

Thursday 7 October 2021

Dear Senior Students, Parents and Carers,

SQA National Qualifications 2022

I am writing to provide some additional updates on the current information we have from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in relation to the plans for National Qualifications for this academic year.

Following the decision by Scottish Government Ministers that exams should go ahead in 2022 if it is safe to do so, East Lothian schools are planning their approaches to supporting young people through their learning in their chosen national qualification courses, and the approaches that will be used to assess their own progress as we near [the planned exam diet beginning in April 2022](#).

East Lothian schools are basing these plans on the scenarios set out below and the potential associated contingencies that will be required in certain related circumstances to support young people through their studies this session.

To keep you fully informed, I want to take this opportunity to outline some details regarding these scenarios, and aspects of our schools' planned response to these.

Scenario 1: Current public health advice: SQA exam diet with modifications, as published

The Scottish Government announced on 18 August that SQA exams will take place – if safe to do so – in Spring 2022. Recognising the continued disruption to learning and teaching this year, SQA has kept most of the modifications made to course assessments (exams and coursework) in session 2020-21. This means that, in most courses, learners will do less assessment than in a 'normal' year with exams, and more time will be available to focus on learning and teaching. You can view a summary of all the modifications at sqa.org.uk/nqmodifications.

All East Lothian schools are planning on a prelim examination diet as part of their NQ22 preparations. The timing of these and accommodation arrangements will be decided by individual schools who will notify parents and students accordingly of these arrangements. The organisation of student groupings for the purposes of the prelim examination diet will be guided by the most current Scottish Government COVID Guidance to Schools at the time of the proposed prelim examination diet.

We are mindful that our current S4, S5 and S6 cohorts have not experienced a traditional diet of examination assessments as a result of COVID related interruptions in the previous two school sessions. In response to this, schools will also focus on guiding and supporting senior phase students in their preparation and approach to a period of 'compressed study' prior to and during planned prelim examinations.

East Lothian schools will also make preparations for any pupils who may miss a prelim assessment as a result of absence, including any student who may have a COVID related absence during the prelim diet.

Scenario 2. Increased levels of disruption: SQA exam diet with modifications (as above) + additional measures

SQA will continue to constantly monitor public health advice and levels of disruption across the country, while taking account of discussions that take place in the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG). If there is further significant disruption to learning and teaching this session, East Lothian schools will adopt the most appropriate additional support measures for learners to help reduce pre-exam stress. For example, where possible in some subjects the SQA may provide additional information to help learners focus their study on the run up to the exams. This will not be possible in all subjects due to the types of modifications which are already in place. The actual assessments will not change under this approach. If additional measures are required, they will be announced nationally and introduced in our schools at the end of March 2022.

Scenario 3: Public health advice leads to SQA exams being cancelled: teachers and lecturers determine provisional results

If the Covid-19 pandemic gets worse to the point where physical gatherings are restricted at the time of the exams, the SQA exam diet will be cancelled. If this happens, teachers and lecturers will be asked to determine provisional results by using their professional judgement of evidence that shows each learner's skills, knowledge and understanding.

This academic session the main focus for our schools will continue to be learning and teaching, with assessment to support that process. With this in mind, and in preparation for the possibility that exams cannot go ahead, teachers will use the type, quality and volume of evidence that would be needed to support quality assured estimates in a 'normal' year. This will also serve as the basis of the evidence needed to support the submission of provisional results if it is not possible to run exams.

Under this approach there will be no requirement for schools to run additional assessments. Doing so would place excess workload on teachers and learners. Provisional results would be based on in-year assessments that normally take place during the school year such as prelims, practical activities, performances and class tests.

Our schools will continue to give full consideration to those learners with additional support needs and who would normally use specific assessment arrangements during their exams. Schools will ensure that appropriate assessment arrangements are put in place for normal in-year assessments to ensure equity.

Further information can be found on the SQA website - [Link to SQA National Qualifications 21-22 Website](#). If you have any further questions regarding National Qualification for this session, please contact your school directly to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola McDowell

Head of Education