



Dear pupils, parents and carers

27 March 2020

We appreciate that this is a very difficult time for you. We have collated details of the most common questions we are being asked just now which we hope is in some way helpful. As soon as the SQA release the 'alternative certification model' we will share it with you. At this moment in time we don't know any more than you do and therefore share your frustration.

Please appreciate that the detail of the information below could change in-line with new SQA guidance but is correct at this date.

Will my achievements this year be recognised?

Yes. Pupil achievements in all courses will be recognised this year. The SQA will ask teachers to provide an estimate grade for each pupil in each course. The estimate must be based on evidence but will include all pupil achievements throughout the year and **not only Formal Assessment Block prelim results**. The SQA will also look at other information, including prior attainment, where appropriate e.g. achievement in National 5 if being presented for Higher this year. Estimates will not be sent to SQA until towards the end of April. Estimates are still being provisionally agreed by teachers and PTCs based on the factors mentioned above.

What happens if a pupil did not complete the coursework for a subject?

The latest SQA advice, issued on Tuesday 24 March, stated that schools are now not required to submit coursework for marking in Higher or Advanced Higher courses.

For National 5, most of the coursework has already been submitted to SQA. However, the SQA have now confirmed that coursework which was due to be picked up from school for marking in April and May will not now be collected.

Can a pupil still complete and submit coursework to the SQA online with their teacher?

No. Every course is unique, with different course arrangements. The reason that coursework cannot be completed and submitted to the SQA online is that it will not be accepted by the SQA and, for some subjects, coursework must be completed under exam conditions – timed, without notes, and in full view of a teacher. We therefore cannot have a 'one size fits all' approach to coursework which is one of the reasons why the SQA have decided that schools cannot submit work online this year.

Why should a pupil continue to complete online tasks set by a teacher when the school cannot submit any work to the SQA for marking?

We are currently awaiting more information from the SQA about estimation of grades and fuller details of the SQA's approach to certification this year. We will update families and pupils once we know more. The SQA have advised us that teachers may, however consider pupil work as part of the 'body of evidence' they use to decide on estimate grades. Therefore, teachers will continue to work with pupils online to ensure we have as much information as possible when deciding on estimate grades. It is therefore vital pupils keep working!

It is also important that pupils continue to engage with teachers online because that will allow them to develop the knowledge and skills needed to progress to the next level in that subject.

This also applies if a pupil is currently in S6 and preparing for college, university or an apprenticeship etc. If a pupil does not continue to work online, when they are able to do so, then not only will a teacher have less evidence to work with when completing estimate grades, but pupils also risk being ill-prepared for continuing with academic study, or work after the summer. We recognise, of course, the importance of ensuring that pupils who are unwell, or who do not have effective access to IT, are not disadvantaged, and we will work with the SQA to ensure this is not the case.

Will I receive certification for achievements this year?

Yes. The SQA have explained that that results will be issued no later than 4 August, as planned. The SQA are also encouraging pupils to sign up online for MySQA.

How do teachers decide on an estimate grade?

An estimate grade is normally based on several different factors including how the pupil performed in any formal assessments/prelims. Also, performance in any coursework, practical or performance elements and a teacher's professional judgement of progress, based on evidence produced throughout the year.

This year we know these estimate grades matter more than ever. For this reason, once we have more information from the SQA, we will work with all teachers to make sure that estimates are a good representation of pupil performance.

Does a disappointing prelim grade automatically mean a poor estimate grade?

No. In many cases a prelim does not provide 'full' evidence of a pupil's likely performance in the final exam. This might be because the prelim only tested a portion of the whole course, or it has been improved on by other exam practice after the prelim, or there is other coursework that is not included in a prelim grade. We know that there is often an improvement in performance between prelims and a final exam and we will also take this into account where appropriate.

Can a teacher tell a pupil what their estimate grade is, or what grade they will be awarded by the SQA?

No. We are still waiting on more information from the SQA about estimation of grades and fuller details of the SQA's approach to certification this year. We will update you further once we know more.

We know that grades will be based on coursework (where this has already been submitted), teacher estimate grades and prior SQA attainment from previous years (where appropriate). We normally submit estimate grades towards the end of April and, in the same way as other years, teachers cannot know what a pupil will be awarded for a course and will not know until Tuesday 4 August when pupils receive certificates.

Estimates provided by the school will form only one part of the process. It is the SQA who will make the final decision and not the school. **Please do not contact teachers directly about your estimated grades. They will not be able to tell you what they are.**

A pupil has produced work at home – can that contribute to the estimate grade?

Yes. As mentioned above, pupils should continue to work with teachers online to ensure that teachers have strong information to support their finalisation of estimate grades. However, our main aim is to be fair to everyone, so because of the current challenge's families face, we cannot expect all pupils to complete all tasks teachers set. Although every pupil who can should do their best to complete tasks set by teachers. Pupils should not worry if they cannot complete tasks due to factors out with their control. No pupil will be disadvantaged.

Other areas of concern that that we have been asked about:

What about UCAS applications?

UCAS have provided a statement on their website stating that the grades pupils receive will be as valid as those in previous years, and that there is no reason for the usual admissions cycle to be disrupted. Universities UK has confirmed that institutions will be flexible and do all they can to support pupils to progress to higher education. Remember all young people in the country are in the same position.

Will a teacher's estimated grade be the same as a pupil's UCAS predicted grade?

No. Predicted grades were provided in November, and were based on teacher judgement at that point. Estimated grades will be based on much more robust knowledge of pupil progress in courses and might differ from grades provided at the time of UCAS applications.

Can pupils still apply for courses out with school e.g. full-time college courses

Yes. Fife College and all other providers of courses out with school are currently closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, Fife College staff are continuing to work remotely and will continue to process all applications.

Will Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) continue when the school is closed?

EMA payments will continue. It is assumed that pupils are accessing learning online via GLOW and Microsoft TEAMS or other appropriate digital platform.

What if a pupil needs support with what to do next? How can they still get help with this?

We remain committed to supporting our leavers into a positive destination and will do all we can to continue to offer our support during these uncertain times. If a pupil has any questions then they should contact their Guidance teacher directly as per the Communication Guide issued which is also on the school website.

What if pupils or parents have any more questions?

Pupils and parents should contact the relevant Guidance Principal Teacher via e-mail in the first instance. All communication is welcome.