

## **FOI Request (FOI 24-25 181)**

### **Request:**

I would like to request the following information:

- All communication held by the SQA regarding the 2024 SATH survey. NB this should include all communication regarding the matters raised during the Education Committee session on 22 Jan 2025, including threats of legal action and a dispute over an apology regarding the content of the recent survey.

### **Response**

**From:** Donna Stewart

**Sent:** 12 December 2024 15:14

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Teams call

Hi [REDACTED]

How are you?

I'm wondering if I could have a quick teams call with you after school finishes? 4:30pm?

I'm just keen to give you a head's up on an issue I've been dealing with.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** Donna Stewart

**Sent:** 12 December 2024 16:32

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Letter re SATH HH Survey

Afternoon [REDACTED]

I've attached a letter regarding the responses to the survey that were published.

I tried to give you a call before sending this over, however the combination of our busy diaries and the tight turnaround meant that this didn't happen. Happy to pick up a call with you tomorrow if helpful.

Many thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

Our ref: DS  
12 December 2024

Contact: Donna Stewart  
Email : donna.stewart@sqa.org.uk  
Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to you in your position as [REDACTED] regarding the publication of the results of the Higher History survey, further to our discussions earlier this week. I am also writing to you in my position as Director of Qualifications Development with a duty of care and responsibility for the health, safety and wellbeing of colleagues within SQA.

When the survey was published, teachers' personal information was not disclosed. However, the same care was not taken with the names of SQA staff or appointees who were subject to comments that were unsubstantiated and potentially defamatory. We are extremely disappointed and concerned by this as it has caused significant personal distress to colleagues.

One example of this is the naming of our [REDACTED]. She is responsible for the processes and procedures (set by the organisation), not the content of the question papers or the marking. This is done by teachers. One respondent says: *'The rot, in my opinion, started since [REDACTED] in 2019. Look at the declining results since then.'* This infers that the [REDACTED] remit extends beyond that of the processes and procedures that she is responsible for and also makes unacceptable calls for her to lose her job. As the Higher History Review makes clear, the [REDACTED] and others involved with the Higher History assessment and awarding processes acted with integrity at all times.

I recognise that, in the interests of transparency and openness, it is important for SATH to share the survey results but that should not extend to the naming of individuals. I require that:

- any personal information in the survey results (which either names them directly or includes information which allows them to be identified) is redacted immediately;
- that any versions that contain this personal information are removed from websites, social media or other platforms and replaced by redacted versions;
- that SATH members are asked not to make any further use of the unredacted survey results or share them;
- that SATH publicly apologises to colleagues named in the survey results and publicly acknowledges that this personal information should not have been published.

Please confirm to me by Friday 13 December 2024 that these steps have been taken.

Yours sincerely

Donna Stewart

**Interim Director of Qualifications Development**

**From:** [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** 13 December 2024 08:20

**To:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Letter re SATH HH Survey

Hi Donna,

Thank you for this – I can only apologise, and take full responsibility for this. It was an oversight due to timescales, and should not have happened. It was due to inexperience in dealing with a situation that has become so contentious and political, and absolutely no malice. I know and respect [REDACTED] and as I said in the meeting SATH does not condone personal attacks - we are disappointed in the person who has been making these types of comments.

I have e-mailed her personally to apologise, and have removed the original version of the survey. I have put an apology on the Scottish History Teachers FB page and will issue a similar statement and apology on the SATH website as soon as I can.

I would like to have a quick chat about it if possible, but we are two teachers down today so may need to be Monday if possible? I won't take much of your time but would just like to quickly discuss in person.

I know that all of this has been very stressful for the History team and apologise again for [REDACTED] being singled out in this way. It has become ugly and it needs to stop now.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

**From:** Donna Stewart

**Sent:** 13 December 2024 08:48

**To:** [REDACTED] >

**Subject:** RE: Letter re SATH HH Survey

[REDACTED]

Thanks so much for your response and quick actions. Thank you also for emailing [REDACTED] directly.

Happy to chat on Monday. Just let me know what time suits you and I will make it work at my side.

Many thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** Donna Stewart

**Sent:** 16 December 2024 11:51

**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Support

[REDACTED]

Thanks for your time this morning. It was good to talk through.

I meant to go through our proposed supports with you when we were on the call – apologies?

In the new year, an additional Understanding Standards webinar covering the Scottish History question paper will be scheduled, giving teachers and lectures the opportunity to hear from and talk to the Higher History qualification team leaders. Please note, the video summary of the Understanding Standards session held last week will be published on the SQA website by the end of January.

- Additional exemplification will be provided for schools and colleges, giving learners the chance to practice how to apply the knowledge and understanding they have developed over the duration of the course.
- SQA will also open up a dedicated Higher History enquiry email address, giving teachers, lecturers, and school leaders the opportunity to directly raise any queries or questions they may have.

Can you let me know if these sit comfortably with you? They should be in line with what we discussed last Monday.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**  
Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 16 December 2024 12:12  
**To:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Support

Hi Donna,

Yes, I think that all of that will be welcomed and very useful. If it is possible to have the recorded US and Q and As available sooner than the end of January that would be really helpful, however, I understand that it may not be straightforward to have that ready quicker.

There was not a lot of commentary after the US event which is hopefully positive – I have had an e-mail suggesting gathering questions that were not answered and putting those to SQA, however, I have suggested waiting for the official Q and A as that will allow teachers to ascertain if they have remaining questions.

Thanks for taking the time to discuss this morning, I know you are very busy! I will send over the amended version of the survey as soon as I can, and will update the SATH website also.

Thanks,

From: Donna Stewart

Sent: 16 December 2024 16:55

To:

Subject: RE: Support

Thanks

When you send over the revised survey response and draft apology, could you send them through me please?

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:**

**Sent:** 17 December 2024 10:17

**To:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Support

Hi Donna,

I have removed the comment with mention of name – I am conscious that there are others that are critical of the team or SQA without naming names but to remove all of these would seem to be censoring the results which I don't want to do.

In terms of an apology, I would keep it fairly brief but happy to add to this:

**SATH would like to apologise for sharing the SATH Higher History Survey without removing comments naming SQA employees. The survey was anonymised for teachers sharing their views, and we acknowledge that the same courtesy should have been shown to members of the SQA team. We have removed the survey results from all forums where it was shared, and ask that anyone who has saved a copy of the original survey deletes this and does not share the contents further. The amended survey is shared below and on the SATH Teams page. Thank you.**

Thanks,

**From:** Donna Stewart

**Sent:** 17 December 2024 10:37

**To:**

**Subject:** RE: Support

Thanks – I'll send over to for her consideration.

Can you confirm that the Facebook apology post has been removed?

- There were several comments that [REDACTED] was named in – have they all been removed?  
Can you possibly send over a copy of the new version?

Just to make you aware that [REDACTED] will begin her A/L on Thursday so I'm keen to action everything before she goes off on leave rather than have it pan out over the Christmas holidays.

Many thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 17 December 2024 12:30  
To: Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>  
Subject: RE: Support

Hi Donna,

I thought that I had attached this. I was only aware of one comment naming [REDACTED] which I have removed – I will read through again in case I have missed others, but I don't recall there being several. Are we considering comments that allude to the team to be naming?

Yes, the Facebook apology was removed yesterday,

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: Donna Stewart  
Sent: 17 December 2024 12:40  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: RE: Support

Thanks [REDACTED] – appreciated.

Yes, it would have to be the one she is named in and any others that allow her to be identified.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

Hi [REDACTED]

I've had feedback on behalf of [REDACTED] about the apology you sent over this morning. Unfortunately, the feedback is that the apology is insufficient and there is a request for the following:

Expect SATH to clearly state that it does not stand by these comments and will not tolerate abusive and unprofessional attacks on a member/s of SQA staff. SATH must clearly state that it apologises unreservedly for the distress caused, that it dissociates itself from these comments and that it will take measures to ensure this never happens again.

■■■■■ I'm happy to talk through if that would be helpful.

Thanks,

Donna

Donna Stewart  
Interim Director of Qualifications Development

From: ■■■■■

Sent: 18 December 2024 16:01

To: Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Support

Hi Donna,

I have searched the document and removed any comments mentioning ■■■■■ by name. There were another 2 in addition to the comment flagged on Friday. I could only find one with reference to her job title and that has been removed also. I'm a little uneasy at going further with removing comments that are critical of SQA and the team as I don't want to feel that I am censoring – I feel there is a line here in terms of freedom of speech and openness, and fairness to those who work for SQA. It would never be the intention of SATH to cause stress or upset to individuals, so would perhaps suggest that if any of the team have issues with any other comments that they are shared with me so that I can review?

I have asked for some legal advice in terms of what can and can't be shared publicly, and will wait for that before re-sharing the survey. It was intended to move things forward, and allow everyone to have their say – I really didn't want to change or remove anything as that feeds into a certain narrative that has been spun that I don't feel is positive and don't want SATH being accused of manipulating the data.

In terms of the apology, I will look at changing the draft and send it over. I'm not really sure what measures we would take to ensure that this doesn't happen again as this all feels very unprecedented, and the release of the survey with the names included was truly an oversight. I will, however, attempt to word an apology that is more acceptable to ■■■■■ – I sense that my apology is simply not accepted, and do understand the upset caused, however, the purpose of the survey was genuinely well intentioned.

I hope that this can be resolved swiftly!

Thanks,

■■■■■

■■■■■

■■■■■

[REDACTED]

**From:** Donna Stewart  
**Sent:** 19 December 2024 11:49  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Support

Thanks [REDACTED] – appreciated. I'll go through it and check that there is nothing that makes [REDACTED] identifiable.

I absolutely appreciate the intent to provide transparency and that you are now finding yourself in a challenging situation. Happy to help navigate any of this with you so feel free to reach if you want to talk through at any time.

Keep in touch.....and don't forget how close you are to the holidays!

**Donna Stewart**  
Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** Donna Stewart  
**Sent:** 20 December 2024 09:57  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Support

Morning [REDACTED]

I hope you are well and I am sure that you are delighted to get to the last day of term.

I'm sharing detail below of comments in the report that have been highlighted to me as either identifying individuals or because of their nature in a public forum. This is for your consideration as you work through the next steps for the survey results.

Page 20, comment 3  
Page 23, comment 11  
Page 25 comment 7  
Page 25 comment 12  
Page 34 comment 5  
Page 45 comment 6  
Page 48 comment 3  
Page 52 final comment  
Page 56 final comment point 5  
Page 60/61 final comment and on next page  
Page 69 comment 9  
Page 79 last comment  
Page 80 last comment

I hope you manage to switch off during the holidays and have a well-deserved break.

Thanks,

Donna



From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 20 December 2024 12:07  
To: Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>  
Subject: RE: Support

Hi Donna,

Yes, very happy that it is the last day of work for a while!

I will take some time over the holidays to review those comments, however, can't make any promises re removal of comments. I feel that I need to wait for further guidance at this point - if it is breaking a law to share the survey as it currently stands then obviously we can't do that. If it is responding to the sensitivities of the team, then we would have to consider what the right course of action is as a committee, and consider each comment individually. We will further lose the trust and confidence of History teachers as a subject association if we promise to gather everyone's views and be open and transparent about sharing those, and then remove comments. It will spark more angry comments on social media and no doubt be fodder for another negative Herald article, with SATH potentially accused of a lack of integrity. We are in a very difficult position.

I will draft a further apology and send that over, this week is very, very busy so haven't had much of a free minute to look at it again, and don't want to ask the committee to meet again at such a busy time.

Thanks for your time and understanding with all of this – I hope you have a lovely break, and that this can be resolved for everyone. I fear, however, that this may be pretty impossible. Hopefully after a break and a rest things will settle down.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

**Sent:** 07 January 2025 16:22

**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Support

Hi [REDACTED]

Happy New Year! I hope that you managed to get a break and switch off during the holidays.

I'm keen to pick back up with you regarding the apology and redacted survey responses that were to be shared with [REDACTED] Would it be helpful for us to get a call in the diary to talk through?

Let me know what suits.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 07 January 2025 17:34

**To:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Support

Hi Donna,

Happy new year to you too, hope you had a good break.

Yes, it would probably be useful to have a discussion. I reviewed the highlighted comments this afternoon, to be honest I couldn't face looking at it over the holidays, although it had been my intention to do it then! I need to get home just now, but will have another look at the apology when I get home,

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

**From:** Donna Stewart

**Sent:** 08 January 2025 12:01

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Support

Hi [REDACTED]

I think it's maybe easier for me to try and fit in with your schedule. Can you let me know a couple of times that you are free and I'll get a call set up for us.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 12 January 2025 16:29

**To:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Support

Hi Donna,

Yes, things are very busy!

I teach first thing on a Tuesday but am usually in school early, so if 8.15 suited I would have until 8.50 when my first lesson starts.



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 14 January 2025 09:01  
**To:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Meeting

Hi Donna,

It is Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 10.30.

Myself, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will be representing the committee,

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: Donna Stewart

To: [REDACTED]

Tue 14/01/2025 09:22

Thanks [REDACTED]

Donna Stewart

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**Sent:** 16 January 2025 16:03

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Re: Meeting

Hi [REDACTED]

Just checking in regarding the redacted survey results and apology for [REDACTED] to have sight of.

Keen to help progress this with you.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

**Sent:** 17 January 2025 15:43

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Re: Meeting

[REDACTED]

I am writing to follow up on our initial conversation from December 16, 2024, where we discussed several issues concerning Higher History. During that meeting, we identified and agreed two key actions that you would take forward: sending a draft apology and providing redacted survey responses for me to share with [REDACTED]

It has now been over a month, and despite repeated assurances from you that you would follow up on the agreed actions, these have not transpired. While I acknowledge that the Christmas holidays were part of this period, this ongoing delay is unacceptable. I have a duty of care to [REDACTED] as a colleague in my team, and as an employee of SQA, and I am deeply concerned about the impact this delay is having on [REDACTED] health and wellbeing.

I am concerned that each time we discuss, you commit to sending me the documentation then fail to do so. This circular situation and ongoing repetitive correspondence cannot continue. I must stress the urgency of this matter and request that you issue the documents by cob Monday 20 January.

I would like to offer you an invitation to have further meeting with me on Tuesday 21 January at 8:20 AM to discuss the draft documents and ensure they can be published by cob of the same date.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter

Kind regards,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 20 January 2025 07:44

**To:** Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Meeting

Hi Donna,

Thanks for this – it is indeed a very stressful situation, and not, I would argue, one of my making. Let's go with the original apology – it seems clear that [REDACTED] is not going to accept any apology given as I have now written four, including one that was sent to her personally which she has not acknowledged or responded to. I am genuinely sorry that her name was included in the shared version of the survey, it was an oversight and not intended to cause harm or upset. It was removed immediately and an apology issued on the day that it was brought to my attention, and this should have been the point where we moved on and focussed on the issues that the survey has highlighted.

I met with the committee last night, and we have agreed, after also seeking advice on this issue, that the survey will be shared with names and job titles redacted. We are unable to remove all of the comments suggested, it would amount to censoring the opinions of teachers after promising that we would not do this. Whilst the survey certainly makes for uncomfortable reading in places, it represents honestly held opinions of the History teaching community. It represents a range of views, and in sharing it SATH are not endorsing or aligning with any of the comments made. Our intention was and is to try to find a way forward, and we were and continue to be keen to work with SQA on this.

I am happy to discuss tomorrow morning.

**SATH would like to apologise for the release of the Higher History survey results with a member of the SQA team named in one of the comments. This was an oversight and no harm was intended. The survey was anonymised for History teachers and the same courtesy should have been afforded to members of the SQA team, and I take personal responsibility for this mistake. We are sorry for the distress that this has caused. Names and job titles have now been redacted from the survey. We would ask that anyone who has saved the previous version of the survey deletes it and does not share it further.**

Thank you,

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

Thank you,

From: Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 20 January 2025 15:46

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Meeting

Thanks [REDACTED] I'll pass on to [REDACTED] and pick up with you in the morning.

Donna Stewart

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

From: Donna Stewart [Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk](mailto:Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk)

Sent: 21 January 2025 18:12

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Meeting

Hi Kirsty,

Thanks again for your time this morning. As discussed on the call, [REDACTED] had some points to raise regarding the apology and updated survey responses. I've attached the points she has raised, with the support of her union reps, and **would appreciate if you could reply to let me know what action, if any, you will take on this.**

Just to reiterate my point this morning. This is a specific issue that I am dealing with regarding the duty of care that I have for the wellbeing of a colleague.

Alongside this, we are both on the same page that we need to look forward to how we can support teachers for the benefit of learners. Good luck tomorrow at committee. As you know I am very keen to work with SATH and if a meeting after would help us then let's get that set up.

Happy to talk through if helpful.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development

**Attachment that includes points from [REDACTED] with the support of her union reps.**

### **Apology**

- The apology fails to address the fact that this issue is not simply about the naming of an SQA member of staff, it is about the nature of those comments and the allegations that have been made publicly.
- The allegations are untrue and are an attack on my professionalism and integrity.
- The comments have been published openly online and shared widely - not just with members of SATH but with a newspaper and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.
- The damage to my reputation and health has been significant.

- Unite, on my behalf, expects SATH to clearly state that it does not stand by these comments and will not tolerate abusive and unprofessional attacks on a member/s of SQA staff.
- SATH must clearly state that it apologises unreservedly for the distress caused, that it dissociates itself from these comments and that it will take measures to ensure this never happens again.

**Updated Version of report**

Request for the following comments to be redacted.

- Page 45 comment 6
- Page 48 comment 3
- Page 52 final comment
- Page 56 final comment point 5
- Page 60/61 final comment and on next
- Page 69 comment 9
- Page 79 last comment
- Page 80 last comment

**From:** Donna Stewart

**Sent:** 22 January 2025 20:32

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Committee Follow up

Evening [REDACTED]

I hope this message finds you well.

During today's Education, Children and Young People Committee session, SATH mentioned that a 2020 survey was withdrawn at the request of SQA staff. This is something we were not aware of, and we would appreciate your assistance in providing details about this matter to help us look into it further.

If it would be helpful to discuss this via a Teams call, please let me know.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Thanks,

Donna

**Donna Stewart**

Interim Director of Qualifications Development