

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE11 June 2020Report by Director of EducationPROGRESS REPORT ON PROVIDING SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY WITH ESTIMATES AS PART OF THE 2020 CERTIFICATION PROCESS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update elected members on the progress made with providing Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) with estimates as part of the 2020 certification process.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the Education Department's progress in providing the SQA with estimates as part of the 2020 certification process.

BACKGROUND

3. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government took the decision that all schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings should close on 20 March 2020. Subsequently the Cabinet Minister for Education and Skills and Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, MSP, made an announcement to the Scottish Parliament on 10 March that for the first time in history, there would be no examination diet in 2020. He indicated that the SQA would put a model of assessment in place which would ensure that young people in schools and colleges who were unable to sit exams would not be disadvantaged in any way.

4. The SQA has since set out arrangements for an alternative certification model. This is based on teachers providing refined estimated bands and ranking for each learner entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

5. The SQA model for certification is based on three broad principles:

- Fairness to all learners;
- Safe and secure certification of qualifications, following the latest public health advice; and,
- Maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualification system, ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners.

6. To support the development of the SQA approach nationally, officers have been liaising with local authority colleagues across Scotland via the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) and have been supported well by our SQA Liaison Manager.

7. Within ERC, schools are working closely with the Education Department to ensure that the hard work of all our young people is rightly and fairly recognised. This paper provides more detail on the arrangements that have been put in place.

REPORT

8. From the outset, East Renfrewshire Education Department adopted a very strategic approach in taking forward thinking and planning within the context of Curriculum for Excellence. This included the introduction of the 33 period-week from August 2006, which was undertaken with the long term aim of supporting the design principles of CfE, and the introduction of new qualifications and vocational courses.

9. As a result of the change from Standard Grades to Intermediate qualifications in 2005, ERC schools have focused on ensuring that young people are presented at the most appropriate level in S4-S6 for many years. Schools in East Renfrewshire adopt a genuinely ambitious approach to presentation levels which is based on reliable assessment data from the Broad General Education and senior phase.

10. Elected members will recall from the annual SQA presentation, that since the introduction of Intermediate 1 and 2 in 2007, we have seen improvements in the proportion of S4 pupils presented successfully at the highest possible level. The table below summarises the changes from 2007 to 2019 in S4 presentations and awards; overall the proportion of S4 pupils successfully achieving at the highest level has increased from 61% of the S4 roll to 78%. These improvements have then led to increases in the proportion of S5 or S6 pupils achieving at Higher and Advanced Higher.

	Intermediate 2/National 5 Presentations		Intermediate 2/National 5 A-C Awards	
	2007	2019	2007	2019
ERC	67%	86%	90.4%	90.5%

	Intermediate 1/National 4 Awards		Access 3/National 4 Awards	
	2007	2019	2007	2019
ERC	82%	98%	93%	96%

11. In addition, elected members will be aware that schools in East Renfrewshire collaborate within clusters (associated early years, primary and secondary schools), planning together to design and assess a curriculum which is cohesive across sectors, hence ensuring continuity and progression for children and young people at key points of transition. Clusters have been supported to map out curricular progression from 3-18, taking account of the most appropriate pace of learning for pupils and based on reliable teacher judgements of pupil progress. The collaborative approach supports transition across sectors and ensures attainment, achievement and experiences are progressive and continuous. The ongoing focus on moderation and assessment and rigorous tracking within the Broad General Education means that ERC schools are well placed to provide teacher estimates for the 2020 certification process.

12. For 2020, the SQA has defined a refined estimated band as not just the result of one prelim or one project, but as an overall judgement based on all activity across the year; estimates reflect both demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

13. By Friday 29 May, schools and colleges were required to provide the SQA with their estimates of the refined bands and rank order for each learner, for each course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. The SQA provided detailed guidance on how to produce refined estimates for 2019-20. The refined estimates are an active part of the awarding process and

cannot be shared with young people or their parents before SQA have made their final decisions in August.

14. To support schools with producing refined estimates the SQA provided schools with their estimates for the last 3 years. In ERC, this data is analysed each year and forms part of the annual discussion with schools on their SQA results.

15. SQA have provided schools with online professional learning designed to support the production and submission of refined estimate bands. Within East Renfrewshire this approach has been enhanced with schools also being supported by the Quality Improvement Team to analyse their estimates in advance of submission to the SQA on 29 May 2020. This has included making use of the very effective systems that are in place for analysing attainment, benchmarking, target setting and tracking of pupil progress. This is crucial in ensuring the integrity and credibility of the qualification system.

16. Following submission of the estimates, the SQA will check and validate the information. They will moderate it, if necessary, to ensure consistency across schools and colleges and with results from previous years. To do this, the SQA will use the information from the refined estimates, in addition to prior learner attainment, where this is available. For example, if learners achieved National 5 or Higher courses, in a previous year.

17. The SQA will also look at schools' and colleges' previous history of estimating and attainment in each subject and level. As a result, they may moderate estimates, up or down, if that is required. This process will produce the results for learners.

18. Each year, the SQA hold Awarding Meetings that bring together a range of people with subject expertise and people with experience of standard setting across different subjects and qualification levels. The SQA will maintain this approach this year, as far as possible.

19. The SQA will then process the results to allow them to issue them individually to learners by 4 August.

20. After 4 August, a free appeals service will be available to schools and colleges, to allow them to request a review of the grade awarded for a learner or a group of learners. It is important that such a service is in place in this exceptional year. Schools will require to have assessment evidence available to support an appeal and the evidence will be reviewed by senior examiners.

21. Elected members will be aware through the 2018-19 Standards and Quality Report, Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) and the presentations on SQA performance of the very high levels of attainment across ERC schools. In 2019, 78% of young people in S4 achieved 5 or more qualifications at National 5, this was the highest performance to date. The Higher results for S5 pupils were very strong across all measures. The proportion of the S4 roll that achieved 5 or more Highers was 44%, the second highest result to date. As such, the Education Department would anticipate very strong attainment in S5 and S6 across a wide range of measures.

CONSULTATION

22. Secondary Head Teachers and the Education Department continue to review and develop the senior phase curriculum and attainment through the regular Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) meetings. This has included discussion of the SQA estimate and appeals process for 2020.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

23. There are no financial and efficiency implications associated with the amended certification process for 2020. The 2020 arrangements will be covered by the agreed SQA budget.

RECOMMENDATION

24. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the Education Department's progress in providing the SQA with estimates as part of the 2020 certification process.

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11 June 2020

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