

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: THE SQA RESULTS SERVICE - CHANGES IN 2014**  
**Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 3 FEBRUARY 2015**  
**Author: JOINT ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In previous years, Falkirk Council Education Services has reported each August to Education Committee on SQA attainment in its secondary schools. Subsequently, SQA performance information was updated each January to take into account of post-Appeals results and was also reported to Education Committee. This updated post-Appeals information was provided by the Scottish Government and included national performance figures as well as those relating to comparator authorities.
- 1.2 This updated information is no longer available. A new benchmarking tool, Insight has been introduced by the Scottish Government to reflect Curriculum for Excellence performance indicators. Insight does not use the same comparator authority methodology as was used in previous years. Although comparator authority data will no longer be available, Insight creates a 'virtual' comparator authority against which comparison will be made in future reports.
- 1.3 The performance information which was reported to Elected Members in August 2014 was, instead, sourced from schools management information systems. This does not give benchmarking information that allows comparison with comparator authorities.
- 1.4 Further, the 'traditional' Appeals process has also been replaced in 2014 by the SQA's new Results Service, as detailed below (Section 2). This reflects the rigour in the SQA's procedures, which has been enhanced with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence-based assessments. This enhanced rigour has led to a considerable decline in the number of results which were felt to be unjust.
- 1.5 The number of referrals to the new Service in 2014 was, consequently, approximately one-seventh of the number of Appeals typically submitted in previous years (233 in 2014 as opposed to 1541 in 2013). The percentage of successful referrals was also reduced from previous years, reflecting the improved quality of the SQA's marking procedures.
- 1.6 This has resulted in no change to the Council's attainment data following the referrals to the Results Service when compared to the results published in August 2014.

1.7 For reference the results remain as shown in the tables below, which were initially reported to Education Executive in August 2014.

1.8 The figures are quoted as a percentage of the appropriate S4 roll.

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>By the end of S5:</b>							
<b>1 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better</b>	<b>Falkirk</b>	39	44	44	47	49	<b>50</b>
	<b>Scotland</b>	41	43	45	47	49	<b>50</b>
	<b>CAs</b>	40	42	43	46	47	<b>N/A</b>
<b>3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better</b>	<b>Falkirk</b>	21	25	24	27	27	<b>29</b>
	<b>Scotland</b>	23	25	26	27	29	<b>30</b>
	<b>CAs</b>	21	23	24	25	26	<b>N/A</b>
<b>5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better</b>	<b>Falkirk</b>	8	12	9	13	13	<b>14</b>
	<b>Scotland</b>	11	11	12	13	14	<b>14</b>
	<b>CAs</b>	9	9	10	11	12	<b>N/A</b>
<b>By the end of S6:</b>							
<b>3 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better</b>	<b>Falkirk</b>	30	31	35	35	38	<b>38</b>
	<b>Scotland</b>	31	33	35	37	38	<b>39</b>
	<b>CAs</b>	29	32	33	35	36	<b>N/A</b>
<b>5 or more awards at SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or better</b>	<b>Falkirk</b>	17	20	24	23	26	<b>26</b>
	<b>Scotland</b>	21	22	24	26	27	<b>26</b>
	<b>CAs</b>	18	21	21	23	24	<b>N/A</b>
<b>1 or more awards at SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Higher) or better</b>	<b>Falkirk</b>	11	13	16	14	17	<b>16</b>
	<b>Scotland</b>	14	15	16	16	17	<b>17</b>
	<b>CAs</b>	13	15	15	16	16	<b>N/A</b>

The table below gives a brief analysis of how the 2014 S5 and S6 results compare with previous years.

	<b>Comparison with last year</b>	<b>Comparison with 5 years ago</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1 or more Highers by end of S5	1% higher than last year	11% higher	Highest recorded performance
3 or more Highers by end of S5	2% higher than last year	8% higher	Highest recorded performance
5 or more Highers by end of S5	1% higher than last year	6% higher	Highest recorded performance
3 or more Highers by end of S6	Equal to last year	8% higher	Highest recorded performance
5 or more Highers by end of S6	Equal to last year	9% higher	Equals the highest recorded performance
1 or more Advanced Higher by end of S6	1% lower than last year	5% higher	2nd highest recorded performance

## **2. SQA RESULTS SERVICE FROM 2014 ONWARDS**

- 2.1 The SQA's new Results Service, introduced in 2014, replaces the previous appeals procedure and covers all SQA Levels from National to Advanced Higher.
- 2.2 Previously, Appeals were submitted for pupils who had not attained the expected result for a given subject and at a given level in instances where, in the school's view, there was sufficient evidence to justify a higher result. As well as classwork, schools also relied for such evidence on preliminary examination papers ('Prelims').
- 2.3 From 2014 onwards, the SQA provides Post Results Services.

These comprise two Results Services:

### Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service

This service supports candidates who have been unable to attend to take an examination, or whose performance in an examination may have been affected by an incident beyond their control, eg bereavement or a medical condition. This service is only available prior to publication of the results. There is no charge for this service. (See below regarding charges for Post Results Services.).

### Post-Results Service

This service operates after candidates receive their exam results. If a school or college is concerned by a candidate's result and believes the final mark does not reflect expectations then they can request a priority marking review (if a candidate's place in further or higher education depends on the outcome of the review), clerical check or a marking review of the exam paper and other externally assessed components, such as a portfolio. Results of such reviews can lead to a result either remaining the same, being raised or being lowered.

If the original grade remains unchanged following the check/review, the school or college will be charged for this service.

## **3. TOTAL NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR CLERICAL REVIEW AND MARKER CHECK IN 2014**

- 3.1 The total number of requests made by Falkirk Council secondary schools for Clerical Review and Marker Check in 2014 was 233, of which 45 were successful. In all cases, the changes led to an improved result for the pupils concerned.

## **4. COST OF UNSUCCESSFUL REQUESTS TO FALKIRK COUNCIL**

- 4.1 As yet, the SQA have not submitted notification to Falkirk Council of the costs resulting from unsuccessful requests. As the number of unchanged results cannot be split between Clerical Checks and Marker Checks (for which there are different charges), an estimate is not possible.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

**3.1 Education Executive note the changes to the SQA Results Service.**

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**Joint Acting Director of Education**

**Date:** 20 January 2015

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**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL