

18th January 2021

Dear S4-6 pupils, parents and carers,

Last week, via the school app, you received a letter from Linda McAulay-Griffths, Head of Education, which explained that plans for the January assessment block have now changed. In order to clarify some additional details, here are the answers to some supplementary questions which pupils have been asking.

When the campus reopens, will the January assessment calendar go ahead?

No. The papers you would've sat will now be used as part of your ongoing class assessment. You will still do them in silence, timed, and without notes; however, they will not be formalised into a whole school assessment calendar. They will be done in class time and may, therefore, be split over more than one sitting. Different classes may sit the papers on different days, depending on when their teachers think they are ready. They will carry the same weight as the other exam-conditions practice assessments you've been doing all year.

Why can't we just go ahead with them when the campus reopens?

There are two main reasons for this. The first is about timing: if we have "prelims" when the campus reopens, you will, understandably, want to spend lockdown preparing for them to the exclusion of new learning. Our priority is to give you ample opportunity to finish your SQA courses because you cannot be awarded a qualification for a partially-completed course. The second reason is that in a school of our size, the absolute minimum time it takes to implement an assessment calendar is 12 school days - having gone from Christmas holidays straight into lockdown, it would be unreasonable to add a fortnight's study leave onto the end of that.

Are any of the other local schools having their January assessments rescheduled?

No. All SQA planning this session is being done jointly across all seven East Ayrshire secondaries and the arrangements above have been agreed across the schools.

Will we have advanced notice of the assessments we're doing in class once the campus opens?

Yes. Bear in mind that they will not all come at once in every subject. Your own class teachers will make a decision about when your class is ready.

Is the April assessment calendar going ahead?

Given that we do not yet know exactly when senior pupils will be back on campus, it would be unhelpful to give you definite dates. As things stand, we do plan to schedule a whole school calendar of assessments later in the school year.

How will my final grade be decided?

The school will submit your provisional grades to the SQA. Your grades will be based on a limited number of exam-conditions assessments which have taken place throughout the year. Our advice since August has been to do your best in all exam-conditions class assessments because they provide helpful evidence of your skills and understanding. For each subject, the assessments you have done throughout the year provide a blend of evidence to support the results that you achieve in a more formal whole-school assessment block.

I'm doing some of my SQA coursework at home during lockdown. Can it still be assessed as part of my final grade even though I didn't do it in class?

Yes. Examples of this are your English folio, Design and Manufacture assignment, Art folio etc. However, your work will only be accepted for assessment if your teacher is confident in signing it off as your own unaided work. For each subject, we have a very specific set of checks in place to prevent any concerns. The following SQA publication explains the consequences of plagiarism (passing someone else's work off as your own) and collusion (getting too much help from an adult or friend).

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Your-coursework-2020-21.pdf

This was published before the current lockdown but the principles are still accurate. The only difference now is that you will notice that your teachers will be asking you to submit your coursework in particular stages, in particular ways, at particular times. This is so that they can ensure it is your own work. We will be unlikely to accept assessments done at home which have not been submitted in their draft stages as directed by the class teacher. If in doubt, speak with your class teachers.

Before Christmas, I spoke with some of my teachers about changing level. Can this still happen?

Yes, your teachers have all their pre-Christmas records about suggested level changes and we will be in touch with you and your parents/carers very soon about this.

I have a question. Who should I speak with?

- *About a level change:* your class teacher and your parents/carers.
- *About a particular subject:* your class teacher.
- *About your feelings and the home learning experience:* your Guidance teacher.
- *About SQA generally:* Miss MacKinnon

In summary, we are exceptionally proud of our senior pupils. You are doing an excellent job of managing your learning in the current circumstances. Whenever in doubt about how to stay organised or if anything is unclear, please make contact with a teacher and ask for help.