

**From:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 14:43

**To:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

**Subject:** RE: Embargoed - SQA media release

Hi [REDACTED]

Please send over any questions you have, and we will respond asap.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 14:01

**To:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** Re: Embargoed - SQA media release

Hi [REDACTED]

Ten minutes notice for an embargo is a bit unusual. Did this go out to everyone at that time?

Is the SQA going to be willing to answer questions about this? I've spoken to history teachers already who just do not believe these conclusions at all.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 13:49

**Subject:** Embargoed - SQA media release

Good afternoon

At 2pm today, we will be publishing the report into the review of Higher History 2024.

Please find attached, a media release, Higher History Review 2024 Report, a summary version of the report and an infographic of our awarding process.

These are being shared with you **under strict embargo until 2pm this afternoon – Wednesday 6 November 2024.**

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 06 November 2024 17:16  
**To:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Embargoed - SQA media release

Hi [REDACTED]

I understand that John Booth has been in touch separately in relation to your question about the embargo.

Here is our response to your questions on the report:

SQA spokesperson said:

“Markers are all teachers and are asked to provide feedback after marking is complete. Over 150 Higher History markers submitted feedback and all of this feedback was considered by the review. In addition, when concerns were first raised about the marking standard, we wrote to every Higher History marker and gave them a further opportunity to provide feedback. While only four took up this further opportunity, this feedback was also considered by the review.

“As the concerns raised were focused on the setting of the standard, follow-up interviews were conducted with those responsible for setting this standard, namely the senior appointees - also teachers - and SQA staff.

“The review provides a balanced summary of the feedback provided by markers, who are all teachers.

“Independent, external scrutiny of the review by an expert in standard-setting and exams has endorsed the findings and confirmed the evidence supports the report’s conclusions.”

**Background note**

Feedback from markers did not raise concerns about the exam team.

-ends-

Thanks

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 06 November 2024 15:29  
**To:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Embargoed - SQA media release

And one more thing for now. The SQA release admits that "some markers provided feedback on the marking standard". Although very few comments are included in the report, one said "goalposts seemed to have been moved."

Will the SQA, in the interests of transparency, release the anonymised marker reports in full?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 06 November 2024 15:24  
**To:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Embargoed - SQA media release

Hi again [REDACTED].

The next question concerns the following:

"The review considered a wide range of evidence, including the course specification, question papers and learners' answers, marking instructions, marker reports and feedback, and interviews with both SQA staff and senior appointees, who are all practicing teachers and lecturers, including the Principal Assessor for Higher History."

This seems to suggest that the review depended upon existing materials (MIs, marker reports etc) and that interviews only took place with people who work for the SQA or who are "senior appointees" such as the PA. Can you confirm whether or not other teachers/markers were interviewed at all? This seems particularly important given that teachers have repeatedly raised concerns about the PA and other SQA staff.

If teachers were interviewed, can you please confirm how many?

And of course, I'm still looking for answer as to whether all outlets received this material 10 minutes before the embargo.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 06 November 2024 14:43  
**To:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Embargoed - SQA media release

Thanks [REDACTED]. If you could start with whether or not this went to every outlet 10 minutes before the embargo that would be good.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 06 November 2024 14:42  
**To:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Embargoed - SQA media release

Hi [REDACTED]

Please send over any questions you have, and we will respond asap.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 06 November 2024 14:01  
**To:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Embargoed - SQA media release

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Is the SQA going to be willing to answer questions about this? I've spoken to history teachers already who just do not believe these conclusions at all.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 13:49

**Subject:** Embargoed - SQA media release

Good afternoon

At 2pm today, we will be publishing the report into the review of Higher History 2024.

Please find attached, a media release, Higher History Review 2024 Report, a summary version of the report and an infographic of our awarding process.

These are being shared with you **under strict embargo until 2pm this afternoon – Wednesday 6 November 2024.**

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 12 November 2024 17:10

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk

**Subject:** RE: SQA report into Higher History

Because your specialist has made clear, in both his previous words and actions, that he doesn't want to be invited.

I'm happy to pick up when we meet, if helpful, but would prefer to focus on how we can get to a position where we can work with The Herald in a more constructive fashion.

John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 12 November 2024 13:04

**To:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk

**Subject:** Re: SQA report into Higher History

Thanks. So why was The Herald not invited along with the other specialist journalists?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Herald

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**From:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 12 November 2024 12:54

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@sqa.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: SQA report into Higher History

Apologies [REDACTED], I missed your subsequent email on Friday.

There was no general press briefing to which media outlets could send reporters. As per my earlier email, we spoke to two specialist journalists who had previously reported on the history story. Beyond that, The Herald and other media outlets received an embargoed copy of the report in advance of publication.

Thanks

John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** 12 November 2024 12:19

**To:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@sqa.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** Re: SQA report into Higher History

Thanks, John.

I received your email on Friday, but I further asked why The Herald (through our news desk) did not receive an invitation (not [REDACTED] personally) to attend the SQA briefing, therefore allowing us to send a reporter to cover this event fully.

I would appreciate a response to this question, please.

Thanks,  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Herald

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**From:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 12 November 2024 11:26

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@sqa.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: SQA report into Higher History

Hi [REDACTED]

Sent it on Friday – have reattached here.

Thanks

John

John Booth  
Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 12 November 2024 10:21

**To:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@sqa.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** Re: SQA report into Higher History

Hi John,

Just following up from Friday's email.

Keen for your response, please.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Herald

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 08 November 2024 16:56  
**To:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@sqa.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: SQA report into Higher History

Thanks, John.

I will come back to you/[REDACTED] on dates asap, but I would like a fuller explanation of Wednesday's event before then, please, as requested yesterday.

Can you please tell me why The Herald (not [REDACTED] personally) did not receive an invitation to send a reporter to an SQA press briefing? This is a matter of great concern to me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Herald

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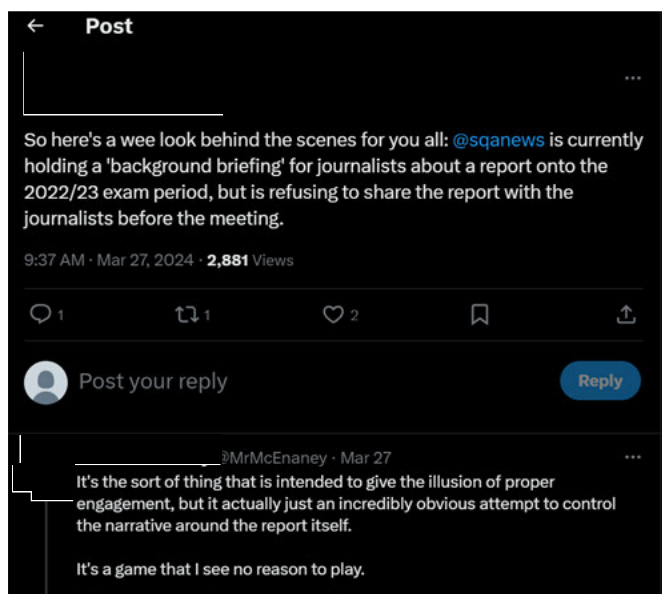
**From:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 08 November 2024 16:42  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@sqa.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: SQA report into Higher History



Hi [REDACTED] Apologies I wasn't able to get back to you yesterday.

Happy to meet, and I know [REDACTED] is trying to sort diaries. I'm interviewing most of next week so will probably need to be the week after. Richard will be joining me from SQA; do you want yourself, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] invited from your side?

I can discuss Wednesday's logistics when we meet, in the context of our wider working relationship, but just to reassure you that [REDACTED] was not 'excluded'. He received the report in advance of publication, along with a number of other journalists. In addition, we spoke to two specialist journalists who had previously reported on the history story and who we knew would appreciate the opportunity to get a background briefing and to ask questions. Unfortunately, [REDACTED] has made clear that he doesn't want to be party to background briefings from the SQA:



Look forward to meeting soon.

John

John Booth

Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 07 November 2024 12:12  
**To:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: SQA report into Higher History

Hi John,

Thanks for this.

I agree it would be productive for us to catch up again. Would you have availability next week?

Richard's email does not appear to have made it to me yet. My apologies. Let me chase and come back to you both.

In the meantime, can you please let me know what happened yesterday as to why we appear to have been excluded from your press briefing. I would like a response to that, before we meet, as a matter of urgency. Can you come back to me today?

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Herald

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**From:** John Booth <[John.Booth@sqa.org.uk](mailto:John.Booth@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 16:46

**To:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Cc:** Richard Pidgeon <[Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: SQA report into Higher History

Not for publication

[REDACTED]

Thanks for the email below.

I would be happy to meet to discuss the matters raised and, more widely, to discuss how SQA works with The Herald.

As you know, both my colleague Richard Pidgeon (cc'd) and I have reached out on a number of previous occasions to offer such a discussion. While I was able to have a helpful conversation with [REDACTED] last year, neither Richard nor I have yet to receive a response from [REDACTED]. The offer of a discussion remains on the table should you wish to take it up.

Thanks

John

PS. I believe Richard had also been in touch last week on a specific issue via the [editor@heraldandtimes.co.uk](mailto:editor@heraldandtimes.co.uk) email address but has yet to receive a response. We could discuss that too if you wish to meet.

John Booth

Director of Communications, SQA

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 06 November 2024 16:14  
**To:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** SQA report into Higher History

Good afternoon.

I have been informed that the SQA held a briefing for journalists at 12pm today regarding the report into Higher History.

Instead of inviting The Herald to this briefing, we were sent an email 10 minutes before the embargo.

Would you please explain why the SQA decided not to invite The Herald, which has covered this story extensively, to the briefing it held for journalists? Who made the decision to exclude us from this event, when was that decision made, and why?

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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History media release Review Report 2024,ç Review 2024 Summai ss-infographic.pdf

**From:** Media Enquiries <media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk>

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 12:57

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** Embargoed - SQA briefing materials

Hi both

Thanks for attending today's briefing.

Please find attached, our media release, Higher History Review 2024 Report, a summary version of the report and an infographic of our awarding process.

These are being shared with you **under strict embargo until 2pm this afternoon – Wednesday 6 November 2024.**

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 13:55

**To:** [REDACTED] Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>; Richard Pidgeon <[Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: Embargoed - SQA briefing materials

Thanks [REDACTED] - Let us know if you have any other questions

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Scottish Qualifications Authority

*I work within a compressed working week. My non-workday is Wednesday.*

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 06 November 2024 13:50

**To:** Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)>; Richard Pidgeon <[Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk)>

**Subject:** Re: Embargoed - SQA briefing materials

Scrap that, found it in the report!

On Wed, 6 Nov 2024 at 13:42, [REDACTED] > wrote:  
Hi Richard

I think Martyn said 81 per cent of markers of the History exam reported that the performance of candidates was lower or much lower than in 2019. Is that correct or should it have been compared to 2023?

Best

[REDACTED]

On Wed, 6 Nov 2024 at 12:57, Media Enquiries <[media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk)> wrote:

Hi both

Thanks for attending today's briefing.

Please find attached, our media release, Higher History Review 2024 Report, a summary version of the report and an infographic of our awarding process.

These are being shared with you **under strict embargo until 2pm this afternoon – Wednesday 6 November 2024.**

Thanks

