

Braes High School – 20-21 – SQA Certification policy

Background and purpose

On the 8th December, the Deputy First Minister announced that there will be no external assessment of Higher and Advanced Higher courses in session 2020–21, and that the 2021 exam diet has been cancelled. This followed the cancellation of National 5 exams on the 7th of October. As a result an alternative certification model will be used which requires teachers to use a range of evidence and professional judgement to award pupils a provisional result. This will be supported and subjected to moderation by the SQA who will then award the pupils their final result.

The purpose of this document is to provide clarity on the 'Braes approach' to this alternative certification model. It will also provide information on evidence collection and provisional grade generation, our quality assurance procedures and other areas of this approach to ensure every pupil has the opportunity to achieve success. Please note due to the current circumstances, information in this document is subject to change based on any further information received from the Scottish Government or SQA.

Timeline

An updated timeline will be issued soon for our approach to evidence gathering and provisional grade submission. We have currently removed the previous timeline from this document as we await further information with regards to future circumstances based on national guidance and final clarification of dates from the SQA. As you will appreciate this is a fluid situation but as a school we are fully prepared for a range of scenarios. It is also worth noting that regardless of how the current situation progresses, during the time from Jan- May pupils will take part in a range of assessments for each subject they are sitting. As a school we have tried to spread assessments evenly where possible over this time but due to the ever changing national picture, pupils must be proactive in asking their teacher for assessment times and planning/preparing thoroughly in School/home learning and at home for these. Pupils should also be engaging with teams and online lessons when they are unable to attend school and well enough to do so.

Please note that alongside the pupil evidence collection from Jan-May there will be various quality assurance meetings that will take place amongst staff, faculty heads, SMT and the local authority. Alongside this the SQA will be sampling work and moderating courses/pupils work from January 2021 onwards.

Communication

Within the Braes approach, communication is critical to the success of the alternative certification model. As a school we will strive to have clear and proactive communication with pupils and parents. By adopting a 'no surprises' approach we will ensure that parents and pupils have the most up to date and relevant information available to them. Please see the communication points most relevant to each school community member with regards to this model below.

Teaching staff

Communicating clearly with pupils during and after lessons, about pieces of work and assessments with clear next steps and where they can improve.

Communicating with pupil support to ensure all additional arrangements are put in place whenever appropriate/required.

Communicating clearly, in detail with parents at parent's evenings and through tracking reports to identify pupil's next steps, target grades and working grades.

Communicating early with their faculty head and when relevant, pupil's pastoral head, about any pupil concerns with regards to attainment, effort, attitude and homework. All subject specific concerns should be referred to the faculty head who will then contact home.

Faculty Heads

Communicating clearly with pupils that are referred to them with regards to current concerns. Appropriate support measures should be offered and put in place in conjunction with staff member and pupil.

Communicating any concerns with parents at the earliest point possible as well as the steps to be taken in school and at home and keeping pupils and parent updated with any future developments.

Communicating any pupil concerns to link depute or relevant head of house depute.

SMT

Communicate to pupils concerns and next steps once faculty and pastoral route has been followed.

Communicate specific concerns with parents once faculty and pastoral route has been followed.

Whole school community communications via letter, email, school app and group call.

Parents

Communicate any concerns as soon as possible with pastoral head or relevant faculty head.

Communicate with child to ensure they have appropriate study plans, study methods, using school supports and approach to completing homework/preparing for assessments.

Check communication details are up to date with the office to ensure the school can contact you with any updates about your child's progress.

Pupils

Communicate any concerns as soon as possible with teacher, pastoral head or relevant faculty head.

Utilise all support mechanisms on offer to ensure they are doing as much as they can to achieve their goals.

Provisional result decisions

Making decisions on pupil's provisional results should be done at the optimum time for each individual pupil. For example, some pupils will meet level criteria and will have demonstrated a consistent amount of quality evidence at slightly earlier points in time. Others will potentially require more support and time to get to certain levels. Teachers will use the evidence gathered, their professional judgement, knowledge of their pupils and course criteria to make provisional results decisions when they deem appropriate. Provisional results will not be shared with any pupil until at least the week beginning the 17th of May. Prior to this time there will be further communication about this process. These results however should not come as a surprise to pupils or parents due to consistent communication at all times during this process about progress and projected attainment.

Type and quality of evidence

As your child's teacher gathers evidence throughout the year it's important to note this will be done in a variety of ways and not every topic in every area will be assessed exhaustively. The following types of evidence listed below may be used throughout the year. However, it is important to reiterate that it is **not the quantity of evidence, but the quality of evidence that is gathered.**

All types of evidence below can be used, however the first four highlighted will produce more reliable quality evidence. This is also supported by the SQA in evidence documentation as more reliable quality evidence pieces:

◆ Prelims or mock exams

◆ SQA question papers or past papers completed in appropriate conditions

◆ Class tests

◆ Performance evidence

◆ Classwork

◆ Completed or partially-completed coursework

To provide pupils with accurate, fair and reflective provisional results, staff will use their knowledge of the following when reviewing evidence:

◆ The range of skills, knowledge and understanding covered by the course

◆ The assessment requirements and the structure of the course

◆ The components that contribute to the course award, including weightings where appropriate

◆ The grade descriptions for the course

◆ The level of demand of the course assessment

Quality assurance

Quality assurance (QA) at all levels will ensure pupils and parents are provided with the most up to date, accurate information about their performance as soon as possible. Our QA system at Braes High School also ensures all provisional results are valid, reliable and equitable.

Listed below are a number of the QA procedures in place during this alternative certification model:

◆ Communication protocols listed previously ensures no information is misunderstood and no surprises occur.

◆ Moderation processes are robust within each department with extra time provided off timetable for staff to moderate pupil work. Use of Local authority inset days to ensure moderation standards are consistent with other schools across LA. Department meeting time used in faculties to undertake a wide range of moderation activities.

- ◆ Staff Attendance at a wide range of understanding standards events, webinars and professional collaboration events.
- ◆ Quality assurance meetings built into staff timeline. These include specific certification tasks/meetings during department meetings, management team meetings and individual meetings at pinch points with Faculty Head, Link DHT and SQA co-ordinator. The purpose of all these meetings is to share attainment progress, note any pupil supports required and to make sure relevant communication with parents has taken place.
- ◆ SQA information shared quickly by school co-ordinator and available resources provided to ensure faculties have the most up to date information with regards changes, attainment, moderation and verification procedures.
- ◆ We know our pupils. We have spent a number of weeks, months and years cultivating relationships with our young people. As a result we are best placed to make professional correct judgements about their work and support them in a fair and equitable way.

Equity and fairness

As a rights respecting gold school Braes High School has always gone above and beyond to provide an educational setting where pupils are safe, respected, nurtured and supported. Our robust additional arrangements system within our pupil support department ensures all pupils receive the appropriate arrangements for their learning needs.

As mentioned throughout this policy document teachers and school leaders will continually follow our already embedded approaches towards equity to provide a certification model that supports all pupils at Braes High School.

A Guide to Wellbeing support during this time

Coping with assessment based stress

Stress is real and plays an important part in all of our lives, often in a very positive way; motivating us and keeping us focussed and alert which can help us to perform to the best of our ability in many ways, including exams and assessments.

We recognise that not all stress is positive and can have a negative impact on our young people emotionally, mentally and physically, especially in these uncertain and challenging times. It is important to acknowledge the stress that study, course assessments, preliminary examinations and final examinations can have and we wanted to recommend some things that we know can help.

- Take time to breath, relax and...put down your phone!
- Look after yourself and your health with good food, exercise and sleep
- Adopt a positive mind-set
- Create a plan which includes small practical tasks/steps towards success
- Form “your team”, people who can help you including family, friends and school staff.

Where to go for help

You can always ask for help and support in school from classroom teachers, Faculty Heads and Pastoral Heads (we have included their contact information below) but you may also want to speak to someone at home, your doctor or Samaritans (call 116 123)

Pastoral heads – Can support with any subject, course, HWB or personal matters please contact your pastoral head:

Lomond house – Michael.burns@falkirk.gov.uk

Pentland House – Laura.eckles@falkirk.gov.uk

Ochil House – George.burnett@falkirk.gov.uk

Campsie House – Linda.jones@falkirk.gov.uk

For Subject Specific advice/information please contact relevant faculty Head:

English and Media – mark.rooney@falkirk.gov.uk

Mathematics - Leanne.simpson@falkirk.gov.uk

Science – John.mclean@falkirk.gov.uk

Creativity (Art, Drama and Music) – brian.morris@falkirk.gov.uk

Humanities (Geography, History, Modern Studies and RMPS) - fiona.malcolm@falkirk.gov.uk

Technologies (DET, Graphic Com, Bus Man, Admin, Computing) – lan.vosser@falkirk.gov.uk

Modern Languages - Susan.dunn@falkirk.gov.uk

Health and well Being (PE, Practical cookery, HFT and Dance) – Darren.yeates@falkirk.gov.uk

For pupil support – please contact Janine.white@falkirk.gov.uk and/or relevant key teachers

The following websites provide further strategies and support

www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk

<http://breathingspace.scot>

<https://www.seemescotland.org/>

You can also download apps which can help

<http://safespot.org.uk/the-app/> **SafeSpot** is an app designed to help young people improve their coping skills

<https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/chill-panda/> Learn to relax, manage your worries and improve your wellbeing with **Chill Panda**.

<http://sam-app.org.uk/> **SAM App** provides anxiety management advice and strategies on your mobile

<https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/catch-it/> Learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression with **Catch It**.

Prepare to Pass

@Braes

Helping your child prepare for assessments

It is important that young people are supported at home and school to prepare them well for prelim exams and other internal assessments during this time.

The type of support required may depend upon the way the course is assessed, for example, assignments; case study; practical activity; performance; portfolio; project; question paper/test.

Regular attendance throughout the year will help to ensure that your child keeps up with course work and homework. We understand that due to the current circumstances that this might not always be possible, so pupils must ensure they can access their class team's pages and glow email accounts. As work missed will be placed and sent via this system. If your child is unsure how to do this please contact pastoral head immediately. If pupils do fall behind, through illness perhaps, do speak to the school about any further support which we can offer which will help them catch up.

Talking to your child to reassure and encourage them and taking an interest in what they are doing will help them get through what can be a stressful time and will help them to do their best.

What support is on offer in school?

➤ **Supported Study**

An extensive programme of supported study classes across a range of subjects has been running since August. Staff have been running classes both in person at the end of the school day and online. Information regarding these sessions are on our school website and are updated termly.

➤ **Braes Brains – Peer Tutoring**

Our Braes Brains Peer Tutors will be attending to offer support with coursework and homework tasks as well as tips, tricks and advice to help with studying. All our Braes Brains have been recommended by subject teachers having achieved success in SQA qualifications and demonstrated a positive work ethic in their subjects. Watch out for the students sporting "Braes Brain" badges and pop over to say hello and get some help!

You can also request one to one support sessions from a Braes Brains by speaking to your class teacher, Pastoral Head or Ms Taylor in the Drama Department.

➤ **Mentoring**

We will continue to offer our staff mentoring programme to give one-to-one support to pupils who would benefit from the additional support. In addition, we have a small group of S6 pupils who have offered to work with younger pupils to support their preparation for assessments and assist pupils keep on track in the current circumstances.

➤ **Easter School**

We hope to offer our usual, intensive subject specific preparation in the lead up to the SQA deadlines and will provide more information nearer the time. At present, the proposed dates for Easter School are **Tuesday 6th** and **Wednesday 7th April**.

There will be three sessions running each day:

Session 1 : 0855 – 1035 Session 2 : 1050 – 1230 Session 3 : 1315 – 1455

Pupils will be asked to sign up to sessions in advance so that staff can plan for the groups attending.

➤ **S5/6 Core Subjects (P.E., RMPS, PSE)**

In the lead up to the exams, pupils will be able to use most of this time to study for the upcoming exams. Pupils in S5 and S6 can select the dedicated study pathway within PE and will be given time where appropriate in PSE and RMPS. In addition, where appropriate, teachers from a range of departments may ask to work with individual pupils during this time, to support them to complete coursework or prepare for the final exam.

➤ **Stress Workshops**

Our Pastoral team work closely with pupils and are aware some find it very stressful in the lead up to exams. We will be running workshops in March to help pupils develop strategies to minimise their stress/anxiety levels in the lead up to the exam diet.