



MACKIE ACADEMY

SQA PRESENTATION GUIDANCE

September 2019

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1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The purpose of this guide is two-fold. Firstly, to provide consistency and clarity in our Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) examination presentation processes and secondly, to make clear the purpose and expectations for pupils returning to S5 or S6 at Mackie Academy. To be effective, this guide must be shared with staff, pupils, parent/carers and others as appropriate. In doing so we ensure fairness and a shared understanding of assessment and examination presentation decisions in the Senior Phase.

From 2017-18, changes have been made to National Qualifications (NQ) with the removal of mandatory unit assessments from all courses from National 5 to Advanced Higher. Following the removal of units and unit assessments, SQA are strengthening the NQ course assessments to ensure they assess the full content of the course. This means that for each course the changes have resulted in one or more of the following:

- Extension of the existing question paper
- Extension/modification of the existing item of coursework
- A new question paper
- A new item of coursework

Further information about individual National 5 to Advanced Higher subject assessments can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/nqchanges.

It is recognised that the vast majority of school-based qualifications will be gained through the SQA framework. However, other equally important attainment and achievement successes will also be gained through our Broad General Education and Senior Phase Wider Achievement programmes.

2. SCHOOL AIMS & LINKED NATIONAL PRIORITIES

1. To support high quality learning and teaching through a curriculum which is well-planned and offers breadth, balance and choice appropriate to the needs of each learner; the provision of motivated and enthusiastic staff with a commitment to lifelong learning and sound accommodation and resources that support the learning environment.

By constantly reviewing and evaluating our curriculum, we aim to ensure that the needs of all learners are addressed. We see each pupil as a unique individual and strive to provide them with learning experiences that are challenging, engaging and relevant.

2. To give the opportunity for learners to gain the highest possible attainment and achievement through personalised learning pathways which meet each learner's needs, builds on prior learning, are effectively assessed and clearly reported.

We have the highest expectations for every single young person who enters Mackie Academy. All of our young people are given every encouragement and support to aim for the highest possible levels of achievement in educational attainment and life skills.

We aim to provide high quality learning and teaching experiences for all our pupils, based on their unique aptitudes, needs and abilities, delivered by a professional and highly dedicated staff. We have very high expectations for the learning that takes place in every classroom, and for each pupil's contribution to this.

At key points in the school year, parents are informed of their child's progress and are encouraged to engage in dialogue with school staff through organised events, Parent Council

and PTA. Our tracking and monitoring systems allow us to track the progress of each pupil throughout the year and take steps to support and challenge accordingly.

4. To provide high quality pastoral care and support for all learners according to their needs allowing opportunities for learners to develop self-esteem, responsibility, personal effectiveness and consideration for others through a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. To provide a safe and secure environment in which the health & wellbeing alongside the safety of all members of the school community is paramount at all times.

Mackie Academy has a tradition of being an inclusive school. Our goal is to help every pupil to benefit from education, and we take pride in the support we continue to provide for pupils of all abilities and needs, within a framework of equal opportunities and children's rights. All members of the Mackie Academy community are valued and respected. The Mackie Academy Learning Wheel and Shared Expectations underpin the variety of learning and teaching approaches used across the school and outline the expectations for everyone in our school community. Good classroom relationships are crucial to developing a positive climate for learning and these are supported by our relationships with parents/carers and other partners.

5. To provide a positive and welcoming ethos in the school based on mutual support, equality, fairness, healthy living and respect for others, their property and the environment.

Mackie Academy is a Rights Respecting School which means that honouring the rights of everyone in our school community is at the heart of what we do. We encourage all of our young people to be aware of their rights and to respect those of others. We ensure that every student has the opportunity to discuss their subject choices and levels with a key adult who knows them well and can advise them on appropriate pathways. We recognise that each individual requires a curriculum that meets their needs and helps them to realise their aspirations, ultimately leading to a positive destination when they leave school.

6. To prepare learners for life beyond school through the development of core skills, active citizenship, education for work and an appreciation of learning as a vital lifelong experience. To value and promote partnership, teamwork and leadership among staff, learners, parents, the wider community and other agencies.

Mackie Academy aims to create a learning environment that enables pupils to be ambitious and develop the creativity, skills and attitudes required for success in life the 21st Century. We endeavour to ensure that clear links exist between the learning that takes place in school and the attributes that our young people will require in the workplace. Through close links with local and national businesses, we aim to provide 'real life' experiences for our pupils that develop their confidence, knowledge and personal qualities to reach a sustained positive destination after school. We value our relationships with parents and strive to have open and regular communication with parents in order to support our pupils to achieve their best.

3. CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

Teaching strategies to support our pupils' learning have been agreed and documented in 'Our Learning Wheel' (see appendix fig. 1). The learning framework (curriculum structure) at the Academy progresses from that experienced in our cluster primary schools. Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) curriculum areas and benchmarks are used as 'learning organisers' in the Broad General Education (Primary - S3). To provide our pupils with the greatest personalisation, choice, depth and breadth of learning, pupils in S2 can choose from a wide range of electives to enhance their curriculum and in S3 pupils may select subject options from each curricular area in preparation for the Senior Phase. In S4, pupils have the option to choose

a seventh subject to enhance their portfolio of NQs. Those who wish to do so will be advised by their Pupil Support and Attainment teacher (PSAT) on an individual basis to ensure that each pupil is making the most appropriate choice. Pupils' learning in the Senior Phase allows for progression through NQs and is further enhanced by opportunities for wider achievement and leadership; links with North East Scotland and Dundee & Angus Colleges and work experience to ensure that our pupils meet the four capacities at the heart of the CfE programme.

Apart from a few exceptions, all SQA attainment will take place in the Senior Phase. Individual gifted and talented pupils may progress their learning to Fourth Level and beyond in the Broad General Education and therefore it may be entirely appropriate that they are presented for National Qualifications at an earlier stage. The Senior Phase provides significant flexibility to ensure all pupils have opportunities to broaden or extend their learning. In doing so, pupils have a range of opportunities to formally recognise their learning through the Scottish Credit and Qualifications (SCQF) framework. (See appendix fig. 2)

5. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Parent/Carer Communication

School staff use a range of communication strategies to ensure parents/carers and pupils are aware of Senior Phase curriculum expectations and the academic progress their child is making. These strategies include tracking reports, full reports, subject choice recommendations, curriculum evenings, parents' evenings, mentoring, academic cause for concern forms, intervention strategies, PSAT interviews and email updates.

S5/S6 Pupils Returning to Mackie Academy

The majority of S4 and S5 pupils choose to return to Mackie Academy for further study. To ensure pupils are well prepared for the world of work, training, college or university when they ultimately leave school, they are required to study a minimum number of subjects. Further details are shared through course choice materials each year.

Returning to school for S5 and/or S6 provides further achievement opportunities: vital in today's society. To ensure our S5 and S6 pupils return with a clear focus on attainment and achievement, they are reminded of the 'Home School Agreement' they signed when they joined Mackie Academy which outlines clear pupil and school expectations. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Pupil Support and Attainment Teachers (PSAT) discuss these expectations when pupils return to school to ensure that they have a clear understanding of what they can expect from the school and, in return, the school's expectations in regard to: attendance, lateness, behaviour, effort, homework and progress. Should these expectations not be met, discussions will take place as to whether it is in the pupil's best interests to continue at school for the remainder of that year.

SQA Qualifications

By the beginning of S4, many of our pupils will be secure in their learning at the Broad General Education third level. Almost all of our pupils will engage with the SQA qualification framework from S4 of the Senior Phase. However, individual or small groups of pupils who have significant gaps in any of the six curriculum areas studied at third level will be recommended to continue with a different range of options in S4. These pupils will be identified through tracking, monitoring and reporting data and through discussion with PSAT staff, Additional Support for Learning (ASL) staff (where appropriate) and their parents/carers. A modified Senior Phase curriculum will then be devised which meets their needs.

Course Recommendations

The opportunity to personalise learning is evident in every pupil's education at Mackie Academy. Throughout the Broad General Education, pupils study subjects across the eight curricular areas (Languages and Literacy, Maths and Numeracy, Social Studies, Sciences, Technologies, Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Religious and Moral Education). As they progress towards the Senior Phase, pupils will personalise their learning by selecting subjects which link to their preferred career path and concentrate on maximising attainment in these areas. Throughout their school careers, pupils and parents/carers will be kept informed of progress and recommended subject progression routes through monitoring and tracking data, Parent Evenings, Curricular Evenings, individual discussions and their child's annual School Report.

Throughout each school session, staff and pupils discuss and negotiate targets, next steps and, where appropriate, pathways for the following year. Towards the end of S2, S3, S4 and S5, course recommendations are made for the following session. These recommendations are based upon a pupil's overall academic progress, effort, attendance, behaviour and attitude in that subject or curricular area. Occasionally, a pupil and/or parent/carer chooses not to follow school advice and selects a subject or level of course which is not advised. In such cases, where spaces are available in requested classes, discussion between all parties will take place to ensure the best learning and attainment outcomes for the pupil involved and the pupil's progress will be closely monitored.

A significant number of our Senior Phase pupils will want to progress their learning from National 5 to Higher Grade. We recommend the following pathways for pupils based on their progress at National 5:

Expected N5 result	Recommended progression
Grade A or B	Higher course in one year
Grade C	Possible two-year Higher course
Grade D or below	Consider re-sitting subject at N5 or choose alternative subject as it is unlikely they will achieve Higher

Recommendations from individual subject teachers will indicate the appropriate subject pathway based on predicted grades. If a pupil has demonstrated little or no commitment to a subject, they will not be recommended to continue to the next level.

S4 pupils and those S5/6 pupils who are studying National 2, 3, 4 or 5 courses begin these at the change of timetable in early May. S5/6 pupils studying Highers and Advanced Highers start their new courses in June when the SQA exam diet ends. S4 and S5 pupils use the Course Choice materials provided to make an informed decision for the following year based upon their expected attainment when SQA results are published in August. Subject to availability, S4 and S5 pupils who get better or worse than expected SQA results can adjust their curriculum accordingly. To ensure pupils settle quickly into their learning, the deadline for any curricular changes is the end of August.

Estimate Examinations

Estimate Examinations provide pupils with the opportunity to gain experience of the formal SQA process and to understand the knowledge and skills required to pass courses in May. Estimate exam timetables and expectations regarding attendance, punctuality and behaviour will be issued each year. The Estimate Exams provide teachers with clear data on pupils' progress which is used to provide pupils with next learning steps and strategies. In addition, the school uses this information to track and monitor pupils' overall progress and make recommendations for SQA presentation and progression routes for the following year (if appropriate). Pupils'

Estimate Exam grades are also shared with the SQA each year to indicate their likely attainment in the final exams.

Judgements with regard to SQA presentation levels for National 2 to Advanced Higher are made in early November. These decisions are based on careful evaluation of a pupils' progress in the course so far through classwork, course assessments, homework, and monitoring of an individual's effort and commitment. From 2019-20, the SQA no longer offer 'Recognition of Positive Achievement' (RPA) for pupils who have failed at National 5 to achieve their National 4 award in retrospect, but this will not change the way that decisions are made in school regarding the most appropriate level for a pupil to sit their NQ.

Most of our pupils will continue to be presented at the level they were working at prior to the November deadline and in such cases, pupils will continue with their coursework in preparation for the final exam in May. Any changes to a pupil's entry level prior to the November deadline or following Estimate Exams will be communicated to the pupil and parents.

If a parent/carer wishes to discuss their child's presentation status, the following process will apply:

- Initial communication received by the Pupil Support and Attainment teacher (PSAT)
- PSAT discusses the issue with Faculty Head / subject teacher and pupil to gain facts and then intimates the background and reason for the decision to the parent/carer
- Meeting held, if necessary, to allow all parties to discuss the situation
- If unresolved, the parent/carer contacts the Depute Head Teacher with responsibility for SQA (Mrs Larkworthy)

Study Leave

Senior Phase pupils (S4-S6) will be granted study leave in January/February for Estimate Examinations and May/June for final examinations. During this time, pupils may come in to school to study or see their teachers for support with the expectations that they wear full school uniform and ensure that they sign in and out of the building.

National Qualification Courses – SQA Unit Assessments and Coursework

Almost all National 2, 3 and 4 courses are assessed through three or four internally marked units. The unit assessments are marked pass/fail. There are no external examinations for National 4 (or below) qualifications.

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses no longer include internal assessments but will instead include an element of coursework which is externally marked and a final examination.

If concerns arise about the progress of any student, at any level, an academic cause for concern will be sent home to notify parents/carers of the situation and actions taken to date.

For National 5, an SQA overall award of A, B, C or D represents a pass in that subject. For Higher and Advanced Higher courses, an SQA overall award of A, B or C represents a pass in that subject.

National Courses with an Internally Assessed Component

Some National courses have an Internally Assessed Component which is marked and moderated by staff in school, then sampled by SQA through their verification process. All internally assessed marks will be shared with pupils via their class teacher who will discuss their results with them and explain why they have been awarded this mark. Pupils will also be made aware that marks are subject to change should SQA verifiers find reason to do so during their checks. Should a pupil wish to query their given mark, they should discuss this with the relevant Faculty Head in the first instance.

Assessment Arrangements (AAs)

The SQA stipulate that pupils can only be considered for AAs where there is clear evidence that the AA is required for a subject and level. Class teachers will review a pupils' progress and collect the required evidence, before discussing this with the pupil concerned and submitting the request and evidence to the school's Additional Support for Learning (ASL) department. Pupils who require AAs will then be issued with a letter outlining their individual arrangements before the Estimate Examinations. Following the Estimates, these pupils' papers will be reviewed, and discussions will again take place with subject teachers and individual pupils in order to finalise the arrangements for the SQA Exams in May. Individual SQA timetables will be issued to those who receive AAs both for estimates and the final exam.

SQA Coursework and Malpractice

All pupils in the senior phase will be issued with the SQA 'Your Coursework' booklet in September/October, which outlines the expectations for coursework which is externally assessed. SQA Guidance states that it is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that the work they submit is their own and does not contain offensive content and as such, teachers at Mackie will challenge pupils if they have evidence to suggest that any piece of work submitted in school for checking as part of an SQA qualification is plagiarised. Malpractice is taken very seriously in school as it a clear breach of SQA policy and can result in pupils being disqualified from a qualification or, in more serious cases, their entire suite of SQA qualifications. While every effort will be made by the school to minimise the likelihood of any malpractice, it must be understood that the responsibility for work submitted to the SQA ultimately lies with the pupils themselves.

SQA Post Results Service

A national two-stage process was introduced by the SQA during session 2013-2014.

- *Stage 1 – The Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service*

This will be applied for at the time of an examination if the school considers that a pupil has been disadvantaged, e.g. a close family member bereavement or serious illness. In relevant cases, a medical certificate may be required. The school has a window of ten days following the exam to submit such requests.

- *Stage 2 – The Post-Results Service*

After results are published in August, the school can request an administrative review of a pupil's examination and/or request to have the marking of the script checked. There is an SQA charge for unsuccessful requests and a candidate's grade can go down as well as up. We at Mackie Academy follow Aberdeenshire Council's guidelines for submission of such requests and each year all requests will be considered against the given criteria.

5. CONSULTATION PROCESS

These guidelines have been subject to consultation with sample groups of relevant stakeholders including staff, parents and pupils.

6. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

These guidelines will be reviewed and updated each session as the changes to National Qualifications take effect from 2017 - 2020.

7. APPENDICES

Fig 1 – The Mackie Academy Learning Wheel



Fig 2 – The SCQF Framework

