

Grange Academy

Head Teacher: Mr Robert Johnston

Email: robert.johnston@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

7th December 2020

Dear S4-6 pupils,

Much of what is explained in this letter you'll already be aware of from talking with your class teachers and from information in the Monday bulletin and on your Year Group's Microsoft Team. However, we now have a bit more detail available to share.

Attached is a calendar of assessments. You will receive another one in April.

If you are sitting National 5s, it is the combination of the assessments performed in these two calendars that will form the most significant evidence upon which your grade is decided.

If you are sitting Higher and Advanced Highers, your exam performance will decide your grade and you will have no April assessment calendar. However, in the event that your exams are cancelled, you would be in the same position as National 5 pupils - it would then be the assessments performed in these two calendars which would form the most significant evidence upon which your grade is decided.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does that mean the results I earn in the January and April assessments will be the results I get on my certificate?

No, these assessments are not the same as SQA exams. These assessments help you to reveal what you are capable of under exam-conditions and are therefore very useful as evidence.

Does this mean the assessments I'm doing in class don't count towards my final grade?

If your exams are cancelled, they do count. In addition to your performance in the January and April calendars, your teachers can take into account a limited number of key pieces of evidence that you produce throughout the year, where appropriate to do so.

Is this the same process as used last session when the schools closed for the final part of the year and we went into lockdown?

It's similar but not exactly the same. Last year, pupils, parents and teachers were reacting to a surprise event. This year, we've been planning since the start of the session. We've all been aware since August that ongoing class assessments are important. Various SQA processes are therefore slightly different this session.

I'm sitting Highers and Advanced Highers – am I at a disadvantage compared to National 5 pupils because it's December and I don't know for certain if my exams are taking place or not?

We certainly empathise with you. In terms of how we are assessing you – no – you're not at a disadvantage. Behind the scenes, since the start of the session, your teachers have been organising their planning carefully for both scenarios.

I'm sitting Highers and Advanced Highers. What happens if the Scottish Government announces the cancellation of exams between now and the start of the January term?

Nothing about our plans for January would change. We would still follow the attached assessment calendar.

Are we having study leave?

Yes. For all pupils in S4-6, you will return to school and follow your normal timetable for the first week back in the New Year. Then from Wednesday 13th January to Friday 29th January, you will only be in school on the days you have assessments.

What if I have nowhere quiet to study at home?

If it helps you, we can make the Assembly Hall available as a supervised study space during Study Leave. However, if we see that it is becoming a hang-out zone with little actual study going on, we'll ask you to head home. You must maintain social distancing and wear your face coverings unless you are exempt.

What if all of my courses are National 4 so none of the assessments in the calendar are relevant to me?

Please come to school and follow your normal timetable.

What happens if I miss an assessment?

Please do your utmost to be present for all your assessments. In the event that your absence is absolutely unavoidable, please speak with, or e-mail, Miss MacKinnon as soon as you can.

mary.mackinnon@eastayrshire.org.uk

Is it true that all of the East Ayrshire Council secondary schools are taking the same approach to S4-6 assessment for 2021?

Yes. The approaches across the schools are broadly the same every year; however, this year, Miss MacKinnon has been in weekly contact with all the SQA Co-ordinators at the other schools. Furthermore, the Grange Academy Principal Teacher of each subject has been in video meetings with their counterpart in each of the other schools to agree a common approach to assessment.

I have questions. Who can I speak with?

Miss MacKinnon would be so happy to speak with you about anything to do with SQA – this can be individually or with a group of your pals. Make arrangements by talking with her in The Street at interval or lunchtime or by e-mailing mary.mackinnon@eastayrshire.org.uk . If you'd prefer to talk to her whilst your parents or carers are also in the conversation – just say so; we can talk together with your parents/carers on speakerphone.

You can also use the school app to make an appointment with your Guidance teacher or speak with any teacher in the school you feel comfortable with. If your questions are about a particular subject, see the Principal Teacher of the subject.

And remember: you see the Head Teacher every interval and every lunchtime in The Street and the Assembly Hall; Mr Johnston's favourite thing is talking to pupils about their learning so just go up to him and chat – he'll be glad that you did and he's very easy to talk with.