

Grove Academy

Questions from parents about the SQA's Alternative Certification Model 2021.

I have been led to believe that there will be 2 assessment periods. If so what are the dates of the 2nd period.

- No, there were originally two assessment windows planned per level, but due to lockdown, we are down to one.

Ordinarily pupils would move up a year after the exams and start the next year prior to the summer break. Is this happening this year & if not how will the pupils catch up the lost teaching & learning?

- Yes, this will happen. Across DCC, change of timetable will be on 7th June.

6th would normally leave school after their exams - when will this year's 6th year finish their schooling?

- We don't know of anything official. It should be as and when they have sufficient evidence for a provisional grade to be submitted by the school. This will be different for each pupil, and I would hope parents would want pupils to have the best opportunities to do so. Pupils will be given as long as possible to produce the best evidence which includes S6. After June 7th, any further assessment required would need to be by arrangement with the pupil and the teacher.

This is more of a concern than a question and I am sure there are other families affected similarly. My child has had 2 periods of self-isolation through the pandemic and I'm concerned about the amount of school she has missed as a result of this and of course with Covid 19 in general. Will this be factored into the assessments in any way?

- Unfortunately not. The Provisional results are based on evidence, and pupils must produce that evidence, on which the teachers will make their judgments. There is however discussion going on at a National level about how we can support candidates who through no fault of their own have been impacted greatly by several periods of self-isolation, bereavement, Covid itself. In the past there were exceptional Circumstances which could be used IF a candidate couldn't sit the exam or did so but there were mitigating circs (fell ill on the day, bereavement around the exams etc). This year this doesn't exist as there are no exams, and all awards will be teacher judgments based on evidence. The assessment

evidence has to reach a specific standard as outlined by SQA (Understanding Standards) and candidates have to provide the evidence of their ability as measured against that standard.

Teachers should be aware of the situation with each pupil and are working hard with the young person- through learning conversations – to support that young person and help achieve their potential. Easter Study School was available and study support will be available. As are E-ngoil courses.

What happens if a pupil is absent on the day of an assessment?

- If a pupil is absent, then the assessment will be rearranged on a date of the teacher's choosing. The pupil should be given notice of when this will be. If a pupil knows in advance that they will not be in ie they have a hospital appointment etc they should make the teacher aware as soon as possible so that an alternative date can be arranged.

Will a pupil be able to resit an assessment?

- No. Pupils will not be able to resit an assessment although there could be other opportunities to gather further evidence which would demonstrate attainment - which would have to go through the same rigour for QA.

The SQA have previously advised that there would not be an end of course 'exam' set this summer but our daughter's school has chosen to have their pupils sit 'Prelims' over the next fortnight. There will then be further testing within a month with pupils asked to sit the exam papers set by the SQA in 2020. These papers will inevitably cover course content that has been largely self taught throughout the lockdown period.

- We are not doing Traditional prelims in the Hall etc, as that is contrary to C19 mitigations. But we are doing chunked assessments in class (maximum time 1 hr 40 minutes, as opposed to 2-3 hours) and these are the main assessments, as is the case in many other schools. Any further assessments will be only necessary for those pupils who need more evidence to prove they are at the right standard. All schools across Scotland are in the same boat. The SQA papers are being used as the assessments and will cover all course content (which has been reduce by them) which pupils were taught between June 2020 and now, both in school and at home in-line. It is important to remember that pupils were actually in school from August to December.

What assurance can the SQA give that there will be fair assessment between different schools where the exam will be held on different days, under different conditions and where some schools have chosen not to use the exam as an assessment tool at all?

- You will need to ask the SQA this question. All assessments are being held at different times across Scotland, but the SQA has stressed the importance of keeping these assessments secure.

The timescale offered for preparation for these assessment tests does not take into account the shortness of time caused by the extended lock down period and the limited in-class teaching opportunities the pupils have been given.

- I am afraid we are up against the clock here and need to have evidence on which to base the teacher judgements for the Provisional Results. Teachers need time to Mark, assess, moderate and quality assure the marking. This takes time. If pupils gain the expected level (i.e. their working grade equates to their aspiration target grade) then they need not be assessed formally again, but must continue to cover the work of the course. If pupils need more evidence then we shall take that forward after the assessment windows and therefore have time to do so before the provisional results are sent to SQA by June 25th. We also need to get this evidence quickly, before there is any possible further lockdown.

Our children have been working hard throughout lockdown towards attaining grades specific to conditional offers for places at Universities in England. What assurance can the SQA give that there will be fair comparative assessment between the Scottish Advanced Higher qualification and the equivalent English A levels, where these may be awarded based entirely on teacher assessed grades.

- Again, this needs to be addressed to the SQA as we are unable to answer it. It is however worth noting that an A pass at English A level is the equivalent of a B Pass at Advanced Higher. Both Scottish and English qualifications this year will be based on Teacher judgments.

Why are the exams starting a week or two earlier than usual when the pupils have had a sub-standard learning experience compared to normal times?

- They are not exams per se, but assessments and they are chunked and maximum in length 1hour40 minutes, as compared to 2-3 hours. Results this year are evidence based teacher judgements, and we need to get the evidence ASAP. Due to lockdown, we were unable to get the evidence through alternative assessment windows, so time is of the essence. We also need time to mark, assess, moderate and quality assure these assessments, by school, DCC and SQA. That requires time. We are also afraid of there being another lockdown, and so we need to collect evidence ASAP.

I understand that the pupils will be going over 'past papers' and finishing course content in school just now, but how did the school come to the final decision that the pupils will not getting any study leave this year?

- We are not allowed study leave except for SQA exams which will not be happening this year due to the decision by the DFM to cancel them. Study leave must be sanctioned by DCC. Study leave would also have meant pupils being out of school again for a period of time, and the focus must be on learning and teaching over the next two months so we can cover the course syllabus and ensure we have assessed pupils properly in order to have the evidence to make the decisions on their grades. We also thought most parents and pupils would react negatively to pupils being out of school for more time following on the two lockdowns.

Are there any details on how pupils can appeal exam decisions, if they wish to do so?

- Details on the Appeals procedures have yet to be issued by SQA. There was a consultation process, and the SQA are now working on a final set of Appeals procedures. Pupils will be able to appeal, but the evidence will need to be supplied by the school.

With this year's course content being reduced, how will this effect a pupil's knowledge if they decide to try a higher SCQF level next year, will next year's course also be adapted?

- We cannot answer this at the moment, because we do not yet know what the course content for next year's courses will be, or whether they will be adapted or not. That is a decision for SQA.

What is meant by assessment arrangements?

- The SQA states that "Assessment arrangements allow candidates who are disabled, and/or have been identified as having additional support needs, access to appropriate arrangements to complete the assessment without compromising its integrity." Although there are no SQA exams we are still to use the same assessment arrangement processes already in place to support pupils requiring an assessment arrangement for an internal assessment. These arrangements may include digital papers, extra time, separate accommodation, readers/ scribes. Pupils who may require such an arrangement are normally identified by their Class Teacher or Guidance Teacher and then discussions are held between the pupil, Class Teacher, member of SFL and possibly the parent to decide if an arrangement is needed and what that might be. We would normally have to have evidence to show that an arrangement is required such as evidence of performance with and without the arrangement to show that the arrangement has made a difference. If a parent/ carer feels that their child should have an arrangement and have not had a form or email about this they need to contact their child's Guidance Teacher as soon as possible.

Will the predictive grades only be based on the assessments and or other continuous work completed during the school day?

- It depends on the subject as each subject has its own guidelines which stipulates the evidence that can be used and the conditions in which the evidence needs to be collected. The main pieces of evidence are likely to be generated from the assessments, but other forms of evidence can be used where appropriate.

My child will move into S5 on the 7th June but you have said that they can still undertake assessments until 24th June.

- The vast majority of evidence should be collected before the timetable changes. It may be for a very small number of individual pupils more opportunities to gather evidence is needed. These would be arranged between the pupil and teacher where appropriate.