

Email to CEC Acting Head of Schools
Re: Changing Grades in ACM
12 June 2021

Dear Lorna

During the Friday morning session of the EIS AGM, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills was asked about whether teacher judgement had primacy in awarding grades in the Alternative Certification Model. In particular, she was asked about the role of using prior years' grades to adjust grades being awarded this year, and what a teacher should do if instructed by their local authority to change a grade that they believe is valid.

Her response was clear and unequivocal. Whilst she said using prior years' data can form a useful part of Quality Assurance, to "sense check" grades as part of moderation, if a teacher's professional judgement remains that the grade they have awarded is valid and correct, then that result must stand. Further, she explicitly requested that she be contacted directly with any examples of teacher professional judgement being overturned.

I have already been contacted by secondary teachers, including CLs, in several different schools, and in several different subject areas, who feel that moderation and quality assurance risks going beyond the clear terms laid out by the Cabinet Secretary (and, indeed, the First Minister) and who feel they are, indeed, being forced to alter grades, or grade boundaries, in order to ensure this year's results are more in line with those of earlier years - in other words, who feel that a variation on last year's disastrous algorithm is in danger of being applied.

I know you are as keen as all of us to make sure that the ACM is applied fairly and consistently, and I commend the way you and your team have worked constructively with Teacher Panel and others to try to manage what is an extremely challenging system. There are, as we all know, many inconsistencies between SQA's headline messaging and the detail of individual subject guidance, and we are all keen to try to resolve these in a way that does not disadvantage pupils, nor put undue pressure on schools and teachers. I am sure any concerns about moves away from the primacy of teacher professional judgement are due to misunderstandings that can be swiftly resolved by further collaborative work. I would welcome your assurance that, to quote the First Minister, "If a teacher's judgement is that they stand by the results they gave, that result stands. It is not changed.". I should also be grateful if you would ensure that this message is shared with colleagues in schools, as well as other stakeholders - if you felt it appropriate, perhaps a message from us both, as joint secretaries of the LNCT, would give reassurance and clarity to everyone?

I will be sharing this email with EIS members in Edinburgh. I will also be making sure all members are aware of the Cabinet Secretary's request that she is directly contacted with information about where practice on the ground does not match what she has said should be happening, and offering to act as a conduit for any such examples in the, I am sure unlikely, event that they were to exist.

I look forward to hearing your views.

Kind regards

Alison

Alison Murphy
Local Association Secretary

*Edinburgh Local Association
EIS
46 Moray Place
Edinburgh
EH3 6BH*

*Mobile: 07948 280 906
<http://www.eis.org.uk/edinburgh/>
Twitter: @EdinburghEIS*

Domestic abuse an issue? Go to <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Contact-us> for help.