

## **Knox Academy**

### **Frequently Asked Questions around the Alternative Certification Model**



#### **What is a provisional grade?**

Provisional grades are the grades we will submit to SQA on 25 June, based on all of the 'demonstrated attainment' evidence we have for each pupil. These grades will only become final grades once the SQA has confirmed them and these will be the grades that each candidate receives on their SQA certificate on Tuesday 10 August 2021.

#### **How will we gather evidence to help form provisional grades?**

SQA has provided guidance, which all Knox Academy teachers are following, on how to gather evidence of 'demonstrated attainment'. Put simply, this means pieces of evidence which can inform teacher judgements of provisional grades. As a school, we have followed both [general](#) and [subject-specific](#) guidance to support us in reaching these provisional grades.

SQA has said, "The amount of key evidence required to determine provisional results in National 5 to Advanced Higher courses varies between subjects. It is not the *quantity of evidence* but the *quality of evidence*, in relation to its 'predictive value', that will support schools in determining provisional grades this session".

Next term we will provide a summary document providing each subject's approach to assessment and the weightings for each assessment. These are already being discussed with senior pupils in each of their classes.

#### **How was the timing of our assessments decided?**

Careful consideration was given to the timing of all subjects' assessments, informed by how ready pupils are to sit assessments, and the additional supports that some pupils will need (alternative assessment arrangements). We have also made every effort to spread our assessments over the time we have available to avoid pupils sitting to many assessments in a day or in any one week. It still may be the case that there may be two assessments on one day and pupils should try not to be anxious about this – we know they will manage it and teachers will do their utmost to support pupils at all times with planning for these and give advice about revision and assessment strategies.

#### **What if a pupil misses an assessment due to illness or self-isolation?**

Pupils affected by this will have an opportunity to sit any assessments they have missed as soon as they return to school following their absence. We have also identified the weeks of 24 May/31 May as 'catch up' weeks. Eventually, we will reach a point where no further assessments can take place, but we have deliberately finished assessments at the start of June to allow 'mop up' of incomplete assessments.

If a pupil knows in advance of an assessment that they will be absent, they must inform their class teacher as soon as possible, so an alternative date can be agreed for them to sit that assessment.

### **When will pupils be told how they have performed in their assessments?**

Each assessment within a subject and level must be marked against the standard set out by the SQA. Teachers will aim to give feedback between assessments when able to do so and where it will impact on assessments that follow so they can work on any aspects they need to improve upon. Pupils are also encouraged to ask teachers for support with aspects of the assessment they wish clarification on. All assessments may be subject to moderation and quality assurance throughout May and June therefore specific marks and grades will not be shared until the end of the assessment window when this process has been completed.

### **What if an assessment doesn't go well, can I sit it again?**

No. Just like the SQA exams these assessments are designed to be final in order to ensure all candidates have the same opportunity to demonstrate their learning. However, provisional grades will be produced using between two and four pieces of assessment evidence and therefore a poor outcome in one assessment may be partially overcome by an improved performance in later assessments in the same subject and level. Please note that the weighting of each assessment in relation to the provisional grade varies and class teachers have explained all these weightings to pupils and we will send this out in a document to both pupils and parents/carers after Easter.

### **Are these assessments just really SQA exams?**

No. They cover the same content, but they are far more spaced out. So, instead of a pupil sitting an exam in one day, pupils will be assessed over 3-4 weeks and 3 or 4 pieces of assessment for each of their subjects. This will give pupils far more time to focus their revision, and to show what they are capable of.

### **Will all course content be assessed?**

The SQA has advised that schools should gather assessment evidence as late as possible in the course to allow for as much subject content to have taken place as possible. SQA has stated "evidence does not need to cover the entire course specification, but the more course content that is covered, the better the predictive value is likely to be." That is why the assessments are taking place as late as possible in this school year.

### **How will we make sure provisional grades are fair?**

All of our teachers have participated in national and local 'Understanding Standards' events, so we know that all teachers are marking to a standard that is the same as SQA exam marking and other schools across Scotland. A sample of each teacher's marked assessments will be 'moderated' by teams within each subject area, and across East Lothian. Put simply, this means that a careful process will confirm that each teacher's marking is meeting the 'national standard'. In each school a very careful

analysis of each subject's provisional grades will take place, to ensure that they are in line with expected results. These processes ensures that each pupil will be treated fairly.

### **How will we avoid any implicit bias (unconscious bias or stereotypes) in establishing provisional grades?**

Our teachers are professional and objective, but in every line of work implicit bias is possible. The moderation processes referred to above will help to prevent this, and specific work will take place next term with all teachers in Scotland to ensure that no implicit bias takes place.

### **What type of evidence can be used in forming predicted grades?**

Some pupils and families are under the impression that the May assessments will be all that define a pupil's provisional grades. This is not the case. Although May assessments are really important, and will carry a lot of weight in forming provisional grades, many other forms of evidence will contribute to provisional grades.

- SQA 2021 Assessment Papers (recently shared securely with us), Commercial practice papers and coursework assessments will have a high predictive value i.e. they carry a lot of weight in deciding provisional grades.
- Class tests from before or after lockdown, which sample key aspects of the course and which have been completed under assessment conditions, can be used as supplementary evidence.
- For S5/6 – prelim grades may also be used/supplement the May assessments
- Classwork and work completed without assessment conditions, or during remote learning, is unlikely to form a strong evidence base on its own, but may supplement other evidence.

### **How will actual grades be decided?**

*Grade boundaries* are the marks required to achieve a particular grade within a course and SQA's notional grade boundaries are:

Band	Grade	Notional % range
1	A (upper)	85-100
2	A (lower)	70-84
3	B (upper)	65-69
4	B (lower)	60-64
5	C (upper)	55-59
6	C (lower)	50-54
7	D	40-49
8	No Award	30-39
9	No Award	0-29

There is still much national uncertainty around the extent to which individual subjects in schools will be able to adjust these grade boundaries in the same way as SQA do each year, to take account of

harder-than-expected or easier assessments. Clearer clarification from SQA should be with us soon in relation to this. Whatever is decided, we will ensure that Knox Academy pupils will not be disadvantaged in any way compared to pupils from other schools.

### **What are pupils' responsibilities around the security of all assessments?**

It is important that all candidates adhere to the SQA code of conduct in relation to their assessments. Any breach of the integrity or security or safety of the assessment will have serious consequences and may include withdrawal from the qualification. In particular pupils must note the following responsibilities:

- Do not take into the assessment room any notes or prohibited items.
- Pupils must not communicate in any way with, seek assistance from, or give assistance to, another pupil or pupils during an examination – including revealing the content of any assessments which they have sat during the assessment window.
- They should not intentionally cause a disturbance in the assessment room.
- They must not remove a question paper of any kind from an assessment room.
- They must not use rude, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language (including racist, sexist or homophobic content), in scripts or coursework.
- They must not plagiarise materials from another source, give assistance to or lend materials to another pupil or work with other pupils on a task which should be completed on their own.
- In addition, all pupils should not discuss or disclose any aspect of their assessments on social media including the themes, topics and content or sharing of images of the assessment materials.

### **When will pupils know their provisional grade(s)?**

Provisional grades will be shared with students towards the end of the school term and once all quality assurance and moderation activities have been concluded. Further details on this will be shared with pupils and parents in due course.

### **When can pupils leave school this year?**

The school leaving date will be Friday 4th June for all eligible pupils (must be 16 or over by 30 September 2021 and completed a Leaver's form – which was sent to all S4/5/6 EduBuzz emails).

### **If you have any concerns, can I speak to someone?**

Yes – you can speak to your young person's House Team (Mrs Falconer/Ms Adam – Garleton; Mr Russell/Mr Meekison – Lammerlaw; Mr Illingworth/Mrs Doig – Traprain). Pupils can also approach their teachers directly about any questions to do with their assessments.