



West Lothian
Council

EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS UPDATE

REPORT BY HEAD OF EDUCATION (QUALITY ASSURANCE)

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Panel of the new National Qualifications

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Panel notes the contents of this report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; Being honest, open and accountable; Providing equality of opportunities; Developing employees; Making best use of our resources; Working in partnership
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Standards in Scotland's Schools (etc) Act 2000
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Within existing devolved school management (DSM) resources
VII Consideration at PDSP	Underway.
VIII Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 What are the New Qualifications?

The new qualifications, which are known as 'Nationals', have been developed to support Curriculum for Excellence.

From August 2013, new qualifications were introduced by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). The final certification of Standard grade at the end of S4 took place in August 2013.

The following table shows how the new National Qualifications replace previous and existing qualifications.

SQF Level	Previous/existing Qualifications	Replaced by...	New Qualifications
3	Access 3 Standard Grade: Foundation	→	National 3
4	Standard Grade: General Intermediate 1	→	National 4
5	Standard Grade: Credit Intermediate 2	→	National 5
6	Higher	→	New Higher
7	Advanced Higher	→	New Advanced Higher

National 3 and National 4 will be fully assessed internally in school. Elements of National 5 will also be internally assessed. The SQA will check internal assessments to make sure the assessment judgements made by the teaching staff in each West Lothian secondary school are consistent and meet national standards.

2013 -14

The new National 2, 3, 4 and 5 qualifications are being studied by pupils in S4.

Learners in S5 and S6 are completing their education with the existing qualifications at Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher levels.

2014-2015

The new Higher will be added to articulate from National 5. This will run alongside Access, Intermediate and the current Higher which will be certificated for the last time. The new qualifications are available for students in S4 and S5.

2015-2016

The new Advanced higher will be available and will take over from the old Advanced Higher.

National Courses

National 4 courses are made up of Units, including an Added Value Unit. Students must pass all Units plus the Added Value Unit to achieve a course pass at National 4 level. All assessments, including the Added Value Unit will be done by the school.

The Added Value Unit applies to all Courses at National 4 and above. This Unit assesses the following:

- Breadth – the range of knowledge, skills and understanding that learners have developed through the Course
- Challenge – how learners have deepened or extended their knowledge and/or skills
- Application – how well learners can apply their knowledge and/or skills to different situations

National 3 and 4 will not be graded, but will be assessed as pass or fail.

At National 5, students must pass all Units and the Course assessment to achieve a course grade pass. In most subjects the Course assessment is an external examination marked by SQA. National 5 Courses will be graded A to D or 'No Award'. If a student fails a Course assessment, they will receive credits for the Units they have achieved at that level.

Students who have already achieved the National 4 Value Added Unit either as part of a course or as a freestanding unit, and who pass the National 5 Units but not the National 5 Course external assessment (i.e. receive a No Award) will receive a National 4 Course pass,

SQA has published unit assessment support packs and units.

D.2 National Literacy and Numeracy Units

National Literacy Units form a mandatory part of English Courses at National 3 and National 4. National Numeracy Units form a mandatory part of the Life Skills Maths at National 3,4 and 5 and the Maths course at National 4.

As there are currently no past papers for the new National Qualifications, specimen question papers have been developed. All specimen papers can be accessed on the SQA website www.sqa.org.uk/browsecfesubjects

D.3 Internal Assessment Teams

Local authorities have nominated subject specialists to form internal assessment teams. These teams will be supported by Principal Verifiers and Team Leaders appointed by the SQA. These nominees are working together to share knowledge of best practice and national standards. All nominees are trained in Assessment Standards and verification.

D.4 Working with Colleges, Universities and Employers

The SQA are continuing to engage with Higher and Further education regarding the admissions process. They are also consulting with Employers to ensure they have the information needed about the new qualifications system and how it compares to its predecessor.

D.5 Results Service

From April 2014 the new 'Results Service' will replace the Appeals Service for all National Qualifications where an exam or coursework contributes to a candidate's final grade.

This will be in 2 parts

1. Exceptional Circumstances Consideration

This will assist candidates who cannot sit the exam or whose performance in the exam may have suffered due to exceptional circumstances and whose school has the relevant alternative evidence to support this.

2. Post-results service

Support will be offered where a school has concerns regarding a student's result. It will consist of a clerical and/or a working review of the candidate's paper.

The results service differs from the previous appeals process. Schools will no longer be able to submit evidence in an effort to improve a result.

Results will only change if there has been a clerical or marking error.

E. CONCLUSION

The new qualifications have been developed to support Curriculum for Excellence. SQA have developed the new qualification which will help students demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have developed and enable them to prepare for further learning, training and employment.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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