

SQA Assessments and Provisional Estimates

2021

FAQs

Within East Renfrewshire 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 continue to work closely with all our schools and the SQA to provide as much feedback as possible as the session progresses and will continue to update you when information becomes available.

ONLINE ASSESSMENTS

Will there be mock exams online? Will there be online tests/assessments? Is there a possibility that we will have online assessments?

Having reviewed the SQA guidance on Remote Assessment there are no plans to carry out online assessments across any subject areas. We will continue to monitor the situation in line with SQA guidance. We may revise our plans if necessary to support some practical subjects utilising virtual platforms to gather evidence in line with subject specific guidance.

HOME LEARNING / EVIDENCE

Will the (class) work we are submitting now, be used to come up with our final grade?

All school work including remote work is designed to prepare our young people for assessment of learner attainment. Any work that pupils within the Senior Phase are asked to complete will help the young person in preparing to demonstrate their learning and to be in a stronger position to be assessed on competence in line with SQA guidelines of assessment. When pupils return we will ensure we build in time for learners to consolidate and prepare for assessment in line with departmental timelines.

The SQA guidance states that schools should exercise caution where candidates have completed work outside of a controlled school/college environment. In many cases, it is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work was done.

How will evidence be gathered now we are doing so much at home?

The most recent SQA guidance states: "We have written to schools and colleges to remind them that maximising learning and teaching time remains the current priority. Overall assessment of your child's educational achievements (also described as attainment) should therefore take place once they are back in school or college". As stated previously, any work that pupils are asked to complete is preparatory work and will put the learner in a stronger position to be assessed on competence in line with SQA guidelines of assessment.

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

If the lockdown is extended will we be required to produce the same amount of evidence although we would have less time to do it?

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. It is important that you focus on gathering high-quality predictive evidence that clearly demonstrates a candidate's attainment.

The SQA has also reduced the evidence requirements for each National Course to the minimum to preserve the validity and public confidence in the qualifications. In many subjects, assessment components have been removed and content and contexts have been reduced to enable a narrower focus for this session.

We will therefore work as individual schools and a local authority to ensure that we are in line with these SQA requirements in accordance our quality assurance procedures and that pupil assessment is in line with course coverage to date with time for learners to consolidate their learning and prepare for assessment as appropriate.

How are the grades actually being calculated and how do they avoid bias?

The grades are formulated in line with standardisation of marking and moderation procedures that have been agreed at Local Authority level. Schools have been working with partner schools to ensure a consistency of approach and validation of both marking and assessment instruments in line with SQA requirements. Moderation of marking and validation of assessment instruments across subjects and alongside departments from partner schools will ensure fairness for all candidates and ensure that standards are maintained. Each school will undertake quality assurance procedures on the provisional estimates that we submit on behalf of all our learners before submission.

What specific items will form the basis of estimated grades?

The SQA have advised schools as to the types of assessment that will assist in gathering high-quality predictive evidence that demonstrates attainment. Assessments such as mock exams as well as class tests will help departments make sound judgements on our learners' attainment. Departments will use the guidance to ensure that learners are well prepared and fully informed of assessments that will go towards their provisional estimate grades. Schools will also look to share this information with parents/carers as we move through the current session and as return to school arrangements are confirmed.

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

SQA Guidance states that some assessments are likely to be more reliable indicators of performance than others (e.g. mock exams) 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.” However, these will be part of a range of assessments (typically 2 to 4 assessments) that will go towards forming a judgement. Learners should work on the premise that all the work is important and should prepare thoroughly in line with guidance from their teachers.

If pupils have managed to sit mock exams already and there is no longer sufficient time to enable a further sitting in this academic year what other factors will be taken into account in assessing the grades?

Schools will work in line with SQA Guidance that states that 2 to 4 pieces of evidence should be used to form the basis of a provisional estimate. Schools will therefore not be relying solely on a mock exam to generate an estimate. 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 performance to allow provisional estimates to be reached for pupils.

How will the approach to grade assessments differ from last year when the bulk of the teaching would have been completed prior to schools going into lockdown? Will inferred attainment be included as we are now disadvantaged again by not being in school and benefiting from all the extra support that we would normally get?

We will be guided by the SQA position where they state that demonstrated attainment remains a key principle for awarding in 2021. Assessment cannot be undertaken unless young people understand the foundations of their course content and have had time to consolidate their learning once they return to school. Overall assessment of learner attainment should therefore take place later in the 2020-21 session.

Do teachers have time available to dedicate to grade assessments when they are juggling remote teaching, working from home challenges and perhaps home schooling/childcare within their own household? Both teachers and pupils are affected by the current circumstances.

Your child's subject teachers will continue to ensure that they provide appropriate guidance and support to prepare for future assessments. Our remote learning offer across schools has been planned to flexibly allow for learning and teaching, revision and consolidation and assessment. This should provide an effective platform for a return to school at the appropriate time. In addition our moderation practice will ensure staff are fully supported in pupil grade judgements in preparation for provisional grade estimates. Pupil Support staff are always on hand to offer support and assistance to pupils as well as our Support for learning departments to assist pupils in tackling any additional challenges they have faced. As ever if your child needs additional support at this time then appropriate contact should be made with these staff.

SHARING OF PROVISIONAL GRADES

When will the estimate grades be shared?

It is anticipated that provisional grades will be shared by the school before the final submission date to the SQA. The timings are to be confirmed. When the pupils' return to

school date is confirmed schools will share an updated timeline that will include the sharing of provisional estimates. All of this will be determined by the guidance on our return to school date.

What format will the grades be awarded in?

As it stands SQA guidance states that estimates will be generated in the usual fashion of final band and grade (e.g A1, B3, C6). At present we are awaiting final confirmation on this, we will know more once the SQA provide schools with the final uplift details for Provisional Estimate Grades.

SQA MODERATION AND VERIFICATION

- What review and/or moderation of results will SQA perform?
- When will grade results be communicated by the SQA?
- What is the SQA process and when are the key dates?

The SQA have published a series of helpful documents and details of this can be found on the SQA website. The link can be found [here](#).

ASSESSMENT CALENDAR (KEY DATES)

Will there be more time after the mocks to work and do other assessments? If there is a staggered return to school will we (seniors) be first back?

At the moment we are working to provide appropriate assessment opportunities for our learners in line with SQA guidance. This will be subject to national guidance on the return to school date. We continue to work within the SQA advice on the need for a range of assessments (typically 2 to 4 assessments) that will go towards forming a judgement. Learners should continue to focus on the work set by teachers and with the mindset that all work set to date is important. This guidance from their teachers should help prepare pupils thoroughly for the remainder of the school session.

Are pupils aware of what these items are on a subject-by-subject basis? When are the next key dates for assessment? Can these be communicated to the pupils as soon as possible?

Departments across schools will continue to ensure that learners are well prepared and fully informed of assessments that will go towards their provisional estimate grades. We will also look to share this information with parents/ carers as we move through the current session as return arrangements are confirmed. We have continued to advise pupils on anticipated dates for revised mock exams, of course these have been subject to review and change throughout the session. We will continue to communicate fully and timeously any future arrangements for assessment going forward as we have done throughout the year.

Different schools and authorities will have different timings for mock exams. How is consistently ensured?

Schools are best placed to make sound judgements on their own pupils and their learning needs. Schools will continue to be guided by current SQA guidance as well as utilising tracking and monitoring of pupils to ensure we work towards the best possible outcome

for all our learners. Schools across the authority will be guided by the moderation and validation guidelines set out by the Local Authority to ensure a consistency of standard for all.

PRACTICAL SUBJECT ASSESSMENTS

What is going to happen with practical subjects estimates if we cannot do our performance pieces/assessments?

The SQA will be publishing further guidance to departments such as Drama to work within the current restrictions. Every effort will be made to replicate the usual assessment practice in line with the current practice for Covid protocols. All learning opportunities during the remote learning period and school session are used to prepare for assessment and pupils should continue to work fully to prepare for any future assessment within all subjects, based on teacher and departmental guidance.

LEARNING LOSS

How is parity achieved and how are special needs pupils being supported to ensure the learning interventions truly support their individual requirements?

This year pupils have missed months of formal teaching. How will this loss of learning be taken into account?

How will gaps in learning be addressed where pupils are moving to next stage in a subject eg Nat 5 to Higher or Higher to Advanced Higher?

Schools are best placed to make sound judgements on their own pupils and their learning needs and will continue to be guided by current SQA guidance as well as utilising tracking and monitoring of our pupils to ensure we work towards the best possible outcome for all our learners. Schools across the authority will be guided by the moderation and validation guidelines set out by the Local Authority to ensure a consistency of standard for all.

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 performance, therefore it is important that schools focus on gathering high-quality predictive evidence that clearly demonstrates a candidate's attainment.

Schools use this guidance to ensure that assessments are reflective of only coursework covered by departments and ensures time for consolidation of learning as appropriate. Departments continue to offer universal and targeted support to aid pupil progression.

Remote learning provisions have been designed to maintain progress and allow for

consolidation of previous learning and while it does not wholly replicate in-school provisions should provide sufficient breadth, depth and challenge to meet course requirements.

Is a repeat of the school year being considered?

There is no repeat of the school year being considered.

APPEALS PROCESS

What is the process and will parents know if SQA has downgraded a child?

SQA are currently consulting on the process for this year. The consultation explains SQA's statutory responsibilities in the awarding of qualifications and reflects the agreed approach to awarding in 2021, as co-created by the National Qualifications 2021 Group*.

The consultation then asks for your views on:

- possible ways of managing appeals in 2021, with each needing involvement from schools, colleges, training providers and SQA in different ways and at different times
- a number of proposed elements that will form the basis of the appeals service

The consultation will run until Friday 26 March, with findings, and final appeals process to be published in early May. The consultation can be found [here](#).