

To whom it may concern,

We are writing to you to ask you to reconsider SQA's position on the appeals system for 2021, by introducing a no detriment policy and ensuring that exceptional circumstances can be taken into account.

As you know, young people in Scotland have been affected disproportionately by the pandemic, and this is likely to have contributed to an exacerbation of existing mental health problems, which were already at very high levels. All of the signatories to this letter have heard heart-rending accounts from young people and students during this period- from those who have missed significant periods of teaching or have experienced serious mental health problems, to those who have lost a parent- who are worried circumstances like these will not be accounted for by the appeals system. We think that all of those involved in the education system need to make every effort to support and nurture our young people and students at such a difficult time and take these views into account.

We are worried that the appeals process as currently proposed does not uphold young people's rights and could risk further exacerbating the mental health crisis that we see affecting this generation of young people. This is a particular risk for those already experiencing disadvantage or inequality, those who have additional support needs, or those who have faced exceptionally challenging circumstances, including experiencing a bereavement. We feel that we can, and must, do better for young people and students.

To mitigate some of the impacts of this crisis, we are asking SQA to reconsider its position on the appeals system, and give young people and students a guarantee that, if they do appeal, their grade will not go down, and that every effort will be made to ensure that any exceptional circumstances they have experienced during this period are taken into account.

Yours sincerely

Liam Fowley MSYP, Scottish Youth Parliament, Vice Chair, Young persons' representative on Covid Education Recovery Group  
Bruce Adamson, Commissioner for Children and Young People Scotland  
Cameron Garrett MSYP, Scottish Youth Parliament Education and Lifelong Learning Convener, Young persons' representative on National Qualifications Group 2021  
Margaret Wilson, Chair, National Parent Forum Scotland, Parents' representative on National Qualifications Group 2021  
Juliet Harris, Director, Together, Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights  
Amy Woodhouse, Joint Interim Chief Executive, Children in Scotland  
Louise Hunter, Chief Executive, Who Cares? Scotland  
Matt Crilly, NUS Scotland President  
Paul Traynor, Head of External Affairs, Carers Trust Scotland  
Rachael Hatfield, Katrina Lambert and Joel Meekison, SQA Where's Our Say?  
Cathy McCulloch, Director, Children's Parliament  
Martin Dorchester, Chief Executive, Includem  
Dr Mhairi Crawford, Chief Executive, LGBT Youth Scotland  
Dr Tracy Kirk, Lecturer in Law, Glasgow Caledonian University  
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