

May 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Letter to Parents/Carers (S4-S5) from Audrey May Head of Service (Chief Education Officer)

I'd like to share with you a communication from Audrey May – Head of Service (Chief Education Officer) – to all parents and carers of pupils in our senior phase (S4 to S6).

It is important that Mrs May's message is read whilst considering the content of my own most recent letter to you. This letter was issued on Tuesday 4 May and accompanied your child's senior phase report. Both the report and accompanying letter are critical in sharing important information about your child's learning as we progress through the SQA Alternative Certification Model 2021.

If for any reason you have not received your child's report, or the accompanying letter, then please contact our school office and we will re-issue.

Yours faithfully,

H McAninch
Headteacher

Dear Parent/Carer,

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you our planned approach to implementing the Alternative Certification Model for this year's SQA Certification. At the heart of our plan is the focus on how we best support every learner's highest possible achievement within the confines of the National Model.

In early January I shared a Briefing Paper outlining the proposed model and in February I shared our proposed Timeline with the Parent Council Chairs of all secondary schools for onward circulation and discussion with individual schools. I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with a further update on the process for awarding your child their provisional grades for National Qualifications (National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher). Other qualifications (including NPA's, National 1-4) continue to be internally assessed and are not directly affected.

As background, in October 2020 the Deputy First Minister announced that National 5 exams would be cancelled, this was followed with an announcement in December 2020 that Higher and Advanced Higher exams would be cancelled. The Alternative Certification Model has been implemented for session 2020/21 and will be based solely upon demonstrated assessment evidence.

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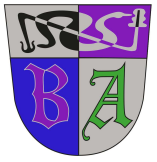
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Recycled Paper





We are meeting regularly with the SQA to ensure our young people are supported fully and given the best chance of success. The assessment and moderation approaches used in schools will be refined for this session and I wish to reassure you that all young people will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their learning across a range of assessments.

Key Principles adopted by all Dundee schools when planning their approach to gathering evidence in Term 4

- Gather evidence that gives all young people the best opportunity to achieve their full potential
- Assess at a time that is in our young peoples' best interest (within the confines of the available time)
- Ensure clear communications with parents/carers
- Ensure all young people who have verified additional assessment arrangements receive them
- To support the Health and Wellbeing of all young people. careful consideration will be given by schools to ensure no young person is undergoing multiple assessments across multiple subjects on the same day.
- Young people will be given information relating to how and when they will be assessed in each subject as early as is possible.

The Alternative Certification Model ([Alternative certification model - National Qualifications 2020-21 - SQA](#))

Learning and teaching has been a priority over the last few months and this will continue when young people return fully to school after Easter. Over the course of this time, young people will, as part of their learning, carry out several different and ongoing assessments. These will vary and utilise a range of approaches, depending on each subject. Some examples of assessments may include submission of essays, presentations, practical demonstration of skills, submission of a folio of work, assignments or assessments which will take place in a controlled environment.

Over the coming weeks, school staff will be working closely with colleagues across other schools as well as engaging with SQA to moderate the assessment evidence which is being generated.

Moderation develops a shared understanding of standards and expectations. It is a collaborative activity, where teachers are familiar with course specifications and approaches to assessment.

In particular, our schools will work:

- within school subject departments
- across schools within the City
- with other schools within our Regional Improvement Collaborative
- across Subject Curriculum Networks
- with SQA Appointees
- with other school improvement partnerships both at local and national level

This will help ensure a common standard is established across Scotland. Throughout this time and as part of this process, SQA will sample different young people's work and provide feedback to teachers on their assessment of each sample. This ongoing process will continue until the end of the summer term when all schools will submit

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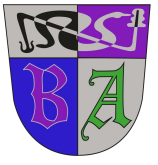
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their provisional results to the SQA by 25 June 2021. The SQA will then quality assure all results and issue young people with their final SQA results and certification on 10th August 2021

To support my colleagues, there will be dedicated time during the following dates for staff to focus solely on assessing and moderating our young people's evidence. The dates are Thursday 6th May, Tuesday 1st June and Wednesday 2nd June

Communication with Parents/Carers

I can appreciate that this may be an anxious time for young people and their parents and carers, and the need for clear, timely communication is important. As with any other year, you can expect as a parent/carer to receive regular updates on your child's progress. This may come in various forms including reports, virtual parents' evenings, email communication, telephone calls and text alerts etc. Each school has their own tracking and monitoring processes in place as well as their own ways of communicating with parents/carers. These will continue.

Your child will be provided with information relating to how and when they will be assessed in each subject as early as is possible. You will be provided with information on your child's current working grade. This is the grade that, at that point in time, the assessment evidence gathered, the professional judgement of the teacher and ongoing moderation activities would indicate your child is on track to achieve. The working grade will change depending on your child's progress and performance across the remainder of the year and in relation to the various assessments that will be undertaken. The outcome of assessments, once moderated, will be shared and discussed with young people as part of ongoing learner conversation. This may also include an explanation for grade decisions and feedback to support improvement in any subsequent planned assessment. Such an approach means that young people will be aware of the provisional grades submitted by their school and understand that they have been checked to ensure that they are fair and accurate.

A final communication will be sent to parents/carers by 25th June outlining the provisional grades submitted to the SQA. Final grades will be communicated by the SQA on the 10th August 2021. The final grade awarded for all National Qualifications will be decided and determined by the SQA following the extensive moderation and actions as laid out above.

I would like to reassure you that there is much resource and expertise focused on giving our young people the best opportunity to succeed in what are very difficult circumstances. We will continue to support all within our school communities to ensure young people's progress and achievements are not only recognised but their mental and emotional wellbeing is also supported. If you have any questions or queries relating to the processes explained above, please do not hesitate to contact your child's school in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

Audrey May
Chief Education Officer/Head of Service

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