

Dear Parent/Carer

SQA Update

On Wednesday 7th October, the Deputy First Minister announced that there will be no external assessment of National 5 courses this year – either by an exam or by coursework – and that Higher and Advanced Higher exams will remain as planned. The SQA have recently started to publish individual subject guidance on gathering key evidence for producing estimates for National 5 and aim to publish guidance for all subjects by 19th November.

Over the last number of weeks, we have been working closely with South Ayrshire Council and our colleagues in other schools to plan for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher assessments. The summary below provides some initial information on our approaches to assessing young people in S4-S6. At present, we continue to await confirmation from SQA of key dates, assessment resources and details of their validation process. It should be noted that the approaches outlined below, particularly for National 5, may be subject to some changes depending on any further guidance issued by the SQA.

Higher and Advanced Higher

The prelim exam diet will take place from Thursday 14th until Friday 29th January. This is slightly later than normal to provide each subject area with an additional week of teaching time after the Christmas break. All prelims will take place during class time due to restrictions in using the main exam halls and SQA have confirmed that schools can split prelim papers to suit delivery in timetabled lessons. During the diet, young people will be given the opportunity to study for remaining prelims in their normal timetabled classes.

The Higher and Advanced Higher SQA exam timetable has now been confirmed, running from Monday 10th May until Friday 4th June with results day on Tuesday 10th August 2021. A copy of the timetable is attached and can be found [here](#). By May, we might be in a position to use the main halls for exams. However, if restrictions are ongoing we will arrange to use classrooms and other spaces. For exams with larger numbers of candidates, we may also need to identify suitable spaces out with school.

As a contingency, departments are identifying the key pieces of evidence that would be used to estimate a young person's grade in the event of exams being cancelled again. Mr Swinney has indicated that the latest point that a decision will be taken on exams will be around mid-February.

National 5

All departments have been asked to identify key pieces of evidence that will be used to estimate a young person's grade in N5. There will be no prelim diet for National 5 and evidence will be gathered on an ongoing basis. This will include a **key assessment that will take place in each subject by the end of January**. Feedback from this assessment will support young people and their teachers to identify improvements in their learning. The SQA have advised that they will provide some resources for assessments. The timing of additional key assessment pieces to be gathered later in the course will be driven by the SQA deadline for grade submission, which is yet to be published.

Where possible, we will aim to co-ordinate key assessment dates and will work hard to create an assessment calendar to support our learners.

National 3 and 4

Some course changes have been made as a result of reduced teaching time this session. National 3 and National 4 courses will continue to be internally assessed and subject to verification by the SQA. The date for submitting results to the SQA for N3/N4 courses is usually towards the end of May.

We will continue to work closely with our colleagues in South Ayrshire and look forward to the SQA publishing the key dates and resources schools require to finalise their assessment approaches. Across South Ayrshire, Principal Teachers are working together to produce shared grade related criteria and approaches to moderating assessments. Within Marr College, we have already started to plan for young people who are entitled to additional support arrangements (AAR).

I appreciate that this will be an uncertain time for you and your child and please be assured that we are doing everything we can to get it right for them. Mr McLean and I have held virtual assemblies with students to update them on SQA matters.

As we receive further information from the SQA, I will write to you again with an update on course assessment arrangements.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Docherty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small red mark at the end.

George Docherty
Head Teacher