Your FOI request has multiple questions and so we have split them into four parts to respond to them. Questions from the FOI are in red italics with our response below.

1. Outline how much the 2020 exam diet was expected to cost (before the exams were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic)– breaking this figure down into the key costs the SQA expected to incur, including the money it expected to spend on markers and invigilators?
- How much of these costs were covered by the fees schools and colleges pay for their pupils and students to sit SQA qualifications?
- Please then outline how much was spent on the alternative certification model – breaking this figure down into the key costs?

SQA Response:
The SQA budget agreed by the Board of Management on 16 March 2020 was fully funded and assumed full delivery of the 2020 exam diet for National Qualifications. Details of that budget and sources of funding are contained in the SQA Corporate Plan which is available at:

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/5662.html

Direct income received by SQA in respect of awarding and commercial activities does not cover the full cost of SQA activities with the balance of funding £48.8 million provided by the Scottish Government via Grant in Aid. Taking into account all factors affecting SQA's financial position including cancellation of the exam diet, the impact of Covid-19 on SQA's operations including the restriction on commercial and international activities, SQA has advised the Scottish Government that it will not require to draw down £14.3 million of grant in aid which is retained by the Scottish Government and applied against other spending pressures.

Set out below are the directly identifiable costs of main diet in 2020 vs budgeted costs. The actual column includes all costs associated with the alternative assessment model. The figures quoted exclude SQA salaries, overheads or indirect costs. The budgeted column covers all costs anticipated under the normal exam diet.

Direct Expenditure on 2020 SQA Exam Diet	**Actual** £'000	**Budget** £'000	**Difference** £'000
Qualification Development	1,368	1,436	68
IT costs	2,078	2,000	(78)
Quality Assurance	270	873	603
Invigilation Costs	59	3,681	3,622
Marker Fees & Expenses	336	9,154	8,818
Script Handling	70	776	706
Logistics & Events	476	6,218	5,742
Issuing Certificates	530	510	(21)
Other Direct Costs	69	142	73
	5,255	**24,790**	**19,534**

The income the SQA receives is primarily from a levy of circa £24.5 million paid by local authorities. The levy is a contribution towards the total costs of awarding National Qualifications. Neither the levy nor entry charges reflect full cost recovery. The value of the levy and the cost of entry fees have remained unchanged since 2012-13. Candidate entry fees are still paid by colleges and third parties including independent schools who wish to sit SQA exams, but this is a much smaller fraction of our income. A breakdown is shown below:

Main Diet Income 2020	**£**
Levy received from local authorities	24,497,078

Main Diet entry income from other sources:

NQ Income - National 5	1,018,228
NQ Income - Higher (New)	977,550
NQ Income - Adv Higher (New)	163,493
NQ - Intermediate	1,513,076
NQ – Higher	1,054,259
NQ - Adv Higher	3,555
	4,730,160
Total Income	**29,227,238**

Income received from the levy and candidate entries in 2020 exceeds expenditure and therefore covers the cost of the 2020 awarding model.

2. The final stage of the alternative certification model – the appeals process – did not go ahead. How many appeals was the SQA geared up to receive, and how much was this final stage of the ACM expected to cost?
How many appeals did the SQA receive in the end (please breakdown into the three categories of appeal that were available) and how much did the SQA actually spend?

SQA Response:
The number of appeals received by SQA in 2020 has been published on our website and can be accessed at the follow web address

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64718.8314.html

Prior to the announcement to stand down the final stage of the ACM SQA had budgeted on the assumption of 75,000 post certification reviews at an approximate cost of £0.5m. In addition to the operational cost of processing these, there was budgeted cost of £70k for development of this process. The actual cost of developing the Post Certification Review Process was £34k. No additional spend was required to handle the number of appeals actually received in respect of 2020 awards.

3. In total how much did the alternative certification model cost? Was this more or less than the traditional exam diet was expected to cost?
If the ACM cost less, what happened to the money SQA saved?

SQA Response:
Please see the first SQA response section which answers these questions.

4. How much does the SQA expect it will cost to certificate school qualifications in 2020-21 – is this more or less than it would expect a traditional exam diet to cost? By how much?
- If it is more please state the key reason for the increase in cost; if it is less please state the key reasons for the decrease in costs.

SQA Response:
As the announcement to cancel all exams for 2021 was only made on 7 December, we are unable to provide a detailed answer to this question at this time as we work through the costs of delivery of the Alternative Certification Model and requirement for appeals in 2021. However, based on the experience of 2020 we would anticipate that the cost of awarding National Qualifications in 2021 will be less than had an exam diet been held. As the Alternative Certification Model is different than that operated in 2020 we anticipate the costs associated with evidence gathering and quality assurance to be higher as well as provisions required to support an appeals mechanism this year.