

ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

6 MARCH 2001

**SQA CONSULTATION EXERCISES: (i) 2001-2002 Winter Diet
(ii) 2002 Examination Diet
(iii) The Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) –
Possible changes for Implementation in Summer 2001**

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report brings to the attention of the Education Committee details of three recent SQA consultation exercises and of the officer responses already submitted.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes the main terms of the consultation papers recently issued by SQA in relation to examination diets and a revised Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC);
- (b) notes and endorses the responses to the consultation exercises prepared by officers [attached as appendices 1a, 2, 3] (Note: These responses have already been submitted to SQA in order to comply with the tight consultation timescales)

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish Qualifications Authority is committed to consult closely with its stakeholders in the light of the major crisis which affected the SQA 2000 diet. Most recently, the Education Committee considered responses to a consultation exercise in respect of arrangements for the submission of internal assessment data at its meeting on 21 November 2000 [Article 9 refers]
- 2.2 On 19 January 2001 SQA issued consultation papers in respect of the Examination Timetable Winter 2001-2002 and the main Summer 2002 Examination Diet. The consultation exercise in relation to the Winter 2001-2002 timetable is at this time an issue for the Further Education sector only; the consultation paper was not, therefore, issued to schools. However, it should be noted that as National Courses develop schools may have an interest in using this diet as a "resit" facility for a small number of candidates. Responses to these papers were submitted to SQA to comply with submission deadlines of 16 February and 23 February 2001 respectively. The responses are provided in appendices 1a and 2.
- 2.3 On 29 January 2001 SQA issued a consultation paper outlining possible revisions to the Scottish Qualifications Certificate. The proposals were drawn up in the light of negative feedback in relation to the format of the certificate issued to candidates in the 2000 diet. The main proposals for improvement are that:
 - the "core skills" profile be removed from the front page of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate and be placed instead as supplementary information at the rear of the document
 - candidates' attainment in the **current** examination diet and candidates' cumulative attainment (which takes account of awards in previous diets) should be provided on separate pages
 - references to fallback awards and course fails should be highlighted in the covering letter which accompanies candidates' certificates.

The response to this consultation paper which is provided in Appendix 3 was submitted to SQA to comply with the submission deadline of 23 February 2001

3 SQA CONSULTATIVE PROPOSALS: KEY COMMENTS

3.1 Winter Diet 2001-2002

The consultation paper (see Appendix 1(b)) was issued to College Principals, Directors of Education, SCEC and SFEU. It was not issued to schools since the introduction of the Winter Diet is likely to be for some considerable time of relevance only to further education colleges.

3.2 Consultation Paper: 2002 Examination Diet for National Qualifications

The 2000 Examination Diet took place over a four week period, with the first week reserved only for Standard Grade examinations. The examination timetable was shorter and later in the school session when compared to previous diets; in the event, this arrangement led to anxieties among teaching staff and candidates because of difficulties in addressing the following constraints:

- the need to allow for reasonable mid-day and between examination breaks
- the need to avoid "gap days" between major uptake subjects
- the need to avoid coincident examinations
- the need to take account of special supervision and invigilation arrangements
- the need to avoid public holidays, election days, and other significant events which fall within an examination timetable period

The three options for amendment proposed by SQA all involve establishing an examination period of six weeks; on balance option 2 is the most attractive and offers a reasonable compromise between the need to maximise learning and teaching time for senior pupils and the need to minimise problems associated with coincident and successive examinations

3.3 The Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) – Possible Changes for Implementation in Summer 2001

- the decision to produce a less "cluttered" and less confusing certificate is endorsed unreservedly
- despite the increased number of pages associated with the proposals for improvement, it is believed that these proposals will result in a simpler and more user-friendly certificate
- the decision to place current **and** cumulative attainment on separate pages is well-considered
- although SQA's interest in maintaining the facility of fallback awards is understandable, it should be noted that it may be no less useful to candidates for arrangements to be made to provide "a safety net" in respect of national courses by simply recognising candidates' achievement in individual units during their course of study

4 HUMAN RIGHTS

There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance.

JIM ANDERSON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Appendices

NL/AR