

Subject-specific Feedback

2 March 2021

NASUWT evidence to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee

The NASUWT's submission to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee sets out the subject-specific challenges members have raised with us in order to help inform the Committee's scrutiny of the support for teacher assessment in 2020-21 by both the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Scottish Government. The NASUWT's evidence is informed directly by serving teacher and headteacher members and also by the work of its representative committees and consultative structures, made up of practising teachers and school leaders working in the education system.:

The Union welcomes the Committee's scrutiny of the SQA guidance for individual subjects. In order to support the Committee's understanding of the subject-specific challenges which remain across the curriculum, both in subjects with a practical element and without a practical element, and to evidence what further support is necessary between now and June for teachers to provide their assessments of pupils' attainment this academic year, please find below direct member feedback which best highlights the key concerns.

ART AND DESIGN

"The bulk of the folio work has to be done in school, and pupils have not had access to this since before the Christmas holidays. Provided pupils come into school when permitted to do so for practical subjects, we will be able to gather sufficient evidence."

DANCE

Dance is only able to be undertaken outdoors:

“We are not allowed to dance indoors at all. We were also not allowed to dance indoors in 2020 when in Tier 4, which was quite a lot of my teaching time.

“Though dance is allowed outdoors, it must be kept at a two-metre distance. The weather is one massive barrier to this being done efficiently, as well as suitable surfaces. Many schools do not have any AstroTurf/any weather surfaces outdoors, and so the suggestion is that dancers dance on either concrete (not suitable at all, and removes the option of floorwork) or by taking mats outside. How these mats are dragged outside, by a single staff member, cleaned prior and after use, is a massive barrier, as well as their general efficiency (restricting dancers to just the space of the mat).”

“Dance is not allowed indoors. Why not? Where is the science behind this? It is possible to distance and access fresh air. If brass, singing and woodwind are now allowed inside then why not Dance? This decision, without justification, is making a mockery of the qualification. An email to the SQA was met the with guide to focus on learning and teaching.. the learning and teaching is the dancing!”

Course content has not been adapted or removed:

“The SQA has not removed/adapted anything for Dance at N5 or higher. Pupils are still expected to produce:

- N5: A solo routine, a choreography (that is performed by two other class members), an essay about this routine and a full written paper.
- H: Two solos, a choreography (that is performed by one to four other people), an essay about this routine and a full written paper.

Even on a non-COVID year, these courses are absolutely saturated. Every year, I find myself dedicating at a conservative estimate at least 36 hours outside of class teaching time per level between January and March in order

to support every student in accessing and completing each component. This is obviously not attainable in any normal work-life balance, and certainly not feasible this year, making me very nervous about students completing all components.”

Challenges of gathering evidence online:

“Many colleagues have not had any opportunity to film solos even for unit evidence, never mind contributing towards final assessments.

“The continuation of the choreography element of these courses is a farce. Students are 'advised to stay two metres apart' and only use 'appropriate spatial elements and devices', which totally removes the chance for partner work and proxemics - two things that are key to delivering an engaging story and choreography.

“Trying to support students in this online is very difficult, and even more so for them as they try to teach their peers via team video calls.

“I feel very strongly that Dance has been severely impacted in a very negative way, but also that we have been forgotten about.”

DRAMA

How to assess facial expressions and voice in drama:

“A real issue for Drama is assessing our students fairly on facial expressions and voice if we are not allowed to film them without wearing masks.

“How can we grade facial expressions if students are required to wear masks for their performances? It also obscures voice as well; another aspect of performance needed to be graded.

Ability to come into school to do practicals:

“Provided pupils come into school when permitted to do so for practical subjects, we will be able to gather sufficient evidence. But if they do not engage with in-school opportunities, there will be no chance that we can gather enough evidence for them in order to pass; any evidence that we have

from before Christmas will not be of the appropriate quality for a pass in this subject.”

ENGLISH

There is insufficient time available:

“The major issue in English remains one of time: four separate pieces of evidence are required, only one of which is coursework, which can be progressed by pupils right now. The other three (Reading for Understanding, Analysis & Evaluation, Scottish Set Text and Critical Essay) all need to be assessed under timed conditions, in a closed-book assessment using unseen papers.

“When we eventually return to school buildings, English teachers will want to consolidate Remote Learning and then offer pupils at least one practice at each of the three elements in assessment conditions. All of this work will need to be marked and feedback given before the final assessment opportunities are offered.

“This undoubtedly means that most English Departments will be running a set of assessments in May which are, essentially, internal exams which need to be marked and quality assured by teachers while they are still running a full timetable of classes. This seems completely unrealistic and unworkable.”

GEOGRAPHY

Insufficient time available and increased workload compounded by inconsistencies between National 4 and National 5:

“National 4 Added Value Unit (AVU) – why hasn’t this been removed as a requirement in line with other subjects such as science (which often require a practical element for this)? The Assignment was removed for National 5 Geography, and often this is based upon practical fieldwork which also provides the basis for National AVU assessment. This is particularly the case (which is quite common) where both National 4 & 5 are delivered in the same class. Retaining National 4 AVU is an unnecessary workload burden as it will

involve redesigning assessment material and activities, and it does not parallel the rational applied for National 5.”

Challenges in finding up-to-date information from the SQA:

“The SQA website subject pages need to be updated as a one-stop location for all of the information on changes to courses and assessment for 2020/21, e.g. when trying to find details on the changes to National 5 geography course content, the subject page provides a pdf from October 2020 called National Course Modification Summary Geography, which does not provide specific details for National 5 but instead has an embedded link which then takes you to a web page with ten tile options (one of which takes you back to subject pages in a circular route). After this, there is no clarity where to find the information. From the pdf, it would suggest a consultation response which is 140 pages long. The amount of time wasted on trying to source such basic information is ridiculous.

Clearer messaging around prelims for Higher:

“We need clarity that a prelim (or anything like a prelim) is not required for Higher geography. This clarity is provided for National 5 in currently published SQA documentation, but it is not explicit for Higher. Clear messaging around this needs to be provided, as despite the SQA language around quality rather than quantity of evidence, the approach of many school managers is to default to the later. If prelims are not explicitly discouraged clearly in SQA documentation and messaging, then an unsustainable workload burden will potentially be put on young people and their teachers.”

Map extracts required:

“The SQA needs to provide all of the OS Map extracts required to support the 2020/21 papers which they have provided, as they are likely to be the primary basis of quality assessment evidence for estimates. These need to also be provided in electronic (as well as hard copy) format.”

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Cake Craft/Practical Cookery/Health and Food Tech

“Happy with guidance as long as there is a chance to be in school and cook to do the practical cookery assessment.”

HISTORY

Confusion surrounding candidate evidence:

“The SQA updates mention that ‘the evidence does not need to be produced on a single occasion; however it should be produced under supervision and control, where possible’. I would like some clarification about whether or not candidate evidence must be under timed conditions, and in what circumstances would evidence, which has been completed otherwise, would be admissible. What mechanisms are in place to prevent teachers from presenting evidence which has not been completed under timed arrangements as evidence which has? The SQA has already indicated that it will accept evidence which has been typed by candidates, which throws open the difficulty of distinguishing ‘exam’ evidence from other evidence.”

HOSPITALITY

Generic guidance:

“Guidance for the skills for work courses seems to be generic, even though the challenges are very different for the different subject areas. Hospitality faces very distinct challenges.”

Need clarity on sound evidence base:

“We do not have any clear guidance on what we are allowed to accept as evidence online (i.e. pupil reviews over a live google meet etc.).

National leadership is required:

“There is no combined thinking; schools are all trying to come up with solutions individually, which will ultimately lead to very different experiences for the pupils from different schools and very different levels of evidence for assessment purposes. We need a Scotland-wide standard for each of the Units making up this course.”

Assessment support packs need to be updated:

“We had very detailed and prescriptive assessment support packs before COVID, but these have not been updated in any way to reflect the current situation.”

Equity across subject areas required:

“It seems as if Skills for Work: Hospitality has been forgotten.”

LANGUAGES

Quantity of assessment required in remaining time:

“The main concern is our senior pupils and the quantity of assessing which we have to do in languages. Since we have only had the writing assignments removed for both N5 and H, we still have to issue a reading paper, a writing paper, a listening paper and a speaking performance. The reading, listening and writing in themselves will be challenging enough. Ordinarily, we would have ample time to do practice papers, and teaching topic-based vocabulary would have been quicker without many phases of interrupted learning, such as still being in the first lockdown in June last year, pupils self-isolating throughout the Autumn term and now a second lockdown.

“Modern languages have four assessments - Reading, Writing, Listening and Talking. Given the time scale, this will be difficult to achieve. The Talking Performance is particularly difficult to prepare for at a distance. It is very time consuming; pupils need to practise one-to-one with their teacher to ensure accuracy and pronunciation. Pupils who have not engaged much with learning will find talking particularly stressful. Even those who engage fully with their learning under normal conditions find it stressful.”

Inconsistencies across Advanced Higher, Higher and National 5:

“This is usually the time of year where teachers will have spent ample time preparing pupils for their speaking performances and ensuring enough practice is given before sitting the exam. With news that the AH speaking exams have been cancelled, it seems bizarre that the expectation is still there

for the H and N5 speaking exams to go ahead. We do not know yet when we will be back in the classroom to ensure all pupils are fully prepared for it. In my school for certain, there are still some engagement issues with S4 pupils and I am sure this is the case elsewhere too, so preparation at home in advance is not going to work out for all learners. We then have the issue of what measures will need to be put in place in order to support health and safety of staff and pupils during speaking exams.

“AH talking has been removed, so now pupils have to do more to achieve N5 or H than AH. This does not make sense.”

Lack of guidance on remote assessment from the SQA:

“The SQA has not said if we can assess remotely, so the assumption is that it has to be done in school and a level of social distancing and effective recording will need to be considered.”

Shifting sands of expectations from the SQA:

“Since speaking is a stressful and time-consuming skill/exam to prepare for, and with pupils being required to catch up with assessments for lots of other subjects too, is there a value in us still doing it? Will the SQA likely drop that exam at the last minute?

“It would relieve a lot of pressure from pupils and teachers if the Talking Performance was removed from N5 and Higher Modern Languages.”

Unsuitable French N5 paper:

“The SQA-issued N5 French papers are unsuitable for use - they included a topic that is not usually taught at N5 (gap year) and the level of the language is far trickier than usual, with several more technically specific pieces of vocabulary being included which does not support pupils who may have large gaps in their learning due to non-engagement with remote learning. This means that we will then be limited to solely our prelim papers and have no choice in getting the best grades possible for our learners.”

MATHS

Engagement remotely:

“We have some learners whose engagement during lockdown has been exceptional and we have some who have struggled to cope with the experience for many reasons and we have some who have not engaged at all, despite various strategies being tried to offer support. Week upon week, the engagement is dropping, even from some of our best pupils – some of the pupils are reaching out and letting their teacher know that they are struggling with mental health or just finding it hard to be motivated, or they just do not see the point as they think they might not get back to school before the Summer. From what I am hearing from colleagues in other schools and authorities, it is a similar picture across the country.”

Insufficient time:

“Blended learning may sound good in theory but in practice, in my opinion, it may be more of a hindrance than a help. When planning for the possibility of blended learning last August, timetables were reworked as best we could, but I would have saw my Higher pupils once a week at most and in different groups. Online learning is a far superior option to this, despite the drawbacks.

“I am really worried about the timescale for everything! To make any of this feasible, we need the senior phase pupils back full time ASAP. If they return on 15 March, that is 14 school days until Easter break and would allow us to get into consolidation/finish courses/revision, but would not be realistic for doing assessments (I don't think?). Post-Easter break, there are 28 school days until the May weekend and (even if there is a return before Easter) this is a very tight window for all subjects to implement assessments and conduct Quality Assurance.”

Workload:

“I am extremely concerned about the workload and wellbeing for teachers and pupils when face-to-face learning returns. Online learning is far from ideal for young people and the reality is that teachers will need to revisit much of what

has been covered when normal schooling resumes. I know that teachers are feeling anxious about meeting pupils' needs educationally without overloading them and whilst rebuilding their confidence. I am also really worried about our senior phase pupils in particular, as it looks like (in time) they will be facing a number of assessments across subjects in order to inform the provisional results.

"For the S5/6, we really need to do two assessments to fit the SQA criteria as we do not have any prelim evidence. One late April/early May and one at the end of May? If all departments are on a similar timescale, this will be major pressure for the pupils."

Balance of grade A to C questions:

"The SQA guidance on producing a maths assessment is to have approximately 65% grade C and 35% grade A questions. I do not believe it is fair to expect this session's cohorts at N5/H/AH to be able to cope with the same proportion of grade A questions as in a normal maths exam. These pupils have missed at least six months of face-to-face teaching in the past year and this will have an impact. I appreciate that the SQA has already taken positive steps in maths by reducing the expected time for assessments and optionality sections, but I would ask that the balance of grade A to C questions is reconsidered."

Insufficient quality assurance guidance:

"It would be helpful to have more details on how Quality Assurance will work, taking into account the impact of lockdown and extension deadline for provisional results.

"There is a suggestion that there should be quality assurance across the authority. Could we have more details about the expectation for this? Moderation would involve passing papers between schools and meeting to discuss - all a concern when trying to meet the COVID health and safety requirements for social distancing, sanitising, and quarantining papers etc. Also, this would require time – when face-to-face teaching returns, we are going to be extremely busy with ongoing L&T and preparing, implementing

and marking assessments for our senior phase pupils which will undoubtedly be our priority.

“How will the SQA Quality Assurance system work? Will staff involved in carrying out the QA process for the SQA undertake training? How many candidate scripts will be requested and will these be requested for named candidates? What is the timescale for departments receiving feedback on evidence? There is concern that if a candidate evidence was deemed unsatisfactory at a later stage, this would require additional assessment to meet any required action with limited time to prepare, administer, mark and quality assure new assessments.”

Internal Assessment Concerns:

“The guidance is vague, the Maths team state at Higher “there are no level A topics, level A questions are more involved and cover several areas (not an exact quote). This may sound ok, but in reality and based on previous experience (most Maths prelim paper appeals years back were rejected due to “insufficient quality/difficulty of paper”, far more than in other subjects, I fear that this vagueness at Higher is a cover to reject results that the SQA do not want.

“There is only one new paper issued on SQA Secure. The SQA must have three ready: 2019, 2020 and there is always a spare. There should be at least two, more likely three issued to departments so that we can make up effective and secure papers to assess pupils. These papers have already been paid for by schools in the entry fees, why are they not issued.

“Three papers to select from would also lead to more secure assessments, tutors will “help richer students that can afford them” with these questions, whether they should or not - having three would make that much harder. Allowing the current situation will disadvantage the poorer students.

“SQA could issue an unseen paper for all pupils to sit in Maths on a specific date. Marked internally. Much more secure.

“The process where we award grades, then SQA review our materials and may not like it puts too much stress on staff making these papers up. We do not have the resources of the SQA, so it can never be as good. It is not a fair situation, if they want to verify the evidence, they should ask to see the papers before issued - could send them in in April, feedback and sit assessments in May.

“Overall, some has been done but too little. There are not enough question papers on SQA secure and the auditing/moderation process is a big concern.”

MEDIA

“Changes are mostly mergers and have become confusing. Exam paper 1 - much fairer though.”

MUSIC

“For the performance element (60%), pupils still have to record a substantial amount of music (10 minutes for Higher for example). Many of our pupils do not have instruments at home and have been unable to practise since before the Christmas holidays. If these pupils do not/cannot engage with the in-school opportunities over the next few weeks as we enter a phased return for pupils in practical subjects, there will be no chance that we can gather enough evidence for them in order to pass.”

“Drama & Music: N4 requirements (minus tonight's update about the removal of AVU) still don't bring it in line with N5. In Music they now must do more at N4 than N5. Why is there no vertical streamlining? Why are we still waiting in February for this information with N5 was updated in December?”

MUSIC TECHNOLOGY

“In order to complete the project (70%), pupils need access to software and hardware that is only available to them in school. They have been unable to make any progress with their projects since before the Christmas holidays. If these pupils do not/cannot engage with the in-school opportunities over the next few weeks as we enter a phased return for pupils in practical subjects,

there will be no chance that we can gather enough evidence for them in order to pass.”

PHOTOGRAPHY

“A few pupils do not have a camera at home and are clearly disadvantaged.”

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Due to restrictions, pupils have been unable to train or participate in their sport:

“In my authority, we have had very restricted physical education for the majority of the school year so far with a significant number of young people unable to train or participate within their sport now for close to a year. We had a brief two-week period for indoor sports before returning to Level 4 restrictions. This is a particularly worrying issue as 50% of Physical Education at National 5 and Higher level is based on their one-off performances in two activities of the pupils choice. Fortunately, SQA reduced the two activities down to one, but this remains concerning for those who are basketballers, gymnasts, and badminton players to name a few.

“We are still expected to do a ‘special performance’ to assess practically. However, some pupils have not been able to train all year for their sport (netball, badminton, swimming etc.).”

Theory is based upon practical work:

“In regards to Advanced Higher, 30% of their final grade is made up with their practical assessment and much of their theory is based on practical work that they have had very limited and restricted access to.”

Gender inequality:

“Physical Education, particularly within the National 5 and Higher/Advanced Higher levels, are facing extreme equity, fairness and integrity issues for our young people.

“In my authority, only 34% of candidates currently have had access to development or assessment in their first choice activity. Within that 34%, there is a real gender inequality issue, with the majority of the 34% being male candidates. A worrying 66% of our young people are being disadvantaged in regards to assessment, which poses a great threat to attainment prospects of the young people.”

Variability across the country:

“Due to the varied restrictions placed on sport across Scotland, there is a clear difference in the restrictions for pupils in my authority compared to those in less restricted areas. This then results in some pupils being severely disadvantaged to their peers around the country. Despite this concern being highlighted to the SQA, they have responded that in a normal school year there are many inequality factors for all pupils and that their procedures are as far as they can go.”

Using evidence from previous years:

“We had requested that for those who are unable to train or partake in their sports such as badminton, gymnastics and basketball, that teachers be allowed to assess a performance from the previous school year. This request has been denied.

“Is there no way of using prior performances and trying to make a judgement based on that? There is no guarantee we will actually be able to play certain sports before the Summer, this could be a pupil dropping from an A to a Fail if they have to do a sport they have never trained.”

PRACTICAL COOKERY

Insufficient time to undertake assignments:

“I am teaching this at three levels in two classes. In order for the pupils to do their assignments, they will need to be brought in at each level only. I can only take four at any one time due to two-metre social distancing rules.

“Pupils in my authority have been severely restricted for practical work. Each pupil will need to make each dish once before any assignment can take place. This will mean even more time in school.”

SCIENCES

Challenges relating to evidence undertaken in exam conditions:

“Unlike other subjects, the updated guidance for all sciences, at all levels, states explicitly that evidence must be done under exam conditions and is to be closed book, which reads as it must be done in school and cover 70% of the course. So we are very restricted until we return to school.”

Insufficient time to produce material:

“Having the time to gather at least two robust assessment pieces for evidence will show that a candidate can pass at a specific level. Although the SQA have supplied one of these pieces of evidence in the sciences, schools still need to produce another assessment. This is difficult and time consuming as although we have been given a list of A-type questions, these cannot be used as they are all in the last few years past papers.

“Timescales. There is a real fear that we will struggle to maintain momentum in assessment as we approach the deadlines for SQA submission.

“My biggest concern comes where the SQA have only provided one holistic assessment per level, but are requesting at least two pieces of evidence, so secondary schools are having to write prelim style assessments (with a view to chunking them), which is a massive workload given they have to be skills tagged, A-C question level tagged, moderated at school level then moderated at LA level - all before pupils have even sat them! Then they will need to be moderated and cross-marked at LA level, grade boundaries discussed/changed and then grades submitted. The workload is massive for staff and this has been discussed at length in centre assessment grades (CAGs). Especially given our timeline is realistically only about six weeks if we have a full return to school in April.

“The push back of the SQA date to June 25 is all well and good, but our estimate grades will have to be ready weeks before this in order to allow for moderation at PT/SLT level and then LA level.”

Guidance needed on the content of papers:

“There is no guidance on what proportion of papers should be specific skills, making it hard to meet the requirement of making the assessments as close to the exam as possible, i.e. the correct balance of questions.

“Note that not all of the sciences have the documents that allow identification of A-grade questions. Physics seems to be further ahead than chemistry and biology with this regard.

“Higher removal of the assignment is really helpful. Just like the understanding standards documents detailing what each question is in terms of type and whether it is A-type. Since the prelim has not been sat, time will be spent on trying to ensure the criteria set out is met. Again, this is slightly unfair as we are not experts in exam compilation. I like the idea of the exam being made available for testing later in May.”

Clarity needed to ensure fairness and equity:

“The idea that if assessments are given over a number of periods that the notional pass marks should be raised. However, there is no guidance on how this is to be done, thereby creating ambiguity across Scotland. Candidates have already been adversely affected by home schooling, making it harder to achieve the notional 70% for an A. Increasing that further seems unfair to those candidates in comparison to previous year groups.”

May not be able to cover the course:

“As no content was removed in the sciences, many pupils are still struggling to complete the courses. This material will need consolidated on return to school.

“There are major concerns about how we are realistically going to assess pupils the longer this online learning goes on.

“National 4 pupils are generally not engaging at all and therefore are unlikely to be able to catch up with the work missed and pass unit assessments. The removal of the AVU is certainly helpful.

“The good news is all practical has been removed from the sciences in terms of assessment. But stress levels are extremely high due to the extra demands in terms of assessment creation, moderation and due to some pupils not engaging at all in the subject. Work is being done by the school to try and get as many pupils to engage as possible, but there is still significant stress and strain on all staff at this time.

"Added to the assessment stresses, of course, will be the stress of teaching almost three months of work to those pupils whose engagement has been minimal or non-existent during this period of lockdown. I cannot see a way that it will be possible to get these pupils up to speed prior to assessment as the assessment window will have to start almost immediately."

“We actually need to finish teaching the course in order to complete the SQA assessment provided!”

Coherence with N4 and N5:

“Due to difficulties this year related to COVID, we have been unable to change level, e.g. from N5 to N4, as there is little evidence to support this (candidates often change level after the Jan prelims). As a result, there has been little/no evidence gathered for N4. For this year, it would help with assessments/workload that if a candidate passed N5 unit 1, it would also count as a pass at N4 unit 1. This will reduce the level of testing, marking and workload on return to school. It may also reduce the number of learners needing to return to complete assessments.”

Timing of guidance impacts on assessment:

“National 5 pupils are in different states due to S4 pupils having done their prelim prior to Christmas and, therefore, there is some evidence. The publishing of what questions are A-level and what skill they test was extremely useful but too late to allow our prelim to be modified as our prelim was in

December when the documents were published. A review of the prelim against the criteria set out in the SQA prelim advice is ongoing. The S5/6 pupils doing N5 still have to do their prelim. It seems unfair that we, not being experts in the creation of exams, are expected to have the knowledge and skills to create a balanced prelim. I do welcome the exam paper, which I will use if we get back into school to do this assessment.”

SQA guidance out of date:

“In Physics (but mirrored in Chemistry and Biology), the existing SQA guidance is now verging on obsolete as we will have very restricted timescales to assess:

Types of key evidence and assessment resources

The closer that the evidence is to the standard, format, and duration of the physics course assessment, and the more closely the marking follows the national standard and the [Physics General Marking Principles](#), the more realistic and reliable your estimates should be.

You **must** base your estimates on demonstrated attainment.

Component 1: question paper

For physics, the key pieces of evidence are:

- ◆ an examination, covering as much of the course as possible
- ◆ a second, top-up examination or an extended test, that includes those areas not assessed in the first examination
- ◆ end-of-topic tests, including grade A marks, which you may use as supplementary evidence only, as they are not as reliable for estimating grades

You must gather key evidence in closed-book conditions and conducted under a high degree of supervision and control. The [National 5 Physics course specification](#) details what is meant by a high degree of supervision and control.

Will concessions be made for this? Could certification be prioritised for only those who need it (school leavers etc.), with the remaining cohort being certified through the Autumn term?”

TECHNICAL

“For all subjects, the revised guidance was very different to what was proposed following consultation and did not match up with the recommendations made in the first place.”

Graphic communication:

“Although the SQA has removed some content (very little), this still overlaps into other areas of the course and therefore it is very woolly about what will be assessed. The practical assignment is still being recommended as a way to gather evidence, although pupils have missed vast amounts of time having access to specialist software due to both isolating and then learning from home due to school closures. These skills, alongside all of the theory, elements cause concerns about ability for some pupils to be ready to complete assignments etc.”

Design and manufacture

“N4/H have had practical elements removed due to having limited access to workshops, but N5 still has that included. They have given one small element to the pupils for their folio (research given this year), but this only amounts to five marks being removed out of a total of 55. This year, it will be out of 50. No other content has been removed. All three elements (folio/model/question paper) are still to be gathered for evidence although pupils have not had access to workshops and missed various times for isolations etc. They also said N4 would be provided with research (like the N5 was), but this has not been released and there was no response when I emailed the SQA about this. The only additional provision is that the practical model does not need to match the designed folio piece, but there are still issues around this. Classes also need to be split up to allow for social distancing, so pupils are still not getting the same amount of workshop time they normally would.”

Practical woodworking

“No adjustments have been made for N4. Although pupils have had no access to workshops - they are still expected to complete all three units and a final model for the course award. Concerns around pupil numbers in workshop - some schools only have a few workshops and classes need to be rotated to accommodate social distancing. N5 is still expected to produce the same level of work - concerns also around machine use (wood lathe) as pupils need direct supervision but need to maintain two-metre distancing. Some pupils are

missing weeks of workshop time but are still expected to produce the same content as normal.

“Many subjects have had a considerable volume of work removed from their course requirements/assessments this session. This is not the case with Practical Woodworking. The N4 PWW course has had no content removed. This is a 100% practical course apart from a logbook. This means that if a candidate does not complete all of the units including the AVU to the required standard, they will fail the course. One aspect of this course, for example, is the turnery. When a pupil is at the lathe, there is an expectation that staff are within close vicinity to offer support and for health and safety purposes. I have previously emailed the SQA regarding this and received a no change response. Therefore, I potentially will have to breach COVID rules regarding this, otherwise pupils will fail the course.

“The N5 PWW course has had no content removed. This is a 70% practical course. Again, I cannot assist pupils or stand in close proximity to support them. I am extremely concerned that the SQA PWW teams will not give any dispensation for PWW pupils. I believe that this is also the case with PMW.”

TECHNICAL THEATRE

“This only involves one pupil. Nonetheless, there are units (e.g. Theatre Design) that have been impossible to access/undertake due to COVID restrictions and school closure. It would appear that it will be impossible to achieve a full course award this year. The SQA have not been forthcoming with much advice about NPAs. I have contacted them for advice but have had no response yet.”