From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2026 14:15
To: Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>; Richard Pidgeon <richard.pidgeon@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks Iain

[redacted]

From: Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2026 14:13
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>; Richard Pidgeon <richard.pidgeon@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi [redacted]

I have sent a draft response to Donna for her initial comments. I am also working on gaining site of the alleged comments by [redacted]. Will let you all know.

Iain

Iain Morrison
Head of Humanities, Care & Services | Ceannard nan Daonnachdan, Cùram & Sheirbheisean
Qualifications Development | Leasachadh Teisteanasan

m: [redacted] | **e:** iain.morrison@qualifications.gov.scot | **w:** http://www.qualifications.gov.scot
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW, G2 8DQ

Qualifications Scotland
Teisteanasan Alba

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2026 11:35
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
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Subject: Media enquiry - Higher History

Morning folks. We've had another query in from The Herald re. Higher History. See below...

Is there a way we can get sight of [redacted] comments and /or the post on social that's mentioned below? Just so we know what we're dealing with. If what's been mentioned is accurate, do we have a rationale for the decision made, and why it was implemented at this point? Do we know what impact that decision has had (can we say that grades weren't lost as a result?)

We've been asked to provide a reply to the questions below by the end of the day.

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I have been contacted by more History teachers expressing their anger at the way in which Qualifications Scotland has handled marking for Higher History this year.

One of the things I have been shown is commentary from [redacted], the senior team leader. [redacted] was one of the people whose names were attached to this article in TESS in 2024 (although the actual draft wasn't written by them): https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/secondary/higher-history-view-principal-assessor-and-senior-team-leader

In the social media post, [redacted] seems to be explaining that changes in the marking rules did take place, and says that changes were about ensuring historical accuracy. He says that research showed that something that had been accepted in the past was incorrect.

As many teachers have pointed out, this may be, but surely the time to make changes would be for the start of the next school year, **not** in between students sitting the exam and those exams being marked.

One teacher I have spoken to says that one of the points raised by [redacted] is something likely to have affected their students, and they say that around a dozen could have been cost a grade by the History team's decision to change the marking instructions.

Now that a senior exam board figure has confirmed that this kind of change did happen, could you please answer the following questions:

- Surely students have clearly been disadvantaged by the changing of marking requirements after exams had taken place. How does Qualifications Scotland justify this?
- Were senior figures at Qualifications Scotland aware that Higher History marking requirements were being altered after the exam had taken place? Is this standard practice at the exam board?
- Is Qualifications Scotland willing to take any action to review the papers of students who may have been affected, given that teachers believe that they were treated unfairly?

+++++

cheers

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 21 August 2026 11:22
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
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HI folks – the line was sent back to The Herald earlier – we've now had some follow-up questions...

Just to be clear, the PA referred to in this comment has been mentioned to me specifically as part of the ongoing problems with History and the article will note that.

I also take it that this is Qualifications Scotland rejecting the accusations of the teachers, including current markers? Does QS believe that they are wrong?

I also note that you haven't addressed the specific example of a change in marking standards that I provided. Given that you have not disputed this, I take it that this change has indeed happened as the teachers have stated.

Let me know if you want us to address these, or if we are not offering any further comments / replies at this time.

cheers

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Sent: 21 August 2026 09:18
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Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks, Donna and Iain – we'll get this away and keep you updated on any further developments/coverage.

[redacted]

From: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 08:37
To: Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks Helen - happy with this reponse.

Donna Stewart | Chief Qualifications and Examinations Officer | Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba
donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot

From: Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:36
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for putting this together. I am happy with the level of response at this stage, so OK from my end.

Thanks again.

Iain

Iain Morrison
Head of Humanities, Care & Services | Ceannard nan Daonnachdan, Cùram & Sheirbheisean
Qualifications Development | Leasachadh Teisteanasan

m: [redacted] | **e:** iain.morrison@qualifications.gov.scot | **w:** http://www.qualifications.gov.scot
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Qualifications Scotland
Teisteanasan Alba

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:30
To: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi folks

I've gone back to the journalist to say that we'll get back with a response tomorrow. Grateful for your comment and approval of the updated line, in the morning:

Higher History in 2026 performed as intended, with a slight improvement on A-C attainment. Through the awarding process we use the rich variety of feedback, observations and insights from the teachers and lecturers who mark the assessments. Reflections from the Principal Assessor and advice for teachers and lecturers to help them prepare their learners for the coming year, will be published in the Course Report from next month.

We have continued to provide History teachers with support and Understanding Standards materials. Since 2024, over 2,900 educators have downloaded the Higher History resources, webinars and accompanying documents, covering the question papers and assignment.

We are committed to continuing to engage with the History teacher community and hearing first hand from them.

-ends-

Thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 20 August 2026 16:38
To: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks everyone – updated line:

Higher History in 2026 performed as intended, with a slight improvement on A-C attainment. Through the awarding process we use the rich variety of feedback, observations and insights from the teachers and lecturers who mark the assessments. Reflections from the Principal Assessor and advice for teachers and lecturers to help them prepare their learners for the coming year, will be published in the Course Report from next month.

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[redacted]

From: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 15:00
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

And maybe add that we regularly engage with SATH and will be meeting them again on XXX [not sure if in diary] which will enable us to hear first hand from the history teacher community.

John

John Booth
Chief Strategy Officer
Qualifications Scotland
qualifications.gov.scot

From: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2026 14:55
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks [redacted]

Can we bring in something on Understanding Standards and the number of teachers that took part in that.

Also be interested to know what SATH's view is on these claims?

I'm not sure what time the query came in but 5pm seems like a ridiculously short deadline for such a complex enquiry and set of accusations.

John

John Booth

Chief Strategy Officer

Qualifications Scotland

qualifications.gov.scot

From: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2026 14:16
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Looping Georgina in here as Iain is on A/L.

Donna Stewart | Chief Qualifications and Examinations Officer | Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba
donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 14:14
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi folks

We've had the following detailed enquiry in about Higher History, which covers a number of points, including mention of a colleague and the team in general.

Deadline is 5pm today – while we may want to address the specific points – here is a suggested high-level response as a starter:

Higher History in 2026 performed as intended, with a slight improvement on A-C attainment. Through the awarding process we use the rich variety of feedback, observations and insights

from the teachers and lecturers who mark the assessments. Reflections from the Principal Assessor and advice for teachers and lecturers to help them prepare their learners for the coming year, will be published for each subject in the Course Reports from next month.

We are committed to continuing to engage with History teachers and providing them with support and understanding standards materials.

-ends-

Enquiry

Following on from the extensive controversy in 2024, I have been approached by several History teachers raising major concerns about the management of exam marking once again this year.

I have been told that during marking this year for paper 2, that "Points that have previously been awarded marks, and have been awarded on mark schemes in the past and are on BBC Bitesize etc have inexplicably not been given, and the first we found out was at the markers meeting, after the children had sat the exam.

A number of examples have been provided to me, including: "question 2 asked about the relationship between the Scottish King John Balliol and English Edward I. One of the standard points we would expect pupils to make was that Balliol took an Englishman, Master Thomas of Hunsingore, to be his Chancellor. Standard, straightforward point; you'll see it on the MI from the 2022 paper when this issue came up last. It's credited on specimen papers. Not awarded this year."

I have been provided with links to previous Marking Instructions and Understanding Standards exemplars that clearly do give a mark for this, and also a screenshot from this year's marking briefing showing it should not be given. I'm told that this image was taken because so many teachers present were unsure they had heard correctly and thought this was a clear break from the past.

And another was: "A further example from Higher Assignment: markers were told that evaluation couldn't be credited twice in one paragraph. This is news to me, a seriously experienced teacher and marker, and every teacher I have spoken to since. Nowhere is this recorded in the marking instructions or in any guidance ever published. There have been understanding standards materials in the past where evaluation has been credited twice in one paragraph. "

To be clear, these are not the only examples or comments I have received, and I think I should also point out that, once again, [redacted] *has been specifically mentioned, along with other members of the History team.*

And these comments were, I thought, particularly damning:

"How are we to prepare candidates when we don't know the standard? The only children who can be adequately prepared are those being taught by the small team of people sitting in the core team making decisions. It is almost criminally unfair. This has been flagged before, denied, and even when it was proved that the goalposts were being changed, nothing happened. Nobody cares. Why would anything change when the SQA team that has always done this and shown such disregard, bordering on contempt, for history teachers and students is now the QS

team doing the same? The people haven't changed, so why would the problems. Frustrated doesn't even cover it. I don't fill in the markers reports because I know complaints will at best be ignored, and at worst be held against me."

This is basically the exact same issue that arose two years ago, and which your CEO subsequently admitted to me should have been revisited.

I should also point out that those speaking to me have insisted that they stay anonymous because they do not trust Qualifications Scotland not to attempt to punish them for raising these concerns.

Another teacher I have spoken to says that one possible issue in other areas of marking is that schools have worked hard to decolonise their curriculum as part of national efforts, and in some cases this could have led to pupils being penalised:

"We really engaged with the materials for this last year and tried to include in our teaching more of the negative impacts of Scottish settlers. I think we have been penalised for this because we, again, have examples of random and inconsistent decision making about what is mark worthy and what is not. Probably also because we are including new stuff that markers won't recognise. Our Scottish paper marks were worse than ever this year at 90% of the national average. Last year, we were 112.2% of the national average and the disastrous year before we were 98% Same staff, with vast experience. I wonder if the trend in other schools is the same. The net effect will be to make us stick to the old stuff - this great white man went and built a railway etc."

So if you could also address those accusations that would be good.

The SQA (eventually) initiated an investigation into Higher History marking in 2024, but this was widely dismissed as a whitewash and the exam board admitted that a fully independent review (rather than having SQA staff investigate other SQA staff) was not considered.

Will Qualifications Scotland consider a properly independent investigation this time, and does it accept that there are major concerns about the conduct of the History team, which has the same people on board as in 2024?

This year the mean mark for paper 1 went up compared to last year, but the mean mark for paper 2 went down. The SD for paper 2 is also quite a bit higher than for Paper 1.

All of that would seem to support the arguments I'm hearing from History teachers.

I've also spoken to another one since I emailed you and they say that there is widespread amongst history teachers over marking once again, particularly given the disparity between papers. This individual also backed the allegations about marking of evaluation in the assignment.

And just to be clear, coverage of this is almost certainly going to include the fact that the History team at QS is led by the same people who were in charge the last time there was a major controversy over marking. I know that caused issues internally (and eventually externally) last time so I figure it's only fair to make that explicitly clear.

-ends-

Thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2026 12:07
To: Qualification Development <qualification.development@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Higher History Enquiries

Please. Cheers.

[redacted]

From: Qualification Development <qualification.development@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2026 11:53
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Higher History Enquiries

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for getting in touch.

Donna and Iain are aware of the two enquiries.

We will wait for the lines. If the lines come to us before yourself, would you like to see any comms/responses before they are issued?

Kind regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Qualification Development
e: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot | **w:** Qualifications Scotland
Qualifications Scotland
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW G2 8DQ

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2026 11:44
To: Qualification Development <qualification.development@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Higher History Enquiries

Hi [redacted] thanks for this. Incidentally, we've had another query in from The Herald this morning on this topic, citing the information on the SATH Facebook page.

I've raised it with senior colleagues, and asked what the next steps will be. At the moment I don't have any lines that can be used immediately, but hopefully over the next couple of days we'll get something.

Is Iain Morrison and / or Donna aware of this this?

cheers

[redacted]

From: Qualification Development <qualification.development@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 27 August 2026 11:11
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Higher History Enquiries

Hi [redacted] and [redacted]

We've received two Higher History enquiries relating to marking. Please see attached.

We are proposing that both enquiries are added to our SP for colleagues to collaborate in responding –

ENQ 12901_Higher History_.docx

ENQ 12918.docx

We have previous lines from 2024, however these are referring to the review that was conducted. Is this something you would like to help with?

Thanks,

Kind regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
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e: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot | **w:** Qualifications Scotland
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cheers

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Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

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[redacted]

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Sent: 21 August 2026 08:37
To: Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>;

Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]
[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks [redacted] - happy with this reponse.

Donna Stewart | Chief Qualifications and Examinations Officer | Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba
donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot

From: Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:36
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]
[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for putting this together. I am happy with the level of response at this stage, so OK from my end.

Thanks again.

Iain

Iain Morrison
Head of Humanities, Care & Services | Ceannard nan Daonnachdan, Cùram & Sheirbheisean
Qualifications Development | Leasachadh Teisteanasan

m: [redacted] | **e:** iain.morrison@qualifications.gov.scot | **w:** http://www.qualifications.gov.scot
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, GLASGOW, G2 8DQ

Qualifications Scotland
Teisteanasan Alba

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:30
To: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]

[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Nick Page <nick.page@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi folks

I've gone back to the journalist to say that we'll get back with a response tomorrow. Grateful for your comment and approval of the updated line, in the morning:

Higher History in 2026 performed as intended, with a slight improvement on A-C attainment. Through the awarding process we use the rich variety of feedback, observations and insights from the teachers and lecturers who mark the assessments. Reflections from the Principal Assessor and advice for teachers and lecturers to help them prepare their learners for the coming year, will be published in the Course Report from next month.

We have continued to provide History teachers with support and Understanding Standards materials. Since 2024, over 2,900 educators have downloaded the Higher History resources, webinars and accompanying documents, covering the question papers and assignment.

We are committed to continuing to engage with the History teacher community and hearing first hand from them.

-ends-

Thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 20 August 2026 16:38
To: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
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Thanks everyone – updated line:

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[redacted]

From: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 15:00
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

And maybe add that we regularly engage with SATH and will be meeting them again on XXX [not sure if in diary] which will enable us to hear first hand from the history teacher community.

John

John Booth
Chief Strategy Officer
Qualifications Scotland
qualifications.gov.scot

From: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2026 14:55
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks [redacted]

Can we bring in something on Understanding Standards and the number of teachers that took part in that.

Also be interested to know what SATH's view is on these claims?

I'm not sure what time the query came in but 5pm seems like a ridiculously short deadline for such a complex enquiry and set of accusations.

John

John Booth

Chief Strategy Officer

Qualifications Scotland

qualifications.gov.scot

From: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2026 14:16
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>; Georgina Holmes <georgina.holmes@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Looping Georgina in here as Iain is on A/L.

Donna Stewart | Chief Qualifications and Examinations Officer | Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba
donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 14:14
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: John Booth <john.booth@qualifications.gov.scot>; Russell[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi folks

We've had the following detailed enquiry in about Higher History, which covers a number of points, including mention of a colleague and the team in general.

Deadline is 5pm today – while we may want to address the specific points – here is a suggested high-level response as a starter:

Higher History in 2026 performed as intended, with a slight improvement on A-C attainment. Through the awarding process we use the rich variety of feedback, observations and insights from the teachers and lecturers who mark the assessments. Reflections from the Principal

Assessor and advice for teachers and lecturers to help them prepare their learners for the coming year, will be published for each subject in the Course Reports from next month.

We are committed to continuing to engage with History teachers and providing them with support and understanding standards materials.

-ends-

Enquiry

Following on from the extensive controversy in 2024, I have been approached by several History teachers raising major concerns about the management of exam marking once again this year.

I have been told that during marking this year for paper 2, that "Points that have previously been awarded marks, and have been awarded on mark schemes in the past and are on BBC Bitesize etc have inexplicably not been given, and the first we found out was at the markers meeting, after the children had sat the exam.

A number of examples have been provided to me, including: "question 2 asked about the relationship between the Scottish King John Balliol and English Edward I. One of the standard points we would expect pupils to make was that Balliol took an Englishman, Master Thomas of Hunsingore, to be his Chancellor. Standard, straightforward point; you'll see it on the MI from the 2022 paper when this issue came up last. It's credited on specimen papers. Not awarded this year."

I have been provided with links to previous Marking Instructions and Understanding Standards exemplars that clearly do give a mark for this, and also a screenshot from this year's marking briefing showing it should not be given. I'm told that this image was taken because so many teachers present were unsure they had heard correctly and thought this was a clear break from the past.

And another was: "A further example from Higher Assignment: markers were told that evaluation couldn't be credited twice in one paragraph. This is news to me, a seriously experienced teacher and marker, and every teacher I have spoken to since. Nowhere is this recorded in the marking instructions or in any guidance ever published. There have been understanding standards materials in the past where evaluation has been credited twice in one paragraph. "

To be clear, these are not the only examples or comments I have received, and I think I should also point out that, once again, [redacted] has been specifically mentioned, along with other members of the History team.

And these comments were, I thought, particularly damning:

"How are we to prepare candidates when we don't know the standard? The only children who can be adequately prepared are those being taught by the small team of people sitting in the core team making decisions. It is almost criminally unfair. This has been flagged before, denied, and even when it was proved that the goalposts were being changed, nothing happened. Nobody cares. Why would anything change when the SQA team that has always done this and

shown such disregard, bordering on contempt, for history teachers and students is now the QS team doing the same? The people haven't changed, so why would the problems. Frustrated doesn't even cover it. I don't fill in the markers reports because I know complaints will at best be ignored, and at worst be held against me."

This is basically the exact same issue that arose two years ago, and which your CEO subsequently admitted to me should have been revisited.

I should also point out that those speaking to me have insisted that they stay anonymous because they do not trust Qualifications Scotland not to attempt to punish them for raising these concerns.

Another teacher I have spoken to says that one possible issue in other areas of marking is that schools have worked hard to decolonise their curriculum as part of national efforts, and in some cases this could have led to pupils being penalised:

"We really engaged with the materials for this last year and tried to include in our teaching more of the negative impacts of Scottish settlers. I think we have been penalised for this because we, again, have examples of random and inconsistent decision making about what is mark worthy and what is not. Probably also because we are including new stuff that markers won't recognise. Our Scottish paper marks were worse than ever this year at 90% of the national average. Last year, we were 112.2% of the national average and the disastrous year before we were 98% Same staff, with vast experience. I wonder if the trend in other schools is the same. The net effect will be to make us stick to the old stuff - this great white man went and built a railway etc."

So if you could also address those accusations that would be good.

The SQA (eventually) initiated an investigation into Higher History marking in 2024, but this was widely dismissed as a whitewash and the exam board admitted that a fully independent review (rather than having SQA staff investigate other SQA staff) was not considered.

Will Qualifications Scotland consider a properly independent investigation this time, and does it accept that there are major concerns about the conduct of the History team, which has the same people on board as in 2024?

This year the mean mark for paper 1 went up compared to last year, but the mean mark for paper 2 went down. The SD for paper 2 is also quite a bit higher than for Paper 1.

All of that would seem to support the arguments I'm hearing from History teachers.

I've also spoken to another one since I emailed you and they say that there is widespread amongst history teachers over marking once again, particularly given the disparity between papers. This individual also backed the allegations about marking of evaluation in the assignment.

And just to be clear, coverage of this is almost certainly going to include the fact that the History team at QS is led by the same people who were in charge the last time there was a major controversy over marking. I know that caused issues internally (and eventually externally) last time so I figure it's only fair to make that explicitly clear.

-ends-

Thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 16:04
To: [redacted]@gov.scot
Cc: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Media Enquiry - The Herald - Draft response for noting

Hi [redacted] – FYI – I believe Donna has already mentioned this to you.

cheers

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 14:47
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted] [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: Media Enquiry - The Herald - Draft response for noting

Thanks for sharing these [redacted] – we've not been approached yet but will let you know if that changes

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 14:45
To: [redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted] [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] [redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Media Enquiry - The Herald - Draft response for noting

Folks – here's what we've gone back to the Herald with...

++++

A Qualifications Scotland spokesperson said:

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“We are committed to continuing to engage with the History teacher community and hearing first hand from them.”

ENDS

+++++

There have been follow-up questions, but for the time being, we’re not going to respond to those.

If that changes, we’ll let you know.

Again, if you have been approached, I’d be grateful if you could share your lines.

cheers

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot [redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:12
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted] @qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: Media Enquiry - The Herald - Draft response for noting

Thanks [redacted] I’m on leave tomorrow and Monday, and [redacted] off til Monday, so ccing wider desk colleagues who will be around tomorrow – they can update if we get similar from the *Herald.*

Very helpful, much appreciated.

[redacted]

[redacted]
m: [redacted]
[redacted] | Education | Scottish Government |
media enquiries (call group): 0300 244 9022 | Media enquiries - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:07
To: [redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]
[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Media Enquiry - The Herald - Draft response for noting

Hi both,

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If you have been approached, I'd be grateful if you could provide us with a copy of your response.

Regards,

[redacted]

[redacted] – Media and Stakeholders

Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba

www.qualifications.gov.scot
m: [redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 14:45
To: [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot
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[redacted]

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Sent: 20 August 2026 17:12
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]
[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot
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[redacted]
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Regards,

[redacted]

[redacted] – Media and Stakeholders
Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba

www.qualifications.gov.scot
m: [redacted]

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 12:52
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Media enquiry - Higher History

FYI

cheers

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 12:43
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]
[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Hi folks,

Just to update that I have check the Ivanti system for open and closed enquiries relating to this and there are none showing. I had a QC double check the system to make sure I hadn't missed anything.

I managed to chat with the History QO, [redacted] and he has confirmed he has no previous enquiries that relate to this either.

[redacted] doesn't have access to [redacted]email (perhaps Iain does?) He has checked the History mailbox and there has been nothing received there either.

It's actually the Nat 5 History PA that will be in Optima tomorrow unfortunately.

Hope that helps,

[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
Qualifications Development - Humanities, Care and Services
m: [redacted]

Qualifications Scotland
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
GLASGOW
G2 8DQ

From: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 12:02 PM
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Fw: Media enquiry - Higher History

Thanks [redacted] - I'm not aware of any issues around HH so it would be good to know what featured in SATH if you can.

@Jennifer Morrison would you mind linking in with the PA if you are in the same building?

Donna Stewart | Chief Qualifications and Examinations Officer | Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba
donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 11:59
To: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Media enquiry - Higher History

Dear Donna

I have forwarded the information on to [redacted] for comment, we will come back to you asap.

[redacted] made me aware of the issue earlier in the week (which featured on STATH) and we let Iain know. He has responded directly to [redacted] to get more information. [redacted] said that there were mixed views on the messenger site.

I have had various conversations about History with [redacted] previously. She mentioned the impact of the scrutiny on the wellbeing of the PA. Just wondering if they need to be made aware?

Warm regards

[redacted]

[redacted]
School Partnership Team (Schools Unit)

t: [redacted]
e: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot
w: www.qualifications.gov.scot
Qualifications Scotland
Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 1FD
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ

Qualifications Scotland
Teisteanasan Alba

From: Donna Stewart <donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 11:28
To: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Subject: Fw: Media enquiry - Higher History

[redacted]

You will see below that we have some queries about H History marking this year. At the moment both [redacted] and Iain are both off.

As one of your QEMs is a history specialist could you ask them to take a look into the issues set out below to give some initial thoughts on the disparities around marking that have been raised?

Happy to talk through if helpful.

Many thanks,
Donna

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donna.stewart@qualifications.gov.scot

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 11:22
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I also take it that this is Qualifications Scotland rejecting the accusations of the teachers, including current markers? Does QS believe that they are wrong?

I also note that you haven't addressed the specific example of a change in marking standards that I provided. Given that you have not disputed this, I take it that this change has indeed happened as the teachers have stated.

Let me know if you want us to address these, or if we are not offering any further comments / replies at this time.

cheers

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Hi [redacted]

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Thanks again.

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Iain Morrison
Head of Humanities, Care & Services | Ceannard nan Daonnachdan, Cùram & Sheirbheisean

Qualifications Development | Leasachadh Teisteanasan

m: [redacted] | **e:** iain.morrison@qualifications.gov.scot | **w:** http://www.qualifications.gov.scot
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Enquiry

Following on from the extensive controversy in 2024, I have been approached by several History teachers raising major concerns about the management of exam marking once again this year.

I have been told that during marking this year for paper 2, that "Points that have previously been awarded marks, and have been awarded on mark schemes in the past and are on BBC Bitesize etc have inexplicably not been given, and the first we found out was at the markers meeting, after the children had sat the exam.

A number of examples have been provided to me, including: "question 2 asked about the relationship between the Scottish King John Balliol and English Edward I. One of the standard points we would expect pupils to make was that Balliol took an Englishman, Master Thomas of Hunsingore, to be his Chancellor. Standard, straightforward point; you'll see it on the MI from the 2022 paper when this issue came up last. It's credited on specimen papers. Not awarded this year."

I have been provided with links to previous Marking Instructions and Understanding Standards exemplars that clearly do give a mark for this, and also a screenshot from this year's marking briefing showing it should not be given. I'm told that this image was taken because so many teachers present were unsure they had heard correctly and thought this was a clear break from the past.

And another was: "A further example from Higher Assignment: markers were told that evaluation couldn't be credited twice in one paragraph. This is news to me, a seriously experienced teacher and marker, and every teacher I have spoken to since. Nowhere is this recorded in the marking instructions or in any guidance ever published. There have been

understanding standards materials in the past where evaluation has been credited twice in one paragraph. "

To be clear, these are not the only examples or comments I have received, and I think I should also point out that, once again, [redacted] *has been specifically mentioned, along with other members of the History team.*

And these comments were, I thought, particularly damning:

"How are we to prepare candidates when we don't know the standard? The only children who can be adequately prepared are those being taught by the small team of people sitting in the core team making decisions. It is almost criminally unfair. This has been flagged before, denied, and even when it was proved that the goalposts were being changed, nothing happened. Nobody cares. Why would anything change when the SQA team that has always done this and shown such disregard, bordering on contempt, for history teachers and students is now the QS team doing the same? The people haven't changed, so why would the problems. Frustrated doesn't even cover it. I don't fill in the markers reports because I know complaints will at best be ignored, and at worst be held against me."

This is basically the exact same issue that arose two years ago, and which your CEO subsequently admitted to me should have been revisited.

I should also point out that those speaking to me have insisted that they stay anonymous because they do not trust Qualifications Scotland not to attempt to punish them for raising these concerns.

Another teacher I have spoken to says that one possible issue in other areas of marking is that schools have worked hard to decolonise their curriculum as part of national efforts, and in some cases this could have led to pupils being penalised:

"We really engaged with the materials for this last year and tried to include in our teaching more of the negative impacts of Scottish settlers. I think we have been penalised for this because we, again, have examples of random and inconsistent decision making about what is mark worthy and what is not. Probably also because we are including new stuff that markers won't recognise. Our Scottish paper marks were worse than ever this year at 90% of the national average. Last year, we were 112.2% of the national average and the disastrous year before we were 98% Same staff, with vast experience. I wonder if the trend in other schools is the same. The net effect will be to make us stick to the old stuff - this great white man went and built a railway etc."

So if you could also address those accusations that would be good.

The SQA (eventually) initiated an investigation into Higher History marking in 2024, but this was widely dismissed as a whitewash and the exam board admitted that a fully independent review (rather than having SQA staff investigate other SQA staff) was not considered.

Will Qualifications Scotland consider a properly independent investigation this time, and does it accept that there are major concerns about the conduct of the History team, which has the same people on board as in 2024?

This year the mean mark for paper 1 went up compared to last year, but the mean mark for paper 2 went down. The SD for paper 2 is also quite a bit higher than for Paper 1.

All of that would seem to support the arguments I'm hearing from History teachers.

I've also spoken to another one since I emailed you and they say that there is widespread amongst history teachers over marking once again, particularly given the disparity between papers. This individual also backed the allegations about marking of evaluation in the assignment.

And just to be clear, coverage of this is almost certainly going to include the fact that the History team at QS is led by the same people who were in charge the last time there was a major controversy over marking. I know that caused issues internally (and eventually externally) last time so I figure it's only fair to make that explicitly clear.

Thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 21 August 2026 11:22
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Thanks

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:09
To: [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: Media Enquiry - The Herald - Draft response for noting

Hi [redacted], in Cc'ing you in on this in [redacted] absence.

cheers

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 20 August 2026 17:07
To: [redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>; [redacted]
[redacted]@qualifications.gov.scot>
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[redacted] – Media and Stakeholders
Qualifications Scotland | Teisteanasan Alba

www.qualifications.gov.scot
m: [redacted]

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