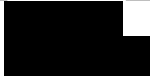



			<p>, Learner , Learner , Learner , Carers Trust (staff) , SYP (staff) , SPARQS (staff) , SPARQS (staff)</p>
<p>25th February 2021</p> <p>[Note of meeting is below]</p>	<p>ACM & The Learner Booklet</p> <p>This was the first panel since the ACM was published. This session was to provide an overview of the ACM. A draft of the learner booklet was shared with the panel and they provided feedback on language, layout and images.</p>		<p>, Learner , Learner , Learner , Learner , Learner , Learner , Learner , Learner , Carers Trust (staff) , SPARQS (staff)</p>
<p>23rd March 2021</p>	<p>Appeals Consultation; Planning sub-group; SQA Branding</p> <p>A presentation was delivered providing an overview of the appeals consultation.</p> <p>A proposal to establish a planning group led by SYP and made up of a sub-group of the panel. This was agreed.</p>		<p>, Learner , Learner , Learner , Learner , Learner , Carers Trust (staff) , SPARQS (staff) – Whitespace – Whitespace</p>

26 th April 2021	Assessment; Appeals; Communication	<div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> Fiona Robertson; Michael Baxter	<div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Learner <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , SYP (staff) <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , SYP (staff) <div style="background-color: black; width: 50px; height: 15px; display: inline-block;"></div> , Carers Trust (staff)
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SYP – Scottish Youth Parliament

SPARQS – Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland

Note: Due to the pandemic, no learner panels have taken place in person.

Learner panel meeting – summary of feedback 26 November 2020 SQA Quality Assurance for National 5 in 2020-21

Sampling:

Q1. Does hearing about the SQA sampling process increase your confidence that all National 5 awards across the country will be of the standard and all learners will be treated fairly?

Panel members felt that although they are reassured that SQA's sampling process will ensure fair treatment, the amount of work involved for learners isn't fair. In addition, schools are taking a different approach. Some teachers are not valuing classroom assessments as much as prelims, therefore some are focussing on two assessment blocks to gather evidence.

For those who are more focussed on continuous assessment, there is a lot of pressure on young people to perform to their best in every test they do. They feel this is a lot of pressure to be dealing with throughout the year which can lead to mental health issues.

Q2. Would you expect to be given information about how your school or college is involved in the sampling? If so, what kind of information would you expect, and how would you expect this to be communicated to learners?

There is a lot of confusion around what assessment evidence is to be gathered and when. Having this information would be beneficial and some panel members believed that their school/college should be discussing this with them.

The panel also spoke in general about how information is still quite confusing and that they would benefit from clear decisions. There are no exams for National 5, yet some schools are still running prelim exams which adds to the confusion for learners.

In terms of how SQA should communicate with learners, the group felt that messages from their school or college can be diluted by the time the information reaches them. A solution could be for SQA to have direct contact with learners. For example, face to face visits to schools/colleges and/or posting information directly would be useful. SQA can also make good use of online videos about how schools/colleges will be sampled.

Checking:

Q3. Does hearing about the checking process by schools, colleges and local authorities increase your confidence that all National 5 awards across the country will be of the standard and all learners will be treated fairly?

The panel welcomed the level of checking among their school, college and local authority. They also welcomed checks being carried out by SQA, however they do not want SQA to compare this year's results with previous years. They felt this would be extremely unfair as this year is a completely different situation for learners.

There was general concern for those in deprived areas as well as those who have had to self-isolate. There was comment made about the quality of teaching for those experiencing a lot of disruption.

4. Do you think that SQA should have a further role in carrying out checks of the results sent in by schools and colleges before they become the final results which will be used for certificates? If so, what checks do you think that SQA should carry out?

The panel felt that SQA should be able to show some leniency towards learners who have been affected by restrictions in practical and creative subjects, as well as for those who have had to self-isolate multiple times.

5. Should SQA be able to change results which have been submitted by schools and colleges? If so, what evidence would SQA need to have in order to make changes to results?

Yes, SQA should be able to change results however, not if it is just to bring them in line with national averages. There must be a clear reason and evidence for changing the results submitted by schools/colleges

Higher and Advanced Higher

The group also discussed the general feeling among Higher and Advanced Higher learners. There is a lot of uncertainty and doubt in schools and colleges regarding whether these exams will go ahead. They felt that a decision had to be made sooner rather than later with most members wanting the Higher and Advanced Higher exams cancelled. They felt that there was too much stress associated with waiting to hear what the decision would be. So many learners are missing multiple weeks of learning and need to catch up. Some felt that cancelling the exams would enable this to happen.

Learner panel meeting – summary of feedback

17 December 2020

Learning disruption and appeals in 2020-21

Learning disruption:

Q1. What does fair mean to you? And can you give examples of what would be fair to all learners as well as what would NOT be fair?

Panel members felt it is important for learners to have equal opportunities to reach their full potential. In addition, there are issues with learners missing teaching time and inconsistency across schools in terms of how learners are being assessed. There are no set rules for all schools to follow.

Learners would benefit from a manual of some sort to ensure they can catch up on what teaching time they have missed – this would help to ensure they are not disadvantaged if they are underperforming due to COVID restrictions.

Young Carers gave feedback that most are happy that the Highers have been cancelled. Perth & Kinross council are piloting an attainment service which would be good if it could be rolled out across the country. They are providing a tutoring service for Young Carers for both Primary and Secondary pupils at dedicated times, evenings etc which has been quite successful.

Disruption is experienced for various reasons – not just those who are self-isolating. This needs to be taken into consideration.

Some teachers are sending work home while others are not. Seems to be a breakdown in communication between learners and teachers.

Q2. How confident are you that the impact of disruption to your learning is currently being managed?

There are mixed emotions, for example some learners were delighted when the Higher and Advanced Higher exams were cancelled, however others were worried because they had already sat prelims with little revision time. Also, there are now more weekly class tests for some subjects which is stressful and overwhelming for learners.

How schools are dealing with disruption is unclear. For example, some learners started their prelims straight after isolating and felt stressed.

Schools seem to be doing things different in terms of how they support learners who have experienced disruption. The group shared examples of supported study being cancelled while others were still getting supported study.

Q3. What more do you think could be done to ensure learners who have been affected by disruption are not negatively impacted?

There should be a system for schools to communicate with SQA regarding individual circumstances of individual pupils. Some schools are doing Zoom calls and Teams meetings but not all.

Schools need solid guidance so that they can be more consistent on what is and is not allowed.

Courses could have further modifications. If learners are self-isolating, then teachers could live stream or record classes so there is still teacher/learner communication. Learners should also be able to re-sit class tests. Some schools are allowing this, but some are not – again there is a need for consistency in schools.

Appeals:

Q4. When thinking about being able to appeal a result, what do you expect to happen?

The Panel discussed the options of a free appeals services which is equal for everyone and which can be accessed directly by learners.

The service should be accessible online or by phone rather than relying on the school or teachers. SQA need to provide more communications to let pupils know if they can appeal. Learners do not always receive information from their school.

The Panel felt it should be the learner's choice if an appeal is to be made and not up to the Head Teacher to allow an appeal if the learner felt that the grade given was unfair.

They also felt that there should be an option to appeal if learners have had to self-isolate and that personal circumstances should also be considered.

In addition, some Young Carers do not always have the best relationship with their school so the learner's personal circumstances may not be known. Could Young Carer services provide evidence on their behalf? Social services or GP and have this taken into consideration. MSYPs support workers who are local to them and could potentially offer this type of support.

If grades are lower than expected, teachers could draft a letter with reasons on how the learner could have done better, which would be fairer.

Other ideas included considering how the learner performed in previous years and looking at reasons why grades have dropped – self-isolation/Young Carer, etc. Evidence should be available to support the grade given by teachers.

Learner panel meeting – meeting notes

21 January 2021

Appeals:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking about learners being able to appeal direct to SQA. Is this just where the school or college says 'no' to an appeal request, or is it only where the learner is concerned about fairness? 	
Response	Additional Info (ie number of people that agreed with point made, etc)
Appeals have to be made in time for University/College deadlines so people don't miss entry deadlines	
Instead of appeals made for specific circumstances but should be made in partnership with the student and school, but the school shouldn't be able to deny the student the opportunity to make an appeal.	
Need to have expectations managed with a clear timeline with outcomes. Not getting mental health support	
If people get results that they are not happy with they may freak out. Need to have clear discussions about what they can or can't do to appeal. They need clear communications letting them know what they have to do to make an appeal	
Need open lines of communication options on results day (as it is during the holidays) either through the school or through SQA Twitter or the SQA website to explain the process clearly	
Is there an option for an Appeals Pack to be sent out with the certificates? Or have a link sent out on text messages so they can immediately look at the appeals process	
Distribute an Appeals booklet like the course one with clear information about the appeals process	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think it is OK for the centre to make the appeal if the learner agrees that they can? 	
Response	Additional Info (ie number of people that agreed with point made, etc)
Yes only put in appeal with the backing of the students	All agreed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think of a time of when you or your classmates have received a result that you/they don't understand or agree with – what would be helpful at that point? 	
To be able to have a dialogue with the school. Not feeling that it would be a battle with the teachers as they had given the initial grade. Don't be scared to have the conversation without the school being defensive	
Using the 3 step approach as used in colleges could be useful in some cases but not in all – students could choose what to use	
Would be a good model to look at but if it doesn't work then the whole appeal should not be thrown out	
One teacher said that last year teachers were putting in estimates that had no evidence for them but were basing on the students potential – could this be done again this year?	
Potentially using different bits of assessments to show the growth over the year and include these in the appeal. But different teachers have different ideas of what potential is. There needs to be guidelines so there the levels are consistent	

Mitigating circumstances? This is a global pandemic so everyone is affected, look at individual circumstances whether Covid related or not – individual homes	
What evidence is considered for Exceptional Circumstances? Self isolation might already qualify for this	
Evidence may not exist for schools or SQA to make a judgement on. Reduced evidence requirements for all courses	
Would need to be as lenient as possible for students who have missed time due to self isolation. Online learning is not really learning and students shouldn't be put down for this. Carers should also be taken into consideration	
With coursework are dissertations being externally marked? Could coursework be externally marked for appeals? Could requirements be reduced further?	
Being as lenient as possible. With online learning there are different approaches being taken by different teachers so this needs to be taken into consideration. Will be huge differences across schools/country	
With reducing content in her school they have nearly finished the courses so some schools will get more ahead. If they have finished the course they are starting next years AH courses while there are other schools still catching up with missed learning for this year	
If people could have an external reference provided then this should be utilised and taken into account if possible	
If they have not got the evidence for University or starting a job – they could be discriminated against. SQA need to step up for students so they are not disadvantaged if the employer/Uni felt the awards were not deserved	
Universities are introducing administration tests for subjects. Everyone has to sit the same test so it will be standardised	
Has to be down to universities to have entry level tests in place	

Had conversation with colleagues about students who didn't have confidence in what they had learned and therefore didn't agree that they could progress compared with students who were confident about what they had learned but this was not reflected in their results. How do colleges find a balance in process so that students are not disadvantaged. There is a leaning gap that can't be filled at a later date. Schools/Colleges and Universities need to have a conversation	
Issue with people who can access tutors for studying for entrance tests, but everyone would have the same time to study for that test that would mitigate some issues of schools not teaching the whole curriculum	
Outcome of appeals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What outcomes would you expect from an appeal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A change in grade? (up or down) ○ A chance to submit new evidence (of educational achievement – referred to as 'attainment')? ○ Assurance that someone else (expert/outside of your school or college) has looked at what has happened? ○ Something else? ○ <p>Have been told that people wouldn't be happy if they were downgraded. Only looking to be upgraded. It would only be fair if the grade goes up or if it stays the same</p>	
Can people appeal grade Bands? If they disagreed with the band given as some Universities look for the Band level as well as the overall grade	
When you get the result of an appeal back, do you get an explanation if the appeal is not given? A justification?	
Would like a step by step explanation of grade given	
If the system is fair to begin with then only people who expect that they should get an appeal to increase result would apply for an appeal	
Difficulty with appeals when they have not sat the exam and to evaluate the student and evidence, its really hard to set the standard. Teachers don't know what is counting towards the evidence to be assessed. There needs to be clear guidance on what will/won't be assessed	
Is evidence only accepted from schools or could it be from an external source? E.g external drama group	
Opportunity to put forward more evidence, should be teachers in collaboration with the students as to what is being submitted. Some teachers have taken different things into consideration. Standardisation of what should be done even if not being externally marked	
Does it have to be the same evidence submitted for all students in a class/school? Or can it be by individual so not the same essay for all. Pick the best evidence for each individual student	
How is this going to be communicated to students?	

Notes of SQA Learner Panel 25th February 2021

The focus of the meeting was to hear what Learners think about the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) that will be used to decide grades for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications in 2021.

Before the meeting links to the ACM information published on the SQA website were sent to Learner Panel members. The Learners attending the panel were asked:

- **Had they seen the information before it was sent ahead of the panel?**
- **Do they understand the information provided?**
 - Feedback was that the 5 step ACM document was quite clear
 - It would be useful if the steps linked to other things, for example, more about how each step will be done, how evidence will be collected etc.
 - This should be sent to all learners either as a link or by post giving more information about the processes.
 - The 5-step process with brief descriptions is good, but the extended version was too much – not many people will read all of it.
 - The Learners had not seen the information until it was sent to them ahead of the meeting. One Learner had seen information about the ACM, but not in this format. We need to reach out in different ways to all Learners.
- **Learners were asked what the best channels are for communicating the ACM**
 - Social media is good, but for such important information it needs to be sent direct to Learners or via school.
 - Send out information more formally like Your Exams/Your Coursework.
 - The point was made that some Learners might be home schooled or sitting exams externally and they might struggle to get information from school.
 - Students who are experiencing digital exclusion will find it hard to access information on social media and the website.
 - Suggestion to ask schools to check they have up to date addresses for students.
- **The panel were then asked if they had clicked through into subject specific guidance and, if they did, what did they think of it?**
 - One Learner commented that they had gone through the subject specific document in detail, but because flexibility has been built in, it is confusing to know what is required.
 - If you don't know the full course in the first place, how do you know what has been changed?
 - It is harder to understand as they are unable to speak to teachers – it would be good if subject specialist teachers could speak to them.
 - It would be good to see what the course specification was pre-Covid and what has been changed so that a direct comparison can be made.
 - Guidance is in lots of different places and even though I look at the website and social media regularly, it gets confusing. It would be good to have everything explained in one document.
 - A lot of the information is in big, long PDFs which are hard to read, so it might be worth having a summary of that showing exactly what has changed in youth friendly language.

- Has a video been produced to describe the ACM? (Panel informed that a video is in production.)
 - It is difficult to navigate the SQA website and find the information that is most up to date.
 - This year there has been a lot of subject specific changes, so there needs to be clear information for each subject.
 - It is very important to emphasise the need to use youth friendly language in these documents.
 - Sometimes reading all the information on the website, particularly on subject specific guidance, feels like you are reading something meant for teachers, not pupils – it is not accessible.
 - Long documents are not accessible or engaging to young people.
 - Are the documents being provided in other languages or by audio?
 - Is there a helpline for SQA? Just thinking about Learners who cannot access the website. (SQA's Contact Centre telephone number is 0345 279 1000 and it is available Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm.)
- **The panel were shown the draft of the Candidate booklet and they provided the following feedback:**
 - The language used is quite accessible.
 - Can a 'word bank' be included to give definitions of official terms, for example, Quality Assurance. – we will check for space and add if we can. It might be easier to call out the descriptions where they appear in the main text – we will give it some thought and discuss with the designers.
 - Is the booklet going to be available in different languages? If yes, can we add some text stating that it is available in different languages upon request? – we can investigate this – translations are normally supplied in basic word documents rather than fully designed publications.
 - Suggestion to move the VQ section so it becomes the 2nd section – they felt this was important to show equal regard for all quals. – I agree, done.
 - Can we publicise that the booklet is coming on social media etc and let schools and colleges know it is coming. Can we also publish reminders to tell candidates to make sure their school or college are holding their current address? Yes, we will have a digital campaign on the run up to the booklet arriving – this will include social media activity as well as radio adverts and hopefully a podcast
 - Can a download version be made available? Yes
 - Can we send an online version to 3rd sector/partner organisations for them to add to their websites? Yes
 - Title suggestion – 'Your Qualifications 2021' – the thought was 'keep it simple'. – we also thought this but SQA has so many other qualifications that the booklet will not cover. We are therefore going to keep it straight forward with **National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher**, with the tag line 'what you need to know for 2021'
 - They liked the illustrations. Great news – thank you. We need to discuss with the designers to make sure the illustrations also work for social media posts so you might see some slight changes.
 - "I think the booklet will be really positive to sure teachers and learners are on the same page because, right now, it seems that everyone has a different understanding of what is going on." Fantastic, we are hoping the booklet does this.

- **The panel were asked if they think the information provided by SQA is ‘fitting in’ with what they are receiving from their school or college.**
 - The SQA booklet will help – it seems that SQA and teachers are on the same page, but there is still confusion about dissertations, for example, AH History – one says the dissertation is not required and the other says it is optional.
 - School is not providing much information – they are getting more information from SQA on this panel. They are passing onto friends what they find out from the panel.
 - In their schools most pupils are in the dark with little teacher/student communication, and some are keeping what they know to themselves. The feeling is the panel only know what is going on because they are on the panel.
 - There have been no official emails from school, there are contradictions between what teachers are telling Learners.
 - It is difficult to work out what is going on, so they stop looking for information as it is very confusing.
 - The panel want SQA to let teachers know the booklet is being produced so that information is consistent.
 - There is a lot of confusion and it all feels disjointed.

- **The panel discussed future meetings, topics, timings and format and the following feedback was provided:**
 - I quite like this format. Even if we are talking about something specific then someone from that department in SQA could attend the panel.
 - We need to define the role of the panel regarding college students. They feel quite left out by SQA as the guidance is focused on NQ.
 - A discussion around prelim and assessment guidance would be welcomed as this is a worry.
 - They are not being told if they are doing prelims or not.
 - They are not being told if they will be taking a final exam in the classroom or if it will be split into assessments. Learners need to know what SQA is requiring of schools and colleges.
 - There is a lot of differences between schools.
 - Now the focus is on content and learning and when they get back to school, they will be focussing on assessment which will feel like a main exam without any study leave.
 - Feedback from SQA to the panel is important – they have not really heard what their feedback is contributing to.
 - SQA should continue to communicate with Learners and find better ways to communicate. Good to have an ongoing conversation rather than just issuing comms.
 - Suggested topics:
 - Appeals
 - Provisional grades
 - Evidence
 - QA
 - Feedback is that there are differences in evidence as schools approach varies, for example, some are doing prelims to determine the provisional grade, but SQA are saying that different evidence can be used.

- Clarity is required around QA processes that are in place to ensure students understand them.
- What action should a Learner take if they have concerns around what their schools or teachers are doing and if SQA guidance is not being followed – what is the recourse for the student? Can this be included in the booklet?
- Clarity requested around assessment arrangements.