

Table of Attachments

Ref	Email	Attachment	Provided	Note
1	(Case Ref: [REDACTED]) – 14 August 2024	Letter from MSP - pdf	No	Confidential – contains constituent personal information
2	History enquiries – 21 August 2024	Spreadsheet of Enquiries Received	Yes - redacted	Personal information redacted
3	History enquiries – 21 August 2024	Screenshots of Herald article	Yes	Already in public domain

Collated Emails

From: [REDACTED] On Behalf Of Fiona Robertson

Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2024 10:52 AM

To: [REDACTED].msp@parliament.scot

Subject: FW: (Case Ref: [REDACTED])

Dear [REDACTED],

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of letter addressed to Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive.

A full response will be sent to you in due course.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

-

From: [REDACTED] MSP [REDACTED].msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2024 4:23 PM

To: Customer <customer@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: (Case Ref: [REDACTED])

Please see attached correspondence.

Regards

From: [REDACTED]@hotmail.co.uk>

Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2024 2:40 PM

To: SQA Chief Executive's Office <ceo.office@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Higher History- 2024 Change in Grade Boundary

Dear Fiona,

[REDACTED] have moved from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], to experience living in another city but importantly, we wanted to give [REDACTED] an opportunity to study in Scotland.

My [REDACTED] studies at [REDACTED] High School just outside of [REDACTED]. It's a fantastic school that has fantastic teaching staff.

I feel your organisation has badly let my [REDACTED] and the staff down.

How can you justify a 25% average increase in marks required to receive each grade, for example I'm looking at marks needed in 2023 to achieve an A is 56 and in 2024 its 70 marks an increase of 25%. 2023 B 45 marks 2024 B 60 marks an increase of 25%.

My [REDACTED] received 1 A,(3 B's - 1 mark off an A for English) and (1 C - History)

The grade boundaries for Higher History, this year, had been grossly increased, somebody needs to urgently look at the 2024 figures, and explain to the hardworking teachers and students why on earth, every grade has increased by 25%? this is unacceptable.

How can the student and teacher be prepared for this increase? What predicted grade should a teacher give to a pupil studying history for 2025? It could be this but the passmark could increase by 25%, that's no way to teach, learn or prepare.

I understand grade boundaries change, as they should, but this year's figure is beyond anything I've ever seen or I understand has the teaching staff.

The 2024 grade boundaries for Higher History have put a stop to my [REDACTED] chances of getting into a good University in England.

My [REDACTED] attended her first day back at school yesterday, the teaching staffs morale was very low, and that is your fault and responsibility. Teaching is such a difficult job, without your organisation undoing all their hard work.

I look forward to hearing from you with your comments.

Kindest wishes

[REDACTED]

From: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 6:49 PM

To: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>;
Martyn Ware <Martyn.Ware@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Fwd: For Noting - SQA Media Response - The Sun - Higher History

Fyi

From: Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 5:20:42 PM

To: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Fw: For Noting - SQA Media Response - The Sun - Higher History

From: Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 17:19

To: [REDACTED]@gov.scot <[REDACTED]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]
<[REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: Media Enquiries <media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Re: For Noting - SQA Media Response - The Sun - Higher History

Much appreciated, [REDACTED].

Richard Pidgeon

Head of Communications and Engagement, SQA

From: [REDACTED]@gov.scot <[REDACTED]@gov.scot>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 17:12

To: [REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk; Richard Pidgeon
<Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: For Noting - SQA Media Response - The Sun - Higher History

SQA Colleagues,

We were approached by the Herald about this today and provided response below, I've included their full query for you.

Thanks

Response:

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

“Marking of exams is an operational matter for the SQA in its independent role as an examination body. As in previous years, SQA will be undertaking an evaluation of their awarding approaches.

“We are reforming our education bodies to ensure they better meet the needs of learners. Legislation has been introduced to create a new national qualifications body, Qualifications Scotland, which will put the knowledge and experience of pupils and teachers at the heart of decisions around qualifications and assessment.”

Query:

Here's our story that's out today: <https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/24531249.teachers-hit-sqa-unfair-exam-marking/>

As I said on the phone, if you put this in front of Jenny she'll understand it because it's not that different to Modern Studies marking. Basically, even though the marking scheme for this year might look the same as last year, it seems that the principal assessor and marking team decided that students have to be more specific than has been the case in the past in order to get marks. That means that students didn't do as well as previous years, or as well as expected, and because there is no traditional appeals process there's nothing that can be done about it.

I've spoken to various teachers, including current markers who were in the room, and they're telling me the same thing again and again: the SQA moved the goalposts for marking after the exams.

The SQA says 'nothing to see here' but that's obviously not true, unless we're willing to believe that a 26% drop in the mean score for an exam paper, making the average performance a fail, is perfectly normal.

One teacher got in touch with me today after reading our story and said that they SQA has "lied on the record".

Obviously, all of this has had a potentially life-changing impact on a significant number of students across Scotland, especially with history being one of the more popular subjects at Higher.

There will be young people who have lost out on university places because of this change in the marking approach.

Given all of this, and given that the SQA was previously deemed so dysfunction that it had to be scrapped, with the Scottish Government / education secretary actually step in and do anything to protect students in this instance?

Media Manager

Education and Skills

Scottish Government | [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 4:41 PM

To: [REDACTED]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED]@gov.scot>; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: For Noting - SQA Media Response - The Sun - Higher History

Folks,

We had a follow-up call from The Sun off the back of The Herald's story published this morning. See below...

We have provided the following response...

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A SQA spokesperson said:

"The marking instructions for Higher History this year were the same as last year and we are confident that the attainment rate reflects the performance of learners."

ENDS

+++++

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Scottish Qualifications Authority

[REDACTED]

From: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 1:56 PM

To: Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot

Cc: [REDACTED]@gov.scot; [REDACTED]@gov.scot; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot; Steve Borley <Steve.Borley@sqa.org.uk>; Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Media reports on Higher History exams

Hi [REDACTED]

In addition to the background note that Gill is sending on, to be aware that we will be issuing a statement this afternoon on Higher History (via SQA News and the website) to address the misleading media reports. We will also be supplying this statement to the Herald which has submitted a follow-up enquiry (worth noting that the Herald is interpreting the SG comms line from last night which mentioned 'an evaluation of their [SQA] awarding approaches' as a review of Higher History' – we will be clarifying that this is our normal annual evaluation of awarding not anything specific to HH).

Will send on statement once finalised and published.

John

John Booth

Director of Communications, SQA

From: Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 5:55 PM

To: [REDACTED]@gov.scot

Cc: [REDACTED]@gov.scot; [REDACTED]@gov.scot; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot; Steve Borley <Steve.Borley@sqa.org.uk>; Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Re: Media reports on Higher History exams

Hi [REDACTED]

Of course - will do this tomorrow but just to reassure you there has been no change to the marking approach from 2023 for Higher History.

Gill

From: [REDACTED]@gov.scot <[REDACTED]@gov.scot>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 5:39:58 pm

To: Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED]@gov.scot <[REDACTED]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot <[REDACTED]@gov.scot>; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot <[REDACTED]@gov.scot>; Steve Borley <Steve.Borley@sqa.org.uk>; Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Media reports on Higher History exams

Hi Gill, hope you are well.

On the back of the media reports about the Higher History exam and claims about a changed marking approach this year, we'd appreciate you providing a background note on the issue for Cabinet Secretary.

Many thanks, do come back if you have any queries.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Head of Senior Phase and OECD Curriculum Reform Unit | Curriculum and Qualifications | Education Reform Directorate | Scottish Government |

From: Fiona Robertson

Sent: Friday, August 23, 2024 8:48 AM

To: [REDACTED]@sls-scotland.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Thank you

You are very welcome, [REDACTED] – it was great to see you and I enjoyed our conversation.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. **Out of scope**

Re Higher History, it is really disappointing to see - and creates concern for learners and their parents. It is also unsettling for the many teachers who mark for us.

Fiona

Fiona Robertson

Chief Executive

Scottish Qualifications Authority

w: <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

From: [REDACTED]@sls-scotland.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 3:33 PM

To: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Thank you

Dear Fiona,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. **Out of scope**

[REDACTED] has just been on the phone regarding the carry-on in the Herald re Higher History. I very much appreciated the briefing. It was very kind of her. It will be useful if I have any members asking me for info, but as yet all quiet on that front.

[REDACTED]. **Out of scope**

Stay safe!

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] - SLS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] **Out of Scope**

From: [Redacted]@sqa.org.uk
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 12:30 PM
To: Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>
Subject: FW: Concerns re Scottish History Teachers and the Herald article

Hi Gill

I am just forwarding this message from a member of the Higher Team for awareness.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 12:27 PM

To: Iain Morrison <Iain.Morrison@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: FW: Concerns re Scottish History Teachers and the Herald article

Morning Iain

I am just forwarding this message from [REDACTED] which sums up the feeling of members of the Higher team. I spent over two hours talking to the PA and an STL last night.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. **Out of scope**

As mentioned, I have asked [REDACTED] to add a bit more flesh to the course report which he will send to the US mailbox, and I asked for the History Higher awarding pack to be temporarily uploaded to PA News for [REDACTED] reference.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. **Out of scope**

Thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 8:34 AM

To: [REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Concerns re Scottish History Teachers and the Herald article

Morning [REDACTED].

I hope this finds you well. I am writing to express concern regarding recent comments on Higher History which have appeared on the Scottish History Teachers Facebook page and subsequent article in the Herald.

Whilst the Scottish History Teachers site can and should allow for professional discourse the recent comments are straying into unwanted and unwarranted vilification of the hard-working examination team.

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted] . Redacted under section 30

See you at appeals.

[Redacted]

Principal Teacher [Redacted]

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]
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[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] **Out of scope**

From: [Redacted]

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 2:59 PM

To: 'John Booth' <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; [Redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [Redacted]@gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart <Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Media reports on Higher History exams

Thanks John.

[Redacted] – can you engage with SG comms on the highlighted please and ask them to action? We should also reinforce John's point about SG comms sharing lines with SQA before issue.

Gill – we will wait to hear from you as to what you would like us to share with the Cab Sec in terms of a note (may just be the link below to the published statement)?

[REDACTED]

From: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 2:52 PM

To: [REDACTED]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED]@gov.scot>; Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk

Subject: RE: Media reports on Higher History exams

Hi

Web page now live and will be signposted via SQA News shortly:

[A response to recent reports on the 2024 Higher History assessments \(sqa.org.uk\)](#)

This may provide you with sufficient info for the background note but if you feel more is needed then Gill is happy to speak.

I think it would be helpful if SG Comms could clarify what was meant by that line on evaluation as it will help spike that particular part of the story. If there are any subsequent enquiries into SG it would also be helpful if you could make the point that SQA has confirmed there has been no change to the marking instructions and approach.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Out of

scope

Thanks

John

John Booth

Director of Communications, SQA

From: [REDACTED]@gov.scot>

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 2:41 PM

To: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot

Cc: [REDACTED]@gov.scot; Donna Stewart <Donna.Stewart@sqa.org.uk>; Gill Stewart Gill.Stewart@sqa.org.uk

Subject: RE: Media reports on Higher History exams

Hi John

Thanks for letting us know. That's quite a leap, even for the Herald, to interpret "As in previous years, SQA will be undertaking an evaluation of their awarding approaches" as a review of Higher History! Is there anything SG comms can helpfully do to clarify or should we just leave it?

Gill – just to reassure, [REDACTED] has been very clear with Cab Sec that there was no different approach to History marking this year having spoken to Fiona. The idea of asking for a note originated with SpADs but I don't think it needs to be long and can reiterate points already made.

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@gov.scot <[REDACTED]@gov.scot>

Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 10:02 AM

To: [REDACTED]@sqa.org.uk; Richard Pidgeon <Richard.Pidgeon@sqa.org.uk>

Cc: John Booth <John.Booth@sqa.org.uk>; [REDACTED]@gov.scot; [REDACTED]@gov.scot;

[REDACTED]@gov.scot; [REDACTED]@gov.scot; [REDACTED]@gov.scot

Subject: Herald article on 'unfair marking, Higher history'

Hi [REDACTED]/Richard

Would you be able to share any comms lines you guys have in relation to the article in the Herald relating to "unfair marking" of Higher history? We've not been asked to comment, but it would be helpful to be aware of any lines you guys have issued.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Education Reform Directorate | Scottish Government |

From: Media Enquiries <media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 3:32 PM

To: [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Cc: Media Enquiries <media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Higher History marking follow up

Good afternoon [REDACTED],

Thanks for your query. Our position has not changed, and our line as was supplied to you earlier in the week still stands.

We have provided an update to schools this afternoon – [you can read it here](#).

I must also clarify the point you shared, as provided by communications colleagues at the Scottish Government, regarding a 'review'. Every year SQA conducts a thorough evaluation of the whole National Qualifications awarding process. This is not a subject-specific 'review [of] what has happened', and I'm sure the Scottish Government would be happy to clarify that.

I am aware too that you have named a member of SQA staff in your enquiry. I am seeking assurances that she will not be named in any article that appears. The member of staff is not part of the senior management team at SQA, and we have a duty of care to our employees.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Scottish Qualifications Authority

From: [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 3:28 PM

To: Media Enquiries <media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Re: Higher History marking follow up

Hello again.

I haven't received anything back from the SQA on this, so just wanted to confirm that our story will be going online at 4pm.

If the SQA does wish to comment on the story then please send that through to me and I'll add it in.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Sent: 22 August 2024 11:41

To: Media Enquiries <media.enquiries@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: Higher History marking follow up

Good morning.

We are planning to run some follow up to our story about the problems with Higher History marking this year.

Since publishing our original story, I have been approached by many more teachers, including current markers, who have confirmed that there were changes to marking standards this year. I have also received a significant number of messages raising major concerns about the culture at the SQA, especially around the history team up to and including [REDACTED] and also [REDACTED].

I have also approached the government to ask if they plan to step in given the concerns raised by whistle-blowers and the potential impact on young people. They have responded saying that the SQA itself will review what has happened, which we are planning to report. I will also be reporting the additional comments from teachers and SQA appointees, which include explicit rejections of the SQA position to this point.

Does the SQA still wish to stick to its position that there is no problem whatsoever with Higher History marking for this year, even given the contributions of teachers/markers?

If you would like to have any comment included in this follow up piece, I would appreciate receipt by 3pm today.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: John Booth

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 3:38 PM

To: [REDACTED].msp@parliament.scot

Subject: Higher History coverage

Hi [REDACTED]. I hope this finds you well.

I spotted your recent social media post about the Herald's coverage of Higher History and seeking answers from SQA (and Scottish Government).

I thought you might find it helpful to see the update provided to schools and colleges (and to the Herald and via social media) this afternoon, which reinforces the point we made to the newspaper on Tuesday that the marking approach for Higher History hasn't changed this year.

[A response to recent reports on the 2024 Higher History assessments \(sqa.org.uk\)](https://www.sqa.org.uk/news/2024/08/22/a-response-to-recent-reports-on-the-2024-higher-history-assessments)

I hope this is useful and of course we'd be happy to provide any further information you want at this stage. We can also answer any questions you might have at the forthcoming Committee session in September.

Thanks

John

John Booth

Director of Communications, SQA

-END-