



Knox Academy

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Dear Parent / Carer / Pupil

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SQA update, and answers to commonly asked questions

As you will be aware, the Depute First Minister has announced that this year's SQA exams will not now go ahead. **Firstly, and most importantly, please do not worry – we want the best for all of our pupils.** We will do everything we can to ensure no Senior Phase pupil is disadvantaged, and the Scottish Government, and the SQA will be working with us on this. We understand that this is an uncertain time for everyone but we will keep you up-to-date with any new information as soon as we have it.

This letter provides pupils and their families with an SQA update, and on page 3 answers some of the more common questions we have had. You can read the latest updates from the SQA [here](#) and on page 3 we have answered some of the more common questions on other matters we have received recently.

Will pupils' achievements this year be recognised?

Yes. A pupil's achievements in all courses will be recognised this year. The SQA will ask teachers to provide an estimate grade for each pupil in each course. The estimate must be based on evidence, but will include all of a pupil's achievements throughout the year and **not only prelim results**. The SQA will also look at other information, including prior attainment, where appropriate. Estimates will not be sent to the SQA until the end of April.

What happens if a pupil did not complete the coursework for a subject?

The latest SQA advice, issued on Tuesday 24 March, stated that schools are now not required to submit coursework for marking in Higher or Advanced Higher courses. For National 5, most of the coursework has already been submitted to SQA, and will be marked. However, the SQA has now confirmed that coursework which was due to be picked up from school for marking in April and May will **not** now be collected. This applies to the following subjects: Art & Design; Design & Manufacture; Music; PE and Practical Cookery. Some subjects have part of their course marked in school by teachers, with the marks then sent to the SQA for inclusion in a pupil's final grade. Such work will also now **not** be submitted to the SQA. This applies to the following subjects: Design & Manufacture; French; Mandarin; PE; Practical Cookery, Practical Woodwork and also the NPA in Photography.

Can a pupil still complete and submit coursework to the SQA online with their teacher?

No. Every course is unique, with different course arrangements. The reason that coursework cannot be completed and submitted to the SQA online is that it will not be accepted by the SQA and, for some subjects, coursework must be completed under exam conditions – timed, without notes, and in full view of a teacher. We therefore cannot have a 'one size fits all' approach to coursework which is why the SQA has decided schools cannot submit work online this year.

Why should a pupil continue to complete online tasks set by a teacher when the school cannot submit any work to the SQA for marking?

We are currently awaiting more information from the SQA about estimation of grades and fuller details of the SQA's approach to certification. The SQA has advised us that teachers may, however, take into account a pupil's work completed after school closure as some of the evidence they use to decide on estimate grades. Therefore, teachers will continue to work with pupils online to ensure they have as much information as possible when deciding on estimate grades. It is therefore important pupils keep working.

However, work completed at home, which in many cases we cannot guarantee as a pupil's own, cannot have as much of an impact on a teacher's estimate grade as work completed in school. We have received some enquiries from pupils about what they have to do at home in order to turn a likely fail into a B pass. This is not possible. So, although worth doing, work from home cannot lead to major changes in a pupil's estimate grade.

A clearer reason for pupils to continue engagement with teachers online is that doing so will allow them to further develop the knowledge and skills needed to progress to the next level in that subject. This also applies to pupils currently in S6, and preparing for college, university or an apprenticeship etc. If a pupil does not continue to work online, when they are able to do so, then not only will a teacher have less evidence to work with when completing estimate grades, but a pupil also risks being ill-prepared for continuing with academic study or work after the summer. We recognise, of course, the importance of ensuring that pupils who are unwell, or who do not have effective access to IT, are not disadvantaged, and we will work with the SQA to ensure this does not happen.

Will I receive certification for achievements this year?

Yes. The SQA has explained that that results will be issued no later than 4 August, as planned. The SQA is also encouraging pupils to sign up for MySQA which can be accessed [here](#).

How do teachers decide on an estimate grade?

An estimate grade is normally based on a number of different factors, including how a pupil performed in a prelim, how a pupil performed in any coursework, practical or performance elements and a teacher's professional judgement of how a pupil's progressed, based on evidence produced throughout the year. This year we know these estimate grades matter more than ever. For this reason, once we have more information from the SQA, we will work with all teachers to make sure that estimates are a good representation of each pupil's performance.

A pupil has produced work at home – can that contribute to the estimate grade?

Yes. As mentioned above, pupils should continue to work with teachers online in order to ensure that teachers have strong information to support their finalisation of estimate grades. However, our main aim is to be fair to everyone, so because of the current challenges families face we cannot expect all pupils to complete all tasks teachers set. Although every pupil who is able to should do their best to complete tasks set by teachers, pupils should not worry if they cannot complete tasks due to factors outwith their control. No pupil will be disadvantaged.

Does a disappointing prelim grade automatically mean a poor estimate grade?

No. In many cases a prelim does not provide 'full' evidence of a pupil's likely performance in the final exam, either because the prelim has only tested a portion of the whole course, it has been improved on by other exam practice after the prelim, or there is other coursework that is not included in a prelim grade. We know that there is often an improvement in performance between prelims and a final exam and we will also take this into account where appropriate.

Can a teacher tell a pupil what grade they are going to get in a subject?

No. We are still waiting for more information from the SQA about estimation of grades, and fuller details of the SQA's approach to certification, and we will update you further once we know more. We know that grades will be based on coursework (where this has already been submitted), teacher estimate grades and prior SQA attainment from previous years (where appropriate). We normally submit estimate grades towards the end of April and, in the same way as other years, teachers cannot know what a pupil will be awarded for a subject, and will not know until Tuesday 4 August when pupils receive certificates. Estimates provided by the school will form only one part of the process. It is the SQA who will make the final decision and not the school. **Please do not contact teachers directly about your estimated grades. They will not be able to tell you what they are.**

Can a pupil find out what their final grade will be before 4 August?

No. The SQA will make this decision based upon any coursework which has been submitted and marked by the SQA, the estimate submitted by the school, and any other relevant information for that subject.

Other commonly asked questions

What about UCAS applications? UCAS have provided a statement on their website (www.ucas.com), stating that the grades pupils receive will be as valid as those in previous years, and that there is no reason for the usual admissions cycle to be disrupted. Universities UK has confirmed that institutions will be flexible and do all they can to support pupils to progress to higher education. Remember all young people in the country are in the same position.

Will a teacher's estimate grade be the same as a pupil's UCAS predicted grade? No. Predicted grades were provided in November/early December, based on teacher judgement at that point. Estimate grades are based on more robust knowledge of a pupil's progress in their courses and might differ from grades provided at the time of UCAS applications.

Can pupils still apply for courses outwith school e.g. full-time college courses, part-time School Partnership courses and East Lothian or College Foundation Apprenticeships? Yes. Edinburgh College and all other providers of courses outwith school are currently closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, Edinburgh College and East Lothian Council are continuing to work remotely and will continue processing all applications.

Will Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) continue when the school is closed? Yes. It is assumed that pupils are accessing learning online via Google Classroom or other appropriate online platform.

What if a pupil needs support with what to do next? Can they still get help with this? We remain committed, of course, to supporting our leavers into a positive destination and will do all we can to continue supporting them during these uncertain times. If a pupil has any questions then they should contact their Pupil Support Leader (Guidance teacher) online and a phone call or Google Meeting can take place if that would be useful.

What if pupils or parents have any more questions? Pupils and parents can contact Pupil Support Leaders (Guidance teachers) online as above. Please do ask about anything that is worrying you. All questions are welcome!

Further updates will be provided as and when we receive more information. Do contact us online if you have any further questions that this letter does not address, and I wish you and your families well, at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Cook
Headteacher