

ADES ADVICE ON SQA RESULTS SERVICE

In April 2014, SQA introduced the new Results Services to support pupils undertaking externally assessed National Qualifications. There are two new services. The Exceptional Circumstances Considerations Service operates prior to publication of the exam results and replaces absentee consideration. The Post Results Services replaces the former system of assessment appeals, which operated following the publication of exam results.

The **Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service** operates before results are published. The Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service supports pupils who have been unable to attend an externally-assessed timetabled examination, or whose performance in the examination may have been fundamentally affected as a result of an incident beyond their control. Exceptional Circumstances fall under two categories – **Personal Circumstances** or **Examination Circumstances**.

Personal Circumstances include a close family bereavement, a medical condition (where a pupil is incapacitated and may be unable to attempt the assessment. Minor ailments are not considered to be exceptional circumstances), domestic circumstances (such as a pupil being a victim of crime shortly before an examination, a member of the pupil's close family being rushed to hospital the night before the examination, a member of the pupil's close family having a long-term medical condition and there is a sudden deterioration of their condition during the examination period) or an exceptional absence (such as coincident examinations, appearance at court, national representation at sporting events, religious observance, etc.).

SQA's Handbook for Invigilators sets out procedures to manage many unplanned interruptions or disturbances during examinations. Where the Chief Invigilator feels that the examination has been disrupted to such a degree that pupils have been disadvantaged, and where the disruption has not been provided for in the Handbook for Invigilators, the Chief Invigilator may produce a report, detailing the circumstances of the disruption. This, accompanied

with appropriate candidate evidence, will form the basis of an Examination Circumstances Exceptional Circumstances submission. The SQA may challenge and reject these submissions.

By making an Exceptional Circumstances request, the Head Teacher confirms that:

- The pupil has an open entry for the qualification, has completed all non-question paper components, and has had an estimate submitted to SQA.
- The exceptional circumstance fundamentally affected attendance or performance during the externally timetabled examination.
- The request is made within 10 working days of the timetabled examination.
- The school holds detailed documentation supporting the submission.
- **The school has obtained, holds and can provide to SQA, on request, the written consent of the pupil to submit the request and the accompanying personal data to SQA.**
- **There is no cost from SQA for this service.**

If any pupil believes they have been affected by exceptional circumstances, they must inform the school **immediately**, and provide relevant supporting documentation (e.g. GP Fit note). The decision to submit a request will be made by the Head Teacher and the school will then work with the SQA on the pupil's behalf. The school will submit alternative evidence in support of the pupil.

The pupil's final award will be decided upon by SQA - however it may not be the grade that was estimated by the school. Results and certificates will be sent out to pupils on results day.

Further information on the Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service can be found in ***Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service: Information for Centres*** (March 2015).

The **Post-Results Service** operates after the examination results are published. Where a school is concerned about a pupil's result, they can request a Clerical Check and/or a Marking Review of the pupil's paper. As clerical checks largely check for arithmetic errors, the enhanced SQA Quality Assurance procedures devised around the ***Marking from Image*** system (electronic marking) will

effectively render this irrelevant for subjects marked in this way. This amounts to approximately 70% of subjects.

SQA have introduced charges for this service. A Clerical Check is £10, a Making Review £29.75 and a Priority Marking Review £39.75 (in the case of candidates awaiting immediate entry to Further or Higher Education that autumn). **ADES advice is that no pupil should be denied access to this service on the grounds of cost and thereby disadvantaged. Schools and Local Authorities will have local arrangements on SQA budgets which should address the costs of using the service.**

Marking Reviews should only be requested under the following criteria:

- Schools will submit Post Result Services requests to SQA where it holds clear and compelling evidence that there is a reasonable possibility that an error may have occurred with the marking or totalling of marks in a pupil's examination script. That is, the pupil's final grade is markedly at odds with the totality of assessment evidence gathered during the course and out of line with the performance of other pupils with similar profiles.
- It is not sufficient for a pupil's final grade to be below the grade anticipated by any estimate submitted to SQA or that achieved in a mock examination. The clear expectation is that there will be compelling evidence from all aspects of assessment carried out by the school including class tests, Unit tests, coursework and mock exams.

It is crucial that estimates are based on the totality of evidence generated throughout the course – not just on the written examination component. Prior to the submission of estimate grades, a standardisation exercise must be carried out to ensure that estimates are based on robust evidence. This will ensure that estimates are generated in a clear and equitable manner – and will assist if a decision not to request a Marking Review has to be justified to parents, etc.

Prior to a Marking Review being requested, Head Teachers must ensure that:

- Written consent from parents **and** pupils has been received to allow a submission to be made. Note that, consent must be given with the knowledge that, as a result of a Marking Review, **results may decrease or increase:**
- The evidence used to generate estimates for pupils for whom a Marking Review is to be requested has been rigorously checked through an appropriate standardisation process.

Post Result Services should not be requested where;

- The pupil's final grade is in line with the estimate submitted to SQA and the expectation of the school based on performance throughout the course.
- The final award is within the same grade as that predicted by the assessment evidence held by the school. [Example: School Estimate Grade B, band 3. Pupil achieves Grade B, band 4].
- The pupil's performance has shown inconsistencies during the year such that the final award falls within the range of performance evidenced.
- The pupil's original estimate is found to be overly optimistic in the light of the actual performance of the class cohort in the examination.

Schools will submit Post Result Services requests on the basis of assessment evidence only.

Requests on compassionate grounds or whose parents offer to pay costs should not be submitted.

The final decision to use the Post Result Services arrangements will be taken by the Head Teacher using their professional judgement and with input, as appropriate, from other teaching professionals.

Pupils and parents who are dissatisfied with the decision can ask the Head Teacher to reconsider their original decision not to use the Post Result Services. The request must be submitted in writing and within the timeframe published by SQA for accepting Post Result Services requests.

The request will be considered on the basis of the criteria above and will be final. The Head Teacher will confirm the reasons for rejecting the request in writing to the pupil/parent within 5 working days of the request being considered. All such correspondence should be logged and filed for further scrutiny as necessary.

The SQA will only accept Post Result Services requests from schools within annually published timelines. Late requests cannot be accepted and schools must comply with the published timelines. Requests received by SQA from pupils and parents will be referred to the school.

An outline of this procedure is given below.

NB1:-Any claim **MUST** be based on a change in GRADE – not merely a change in BAND.

NB2:-Evidence must be present of **consistent** performance at the Estimate from throughout the year **and over a full range of assessable elements**. A PR claim cannot be justified based solely on performance in a prelim exam.

NB3:-Written consent must be obtained from **both** pupil and parent, with an acknowledgement that the grade may go down as well as up.

NB4:-Evidence must be retained of the generation of this estimate. Head Teachers are accountable on the overall number of claims and may have to justify this to central staff at a later date by demonstrating that this policy has been followed.

