

Dear Parent/Carer

SQA RESULTS DAY AND APPEALS

In common with all Highland Council secondary Head Teachers, I am sending you this letter to give you some information about the qualifications process this year.

As you know, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) will release this year's results to candidates across Scotland on August 4 2020. This year, of course, there were no examinations and the results that will appear on candidates' certificates will be based on a completely new system.

Teachers in schools were asked to make estimates of candidate performance, and send these to SQA in May. Estimated grades were based on teachers' knowledge and experience of your child's performance for the year, in each subject drawing on evidence of attainment from across the course. SQA then applied a moderation process to arrive at the final results.

We have not been told the full details of the SQA's moderation process yet, but we know that it included looking at schools' results in previous years and also analysing estimates sent in by schools in previous years for all National Courses. SQA also looked at candidates' attainment in previous years for many Highers and Advanced Highers. SQA has told us that doing this allows them to explore the reasons for any apparent changes in the pattern of attainment (compared with previous years) that are reflected in the estimates submitted by schools.

What this SQA moderation process means is that it is possible that the final results for your son/daughter may not be the same as the estimates submitted by the school. Because of this possibility, SQA has put in place a "free appeals process" which can be used in certain circumstances.

- Firstly, an appeal can only be submitted if the final result for a course is lower than the estimate that the school sent in.
- Secondly, an appeal has to be submitted by the school (candidates and parents can't submit an appeal).
- Thirdly, candidates have to give their consent for an appeal to be submitted.

This final point is important because SQA have told us that if an appeal is submitted there are three possible outcomes.

- 1) The final grade could stay the same, if SQA is not persuaded by the evidence the school has sent in.
- 2) The grade could go up, if SQA are persuaded by the evidence the school has sent in.
- 3) The final grade could go down. This would happen if the evidence the school sent in did not persuade SQA that the original grade awarded was correct. According to SQA, this would be very unusual, but it is important to be aware that it is a possibility.

The advice for parents and candidates on the SQA website about appeals is that "If your child disagrees with their result, speak to their school or college who may use the free appeals service."

It is impossible for us to know how common it will be for a final result to be lower than the estimate that the school sent in, so we are unable to say how many appeals we will be required to submit. We have agreed an approach to handling appeals which will apply in all of our schools. The reason for agreeing this approach is to make sure that we have consistency of approach across all schools.

Requesting an appeal

We would ask you to follow the following steps if you decide to ask us about submitting an appeal (or more than one appeal). We would ask you to submit an appeal only where, on consideration, you think that the grade awarded does not reflect the assessment information you have received throughout the year to March (when the school closed). **Please do not visit the school to discuss appeals:** instead follow the process described below.

- 1) Please send an email to the school's email address Charleston.Academy@highland.gov.uk
OR Complete the Google Form to be made available on the school website, stating:
 - a. Your name and the name of your son/daughter
 - b. The name of the subject or subjects for which you think an appeal may be possible
 - c. A statement as follows "We and our son/daughter give our consent for Charleston Academy to submit an appeal to SQA on our behalf." It is important that you and your son/daughter give consent for an appeal to go forward.
- 2) Please do not contact the school by phone at this stage about appeals, as it is likely that staff will be very busy dealing with emails about appeals. The only exception to this would be if you are unable to access email for any reason. In that case, you should call the school's number and leave a message giving the information mentioned above.
- 3) Please then await an email reply from the school. It is difficult to predict how long it will take us to reply to you, as we do not know how many requests we will need to respond to. We will deal with emails as quickly as we possibly can, but it may be the case that you will not receive a reply until the school reopens during the week following results day.
- 4) Under no circumstances should you contact class teachers or Faculty Heads directly about appeals. It is important that requests are collated centrally in the school and we have asked class teachers and or Faculty Heads not to reply if they receive emails about appeals and not to return phone calls about appeals. This is to allow us as a Senior Management Team to be sure that we have collated all of the appeal requests as they come in.

Please note that it may not be possible for an appeal to be submitted, even though your son or daughter disagrees with the result. This would be the case, for example, if the final grade awarded was the same, or better than, the school's estimate. Estimates sent in to SQA were based on all of the best evidence held by the school and were quality assured at departmental and whole school level. Estimates cannot now be changed. If the final result matches the estimate there is no further evidence on which to base an appeal. However, if the rules allow, we will submit an appeal so long as you have given your consent as described above.

When we reply to your email we will let you know if we are able to submit an appeal. If you are requesting an appeal in more than one subject it may be the case that we can submit an appeal in one subject but not in another.

If your son or daughter is eligible for an appeal (i.e. if the final grade is lower than the estimate we submitted) and we have not heard from you, we will contact you to discuss the possibility of pursuing an appeal. You may choose to wait for the school to contact you about possible appeals, rather than send an email as described above.

Once we have decided that we can submit an appeal, the relevant evidence will be drawn up and will be sent to SQA. For Priority appeals (where a candidate needs to know the outcome quickly because of a conditional offer for college or university) we must notify SQA by Friday 14 August. After that date we will not be able to submit a Priority appeal. Evidence to support Priority appeals

will be collected from school on 20 August. Candidates will hear the outcome of Priority appeals by Friday 4 September.

For non-Priority appeals, we must notify SQA by 21 August and the evidence will be collected on 27 August. SQA have not notified us yet about when candidates will hear about the outcome of non-Priority appeals. This is because it is a new system and the date will depend on the number of requests SQA receives from schools across Scotland.

We would be grateful if you could help us at what will be a very busy time by following the advice above about appeals.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. The flow chart below may help to explain the process. One final point worth repeating is that our approach to handling appeals requests is in line with all other secondary schools in Highland and this letter has been sent out to all schools in the authority. Many thanks for your help in following the advice, and for your patience in August if you submit an appeal and are waiting for our response.

Kind regards,

Mr Gordon Stewart

HT Charleston Academy

