



Strathaven Academy **SQA Update February 2021** **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Now that exams are not going ahead this summer, how will I be assessed?

The Scottish Government has now decided that N5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams will not go ahead this school session. This is due to continuing concerns about Covid-19 and also the need to ensure that there is fairness and equity for all of Scotland's young people who have been impacted as a result. Instead, your class teachers will provide the SQA with provisional results for you. This means the school will submit a grade to the SQA based on a range of evidence gathered across each of your subjects this session.

2. How will teachers decide on my provisional grades? Will work that I do in class and at home count towards them?

Provisional grades will be based on range of evidence gathered across each of your subjects throughout the academic session until the deadline for when provisional grades have to be submitted to SQA. As a school we will give you as long as possible to generate the strongest possible evidence.

The range of evidence will depend on the subject and how this is assessed. The SQA is clear that the evidence of most value will be:

- Normally gathered as late in the course as possible to give you the best chance to show the progress you have made
- Gathered using assessment that is of the same level of challenge as the SQA final assessment
- Evidence for some courses may be collected at a specific point earlier in the year because this is the best time to complete the assessment for you

If needed, your teachers may consider other types of evidence. For example, you may have needed to be absent and missed an assessment. There will be agreement across the teachers for each subject about this.

3. Will my teacher's provisional grade for me be the grade I get in August 2021?

Throughout learning, teachers will share with you how you are progressing, as they normally would. They will indicate to you at appropriate points what grade you would be expected to achieve based on the evidence you are generating. This should mean that there are no surprises for you when your teachers confirm the provisional results that will be submitted to SQA for you. SQA will do some further checks once they receive your provisional results and may ask your school to provide some evidence that the school has used to decide on your provisional result. SQA will then make the final decision about your result. SQA has said they will not change any pupil's provisional result for a subject without seeing evidence from the school first.

4. We have missed out on learning time because of lockdown and not returning to school till August. Will this affect how well I do this year?

As long as you are engaged with your learning now, schools being closed up to August 2020 will not affect your results. SQA have made changes to N5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses to take account of this. For example, in PE you are assessed on one practical performance activity rather than two for N5. In other subjects, for example, you will have greater choice of topics that you can write about in assessments. It's important to remember that every school pupil in Scotland is in the same situation here and the SQA and we will ensure that you are not disadvantaged.

5. When the school reopens, will the Winter Assessment Diet go ahead?

The Winter Assessment Diet cannot go ahead as planned. The papers you would have sat may now be used as part of your ongoing class assessment. You will still do them under 'exam conditions' for example, in silence, timed, and without notes. They will be completed during class time and may, therefore, be split over more than one sitting. Different classes may sit the papers on different days, depending on when their teacher feels they are ready.

6. Will we have advanced notice and get time to prepare for assessments or will these take place straightaway when we return to school?

Yes, we will make sure that you have plenty of notice of when your assessments will be. Pupils will not sit assessments on their immediate return to school. Your teacher will make sure you are fully prepared for these and let you know how they are going to be split up. We will also make sure that you do not have too many assessments all happening close together to allow you to plan your studying.

7. Will all subjects be doing assessments in class, or only some subjects if they wish?

Most subjects will have some sort of assessment in class when we return to school. We will make sure that you have all of the information you need to prepare for these assessments.

8. Why can't we just go ahead with assessments when the school re-opens?

We want to ensure that during remote learning you are progressing with your coursework to make sure you have covered all the course content or skills required, rather than focusing on studying for assessments. When you return to school, you will have time with your class teachers to prepare you for your assessments.

9. How long will the school have to gather evidence towards my provisional grades?

We will give as long as possible for you to generate evidence towards your provisional grades. The SQA deadline for receiving provisional grades from schools is 18th June 2021. The SQA require the school and South Lanarkshire Council to spend time analysing evidence to ensure provisional grades are accurate so we will need to set a deadline for the submission of evidence prior to Friday, 18 June 2021. However, we know that it's likely that you will produce your best evidence near the end of the course and you will be given as much time as possible for this.

10. We heard that the plan was to have a second assessment diet in Spring. Will that still take place?

SQA has confirmed the delay to the submission date of the provisional grades. This will allow us to plan for an assessment diet that maximises the time in school to prepare for these. Although a decision on this will all depend on when we get back to school. We will make sure you are kept up to date with the date of the second assessment block.

11. Can work completed outwith school still be used as evidence for my provisional grade even though I didn't complete it in class?

Some subjects have assessed components that are able to be completed outwith class. For example, subjects that have folios, assignments and projects as part of their assessment could be worked on at home and used as part of the evidence for your provisional grade. However, your work will only be accepted for assessment if your teacher is confident that it is your own work in line with SQA's plagiarism and collusion guidelines which can be found by clicking here (https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Your-coursework-2020-21.pdf).

12. I am entitled to Additional Assessment Arrangements for assessments and exams. How will I be supported now I'll be doing assessments in class?

You will be entitled to the same supports during a formal assessment in class as you would have in an SQA exam situation. We will discuss this with you and put supports in place.

13. How do I know that my provisional grades decided on by my school are fair?

All Strathaven Academy staff have engaged with the South Lanarkshire Council moderation events. This has provided staff with the opportunity to work with colleagues to develop consistent assessment approaches and a shared understanding of standards. It is very important that the process of deciding on your provisional results is fair and what we would call "robust". This means it is a strong and well planned system. Across South Lanarkshire Council, we have developed agreement across each subject on the range of evidence that your teachers will gather and examine when deciding on your provisional results. Schools will also be involved in regular moderation within the school and with other schools during the year: this is the process of talking together about how they have assessed you and why they have given the grades they have. Provisional results will all be checked at a number of levels within your school and by South Lanarkshire Council before they are sent to SQA, to make sure they are a fair and accurate reflection of your achievements. The SQA will perform spot checks whereby pupil work will be submitted for SQA to check the marking and make sure that it is up to their expected standard.

14. How will the changes made to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher course content affect me?

These changes were made after a series of consultations between SQA, teachers and focus groups of parents and young people. The changes are all very subject specific, with the aim of reducing assessment and freeing up teaching time.

It has been confirmed that evidence that was generated prior to changes in course content can still be used, if it is deemed to be an appropriate piece of evidence which clearly demonstrates a candidate's ability, skills and knowledge.

15. What if I'm ill or have to self-isolate and miss an assessment?

We understand that this may cause anxiety for you just now. We have procedures in place to support anyone who is absent during the year, either because they are ill or because they have to self-isolate. The digital platforms that we are now using more regularly in school (Google Classroom) will support you to keep in touch with your teacher, your class and your learning if you can't attend school for a period of time. You will have the opportunity to sit any assessments that you might miss if you can't attend school. Periods of self-isolation and illness leading to a gap in your course coverage will be taken into consideration when finalising provisional grades.

16. What if my teacher is absent during the year because of illness or self-isolation?

Again, we understand that this might be a concern for you. We have procedures in place to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by their teacher being absent. The digital platforms we are now using much more can be really helpful in supporting with this. Depending on the situation, this might include learning being set via Google Classroom, or another subject teacher in your school teaching your class for a period of time.

17. Will I be told the provisional grade that has been sent to SQA?

You won't be told directly as these will still be subject to checking by SQA. The provisional grade that is sent to the SQA will be reflected in your working grade. This will be much more accurate after you have completed some assessments. So your final working grade will be the most accurate and will give a good indication of the provisional grade that has been submitted.

18. There are COVID restrictions in some of my subjects like Drama and Music. Will this affect my grade?

We know that this has caused significant concern. In the changes that SQA have already made to qualifications, they have considered restrictions relating to Covid-19. However, Scottish Government and Education Scotland are currently looking in more detail at the impact of these restrictions on your learning and will put in place further changes to ensure that you are not disadvantaged in the grade you achieve because of this. In addition to this, Senior Phase pupils will have the opportunity to attend school in order to complete necessary coursework for relevant practical subjects. We are currently in the process of planning this and will provide an update in due course.

19. What about National 3, National 4 and non-graded courses, will these still be the same?

At the moment SQA has said that there are no changes to these course and evidence will still be required for all units. It is really important, therefore, that you continue to engage with your teachers and complete all the online work they are setting you.

20. What about choosing my subjects for next year, how will this take place?

This will take place at the usual time, however, this year you will be sent an electronic Google Form to pick your subjects. You will still have a chance to discuss this with you Pupil Support Teacher before you submit your final choices.

21. If I have a question. Who should I speak with?

If you have questions about a particular subject you should speak to your class teacher. If you have questions about your feelings, the home learning experience or if you have any general concerns you should speak to your Pupil Support Teacher. If you have questions about accessing a device at home you should speak to Mrs Kane. If you have a question about your college work or college applications you should speak to you Pupil Support Teacher and/ or Ms Barr. If you have a question about the option process, you should speak to your Pupil Support Teacher. If you have a question about SQA, you should speak to Mr Fleming/Mrs James. If you have a question about Alternative Assessment Arrangements, you should speak to Mrs Gallagher in the Support for Learning Department. You can contact any of these people on Glow email.

All enquiries from parents/carers should be sent to the school office.

office@strathaven.s-lanark.sch.uk

