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East Dunbartonshire Council

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EDUCATION SERVICE
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Dear Parent/Carer

Alternative Certification Model for the National Qualifications

Due to the cancellation of the SQA examination diet, an Alternative Certification Model (ACM) has been put in place. Detailed in this letter is information on the Alternative Certification Model, which will require teachers to make professional judgements on the grades for pupils in the National Qualifications.

Scottish Government announced that there would be an additional two in-service days for secondary school staff to enable them to complete this work. In order to ensure a quality assurance process is in place, teachers will have to work to share standards and moderate judgements. The two additional in-service days are **Friday 7th May and Tuesday 1st June**. This is in addition to the in-service day on Thursday 6 May. Pupils should not attend school on those days.

The Alternative Certification Model (ACM) was initially developed for National 5 courses, in response to the Deputy First Minister's announcement on 7 October 2020 of the cancellation of National 5 exams. Following the cancellation of Higher and Advanced Higher exams on 8 December, it was decided that the ACM would be expanded to cover Higher and Advanced Higher, as well as National 5. The expectation from Scottish Government is that schools will provide the SQA with **provisional results** for all pupils. These provisional results will be based on a range of evidence that staff in schools will gather across each subject area for this session. All provisional results will be based on evidence of demonstrated attainment. After provisional results have been submitted, the SQA will make the final decision, with results being confirmed in August.

All schools will give as much time as possible for pupils to provide additional attainment evidence. The SQA deadline for receiving provisional results from schools has been **extended to the 25th June 2021**. As it is likely that pupils will produce their best evidence nearer to the end of the course, schools will work towards allocating as much time as possible. Currently each school is updating its assessment calendar, which will be shared with pupils and parents, when further guidance is released by the Scottish Government regarding pupils returning to school following the Easter break.

Pupils will complete assessments within the school day. There will be no study leave when these assessments are taking place. The vast majority of assessments will take place within timetabled classes. To ensure the integrity of the assessment instruments, pupils may be extracted from another subject to complete an assessment at the same time as their peers. This will be clearly communicated to all pupils and parents. Assessments completed after the Easter break, in conjunction, with demonstrated attainment recorded since August 2020 will be used

to confirm pupil provisional grades. Schools will adapt assessment arrangements if a pupil is unable to complete an assessment within the planned time of their assessment calendar. It is important to note assessment arrangements will differ based on the context of each school. Pupils and parents will be kept informed of pupil progress to ensure there are no surprises in terms of provisional results submitted to SQA on the 25th June.

It is very important that the process of deciding on provisional results is fair and robust not just in individual schools but across all schools in East Dunbartonshire Council. A key part of this process is staff involvement in regular moderation within the school and their department as well as working with colleagues in other schools. Moderation is the process that involves staff working together to determine how pupil work has been assessed and why pupils have achieved the grades they have. In addition to this school based approach to moderation, SQA will complete a 'sampling' activity in all schools to ensure teachers are marking within the national standard. Provisional results from each school will be checked at a number of levels within each school and by the central team, before they are confirmed to you and sent to SQA, to make sure they are a fair and accurate reflection of pupil achievements.

The SQA are leading a consultation with all stakeholders regarding the appeals system this year. More information regarding the appeals consultation can be found at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96506.html>.

To support parents and carers, East Dunbartonshire Council has developed detailed information in support of this process - National Qualifications 20/21 - Support Information for Pupils and Parents/Carers (<https://wakelet.com/wake/uBdKA47Qqna3OpTC3hrN3>) where you can find more detailed information of the steps our schools are taking to ensure we get it right for every senior phase pupil in East Dunbartonshire.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child or the Alternative Certification Model, please contact your child's school.

Yours sincerely

JACQUI MACDONALD
Chief Education Officer

Protection Level 4 - enhanced and targeted protective measures

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/>

- the current advice is that children on the shielding list should not attend in person. However, there will be further consideration of how individualised risk assessments can be used to maximise school attendance, and remove barriers to access to regulated childcare services, for children who continue to shield during Level 4 restrictions. It is expected that these should be informed by the secondary care (hospital) clinical team caring for the child or young person.
- the majority of workplaces can be made safe for staff. To ensure this remains the case, employers should ensure that individualised risk assessments for school staff members with the highest clinical risk are in place and updated appropriately, and staff should speak to their employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place.
- at Level 4, to provide additional assurance, the Chief Medical Officer will issue a letter which is similar to a fit note that will last for as long as the local area is under Level 4 restrictions. This letter can be used in the few cases where, following updating of risk assessments and discussions with employers, it is not possible to make a workplace safe for staff. Being in receipt of one of these letters does not automatically mean that staff should not attend work if appropriate protections are in place. Staff should use the period covered by the letter to discuss any concerns further with their employer or an occupational health adviser, and if, following individualised risk assessments, action results in adequate protection in the workplace then they may continue to attend work.
- decisions on appropriate protections should be informed by individual risk assessments, and may include protective measures in the workplace, mitigations such as working remotely (e.g. at home or in different settings), or carrying out different tasks within their usual workplace.
- schools should be prepared to engage with enhanced testing responses to COVID-19 outbreaks in schools, where recommended by the Incident Management Team
- physical education within school settings should only take place out of doors. Schools should consider what types of activity and clothing may be most appropriate in view of weather conditions. While physical education should continue to be considered a priority, if weather is extremely bad then schools may use their judgement as to whether it is safe for children to be outside.
- pausing of the provision of non-essential activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable. This does not include regulated childcare operating from school premises.