

Access to Marked Exam Papers Trial.

The SQA has advised heads of centres that a trial of access to marked exam papers will take place following results day in August 2024. This will encompass Geography (N5 and Higher); Graphic Communication (N5, Higher and Advanced Higher); Media (National 5); Music (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher); and Statistics (Advanced Higher). SQA co-ordinators will be able to access the marked papers from SQA Connect. Parents, carers and learners will be informed of this trial and, therefore, will be able to request papers.

Background

The SQA advised the NQ Working Group (on which the EIS sits) in late 2023 that a small scale trial of access to marked exam papers had taken place following results day in 2023. SQA deemed this to be successful, and cited satisfaction from practitioners. The EIS and other stakeholders on the group questioned the reliability of this trial and pointed to the potential issues, particularly in relation to workload, should the service be rolled out nationally across all subjects.

Subsequently, SQA announced the expanded trial to gather more information.

SQA Rationale

The SQA states that providing access to marked exam papers is part of its "commitment to transparency and openness". It further states that the aims are: to help inform appeal decisions; to help inform next steps in teaching and learning; to ensure transparency; and to inform any future rollout.

EIS position

The EIS has, for a number of years, been opposed to the return of marked exam papers as it has the potential to increase workload for Secondary teachers, including SQA co-ordinators. Specifically, members have voiced concerns that it risks creating expectations – from pupils, parents and some educational management - that teachers verify SQA marked papers in pursuit of speculative appeals.

Advice to members

All EIS Secondary branches should seek discussions with school managements with a view to agreeing protocols and parameters around this trial. It is important that this is not left to members in the subjects affected. Joint discussions should encompass the following points:

- SQA states that this is an "optional" service. Because SQA co-ordinators can access all candidates' marked scripts in the identified subjects and components does not require that they should; nor does it require that scripts are shared with candidates by default.
- Branches should, therefore, seek agreement only to access scripts where there has been a specific request or where teachers deem there to be a specific need.

- Limited, rather than wide-scale, access (that is, upon request rather than by default) will mitigate workload risks and maximise the security of pupil information.
- SQA appeals are now learner-directed (that is, learners can appeal on demand, regardless of school advice).
- Teachers cannot be expected to closely scrutinise such scripts or significant parts thereof **unless** there is a significant, bona fide concern **based on teacher professional judgement**.
- It is for teachers, working collaboratively, to make decisions around the use of such papers in teaching and learning, and moderation activities.
- **All SQA-related work must be accounted for in Working Time Agreements.**

The EIS nationally will monitor the implementation of this trial and will be in contact with members in the subjects concerned.