grade has been achieved, then this will be awarded.

The evidence provided by your daughter's school in support of her appeal would have been reviewed by an SQA appointee who would have applied their professional judgement to the standard and coverage of evidence against the national standard. As per the fourth provision on page 8 of the attached SQA pages relating to appeals, " (if) a clerical check confirms there is no change required to the grade on your certificate and your alternative assessment evidence does not demonstrate a higher grade ", then " your grade will remain the same ".

Whilst I note the SQA's position that Prelim exams are not a formal part of the process for awarding SQA Qualifications and that it is not possible accept the marks and grades applied by centres without additional checks, it is important to recognise that the SQA issued advice to all centres in its paper 'Appeals 2022, General Information' in May 2022 as to the type of alternative evidence that could be submitted in support of appeals. That paper stated, inter-alia, the following:

'Prelims or mock exams are likely to be the most reliable indicator of performance in a question paper component. The most convincing examples of these will accurately predict attainment in the skills, knowledge, and understanding assessed by the question paper. They will be clearly aligned to the course specification, content, level of demand, and assessment conditions as exemplified in the specimen question papers and past papers.

The way in which prelim or mock question papers are produced can vary. They tend to fall into three main categories: centre produced papers; papers generated co-operatively by a group of centres; and commercially produced question papers. All of those have the potential to generate robust evidence for appeals. In all cases, the validity, reliability and security of the evidence should be checked before being submitted to SQA.

Centres generating their own prelims sometimes incorporate elements of SQA past papers. This can be a valid approach. Please note, though, that an SQA past paper or specimen question paper in its entirety will not be accepted if it is the only evidence submitted. These papers and their marking instructions are in the public domain and can be accessed by learners. The subject-specific ACM 2021 Assessment Resources available on the SQA secure site cannot be used in their entirety as the only evidence to support appeal requests. These resources are not secure and should be treated in the same way as SQA past papers or specimen question papers.'

In the SQA Document entitled 'Appeals 2022 – what you need to know' the assessment of appeals is explained. There are two circumstances set out where the grade would remain the same following an appeal. These are as follows:

1. A clerical check confirms there is no change required to the grade on your certificate and your alternative assessment evidence does not demonstrate a higher grade.

2. A clerical check highlights that you have achieved a lower grade than the grade on your certificate; however, your alternative assessment evidence demonstrates the same as your certificate.

The same document cites the following circumstances where a higher grade will be awarded:

- 1. A clerical check demonstrates that you have achieved a higher grade than the grade on your certificate.*
- 2. A review of your alternative assessment evidence and SQA coursework demonstrates a higher grade than the grade on your certificate.*
- 3. A clerical check highlights that you have achieved a lower grade than the grade on your certificate; however, your alternative assessment evidence demonstrates a higher grade than the grade on your certificate.*

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] school (i.e. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]) is adamant that the Prelim papers (FAB 1 and FAB 2) sat by [Redacted s38(1)(b)] were compliant with the guidance issued by the SQA referred to. That position is supported by the professional opinions of three [Redacted s38(1)(b)]- teachers within the school and one teacher external to it.

You state in your letter that the evidence provided in support of [Redacted s38(1)(b)] appeal would have been reviewed by a SQA appointee who would have applied their professional judgement to the standard and coverage of evidence against the national standard. Am I to take from this that the papers sat by [Redacted s38(1)(b)], which had been prepared by her school, did not comply with the evidence required by the SQA or am I to take something else from it or am I to take nothing at all from it? Clarification would be appreciated as it seems irrational that four maths teachers can hold the professional opinions that a grade should be increased from a B to an A based on the evidence submitted whereas the SQA appointee has formed an opposite opinion. Might the irrational outcome be down to a simple administrative error on the part of the SQA?

If that is not the case and if the papers were deemed inappropriate and failing to meet the national standard, the system employed by the SQA has clearly failed our daughter and as a consequence serious questions must be asked of the SQA as to why the Guidance issued by them could generate such a scenario and why schools/centres were not properly advised/trained as to what would and would not be considered as acceptable evidence in support of appeals lodged.

By way of further update I have also attached for your attention a copy of a letter issued to the SQA by my lawyers in connection with this matter and a copy of a reply received from the SQA's lawyers who have stated that they will revert with a substantive response to the issues raised within 14 days of 21st October 2022. My lawyers have already been instructed to instigate judicial proceedings against the SQA in the event of that response not addressing the issues raised satisfactorily.

I look forward to hearing from you further.

Yours sincerely
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Enc.

[Remainder of correspondence in this enclosure redacted – information not in scope]

Enclosure 12.2 – Attachment: PDF

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Foghlam agus Sgilean
Shirley-Anne Somerville BPA/MSP a b c d

T : 0300 244 [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Our Reference: 202200322508

Your Reference: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] - Unsuccessful appeal to SQA which sought to increase Grade Awarded in [Redacted s38(1)(b)] from a 'B' to an 'A'

28 October 2022

Dear [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Thank you for your email of 22 September regarding your [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and subsequent appeal to SQA. I apologise for the delay in responding while my officials sought clarity on the position with the SQA.

I understand that studying toward qualifications can be stressful at the best of times, and appreciate the disappointment that learners face when they do not get the grades that they had expected.

While there was a return to exams in 2022, it was not a return to normal. In recognition of the disruption that learners have faced over the last two years, and the different approaches to assessment, SQA took a more generous approach to grading than in a normal exam year. SQA experts (also known as appointees) – experienced teachers and lecturers who are not SQA employees – took an expert judgement based on a wide range of evidence as they do every year.

In addition, acknowledging the disruption this year, the appeals approach goes further than in recent pre-pandemic years. Where a learner received a lower grade than the estimate submitted by their school, they could request an appeal.

SQA provided centres with guidance for determining estimates for 2022. SQA also published roles and responsibilities for Appeals 2022 on their website. These documents outline the evidence gathering approach with regards to estimates as well as what is expected of SQA, centres and learners during the Appeals 2022 process.

Operational delivery of the appeals process is a matter for SQA, and Scottish Ministers are unable to Intervene in individual cases. However, I have checked the general position with the SQA and I have set this out below.

In relation to Prelim exams, it is important to note that although they are commonly used, they are not a formal part of the process for awarding SQA qualifications. SQA does not set, mark, grade or quality assure Prelim exams. As such the marks and grades awarded for Prelims by centres have no formal standing in the SQA awarding process. Because Prelims are not quality assured by SQA they vary in standard, as well as in breadth of the course coverage, between different centres. This means

it is not possible, when they are used in the appeal process as evidence of attainment, for SQA to accept the marks and grades applied by centres without additional checks.

As well as conducting a clerical check on the examination script, for each appeal SQA appointees will have reviewed alternative assessment evidence that learners have completed through the year. If, following this review of evidence, the appointee assesses that a higher grade has been achieved, then this will be awarded.

The evidence provided by your daughter's school in support of her appeal would have been reviewed by an SQA appointee who would have applied their professional judgement to the standard and coverage of evidence against the national standard. As per the fourth provision on page 8 of the attached SQA pages relating to appeals, " (if) a clerical check confirms there is no change required to the grade on your certificate and your alternative assessment evidence does not demonstrate a higher grade ", then " your grade will remain the same ". SQA Appeals 2022 - what you need to know.

With the considerable demands on the wider system to deliver the evidence-based Appeals 2022 service, SQA has advised that there is no opportunity to provide individual feedback regarding appeal outcomes. In addition, as the outcomes are academic judgement made by subject experts there is no further appeal route.

I hope you will find this reply helpful, and I would like to wish your daughter every success in her future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

Enclosure 13 –Email RE: appeals stats for release on Thursday

From: Stephen Price <Stephen.Price@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 02 November 2022 09:34
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: appeals stats for release on Thursday

Sure, share as you need. Embargoed until Thursday at 1pm as of now.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Sent: 02 November 2022 09:31
To: Stephen Price <Stephen.Price@sqa.org.uk>; Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot
Subject: RE: appeals stats for release on Thursday

Hi Stephen,

I've managed to get access. It looks like Laura isn't about today. Ok if I share with [Redacted s38(1)(b)]? I imagine we'll need to share more widely but obviously no PRA list in place.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 02 November 2022 06:51
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>
Subject: appeals stats for release on Thursday

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

I have shared Thursday's short appeals publication via the secure sharepoint area that [Redacted s38(1)(b)] has access to:

[Redacted s25(1)] <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/103173.html>

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], can you confirm you can access it and share with Laura please?

Cheers,
Stephen

Stephen Price

Head of Data & Analytics
Scottish Qualifications Authority
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

I work flexibly, including evenings/weekends on occasion. Flexibility works for me, but I do not expect you to read, action or respond outside of your own normal working pattern

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Enclosure 14 – Email RE: Publication of reports on estimates and appeals

From: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 03 November 2022 10:09

To: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; John.Edward@scis.org.uk; abradley@eis.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@syp.org.uk'; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sparqs.ac.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@ayrshire.ac.uk; chair@npfs.org.uk; Director for Education Reform <DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot>; Gorman G (Gayle) <Gayle.Gorman@educationscotland.gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@syp.org.uk; 'Jim Thewliss' <jim.thewliss@sls-scotland.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sparqs.ac.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@nus-scotland.org.uk; ollie.bray@education.gov.scot; 'Steven Quinn' <steven.quinn@renfrewshire.gov.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@napier.ac.uk>; Tony.Mcdaid@southlanarkshire.gov.uk; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; Margaret Farragher <Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sypmail.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@syp.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@syp.org.uk; Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@cityofglasgowcollege.ac.uk; Bray O (Ollie) <Ollie.Bray@educationscotland.gov.scot>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: Publication of reports on estimates and appeals

NQ Strategic Group members

Further to discussion at last week's meeting, I am attaching two publications for your information – one on estimates and one on appeals. These are both under embargo until 1pm today (Thursday 3 November) so please do not share any further until after that time.

A press release will also issue at 1pm which will be available on our website at that time.

I hope you find this advance information helpful.

Thanks

John

John Booth

Director of Communications
Scottish Qualifications Authority

twitter: @johnbooth224 | email: john.booth@sqa.org.uk | website:
<http://www.sqa.org.uk>

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Enclosure 14.1 – Attachment: PDF

[Redacted s25(1)]

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/estimates-vs-results-research-nq-2022.pdf

Enclosure 14.2 – Attachment: PDF

[Redacted s25(1)]

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/appeals-high-level-summary-2022.pdf

Enclosure 15 – Email RE: Meeting Request – 3 nov

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

Required: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Shazia Razzaq [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@universities-scotland.ac.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@universities-scotland.ac.uk; vpspp@st-andrews.ac.uk

03 November 2022 15:00-16:00

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Tue 01/11/2022 15:14

Meeting with SQA and Universities Scotland about priority appeals and conditional offers
Please accept this diary request for an online meeting between Scottish Government officials, SQA and Universities Scotland to discuss timescales around priority appeals for the National Qualifications and HE deadlines for finalising conditional offers.

Outline agenda below and background paper attached.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Discussion of background (see paper)
3. Identification of potential solutions/mitigations
4. Any Other Business

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

* email:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot (mobile: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]: url: www.gov.scot

Please note my working pattern is 9.30am to 4.45pm Mon to Thursday and 9.30am to 3.30pm Friday.

[Redacted:s.30(b)(ii)]

Priority Appeals and Conditional HE Places for Students

Purpose of meeting

To discuss SQA priority appeals timescales (reached in line with UCAS clearing deadlines) and earlier internal deadlines set by some higher education (HE) institutions for finalising conditional offers, and determine what can be done to minimise the impact on learners awaiting appeals outcomes going forward.

Background

As part of SQA's appeals service, a priority appeals process operates for learners requiring the outcome of an appeal for immediate progression to university, college, training or employment.

The timescales for outcomes of these priority appeals to be finalised is arrived at each year in line with the UCAS clearing deadline. In 2022, this was 6 September. This date is determined by UCAS and is the same date for all UK Awarding Bodies.

However, we are aware that some HE institutions set earlier deadlines to meet their internal processes in line with individual term start dates.

This differential in timescales caused concern for learners and their parents who were awaiting appeals that were required for conditional offers. There was an increase in correspondence on this issue this year, with some applicants indicating that they missed out on preferred courses or had to defer their place until next year.

While many institutions aimed to provide flexibility around entry requirements and/or deadlines where priority appeals were being progressed, it is recognised that there were challenges for some universities, particularly for high demand courses including medicine, law and vet.

Particular challenges around appeals in 2022

In recognition of the disruption last year, SQA's appeals approach went further than in recent pre-pandemic years. It built on the approach undertaken historically in Scotland, taking alternative learner evidence into account in the appeals process. This comprehensive appeals process was agreed by stakeholders across the education sector and was put in place to ensure fairness and equity for learners.

SQA is dependent on centres to advise on conditional offers when it comes to priority appeals. It does not have sight of these ahead of the requests which centres have to validate at the same time as they submit their learners' evidence digitally. Due to the number of priority appeals and the resources required to progress these, SQA did not have flexibility to process appeals any earlier.

Along with all other 2022 arrangements, SQA will carry out an evaluation of how the Appeals 2022 service performed. The results of this evaluation will play an important

part in informing the decisions around what type of service will be taken forward for 2023, and there is an ongoing discussion with stakeholders through the National Qualifications 23 Group about the approach.

Enclosure 16 – Email RE: News release on appeals – 3 Nov '22

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 03 November 2022 14:24
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Cc: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: News release on appeals - 3 Nov '22

Hello

Here is the news release on appeals that we issued just after 1pm. It is also on our website - <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/103187.html>

Thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Join us on 

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Enclosure 16.1 – Attachment: PDF

Redacted s.25(1):

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/103187.html>]

Enclosure 17 – Email RE: Appeals Petition

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 03 November 2022 19:00

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; Margaret Farragher <Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Director for Education Reform <DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Appeals Petition

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

We are aware of the petition and comms colleagues are monitoring.

Regards

Jean

Jean Blair

Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | **e:** jean.blair@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

Scottish Qualifications Authority

24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

From:

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

Sent: 03 November 2022 17:33

To: Margaret Farragher <Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot; Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

Subject: Appeals Petition

Hi all

You may already be aware but just to flag that a change.org petition has been started on appeals.

Petition · Give Scottish students their estimated grade appeals. · Change.org

Each year the SQA disappoints Scottish students and often leaves them feeling invisible and disappointed. 2022 was no different with only a tiny fraction of appeal requests going

through leaving many students devastated and unable to apply for their favourable university choices.

Signing this petition will tell the SQA that we are not happy with their so-called "robust" marking. If we do not take action then our children have no chance of getting the grade their teachers estimated them to get based on their evidence.

If this petition gains enough traction we plan to organise a peaceful protest at the SQA HQ in Glasgow

We also recommend that anyone signing this contacts their MSP and or MP about the situation to make this known to politicians. We also recommend that you share this with friends or family to spread the word.

Not clear what is considered 'enough traction' for a protest to go ahead. It currently has 107 signatures.

There is also the following reference in the updates section:

Hello everyone, today we nearly got to 100 signatures which is great. Here is what we know: some schools are reporting a 75% unsuccessful appeals results. Here is what we think but don't know for a fact: Some appeals weren't checked properly e.g some appeals didn't consider any evidence and only included a clerical check.

Not sure where this latter suggestion has come from. Grateful for any intelligence on this or any lines from SQA's perspective.

Best regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

* email:

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] url: www.gov.scot

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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PRIORITY APPEALS

Meeting between SQA, US, SG, 3 November 2022

Attendees

SG

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

SQA

Jean Blair

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

US

Nazira Karodia

Ester Ruskuk

Kirsty Conlan

Key Points from Meeting

Purpose of the meeting was to discuss the difficulties and challenges encountered this year in relation to the exam results appeals process. Although there was a priority appeals process in place to prioritise those students who had submitted an appeal, the outcome of which would decide whether the student had achieved the results to attend the university of their choice, the deadlines for the appeals results and the start dates of various universities and courses did not align and this caused issues for some students with conditional offers who were not able to secure a place in the current academic year.

SQA set out the key elements of their priority appeals process for 2022:

- In order to submit an appeal, eligibility criteria had to be met. In particular an estimate of exam result had to be in the system and this had to be higher than the exam mark achieved.
- Schools had to submit the appeal by 19 August (the submission start date was results day – 9 August).
- Schools had to provide digitised evidence, gathered throughout the year, to support the appeal.
- Difficulties with regards to this tight timeline was compounded as many schools were not back by 19 August so meeting this deadline was difficult. SQA had many discussions with teaching unions etc about staff working during the summer holiday in order to ensure the 19 August deadline was achieved.
- By accessing the UCAS portal, schools could establish which students would require a priority appeal which could speed things up a bit but this was not done by all schools.
- In addition, SQA had 1,420 appeals to process, 3-4 times more than the norm or expected. It was not clear why that was the case and whether it would be indicative of appeals volumes in future academic years. [Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

- In previous years, schools did not have to provide the additional evidence. Instead the exam paper was re-examined to check that the correct grade had been given. [Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

Colleagues in attendance from HEIs confirmed that many institutions were commencing their academic years from an earlier date than in the past. From around 2010 Scottish courses have started earlier to assist students e.g. to ensure able to finish first semester prior to Christmas so students can timeously travel home, get pre-Christmas holidays. Start date moved from early October to early September. – meaning many institutions required confirmation of student places by 31 August, one week prior to the UCAS clearing deadline.

[Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

Conclusions Reached/Next Steps

- [Redacted s30(b)(ii)] All attendees felt, however, that clear, effective communication with students was essential to mitigating problems in future years and managing expectations. HEIs indicated that, where students with conditional offers who did not obtain their expected grades contacted them proactively to keep HEIs advised of their situation, they would always strive to be flexible and it was important for students to receive that message.
- All agreed that timescales tight all round and that want learner to be there from the start of their HE education experience – for student welfare, getting accommodation, widening access agenda etc.
- Noted SQA & US worked together during covid, so can do so again.
- SQA advised that the appeals process for 2022 was being evaluated in partnership with UCAS, Russell Group and Universities Scotland. This would inform decisions on the appeals process for 2023.
- It was agreed by all that all attendees should reconvene for a further meeting in December, ahead of SQA finalising plans for the appeals process for 2023.
- Also agreed that it would be useful to have UCAS in attendance at the next/future meeting(s).

Enclosure 19 – Email RE: Appeals Correspondence

[Redacted – information not in scope]

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 03 November 2022 10:49

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Margaret Farragher <Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Director for Education Reform <DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Appeals Correspondence

Good morning [Redacted s38(1)(b)],

I can confirm that we have received correspondence from the learner's legal advisor and this is following due legal process with Brodies. There is no further background in this case and therefore nothing to add to what you already know.

[Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

I shall let you know when the letter has been sent.

Regards

Jean

Jean Blair

Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] | **e:** jean.blair@sqa.org.uk | **w:** http://www.sqa.org.uk

Scottish Qualifications Authority

24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

[Remainder of enclosure removed as duplicated in email chain at Enclosure 12.]

Enclosure 20 – Email RE: Appeals Petition

From: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 04 November 2022 07:16

To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Margaret Farragher <Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; Kat Hannah <Kat.Hannah@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Director for Education Reform <DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot>; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Appeals Petition

Thanks Jean. Yes keeping an eye on this and other reaction on social media etc. [Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

John

John Booth

Director of Communications

Scottish Qualifications Authority

twitter: @johnbooth224 | email: john.booth@sqa.org.uk | website:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk>

[Remainder of enclosure removed as duplicated in email chain at Enclosure 17.]

Enclosure 21 – Email RE: Meeting with SQA and Universities Scotland about priority appeals and conditional offers

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

Sent: 04 November 2022 16:16

To:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@universities-scotland.ac.uk; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@universities-scotland.ac.uk; vpspp@st-andrews.ac.uk; Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Meeting with SQA and Universities Scotland about priority appeals and conditional offers

Dear all

Many thanks for coming along to the discussion yesterday on ensuring the choreography of the appeals process after Results Day works for everyone, particularly the learner, and how we can improve things for next year.

Here are the actions I took from the discussion, please let me know if you disagree with anything:

-

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]'s team to set up a follow-up meeting at the start of December, also involving UCAS;

-

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]/SQA to unpack the timing issue of the appeals process as part of their evaluation work with HE over the coming months and feedback at the next meeting;

- **Everyone** should work together to ensure clear and consistent communication to learners about the appeals process and their role in keeping universities up-to-date if they have appealed their results;

- **Everyone** to consider what information can be shared at what points in the appeals process to ensure the process is as streamlined as possible for the learner and to be discussed at the next meeting.

If I have missed anyone off this email who was at the meeting, please do forward on.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Curriculum and Qualifications | Education Reform Directorate | Scottish Government |

Please note: my working hours are Tuesday – Friday. I am currently working from home but am contactable via email or Microsoft Teams.

-----Original Appointment-----

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

Sent: 01 November 2022 15:14

To:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)];

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]; Jean Blair; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk; Macdonald R (Roddy); [Redacted s38(1)(b)]; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]; [Redacted s38(1)(b)];

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@universities-scotland.ac.uk;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@universities-scotland.ac.uk; vpspp@st-andrews.ac.uk

Subject: Meeting with SQA and Universities Scotland about priority appeals and conditional offers

When: 03 November 2022 15:00-16:00 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London.

Where: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Please accept this diary request for an online meeting between Scottish Government officials, SQA and Universities Scotland to discuss timescales around priority appeals for the National Qualifications and HE deadlines for finalising conditional offers.

Outline agenda below and background paper attached.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Discussion of background (see paper)
3. Identification of potential solutions/mitigations
4. Any Other Business

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

* email:

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]; url: www.gov.scot

Please note my working pattern is 9.30am to 4.45pm Mon to Thursday and 9.30am to 3.30pm Friday.

[Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

Enclosure 22 – Email RE: Appeals Correspondence

From:

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

Sent: 07 November 2022 15:11

To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Appeals Correspondence

Hi Jean

Regarding the case below, appreciate that this is following due legal process and you may not be able to share specific advice. However, are you able to advise whether the following lines are still appropriate for use in responding to general correspondence on the appeals, or if any amends are needed?

- With the considerable demands on the wider system to deliver the evidence-based Appeals 2022 service, SQA has advised that there is no opportunity to provide individual feedback regarding appeal outcomes.

Many thanks

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 04 November 2022 10:55

To:

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

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Murdoch L (Laura) (Educ) <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>;

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

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Director for Education

Reform <DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot>; Margaret Farragher

<Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Re: Appeals Correspondence

Good morning,

Just to advise that Brodies has issued a response on our behalf to Shepherd and Wedderburn.

Regards,

Jean

From: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, 3 November 2022, 10:49

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot' [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot <Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot>; [Redacted

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

s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Margaret Farragher <margaret.farragher@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted

s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>;

'DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot' <DirectorforEducationReform@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Appeals Correspondence

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

I can confirm that we have received correspondence from the learner's legal advisor and this is following due legal process with Brodies. There is no further background in this case and therefore nothing to add to what you already know.

[Redacted s30(b)(ii)]

I shall let you know when the letter has been sent.

Regards

Jean

Jean Blair

Director of Operations

t: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]e: jean.blair@sqa.org.uk | **w:** http://www.sqa.org.uk

Scottish Qualifications Authority

24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

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

Sent: 01 November 2022 14:50

To: Jean Blair <Jean.Blair@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Laura.Murdoch2@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Margaret Farragher <Margaret.Farragher@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Appeals Correspondence

Hi Jean/[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Please see attached correspondence we have received relating to an unsuccessful appeal made by a learner [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and highlighting a legal challenge being made in relation to this decision and the lack of individual feedback. Grateful if you could provide me with any background, and the latest SQA position on this, to inform our response – noting that a response from your lawyers, Brodies, has been requested and is expected by this Friday (4 Nov).

We had previously responded to the parent on their general concerns and I attach a copy of this response for your reference.

Happy to set up a call to discuss if that would be helpful.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

* email: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot (mobile: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]: url: www.gov.scot

Please note my working pattern is 9.30am to 4.45pm Mon to Thursday and 9.30am to 3.30pm Friday.

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