



The Educational  
Institute of Scotland

Dr Janet Brown  
Chief Executive  
SQA  
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Ref: AB/LM  
12 May 2017  
Email: [abradley@eis.org.uk](mailto:abradley@eis.org.uk)

Dear Dr Brown

I write on behalf of members of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) who have responsibility for delivering national qualifications.

Regarding the recent changes to course specifications, teachers, particularly in Computing, Physics and Biology, have met the recently published detail with what would not be over-statement to describe as alarm, dismay and deep anger.

With regards to National 5 Computing, we have been inundated at EIS HQ with correspondence about the significant course content changes being made in this area – belying the SQA commitment that the removal of unit assessments would not change courses.

The strength of feeling among teachers of all of the subjects listed above has been intensified by the short notice of the changes. The EIS has previously raised concerns about the late arrival of details in terms of changes to assignments and exam papers, which clearly had made it difficult to judge the totality of the changes proposed. The agreement was to migrate to course or exam assessment, from previous unit assessments, those elements deemed central to the course which would not be assessed otherwise. We remain to be convinced that changes have been limited in this way.

In best case scenarios, courses begin in August, still leaving only a matter of weeks for consideration and planning to take account of the changes in the context of development time having been fully accounted for within school Working Time Agreements for this session. In the majority of cases, however, the reality is that teachers have a matter of days in which to respond to the changes, with the imminent commencement of senior phase timetables.

Teachers feel yet again that they have been put in an impossible position by the SQA: respond to the changes as required and suffer the consequences to their health and wellbeing in terms of increased workload and stress; resist delivering the necessary response to the changes in the timescale required and suffer increased anxiety at the prospect of compromising the quality of the learning experiences and/ or outcomes for the young people that they teach. Neither of these is in the interests of sound education; neither suggests that the SQA as a body which has significant influence over the working lives of teachers and students, is sufficiently sensitive to the needs of either group.

This latest misjudgement by the SQA has simply served to deepen the mistrust of the SQA among EIS members who are involved in delivering national qualifications, and indeed of all in education who can see the detrimental impact that SQA actions have on the morale, working conditions and wellbeing of secondary teachers and their potential to jeopardise learner outcomes.

It truly is difficult to comprehend why the SQA continues to act in such a way as to compound its alienation from the teaching profession in the context of recent feedback from teachers and other stakeholders.

This is a matter that the EIS wishes to discuss in further detail at our forthcoming meeting. In the meantime, I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Bradley". The script is cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'A' and 'B'.

Andrea Bradley  
Assistant Secretary  
Education & Equality