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Children's Services

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All Parents and Carers of Senior Phase Pupils

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Our Ref: HB/JJ/kw/S40-37/corr/21/006
Your Ref:

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Dear Parents and Carers

National Qualifications in 2021 – The Alternative Certification Model (ACM)

Background

Following the Scottish Government's decision to cancel the exam diet for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses this year I am writing this letter to set out some key pieces of information ahead of schools communicating with you, and your child, directly in the coming weeks.

The new model for awarding qualifications this year is called the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). Central to the model is that awards for learners in secondary 4, 5 and 6, will be based on teacher and lecturer judgement using learner's assessment evidence and supported by a robust set of checks carried out by the school, local authority and Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

The SQA have set out a five stage plan of how the ACM will be delivered this year, including a set of roles and responsibilities for teachers, school and college managers, local authorities and other stakeholders, including the SQA, to follow.

Central Officers from Children's Services have been working with staff in schools and a representative from the SQA to put together plans to ensure everyone is fulfilling their responsibilities within the ACM and a set of Guiding Principles and details of our quality assurance activity has recently been agreed with schools.

The primary objective of the principles and quality assurance activity is to ensure fairness for all learners who must receive awards for national qualifications which are reflective of their demonstrated attainment.

Assessments

You will be aware of a change in assessment demands on your child. Because there is no formal, singular end of year exam, schools are developing assessment calendars to give young people the greatest opportunity to demonstrate their evidence of learning.

Assessments shall be tailored to the learning that has taken place over the course of the year and therefore the timing and range of assessments will be specific to each school. Different subjects have different requirements and so the assessment approaches will also differ in each subject area. Nevertheless, all assessments, regardless of subject area and school, will meet the national standards which have been set out by the SQA.

Moderation

The quality assurance process means that your child's provisional results will not simply be determined by their class teacher. A rigorous process of checking the accuracy of results takes place within schools and may include teachers working alongside teachers of the subject from other schools, and sometimes other local authorities. The local authority and SQA also have roles to play in this process of moderation and quality assurance.

Results

Discussions between class teachers and your child regarding their progress are extremely important in this process and we have instructed schools to make this a priority in order that learners know how they are doing, what they need to do next and how their grades have been determined. It is important that you support your child to work with the school and the systems they have in place to give your child the best opportunity of doing well.

Because of the ongoing nature of these conversations there is no local authority announcement or provisional results day and learners will receive their results from the SQA on Tuesday 10 August 2021. Learners will receive their Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) by post, or by text or email if they have registered for this service at [MySQA.org.uk](https://www.mysqa.org.uk).

Listening to young people

We recognise that, although there is no final exam this year, the new model will create its own new pressures on learners and we will be working with colleagues in Youth Services to provide young people with opportunities to share how the ACM is affecting them, both in terms of the challenges that arise and the benefits of obtaining results in this way.

Furthermore, although the overall approach to national qualifications has been set this year by the SQA, we will continue to work alongside school colleagues to listen and support young people through this process and make adjustments where this is possible. I would also encourage you as parents, along with your child, to engage with the school and contact your child's pupil support teacher with any questions that may arise.

For more information

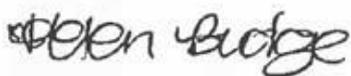
The SQA have created an online blog for parents and learners providing further, valuable information about the approach to awarding qualifications this year and I would recommend that you take some time to read some of the announcements and information on this page. You may find that the information here answers some questions you, or your child, may have. For example, two recent blog posts are titled:

- [How will my results be decided this year? Your questions answered.](#)
- [NQ2021 Group answers questions from parents and carers](#)

Both these pages can be found by using the hyperlink or by going to <https://blogs.sqa.org.uk/2021/>

Finally, I would like to wish all the learners in the senior phase my very best wishes as they continue to work hard during this challenging year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Budge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small circular mark at the beginning.

Helen Budge
Director of Children's Services