

SSTA Meeting with SQA 11 December 2020

The SSTA met with senior officers of the SQA and the following issues were discussed

National Qualification Group 2021 – This body was created to advise the DFM on national qualifications and procedures required to make awards in the summer of 2021. The SSTA said that this group was a management body that was deficient in not including the SSTA to speak on behalf of the teachers delivering the examinations in schools. The SSTA was disappointed that the SQA was not hearing the concerns of the teachers and their position would only create further teacher frustrations in the future.

SQA Final Date – It was confirmed that the final date for submission of grades for all levels will be **Friday 28 May 2021**. Any other dates being used within schools and local authorities would be for administrative purposes. The SQA confirmed that all teaching and learning of all candidates should continue up to that date. The removal of the final examinations was agreed to allow for more teaching and learning during this year.

Moderation Procedures – The SSTA sought clarification on the terms being used in schools that are being used in schools that are leading to confusion. These include verification, moderation, validation and quality assurance.

Quality Assurance - The SQA considered that the process of Quality Assurance would cover all of these terms. The SQA view was that Quality Assurance would be built in at all levels from the: class teacher to the department, to the school, to the Local Authority, to the SQA.

- The Quality Assurance process will be a staged process starting in January to March initially, as the SQA communicate with centres.
- The SQA will advise Centres/LAs and their approaches being adopted. They would then share good practice.
- Centres will have to demonstrate a robust Quality Assurance process.

Subject Assessment - Candidates data should be 'progressive'. The idea evidence should be to the pupils (learners) advantage, and not averaged over a period of time.

- 2 to 4 pieces (components) of evidence will be used for the provisional results
- The component of evidence used should be their best one.
- Learners should be kept informed of their progress with the final result not being a 'surprise'.

Prelims – SSTA sought clarification for the use of prelims in the process. Prelims for N5 would **not** be an essential part (centres' choice) of the evidence. Impact on the health and wellbeing of candidates, the longer time to gather evidence was considered when the exams for N5 cancelled. It would be expected that a prelim would be one of the components of evidence for Higher and Advanced Higher.

SQA Papers – The SQA have plans to release the examination papers and mark sheets intended for the 2021 examinations to support subjects.

Teacher Assessments - Higher and Advanced Higher assessment advice is hoped to be released early January. Expectations for Higher and Advanced Higher advice will be similar to **N5**.

Workload – SQA had little acknowledgement of the workload for teachers created around the process of gathering component evidence. SQA will try to get information out to schools as quickly as possible to try and help manage workload. The SQA pointed out that their workload is also very ‘heavy’. SQA emphasised that component evidence gathering must be ‘**quality not quantity**’.

Access to SQA Secure Site – SSTA highlighted this as a problem for teachers, in terms of workload and time, with schools been given limited access to the SQA secure site. The SQA are looking into this matter further, but highlighted the problem of teachers posting secure material online, subject websites, or by passing weblinks in e-mails.

Remuneration – The SSTA sought clarification on the DFM’s statement on payment of teachers ‘carrying out’ the work for the SQA. The SQA said that no decision had been made but thought it may be linked to the Quality Assurance process.

Further notes from the recent meeting with John Swinney

Additional In-Service Days – The SSTA asked the DFM for additional in-service days and time following the cancellation of Higher and Advanced Highers next summer. The DFM said he was not going to introduce additional days as there are at least 2 in-service days remaining this school year and they should be used for teacher assessment. He said that schools should focus on what is needed ‘now’ and not on where we are going.

Visiting Other Schools - The DFM also reaffirmed the Public Health Advice that teachers must not visit other schools as part of any assessment process.