WRITTEN QUESTION FOR SUMBISSION TO EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON WEDNESDAY, 26 MAY 2021

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR TIM EAGLE

The Conservative group has serious concerns in regards the latest reports of the 2021 SQA examination process, in particular, its assessment and awards process, which has been reported as an 'unfolding debacle' by the author of the review into the 2020 SQA exam diet.

It has been widely reported that the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) unexpectedly announced a series of smaller exams for every subject, following the cancellation of exams in 2020-21;

We understand this has led to schools, including those in Moray having to create complex timetables to cover the smaller exam diet announced by the SQA; that there have been questions over the leaking of papers online and with schools operating differing timetables, exam content having been placed on social media such as TikTok;

Can officers confirm if there has been any such concerns about the leaking of exams online in Moray and detail how these exams have been set out across the Moray area.

Further can the council administration set out what action has been taken by them or the Council in response to these growing concerns and what reassurances have been sought that Moray pupils will not be disadvantaged as a result of the SQA requiring the completion of these exams, following the cancellation of the 2021 Higher level exam diet by the Deputy First Minister in December 2020?

RESPONSE

There has been no concern in Moray regarding the suggested leak of exams on social media such as Tik Tok. Therefore, there has been no action required to address such concerns.

National 5, Higher and Advanced higher exam diets have been cancelled and will have an Alternative Certification Model (ACM) approach.

Moray's approach to the ACM is set out in the Moray ACM Guidance. In Moray, there is no expectation that schools hold a formal diet of exams for National 5,

Higher or Advanced Higher. In place of prelims, a selection of key tasks and/or questions were planned and carried out under appropriate conditions and with an appropriate level of demand to give a robust indication of performance in the final course assessment. This provided a firm foundation for the ACM, arrangements for which have been put in place across all schools to ensure a fair and equitable alternative certification model for pupils in Moray.

The ACM arrangements include:

- replacing the final examination diet with flexible classroom-based assessment within schools and colleges to assess learning at key points, adapted as necessary with learners at the centre.
- phased return in term 3 for practical subjects initially then others to complete learning
- formal assessments and evidence gathering in term 4 for all subjects
- reviewing a range of evidence to build up a picture of the candidate's performance as a whole, to decide on provisional grade
- focus on the quality of the pieces of evidence (two to four depending on subject requirements) in order to manage the assessment load for pupils and workload for teachers
- robust assessment and moderation arrangements within schools and across Moray – schools undertake quality assurance processes and local authority quality assurance meetings take place prior to final grade submission.

In addition arrangements are in place for:

- Young people who receive Additional Assessment Arrangements to continue to do so – the Moray AAA Guidelines support with this.
- Alternative arrangements where young people have been affected by Covid-19 to enable them to complete all formal assessments as part of the provisional grade decisions.

Assurances

Education Scotland have reviewed our processes as part of a national review and have given positive feedback and validated our approaches.
A further meeting with SQA took place last week to acknowledge the situation with Covid-19 cases and if any further support or mitigation was needed; it was agreed that Moray was in a strong position with their SQA and ACM processes.