

## Message from the General Secretary

Dear Rep

As this is the last Bulletin for 2020 please allow me to offer a huge vote of thanks to you for the sterling work you do on behalf of members, especially in this most testing of years. I wish you and your family a safe and restful festive period. Enclosed with this mailing is your copy of the EIS calendar. I hope that as we collectively turn the pages, we are marking progress to a better place.

Again, thank you for your commitment to others.

Stay safe

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Larry Flanagan'.

## COVID-19 Update

The Scottish Government recently announced that there will not be early school closures in the run-up to Christmas nor a delayed start to the new term.

This has understandably left many teachers across Scotland feeling disappointed and angry, as this decision once again shows a complete disregard for the concerns and welfare of teachers.

The EIS had asked that schools move to remote learning in the final week to ensure that senior staff did not find themselves having to work during the Christmas break to deal with any COVID outbreaks, and also to minimise the risk for staff, pupils and parents of infections ruining the Christmas break.

Allowing this would have helped protect staff, students and their families during the festive season and reduced the risk of pupils or teachers being required to self-isolate over Christmas – while also ensuring that education provision continued via remote learning.

The issue is now being pursued at Local Association Level.

EIS Council recently approved a number of actions and policy approaches, including a call for Level 4 to trigger automatic consideration of blended / remote learning contingencies and a renewed demand for mass proactive testing in schools. These are available to view in full in the COVID section of the EIS website ([www.eis.org.uk/Health-And-Safety/COVID19](http://www.eis.org.uk/Health-And-Safety/COVID19)).

## Not at all Costs

EIS Council recently approved a communications campaign whereby comments from the latest all member survey will be organised into feedback packages which we intend to send to the First Minister, to illustrate the realities of teaching during a pandemic.

A social media campaign will run highlighting the issues members raised in the survey, and renewing our call for areas of high infection, for example those in Level 4, to move temporarily to blended or remote learning.

**Action for Reps and Branch Secs:** Please actively encourage members to engage with the social media campaign using the hashtag #NotAtAllCosts.

## Member Survey Results

In light of the recent upsurge in COVID-19 cases in Scotland, and the introduction of the Strategic Framework, the EIS Executive carried out a survey of member opinion on the current situation, including the appetite for potential industrial action.

The survey closed on the evening of 22nd November. 18,733 responses were collected from school-based members working in the Primary, Secondary, Special and Nursery education sectors.

The results lay bare the depth of the concern held by Scotland's teachers over potential risk to their and their pupils' health, with less than one-third of teachers indicating that they currently feel safe from potential COVID infection in schools. A full report of the survey results can be found in the COVID-19 section of the EIS website.

Local Associations have been given a breakdown of data for their Council area.

**Action for Reps:** Please make members aware of the results of the survey and look out for local survey results which will be shared with Reps and Local Association Secretaries to support local campaigning.

## SQA: Alternative Certification of N5

The SQA has now published subject specific advice covering some aspects of the altered assessment arrangements for this session arising from the challenges presented by COVID-19.

Some of the associated communication from the SQA suggested that prelims should take place as usual for N5 candidates. The EIS has raised this with SQA who have agreed that with the cancellation of the exam diet, there is no need for prelims (practice for the final exams) to take place.

The running of prelims in the usual way to generate key assessment evidence for large N5 cohorts would:

- incur COVID infection risk;
- generate additional workload for teachers and students;
- use up swathes of valuable learning and teaching time;
- be contrary to the wellbeing principle of the Recovery Curriculum;
- create equity issues.

We are clear that assessment of N5 students' work should be classroom based and timed to suit the needs of learners such that they are best able to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge and skills in the area of the course being assessed at any given time.

**Action for Reps and Branch Secs:** More information related to the alternative certification process for N5 is due from SQA by 10th December. In the meantime, EIS FAQs can be found in the COVID section of the EIS website ([www.eis.org.uk/Health-And-Safety/COVID19](http://www.eis.org.uk/Health-And-Safety/COVID19)).

## SQA: Higher and Advanced Higher

In light of the continuing disruption caused by COVID-19, on 8th December the Deputy First Minister announced the cancellation of the Higher and Advanced Higher exam diet. The EIS had argued from the outset that there should be no exam diet, predicting that the COVID-19 virus would make it impractical and potentially inequitable to hold exams.

Since October particularly, it has become increasingly obvious that pupil attendance has been significantly affected by COVID-19, with large numbers of young people having had to self-isolate at home, many of them more than once, and a significant number, up to three or four times so far. Data provided by local authorities has shown that young people from poorer backgrounds have been disproportionately affected by COVID-related disruption. The likelihood is that there will be further such interruption to school-based learning in the new year and possibly beyond, depending on the behavior of the virus into the Spring.

Although it came much later than we would have wished, the EIS has therefore welcomed the Deputy First Minister's announcement, seeing it also to be in the interests of the wellbeing both of students and teachers who have faced prolonged uncertainty in relation to many aspects of school life, final course assessment significant among them.

The SQA has indicated that although the alternative certification model for H and AH will broadly mirror that for N5, there will be more flexibility around the nature of the learner evidence that can be used to inform awards ([www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96102.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96102.html)). This is likely to have implications for school-based decisions around prelims. The EIS considers that our advice around prelims for N5 is applicable to H and AH where prelims are not already underway.

## SQA Generated Workload

The Institute has repeatedly stressed to both the SQA and to Scottish Government that alternative assessment arrangements, including cross marking exercises and understanding standards events, are significant generators of additional workload which cannot be accommodated alongside existing arrangements.

In spite of SQA's earlier rejection of our request that teachers be paid for the marking of key assessment items in lieu of final exams, the EIS continued to press on members' behalf for remuneration for this additional activity. We therefore welcome the announcement of a one-off payment to teachers involved in delivering N5, H and AH qualifications this year and we will be engaging Scottish Government on the detail of this, including level of payment. We also acknowledge the step taken by the Deputy First Minister to address workload by indicating that the remaining inset days for the Secondary sector will be devoted to assessment and moderation of national qualifications.

Nationally the EIS will push for further workload alleviations, for example by seeking funding for supply staff to backfill "marking days", removal of elements of current WTA arrangements to free up the time that will be required to deliver the alternative certification model, further inset days, and we are writing today to the SQA to request the suspension of verification of N1-N4 courses.

EIS FAQs on the alternative assessment of NQ courses this year can be accessed here ([www.eis.org.uk/Coronavirus/SQAFaq](http://www.eis.org.uk/Coronavirus/SQAFaq)) and will be updated in the coming days.

**Action for Reps and Branch Secs:** Should the outcomes of the discussion be unsatisfactory, then the matter should be raised with the School/Branch Rep or Local Association Secretary, who will advise on potential next steps to resolve the matter.

## Test and Protect Updated Self-Isolation Advice

Test and Protect has published updated Advice for Employers. This guidance is intended for use by both employers and employees working in health and social care settings and non-healthcare settings. It references again the Joint Statement on Fair Work agreed between the Scottish Government and the STUC in July.

Key points:

- anyone who has symptoms must self-isolate straight away, and use NHS Inform or call 0800 028 2816 to arrange a test
- people who have tested positive for coronavirus must self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the time their symptoms started
- self-isolation may be required on more than one occasion

The advice stresses that it is critical that employers are as supportive as possible and should never ask employees to finish their self-isolation early and return to the workplace unless in response to specific advice provided by Test and Protect or local Health Protection teams.

The updated advice is available at: [www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/pages/advice-for-employers/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/pages/advice-for-employers/)

## EIS-FELA Forth Valley College Members Escalation of Industrial Action

Members at Forth Valley College voted in favour of action short of strike over attempts to remove 30 lecturers' jobs and replace them with "instructor assessors". In the ballot, 80% of participating members voted for action, with turnout of 53%.

Members are now participating in action short of strike which will run to the New Year, the next escalation of this action will take place on Thursday 10th December.

**Action for Reps and Branch Secs:** Please show solidarity with members taking action by posting on Facebook or Twitter – don't forget to tag @eisforthvalley #collegesNeedLecturers

## EIS-FELA Ballot: Campaign Against Replacement of Lecturer Posts by Instructors

The National Executive of EIS-FELA has opened a consultative ballot on industrial action on Thursday 26th November which will run until Tuesday 15th December in support of its campaign to oppose the replacement of lecturer posts by Instructor Assessors - which seem to have the same teaching duties as lecturers but less favourable terms and conditions such as less

pay, increased weekly teaching time, no preparation and correction time, fewer holidays, no right to permanency after 3 years and no professional registration or access to teaching qualifications (such as TQFE).

**Action for Reps and Branch Secs:** Please support the campaign by posting on Facebook and twitter tagging @EISFela and #CollegesNeedLecturers

## Oppose the Privatisation of Shetland College

The EIS has concerns over the proposed merger of Shetland College, Train Shetland and NAFC, in particular that the newly merged institution would be a private company as opposed to a public body like almost all other Scottish colleges. The campaign is now heading into the Scottish Government consultation phase and the EIS-FELA Branch is looking for your support in calling for the Scottish Government to reject the proposal that Shetland College is taken out of public control.

**Action for Reps and Branch Secs:** Share messages of support for the campaign by posting on Facebook or Twitter – don't forget to tag #KeepShetlandCollegePublic @EISFELAShetland

## Student Teacher Placements

The current Covid-19 pandemic is presenting many challenges for all teachers and schools. Student teachers may well have begun their 4th Year BED or PGDE placement in your school and will also be looking for advice and support during this difficult time. The EIS has opened a student survey, also (with the chance of winning a Microsoft Surface).

**Action for Reps:** Please approach new students and encourage them to join the EIS online via the website. This is free until the end of their Probation Year. Please also encourage students to complete the EIS student survey which closes on 31st Jan. ([www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Studentteacher](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Studentteacher))

## Updating Member Details

If you have new colleagues in your school who are EIS members, they should update their school base or personal contact details on the myEIS section of the website. Remind them to log on using their EIS number. Alternatively, as a Rep you should have access to member lists for your school and you can update details on their behalf.

**Action for Reps:** Visit [www.eis.org.uk/Account/EISLogin](http://www.eis.org.uk/Account/EISLogin) to update member details.

## Using EIS Anti-Racist Posters to Spark Local Conversation

Racism is real - and we must work together to end it. Many of you will already have seen the new EIS posters raising awareness of the importance of us all standing together against racism. The posters can be used as a reflective starting point for engaging in local conversations about anti-racism.

**Action for Reps:** Please display the poster series prominently in your establishment and share with members also. Use the posters to prompt local conversations about anti-racism. Some prompt questions for discussion are available here at [www.eis.org.uk/Anti-Racism/EISAntiRacistInitiatives](http://www.eis.org.uk/Anti-Racism/EISAntiRacistInitiatives)

## TUC Health and Safety Reps Training

The EIS is offering a two day TUC accredited Health and Safety Reps online training course on the 28th and 29th January. Having a Health & Safety Representative in your workplace is extremely important, as it is a key role which can make a tangible difference to working conditions, especially in the time of Covid-19.

**Action for Reps:** If you are interested in either of these training courses please contact your Local Association Secretary and then register with Jennifer Cook [JCook@eis.org.uk](mailto:JCook@eis.org.uk).

## Scottish Union Learning Courses

A range of Scottish Union Learning funded courses will be delivered in January, as follows: Teacher Health and Wellbeing; Building Teacher Leadership in Digital Environments; Building Teacher Leadership; Developing Awareness of the Mental Health Needs of Children and Young People – Secondary

All course details and a booking form will be available on the EIS website: [www.eis.org.uk/Meetings-And-Events/Courses](http://www.eis.org.uk/Meetings-And-Events/Courses)

## Opportunity for Disabled Members

**Tuesday 19th January 10-12pm.**

The EIS is hosting an online event for members who identify as disabled, or who have access or communication difficulties, on the 19th of January. The meeting will be an opportunity to network, discuss support and share good practice. Bookings can be made at [www.eis.org.uk/Equality-Webinars](http://www.eis.org.uk/Equality-Webinars)

**Action for Reps:** Please share the details of this event with any disabled members.