



# Knox Academy

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Dear Parent/Carer

## **SQA Arrangements 2020-21**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> October the Deputy First Minister (DFM), John Swinney, announced that there would be **no** external exams for National 5 candidates in 2021. He also announced that there **will be** exams for Higher/Advanced Higher pupils in May/June 2021. The DFM also stated that the intention to hold exams for Higher/Advanced Higher pupils would be reviewed again in February, in line with the evolving picture of Covid-19, and to plan contingencies should they be deemed no longer able to proceed based on public health advice.

### **National 5**

Following a discussion with our Head of Education at East Lothian Council, and the other five secondary Head Teachers on Wednesday of this week, and based on some further information from SQA about National 5 assessments, we have agreed that the position across the authority is that there will be **no prelim exams for National 5 pupils this session**. A prelim is a 'preliminary' exam in preparation for the final SQA exam, and given that there are going to be no exams for Nat 5 in 2021, this is the reason we have made this decision.

In order to gather assessment evidence to submit our grades to the SQA, currently by the end of March 2021 (although this date may still change as more information is awaited from SQA), we will have a series of structured assessments, for our National 5 pupils, between January and mid-March. This allows us, over a period of time, to collect evidence of between 2-4 pieces of work, gathered in a formal setting, for each subject area, which is as near the course completion as possible. This means that this is deemed to be more valid and reliable in terms of a young person's ability/performance.

A timetable/overview of the intended dates for these assessments will be shared with you and your young person in the near future. This will help you and them plan for these to be able to organise a study programme.

### **Higher/Advanced Higher**

A planned diet of prelims for Higher/Advanced Higher will take place from **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> until Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020**. This is slightly later than originally intended, when it was envisaged National 5 and Higher/Advanced Higher prelims would take place over a three week period. Now that we are only having Higher/Advanced Higher prelims we felt a few extra weeks of study time would be beneficial to our pupils. It also allows some more teaching time/course work to be covered prior to these. The prelim timetable will be shared shortly with pupils/parents. We are offering a flexible approach to study during the duration of the prelims to ensure that pupils maximise the time available to prepare for these prelims.

- If a pupil has a Higher/Advanced Higher prelim, they should attend school on that day. If they do not, they can study in a place of their own choosing e.g. at home or by attending their normal timetabled classes, where this time will be given over to study/support from their teacher.
- If a pupil is in S5/S6 and is doing a mixture of National 5/Higher subjects, they should attend their National 5 classes when not sitting a higher exam on that day.
- For those pupils who are on home-school transport, they should attend their normal timetabled classes after/before their higher prelim exam and use this time for study/support from their teacher.

Once we have issued prelim timetables, we will ask pupils to let us know whether or not they will be studying in school or at home in the times outwith their prelim exams. This will ensure all staff know who to expect in classes and to ensure we follow Covid-19 protocols for track and trace purposes.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your forbearance in terms of us having to wait on information from SQA or be able to make decisions in the best interests of all our pupils. As you can see, we don't have all the pieces of the jigsaw yet in terms of exact dates for estimate/grade submissions to the SQA for National 5. However, what we are aiming to do is to communicate with you as soon as we can in terms of keeping you up-to-date with information and to re-assure you that we are working hard to ensure the decisions we make at both a school, and local authority level, are always based around the best interests of our young people as this is the most important consideration for us.

To summarise:

Further information for **National 5** pupils/parents on assessment dates will follow shortly.

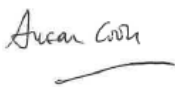
The S5/6 Higher/Advanced Higher prelim timetable will be shared next week and runs from **Wednesday 2 until Thursday 10 December 2020**.

The SQA diet of Higher and Advanced Higher exams runs from Monday 10 May to Friday 4 June 2021.

SQA results day is Tuesday 10 August 2021.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely



Susan Cook

Head Teacher