

## FOI24/25 158

I am getting in touch regarding the following article:

[https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/secondary/higher-history-view-principal-assessor-and-senior-team-leader?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR1cFVtvhU7cXXd5d2S0qWKFq5DcUbwGLqIXVPmlh5ucW3O64AHLf\\_yZGo0\\_aem\\_ivy7pbE4B2ZqqjG\\_Za-2uQ](https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/secondary/higher-history-view-principal-assessor-and-senior-team-leader?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR1cFVtvhU7cXXd5d2S0qWKFq5DcUbwGLqIXVPmlh5ucW3O64AHLf_yZGo0_aem_ivy7pbE4B2ZqqjG_Za-2uQ)

Please release all communication, internal and external, held by the SQA regarding this article. This request is not limited to communication after the article was published, and would - for example - include communication discussing the idea of the article before it had been confirmed and/or written. This request also includes email attachments.

### Index of Attachments

Ref	Date/Time	Email Subject	Document	Note
1	03/12/2024 15:38	Final PA article	FOI24-25 158 01 HH PA article	Provided.
2	03/12/2024 14:57	Re: Link	FOI24-25 158 02 HH PA article	Duplicate to FOI24-25 158 01 HH PA article. Not Provided.
3	29/11/2024 14:17	Principal Assessor article on HH	FOI24-25 158 02 HH PA article	Provided.

**From:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 03 December 2024 15:38  
**To:** Fiona Robertson; Martyn Ware; [REDACTED]; Richard Pidgeon; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Donna Stewart  
**Subject:** Final PA article  
**Attachments:** HH PA article.docx

Final article from PA and Senior Team Leader which will be appearing in TES later, with thanks to Richard.

[REDACTED] – can you print a copy for Fiona’s pack please

John

**From:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 03 December 2024 14:54  
**To:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison; [REDACTED]; John Booth  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Thanks and much appreciated, both.

Richard Pidgeon  
Head of Communications and Engagement, SQA

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 3, 2024 14:52  
**To:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Also happy with that.

**From:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 03 December 2024 13:57  
**To:** [REDACTED]; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; rab145@hotmail.com; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Dear [REDACTED],

Our absolute final ask re. the piece is whether you would be comfortable with the addition of a single sentence which is highlighted in yellow on the attached?

Obviously absolutely no issue if not and thanks again for your patience and understanding.

Kind regards,

Richard Pidgeon  
Head of Communications and Engagement, SQA

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 3, 2024 10:57  
**To:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] **Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

That works for me.

Thank you  
Simon

**From:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 03 December 2024 10:01

**To:** [REDACTED]; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Good morning all,

Hope you had a good weekend.

Thanks very much for the article [REDACTED]. It is a very strong and measured piece.

Our approach would now be to publish it on our SQA website later today, and promote it via our social channels.

As per the attached, your names **would not** be published, nor any identifying information about your schools.

There is a possibility that we may be asked for names at a later stage, and as a public body we might not be in a position not to give those.

If you can let me know by midday if that works for you.

Many thanks.

Richard Pidgeon  
Head of Communications and Engagement, SQA

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 29, 2024 15:12  
**To:** [REDACTED]; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Likewise. I am heading out of school

Have a good weekend all.

[REDACTED]  
**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 15:11  
**To:** [REDACTED] <S.Wood@tga.org.uk>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED] John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Had an informal chat with [REDACTED] and he said, "These kinds of individuals want to demonise individuals, but there was a nation-wide issue with candidates in 2024."

Perhaps a team response better.

Thanks to all for all their time and efforts on this,

Have a great weekend.

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED] **Sent:** 29 November 2024 15:02  
**To:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED] John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Nice idea.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 14:43  
**To:** Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED] John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

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[REDACTED] also reservations with regard media and names. I agree with [REDACTED] on this if we are named.

Also, i think all of the Higher team would be willing to put the "Higher Core" team or "Higher "team" as they are all fully behind us and practicing professionals in a variety of schools across the country. I have received many messages of support from them all asking if there is anything they can do to help or support, which is very kind.

We are a real team and have a great culture, so perhaps this could be the way forward? Just and ideas if it is run past them as well.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

My school is raising concerns regarding the article. I have had to pass it by our media people.

They have concerns for the school as well as for me.

I will let you know what happens.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 14:19  
**To:** [REDACTED] John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Concerns regarding letter\_blog

Can we look at either reducing their name as I suggested to initials and surname, or even just leaving their names out and including their posts?

Iain

**Iain Morrison**



Head of Humanities, Care & Services | Ceannard nan Daonnachdan, Cùram & Sheirbheisean  
Qualifications Development

**m:** [REDACTED] | **e:** iain.morrison@sqa.org.uk | **w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>  
Scottish Qualifications Authority | Ùghdarras Theisteanas na h-Alba  
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW, G2 8DQ

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 14:16  
**To:** [REDACTED]; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Concerns regarding letter\_blog

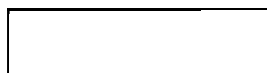
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They have concerns for the school as well as for me.

I will let you know what happens.

[REDACTED]

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\*\*\*\*\*

**From:** Richard Pidgeon <[Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 03 December 2024 14:57  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Link  
**Attachments:** HH PA article 03122024.docx

**Importance:** High

Hi [REDACTED]

Approved version with names (but no schools) and additional context at third last para.

If you are not going to be able to use, would you mind letting me know [REDACTED] as we would need to put up on our SQA website as soon as we could.

Kind regards,  
Richard Pidgeon  
Head of Communications and Engagement, SQA

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**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 3, 2024 14:48  
**To:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Link

Thanks! Might still have time but touch and go



**Tes**, 70 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH



**tes.com**

**From:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 03 December 2024 14:48  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Link

Thanks [REDACTED], not sure if you saw my text but just awaiting final approval for names and that addition we discussed. But not sure if too late now from your perspective

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 3, 2024 2:41:16 pm  
**To:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Link

Hi Richard, here's the appeals story:  
<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/sqa-exam-appeals-what-happened-your-sector-and-subjects-2024>

Thanks,



Tes

**Tes**, 70 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH



**tes.com**



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**From:** Richard Pidgeon <[Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 14:42  
**To:** [REDACTED] John Booth; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

We totally appreciate that and will await updates.

I am also available [REDACTED] if it would be helpful for any stakeholders to speak to us directly.

Or if either of you would prefer to chat through via phone, please do give me a call.

Kind regards,

Richard Pidgeon  
Head of Communications and Engagement, SQA

---

**From:** [REDACTED] **Sent:** Friday, November 29, 2024 14:33  
**To:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>; [REDACTED] >; Richard Pidgeon <[Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Media is a sensitive issue in [REDACTED] as well.

I think my head teacher would also have reservations.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 14:20  
**To:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

OK. Keep me posted, thanks. I hope the removal of the school's name helps provide reassurance. If helpful we could also be more generic in our description eg a senior team leader for higher history and a practicing history teacher?

I'm on leave this afternoon so please keep my colleague Richard in the loop.

Let us know what we can do to help if anything.

Thanks

John

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 29, 2024 2:09:51 pm  
**To:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

My school management is concerned about this.

I will update you as and when I hear anything.

[REDACTED]

**From:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 13:15  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Finally, and you may have already done this, I assume you will want to inform your respective school management, even though your schools are not being named.

John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** John Booth  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 13:10  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Great, will do.

Thanks and have a good weekend.

John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 13:09  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

It might also be safer to say A senior Team Leader as there are others for Higher History.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 12:31  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

yes also happy with this.

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 12:15  
**To:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Works for me. A good balance.

[REDACTED]

**From:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 12:04  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Hi

It's your call obviously as you and your schools need to be comfortable, but I thought it important to underline that you are practicing teachers as well as appointees. It reinforces the point that it's teachers who are at the heart of the assessment process.

I suggest this as an alternative sign-off:

██████████ is the Principal Assessor for Higher History and is a Faculty Head for Social Subjects and RMPS

██████████ is the Senior Team Leader for Higher History and is a Head of History, Modern Studies and Politics

Let me know if that works.

John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** ██████████  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 11:55  
**To:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; ██████████  
**Cc:** ██████████, Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Hi,

Just to say in total agreement with ██████████ and we discussed this. Happy with this version. Many thanks for your work on this.

I think it might be better not to say our Schools or is it practice to say this? May lead to emails to us etc.? Allow herald to contact us directly?

Equally i know it would not be hard to find our school with a google. So happy with whatever decided.

Happy with name and PA and Faculty Head of Social Subjects and RMPS.

██████████ is a former PA and has a wealth of expertise in all areas. His contributions and support in all this has been fantastic and invaluable as has his contribution to SQA been over many years. Just saying this incase he undersells himself.

Many thanks

██████████

---

**From:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 11:38  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Thanks for the prompt reply [REDACTED]. Have made those amends. If you could just check you're happy with the bit in red that would be helpful – have just slightly played around with that sentence.

Could you also let me have your school job titles to go alongside your PA/DPA titles.

Thanks  
John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 10:40  
**To:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

Morning all

[REDACTED] and I have had a look at this. We would make the following alterations [in red], but are obviously in your hands regarding accuracy and the level of message you would like to get across. Thank you so much for the draft. It was extremely useful and certainly gets key messages across.

Many thanks  
[REDACTED]

It's fair to say that when we started preparing for the assessment of Higher History in 2024 we never could have imagined what lay ahead over the next 12 months.

There has been much said and written about Higher History over the past few months. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, of course, and healthy debate is to be welcomed, but much of what we have heard and read is ill-informed at best and plain wrong at worst. We would encourage everyone to read the Higher History Review for themselves, cover to cover, rather than reaching conclusions based on social media noise or anonymous comments in newspapers.

The Review – carried out independently within SQA and then subjected to external independent scrutiny – was clear: the marking standard did not change and learners were not expected to provide more detailed answers than in previous years to gain marks. **The Review was based on an extensive analysis of evidence of candidate performance this year and of marker feedback, as well as rigorous consultation with a range of stakeholders involved in the standard-setting process.** A comparison with previous exam performance was also made.

The SQA did not mark its own work. It used its expertise and experience to extensively stress test the evidence before drawing its evidence-based conclusions.

Some markers fed back that they thought the standard was harsher but these were balanced equally by feedback from others who said the standard was on point; the important point, overlooked in all the coverage and commentary we have seen, is that even if this did cause any variation in marking (which is not unusual, particularly where humanities subjects are concerned) then the checks and balances that are built into the system worked as intended and ensured all marking was on standard.

Ultimately the dispute over the Higher History marking standard boils down to a disagreement between teachers. Let's not forget that it's teachers who [set](#), [check](#), mark and grade the assessments, so when we criticise the standard we criticise ourselves. History teachers are a passionate and vocal group but it has been disappointing and unedifying to see the self-harm being done to our profession, and if we are not careful we run the risk of discouraging teachers to sign up as markers next year. We are the lifeblood of assessment and awarding in Scotland.

However, what concerns us most of all is the damage this ongoing debate is doing to learners. Thousands of them are studying for Higher History in 2025 and we owe it to each of them to be laser-focused on giving them the best chance of success. There are some very important lessons for us to learn from the 2024 assessments and the significant drop in learner performance, and we'd humbly suggest that our energies should be focused on that rather than on picking away at issues that the Higher History Review has firmly put to bed.

It is not for us – or the rest of the exam team or the SQA – to explain why learner performance has fallen so dramatically. That is a much wider issue which the whole education community needs to consider and fix. But feedback from teachers provides some pointers – for example, falling standards of literacy, candidates being entered for Higher who are at National 5 level or below, teaching to the test, the ongoing Covid impacts. Let's explore and address those issues, however challenging they may be for us to face up to.

The Higher History course report has now been published which provides useful material to support teachers, and the forthcoming Understanding Standards events will provide a further opportunity for us to move forward together instead of looking back. If we do that then we will get to a better place that serves both the teaching profession and learners well.

If we don't then we risk fundamentally undermining not only the Higher History course but confidence in Scotland's assessment and qualifications system more widely. Surely we can all agree that is a result none of us want.

**From:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

**Sent:** 28 November 2024 17:33

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Draft blog/article on HH

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Good to meet you earlier. As promised, given the time pressures you are under as teachers, I've had a first go at drafting an article which addresses the issues we discussed. However, given that you will be putting your names to this, it very much has to be something that is authentic to you and which you are comfortable with, so please feel free to amend and edit as you see fit, making sure it covers everything you want it to. And please feel free to add some more colour that reflects your background and experience as history teachers and appointees.

If possible, it would be great to get any comments back by close of play tomorrow (Friday).

Thanks, and look forward to hearing back

John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

+++

It's fair to say that when we started preparing for the assessment of Higher History in 2024 we never could have imagined what lay ahead over the next 12 months. But then again as history teachers we are experts in looking at the past rather than forecasting the future!

There has been much said and written about Higher History over the past few months. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, of course, and healthy debate is to be welcomed, but much of what we have heard and read is ill-informed at best and plain wrong at worst. We would encourage everyone to read the Higher History Review for themselves, cover to cover, rather than reaching conclusions based on social media noise or anonymous comments in newspapers.

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If we don't then we risk fundamentally undermining not only the Higher History course but confidence in Scotland's assessment and qualifications system more widely. Surely we can all agree that is a result none of us want.

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

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**From:** Richard Pidgeon <[Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 14:17  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Principal Assessor article on HH  
**Attachments:** HH PA article .docx

Hi [REDACTED] and [REDACTED],

As discussed, please find attached the first-person piece written jointly by the Principal Assessor and Deputy Principal Assessor for Higher History.

We anticipate that, pending some possible back-and-forth with TES, this could run on the TES website on Tuesday 3 December. Should that not be possible, we would publish on our own SQA website that day and promote the article through our social channels.

Kind regards,

**Richard Pidgeon**

Head of Communications and Engagement

Ceannard Conaltraidh agus Com-pàrtachaidh

**m:** 07791 659 242 | **e:** [richard.pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:richard.pidgeon@sqa.org.uk) | **w:** [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)

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The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ

**From:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 13:13  
**To:** Fiona Robertson; Martyn Ware  
**Cc:** Richard Pidgeon  
**Subject:** RE: PA/DPA article

Thanks. I think they have but will double-check. We have agreed we will not name their schools but article will be signed off as follows:

[REDACTED] is the Principal Assessor for Higher History and a Faculty Head for Social Subjects and RMPS

[REDACTED] is a Senior Team Leader for Higher History and a Head of History, Modern Studies and Politics

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 13:11  
**To:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; Martyn Ware <Martyn.Ware@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: PA/DPA article

Thanks John  
I have no comments.  
I think it is important that [REDACTED] inform their school management that this is happening.

Fiona

Fiona Robertson  
Chief Executive  
Scottish Qualifications Authority  
**w:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk>  
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ | 24 Wester Shawfair, Lowden,  
Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1F

**From:** John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 November 2024 11:44  
**To:** Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Martyn Ware <Martyn.Ware@sqa.org.uk>  
**Cc:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** PA/DPA article  
**Importance:** High

As per Teams message:

It's fair to say that when we started preparing for the assessment of Higher History in 2024 we never could have imagined what lay ahead over the next 12 months.

There has been much said and written about Higher History over the past few months. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, of course, and healthy debate is to be welcomed, but much of what we have heard and read is ill-informed at best and plain wrong at worst. We would encourage everyone to read the Higher History Review for themselves, cover to cover, rather than reaching conclusions based on social media noise or anonymous comments in newspapers.

The Review – carried out independently within SQA and then subjected to external independent scrutiny – was clear: the marking standard did not change and learners were not expected to provide more detailed answers than in previous years to gain marks. The Review was based on an extensive analysis of evidence of candidate performance this year and of marker feedback, as well as rigorous consultation with a range of stakeholders involved in the standard-setting process. A comparison with previous exam performance was also made.

The SQA did not mark its own work. It used its expertise and experience to extensively stress test the evidence before drawing its evidence-based conclusions.

Some markers fed back that they thought the standard was harsher but these were balanced equally by feedback from others who said the standard was on point; the important point,

overlooked in all the coverage and commentary we have seen, is that even if this did cause any variation in marking (which is not unusual, particularly where humanities subjects are concerned) then the checks and balances that are built into the system worked as intended and ensured all marking was on standard.

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