

National Qualifications and Reducing Teacher Workload

SSTA members have consistently highlighted the need for a reduction in teacher workload in the senior phase of secondary education. The SSTA conducted a survey of members in December 2015 to identify the sources of workload in the delivery of the 'new' qualification regime. The survey clearly found that the SQA requirements and processes had added considerably, and in many cases unnecessarily, to teacher's workload.

The SSTA Council in December resolved to conduct an indicative ballot of members on cutting bureaucracy in the National Qualification in early 2016. However, the Government's decision to establish the 'Assessment and National Qualification working group' on 6 January has shown a willingness to address workload. This working group was tasked to produce a report, by the end of March, that would reduce teacher workload in the 2016-17 session. This group, if successful, will have the potential to reduce teacher workload. However, SSTA Council will be considering the developments within the working group and will be developing its strategy in the SSTA campaign to cut teachers' workload.

The SSTA has listened and continues to listen to members on the measures that can be taken to reduce teachers' workload and is making the case within the working group. The SSTA is pushing hard for the recognition of the importance of the teachers' professional judgement and creating a 'breathing space' in the next session allowing time for long-term changes to the National Qualifications process.

Tackling Bureaucracy Reports

At a meeting with Angela Constance, the Cabinet Secretary, the SSTA shared the results of the recent SSTA members survey that indicated that only 6% of members said that the reports had brought about a reduction in workload with 88% saying that the reports had had 'no impact'.

We urged the Cabinet Secretary to seek evidence that had shown any reduction in workload following the reports and identify areas that 'should not be done' to assist the next round of 'Working Time Agreement' negotiations.

SSTA also asked that the Government identify its priority (possibly from the National Improvement Framework) to be included in the School Improvement Plan so that time could be allocated in the Working Time Agreements.

SSTA wants a reduction in teacher workload to allow teachers to focus on teaching and learning. Major steps need to be taken to reduce the pressure on teachers and retain teachers in the profession for the future.