

A selection of comments made by SSTA members.

"Multi-course teaching in one class is a common theme in our department and school. The confusing thing is that this is not a staffing or timetabling issue that causes this. Each teacher in our department has 7/8 unallocated teaching periods when we could easily be splitting these classes into single level classes. However, this is not being permitted by management, as our requests to do this have been denied. This official line is that the school needs this for cover".

"I teach Dance and Physical Education. I stood my ground when they tried to put Nat 5/Higher Dance in the same class and stated that it would not be running if they did. This is too challenging for the pupils and staff and has a negative impact on teaching and learning".

"No teacher can teach more than one course to a class of pupils. In Biology the content is different in Nat 4, Nat 5 and Higher. This is the equivalent of asking Mr Swinney to run three ministerial departments at once. Nobody benefits from the cost saving exercises, not the teacher, not the pupils and certainly not attainment".

"As a result of the change to just 6 National subjects, pupils are missing the opportunity to a wide range of subjects which was the whole point of CFE. Instead they are restricted and find it difficult to fit all their choices into only 6. It further impacts on their Highers as they can only drop one at the end of S4 - they may have discovered that in two of their subjects they would be unlikely to get a pass at Higher - thus impacting on their future pathway beyond school. It has also created a mad dash in S4 to complete all the coursework which puts stress and strain on both pupils and teachers".

"Teaching a Nat.5 course in fourth year over 4x periods a week is nigh on impossible especially when teaching bi-course or, even tri-course in one class of 30 pupils. No one is benefiting and attainment is declining as a result, particularly for those at the top end".

"The SQA and Scottish government need to take responsibility and make it clear that bi – level classes in subjects like the sciences do not work and should be a last resort as these are really bi - course classes which have different content and are not just the same course but with different responses. The result of these classes is that the overall attainment of the N5 candidates is lower leading to less uptake of the subject in Higher".

"Having N5 and N4 pupils in one class adds to teacher workload. Having distinct exams from each will deter senior management from timetabling them together. Well that would be my hope".

"In this authority as with many others we do not have S4 classes any more it is senior phase classes with S4, S5 and S6".

"I was on the QDT. We were not tasked to write a bi level course. The N4 and N5 were written as separate courses. Standard grade although not perfect for content did make sense in small schools as it allowed for bi level teaching.

"Expecting teachers to deliver either bi level or worse tri-level classes must be banned, teachers are unable to give the level of support required when multi levels are being taught and it's usually those in the bottom 10% who suffer most as their support needs are greater".

"Too many levels being taught in one class (and with no support evident to pupils with ASN requirements). N3 & 4 in the same class as N5 is divisive as we do have to teach to the exam".

"Too many pupils being dropped into classes in S4 who have not chosen the subject, or it is not an appropriate subject for them to be in. Art & Design is used as a dumping ground. Bring back Standard Grade and let pupils have the chance to sit different levels. There was nothing wrong with Standard Grade for our subject".

"Failure to pass the assessments was a way to ensure that pupils who do not demonstrate basic competencies do not sit the final exam. Removal of these has saw an increase in parents insisting that pupils sit an exam that they are not able to pass. Teacher judgement on departmental assessments, prelims etc. is ignored. Then over ruled by parents and SMT and then put under pressure for falling results".

"Teachers are being forced to teach dual level courses due to budget cuts without additional time for planning. This is not appropriate for maths as there is a significant difference in the level of course content. Unit assessments are still part of the Nat 4 course and to be expected to juggle that along with the significantly higher demands of the Nat 5 course is ridiculous".

"In my school we unofficially teach N5 Maths as a two-year course (although the SLT don't like us doing so). This is essential in order for us to complete the course and teach it properly. However, other subjects have to teach the whole of N5 in S4 and thereby don't have enough time to teach it properly. In particular as pupils choose 7 N5s each subject is only given four periods a week which does not allow them to have the 160 hours of teaching time required to deliver the full course. Even then, in my opinion, 160 hours still isn't enough i.e. I think all N5 courses should be two years".

"Fed up with bi/tri level classes. There's a focus on lesson classes/larger class sizes. Multi-level classes are stressful to teach and the pupils at all levels don't get as good an experience as they would in a single level class. Pass rate for lower ability pupils has plummeted compared to when they were taught single level".

"As a MFL secondary teacher, I have great concern that some courses will not run if teachers do not accept multi-level classes. To this end, it could have an effect on staff (surplus) and pupils (lack of choice which is already a problem)".