

# SQA Update FAQs

Updated June  
2021

Mearns Castle High School



At Mearns Castle we are well aware that this is a challenging and stressful time for all our young learners and the wider community and we thank you for your continued support at this time. We hope that sharing answers to some FAQs is helpful to you at this point. We have continued to work closely with both the Local Authority and the SQA to provide as much information as possible throughout the session with regularly updated FAQs and we hope this update is helpful at this point of receiving your provisional results.

## ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

### **What specific assessment items have formed the basis of the provisional results?**

The SQA advised schools on the types of assessment that would assist in gathering high-quality predictive evidence that demonstrates attainment. This guidance was specific in each subject and resulted in a MCHS assessment calendar being published for each subject to inform learners and parents on the specific assessment items which would contribute.

Assessments such as mock exams, class tests, assignments and practical elements have allowed learners to demonstrate their attainment and this has informed the provisional results. Teachers cannot 'infer' attainment this year – a provisional result must be based on the attainment demonstrated in these key assessment items. A copy of the calendar has been included alongside this document.

Departments used SQA guidance to ensure that learners were as prepared as possible and fully informed of assessments contributing towards their provisional results.

### **Do some items carry more weighting than others e.g. invigilated mock exam, coursework, etc?**

SQA Guidance indicates that some assessments are likely to be more reliable indicators of performance than others (e.g assessments undertaken in controlled environments) and that "the evidence you consider should have a high predictive value; this means that it should be measured against the requirements of the course assessment, and should replicate it, as far as possible." All of our assessments contributing to the provisional results were conducted in secure, exam conditions. Each assessment was externally validated and conducted concurrently or a unique assessment was used to enhance security of assessments. All assessments have contributed to gathering evidence which meets the subject specific guidance.

We have ensured that a range of assessment evidence may contribute to the provisional result, rather than a single 'high stakes' event. Learners were advised to work on the premise that all of their work was important and they should prepare thoroughly in line with guidance from their teachers.

Many courses have more than one component and these contribute different amounts to

the final result – this is their ‘weighting’. Each piece of evidence for a course component has an allocated weighting and all of our assessment weightings are based on SQA specific weightings for each course component. Subject Departments will indicate the weightings allocated to each assessment item used to generate the provisional result.

**Given the extended lockdown period how was my child supported to prepare for these assessments?**

SQA guidance states that a selection of key tasks and/or questions carried out under appropriate conditions and with an appropriate level of demand will give a good indication of likely performance in the final course assessment. We therefore focused on supporting learners to produce high-quality predictive evidence that clearly demonstrated their attainment.

The SQA also reduced the evidence requirements for each National Course. In many subjects, assessment components have been removed and content and contexts have been reduced to enable a narrower focus for this session. We ensured learners had clear support to consolidate in each subject and advice on revision topics to support assessment preparation.

In addition, our Supported Study and Easter School programme was a well-received element of our support for pupils.

**How have the grades actually been calculated and how do they avoid bias?**

The grades have been formulated in line with standardisation of marking and moderation procedures that have been agreed at Local Authority level.

Schools have been working with a range of partner schools to ensure a consistency of approach and validation of both marking and assessment instruments in line with SQA requirements.

Internal moderation of marking and validation of assessment instruments across subjects and alongside departments from a range of partner schools has been implemented to ensure fairness for all candidates and ensure that standards are maintained.

The school has participated in the SQA’s national quality assurance exercise and has also undertaken quality assurance checks on the provisional results.

**Given all of the difficulties children and young people have experienced this year, surely teachers can ‘infer’ attainment if they know a pupil has the ability to achieve?**

We are guided by the clear SQA position where they state that demonstrated attainment remains the key principle for awarding in 2021.

This means ‘inferred’ attainment is not possible for any candidate and throughout the session we have advised parents to inform pupil support staff of any need for additional support which would assist learners in demonstrating their attainment.

## HOME LEARNING / EVIDENCE

### **Was the work completed during lockdown used to help formulate provisional results?**

All school work including remote work was designed to prepare our young people for assessment of learner attainment.

The key pieces of evidence used to form the provisional grade was the assessment items itemised in the assessment calendar.

## SHARING OF PROVISIONAL GRADES

### **When will the estimate grades be shared?**

Provisional results are being shared across ERC schools on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

### **What format will the grades be awarded in?**

The school will advise candidates of the grade associated with their provisional results. In August the school should be able to share specific bands.

## ASSESSMENT CALENDAR (KEY DATES)

### **Why were the assessment windows scheduled when they were?**

The assessment windows were scheduled to assist learners to demonstrate their best possible attainment within the very tight parameters of lockdown learning, blended learning and the post-Easter return.

The three Assessment Windows for S4 were designed to assist in generating valuable and predictive evidence towards provisional results whilst assisting learners to make further progress. Learners were advised that each of these assessment windows would count towards their provisional results, and that we would fully utilise the opportunity to consolidate learning in advance of each assessed area.

Our S5/6 pupils had a consolidation period in advance of the post-Easter return and were able to access further support over Easter before commencing the Mock Exams in April. A further period of consolidation and revision was scheduled prior to the commencement of the final assessments in May.

## PRACTICAL SUBJECT ASSESSMENTS

### **Covid restrictions on practical subjects made learning and teaching more challenging, has this been taken into account?**

The school made full use of the relaxing of restrictions allowing practical subjects to re-commence with in-school learning. This three week period provided vital consolidation and preparation time and assisted learners in demonstrating attainment in practical elements.

## LEARNING LOSS/ PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

### **After missing so much school, how were pupils supported to catch up and prepare for these assessments?**

We adopted a consolidate>revise>assess approach to ensure learners could benefit from their in-school teaching and their own focused revision before commencing any assessments. This approach was warmly welcomed by both pupils and parents in consultation activities.

Parents have been reminded throughout the session that Pupil Support would respond to any requests for further support during this challenging year. You should be aware that the evidence we have gathered to form your child's provisional result is the evidence we would submit for any SQA appeal.

## APPEALS PROCESS

### **How can I raise a concern or query regarding my child's provisional results?**

The school has based your child's provisional results on their demonstrated attainment. However, you may have a query or concern regarding this. Please complete the Microsoft Form to raise any queries/concerns if you wish to do so. You will then be contacted by a member of the school's management team.

The SQA will also offer an appeals process this year, following the submission of provisional results. The SQA may raise, lower or retain your child's grade at the existing level.

Further information on SQA appeals will be available from the school following your intimation you are considering an SQA appeal.