

January 2017
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Message from the General Secretary

Welcome back and a Happy New Year.

I hope that you have enjoyed your well-earned break over the festive period which will stand you in good stead for the forthcoming term, which looks to be as busy and hectic as ever.

Let me take this opportunity to underline the importance we attach to your work as a school Representative, and to re-iterate the invitation to let us know if there is anything we can do to support your efforts.

Best Wishes

Larry Flanagan

SQA Changes

It is becoming clear that a degree of confusion remains with regard to the implications of the changes to N5 awards for session 2017/18. The following summary is offered as a guide to issues which schools should be considering.

Following agreement on the removal of mandatory units from N5 courses from August 2017, the SQA has indicated its intention to restructure course materials without using existing units as organisers. This is a lengthier process than simply indicating that unit assessments were no longer mandatory and it leaves schools, once again, facing a tight turnaround from existing arrangements. SQA has undertaken to indicate significant changes to assessment arrangements by the end of January, particularly around any extended coursework. In the meantime, it is important that schools are aware of the key fact that units are being removed from N5 courses. (Titles within the “new” course descriptors are likely to broadly match those used in current documentation, but not as units.)

N4 courses, however, will retain mandatory internal unit assessments (plus added value assessment) and accordingly will be organised and assessed entirely differently from those at N5.

In light of these significant differences, and in the interests of ensuring the effective delivery of courses for all students, schools should be planning for discrete N4 and N5 classes, rather than seeking to run bi-level classes where pupils would face different assessment arrangements.

A further matter to be considered is that the absence of unit assessment at N5 will have the consequence of there being no fallback award of unit passes for candidates who do not pass the final exam. Free standing unit assessments will remain available but students will require to be entered for either a N5 course award (based on external assessment) or a series of unit awards – they cannot be entered for both. Ensuring that candidates are enrolled for courses which best suit their prior learning and attainment at the point at which options are being considered will be essential. Consideration is being given within the NQ Review Group to extending the “D” pass range to a 10% spread (i.e. 40 – 49 rather than 45- 49) to provide a bigger safety net but this has not been agreed as yet.

Action for Secondary Representatives: Please ensure that members are aware of these changes and that departmental discussion around the implications of the changes is facilitated. It is important, also, to seek discussion on assessment and timetabling matters with the senior management of your school as a matter of urgency, with a view to ensuring the school's appropriate response to such changes to senior phase course design and assessment.

'I, Daniel Blake' Screening – Saturday 4 March

As part of our ongoing Face up to Child Poverty Campaign, the Equality Committee will be screening Ken Loach's highly acclaimed 'I, Daniel Blake' and the EIS produced 'School Costs', on the morning of Saturday 4th March 2017, in Aberdeen (Belmont Filmhouse), Edinburgh (Filmhouse) and Glasgow (GFT). (The Glasgow screening will be followed by a Q&A with speakers to be confirmed. The panel session will be filmed and uploaded onto the EIS website for further viewing.)

Members are invited to the screenings on a first come, first served, two tickets per member basis.

Following the national screenings, Local Associations may organise their own screenings, either unilaterally or in conjunction with other trade unions, for a cost of £80 per screening and venue. (Any additional screenings at the same venue are available for a cost of £60.)

Action for Representatives and Branch Secretaries: Please display posters prominently within your establishment, make members aware of the national day of screening and encourage attendance. Members can download two free tickets each to attend the screenings by visiting: - http://www.eis.org.uk/Meetings_and_Events/DanielBlake.htm

International Women's Day, 8th March – How do we Get It Right for Girls?

International Women's Day is on 8th March, and provides an ideal opportunity to use the EIS resources on tackling misogynistic attitudes which can be found at: http://www.eis.org.uk/Gender_Equality/Get_Right_Girls.htm

We're keen to hear about what's working in your setting to promote gender equality, and your ideas for what else could be done. Please use the large postcard(s) enclosed to encourage members to give us their feedback on this topic. You could pass this to an Equality Rep, or to any member with an interest in this issue. We'll share all the ideas we receive with members on International Women's Day using social media and the website.

Action for Representatives and Branch Secretaries: Complete the large 'How do we get it right for girls?' postcard(s) included in your mailing and return (freepost) by 24 February 2017.

EIS Page Scholarship 2017/18

Application forms are now available for the 2017/2018 Page Scholarship to America being offered by the EIS in association with the English-Speaking Union.

Walter Hines Page (US Ambassador in London during the First World War) gave great encouragement to the founding of the English-Speaking Union in 1918.

The Scholarship is awarded annually to a teacher/lecturer in a Scottish school/college and is intended to promote the research and exchange of educational ideas in the field of communication between Britain and America. The successful Scholar travels to the USA to study a specific aspect of American education which interests her/him and which is relevant to her/his own professional responsibilities.

The value of the EIS Page Scholarship is £2,400 which gives the Scholar the opportunity to travel widely in the USA. Throughout the tour, the Scholar is the guest of the American Branches of the English-Speaking Union.

Besides being EIS members, applicants must also have taught for at least 5 years.

The closing date for submission of applications to the Education Department is 28 February 2017.

Action for Representatives and Branch Secretaries: Please make relevant teachers in your establishment aware of this opportunity. Requests for further details and application forms should be addressed to the EIS Education Department at 46 Moray Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6BH (e-mail: imeechan@eis.org.uk).

CPD Events

All national CPD events and those which the EIS Education Department are advised of by Local Associations and Colleges/Universities, are publicised on the EIS website. Members can find information on professional learning events by visiting http://www.eis.org.uk/CPD/CPD_Events.htm, as well as by looking out for local publicity of additional Local Association held events.

Action for Representatives and Branch Secretaries: Please make members aware of how they can be kept up to date on national and local professional learning opportunities provided by the EIS.