

Distribution: Schools – affected by targeted action

Title: Industrial action - impact on SQA exams within targeted schools

Date to be issued: Wednesday 1 March 2023

Dear colleague

We understand that the current industrial dispute between Scottish Government, COSLA and teacher unions is disrupting learning and teaching and creating a difficult and concerning situation for you, your staff, your learners and their parents/carers. This is also a time of year in which learners are being assessed, completing coursework and preparing for exams.

We are grateful for your ongoing support in delivering Scotland's qualifications. We are keen to work with you to ensure we are doing all we can to support learners at this time.

We have already been engaging with many of you and your local authority on these issues. We also attended a Scottish Government meeting with your local authority yesterday – Tuesday 28 February – and have agreed some steps that can be taken in light of the targeted strike action, to help you and your learners.

We wish to continue an open dialogue with you and your local authority during these challenging times, to ensure that we can offer targeted support, where possible. In the meantime, the following special arrangements are being put in place for those schools affected by additional strike days within the targeted constituencies:

i) Extension requests

We can accommodate an **extension of six days for the submission of coursework** and an **extension of 10 days for the submission of estimates** in the following subjects:

- National 5 and Higher Administration and IT
- National 5 and Higher Computing Science
- National 5 and Higher Graphic Communication

These are the only subjects where extensions may be agreed due to the impacts of industrial action. This is because the coursework for these subjects takes place at a fixed point in time – compared to other subjects where coursework is carried out over a longer period.

All other extension requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis for individual learners but will not be approved due to industrial action.

ii) Verification

We have taken a risk-based approach to verification to significantly reduce the workload in schools during this time. Therefore, with the exception of schools that are delivering subjects for the first time or who received a 'not accepted' outcome last year, we will cease

verification for the remainder of session 2022-23. Any current verification which has resulted in a 'not accepted' outcome this year will still need to be addressed to ensure standards are met. If you have current verification selections, we will email you shortly with information about how to proceed.

Please note that the above special arrangements are only for those schools affected by the targeted industrial dispute.

As you know, awarding National Qualifications depends on the whole education community working together and playing their part in delivering for learners. We need teachers to carry out visiting assessment, mark coursework and exams.

We already have a package of support in place this year designed to help learners experiencing disruption to learning and teaching including modifications to course assessments and a sensitive approach to grading. While we will have the Exam Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service available for learners whose performance is affected by personal circumstances beyond their control, it is important to note that this service is not appropriate for addressing widespread disruption to learning and teaching. The Exam Exceptional Circumstances Consideration service is designed to support individual learners who have been unable to attend an exam or learners whose performance on an exam may have been affected by personal circumstances or an unplanned incident on the day of the exam and should only be used for individual learners.

We know you will also be doing all you can to mitigate any local disruption to learning and teaching in your school, particularly in the senior phase. With visiting assessments underway, we ask that you continue to work with us by releasing staff for assessment and marking. In order for visiting assessments and marking to take place in your area and across Scotland we need every school to play its part in releasing staff.

We are committed to doing everything we can to mitigate the impact of any industrial action on assessment and exams, as part of the contingency planning being led by the Scottish Government. We are continuing to recruit teachers into appointee roles and will be writing to your local authority to ask that they support you when it comes to releasing staff wishing to carry out their SQA duties.

Once again we thank you for your ongoing support during this very challenging time. We are doing our very best to support you and will continue to work very closely with you in delivering this year's National Qualifications. Please contact your local Liaison Manager should you have questions regarding any of the above

Yours sincerely

Dr Gill Stewart
Director of Qualifications Development