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Parent / Carer

Dear Parents/Carers of S4-6

Following the [Depute First Minister's announcement](#) on 7 October 2020 in the Scottish Parliament, and the publication of the [Priestly Report](#), I am writing to update you on the Government's plans for National Qualifications, including National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

**National 1-4:** Courses will continue as planned with internal assessment and internal coursework.

**National 5:** There will be no SQA external assessment of National 5 courses this year – either by an exam or by coursework. To support this, the Government has asked SQA to work with stakeholders to provide broad guidance for teachers, lecturers and exams centres on evidence gathering and estimation, with a clear focus on quality rather than quantity of that evidence.

SQA will also provide clear National 5 subject specific guidance that, where possible, includes advice on 2-4 key pieces of work that young people will complete for each course, which will be assessed in school, to inform their final grade. This will be published on a rolling basis soon after the October break. SQA will also provide assessment materials and a support plan for moderation in due course.

**Higher and Advanced Higher:** Higher and Advanced Higher externally assessed exams, including the completion of coursework where appropriate, will continue as planned, with a later start date to exams of 13 May, but with certification day remaining as 10 August 2021. Modifications to the courses have been published by the SQA and our teachers will look at these and adapt their teaching as appropriate. A clear contingency plan will continue to be developed nationally, including key checkpoints up to the February break to assess public health advice and its impact on the plans for these exams.

You can also read [SQA's statement](#) on these changes.

Mr Swinney has said that cancelling exams for National 5s will create space to assist the successful and safe delivery of Higher and Advanced Higher examinations, both of which involve smaller numbers of candidates enabling social distancing and other COVID-19 safety mitigations. This approach will also allow additional time for learning and teaching for Higher and Advanced Higher courses since the exam diet will start slightly later. Furthermore, a focus on exams for courses with smaller numbers of entries is more consistent with public health advice.

Our staff have just returned from a well-deserved break after a challenging Term 1. Please be patient as we work through this substantial change with our staff and adjust our own assessment plans at departmental and whole school levels. Please also be assured that all our teachers have been working hard on our recovery plans following the lockdown and will always work to support our learners achieve in their SQA courses. Over the coming weeks, we will look closely at the SQA's guidance and adapt our teaching, assessments and moderation practices accordingly.

Our teaching staff will speak directly to our candidates about these changes.

We will ensure that we will communicate with you in good order, providing you with clear guidance and timelines for course assessments to allow you to support your child with their qualifications this session.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Lothian', written in a cursive style.

J Lothian  
Rector