

Dear Parent/Carer

### **SQA Assessment in 2020-21:**

#### **Updates: Disruption to Learning; Maintaining the Confidentiality of Secure Assessment Materials**

You may be aware that SQA has released additional guidance for schools, learners and parents on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May regarding assessment towards National Qualifications this session.

The links to the SQA guidance on disruption to learning for learners and parents/carers can be found here:

<https://blogs.sqa.org.uk/2021/national-qualifications-2021-group-disruption-to-learning-learner-message/>

<https://blogs.sqa.org.uk/2021/national-qualifications-2021-group-disruption-to-learning-parent-carer-message/>

As an authority we have also received additional advice from SQA, further clarifying the messages in these updates. The main points for learners, parents and carers to be aware of are as follows:

#### Disruption to learning

- Schools will continue to make use of the full flexibility in the SQA Alternative Certification Model to ensure that there is maximum opportunity for learners to undertake the required learning and be given the best chance to succeed in their course assessments.
- Results this session for learners will be based on a range of evidence gathered over time, based on SQA subject specific guidance. For some, this may include evidence gathered prior to the period of remote learning. The range of evidence that learners' results are based on may vary between candidates.
- To ensure fairness for learners who have been unduly disadvantaged by severe disruption to learning and teaching and therefore unable to complete their assessment evidence in time for the 25<sup>th</sup> June submission date, there will be the option for schools to submit results by 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021. This contingency arrangement would apply **only** where a learner's **extended** absence has reduced their ability to produce all the necessary evidence and where no alternative arrangement has been possible. It would not apply where a learner wished to attempt to improve on existing evidence or to take advantage of an extended period of preparation. Further guidance will be issued in due course by SQA regarding this. SQA anticipates that the number of learners needing to utilise this contingency will be very small.

#### Maintaining the Confidentiality of Secure Assessment Materials

You may be aware of some concerns being reported in the media regarding the security of assessments being used in schools across Scotland. SQA has reminded centres this week of the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of assessment materials being used to determine provisional results. The SQA advice below has been followed by West Lothian schools throughout this session:

- Schools must ensure that question papers are stored securely when not in use
- Staff must not share or discuss question papers and marking instructions online, including on social media, or in any other location where they could be accessed by unauthorised persons
- Learners must not discuss or share the content of assessment materials with anyone, including friends, family or on social media

- Items such as mobile phones should be removed during assessments

Guidance on 10<sup>th</sup> May to schools also states that

- Learners must only have access to the content of secure assessment materials when completing their assessments under supervision. Learners must not be given access to printed or digital copies of the assessment materials before or after their assessments take place.

In West Lothian we have also put additional mitigations in place to ensure the integrity of assessments and ensure fairness for all learners, including asking each school to modify any SQA papers being used for assessments so that these are unique to that school.

We hope that this additional guidance is helpful and await further advice from SQA. We also await clarification about the appeals process for this session and will update you when this is available.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully