

Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

On: 6th September 2016

SQA National Qualification Appeals Process

Report by Joint Secretary (Teachers' Side)

Background

Principal Teachers and Faculty Heads in Renfrewshire's secondary schools have been advised that National Qualification appeals on behalf of pupils should only be submitted where the evidence indicates that there is one mark of a difference between the exam estimate and the final SQA grade awarded mark. This meant that many pupils were denied the opportunity to submit an appeal to the SQA by the 31st August deadline.

The SQA has changed the parameters on appeals so that now appeals may only be lodged for a re-count or a re-mark in specific circumstances. Internal coursework is now no longer a consideration in the appeal process. It remains possible however to appeal the grades of individual pupils.

The aforementioned policy of Renfrewshire Council Education Department is being applied without any degree of flexibility and assumes a concordancy of estimates which may be unfounded. This is especially the case as teachers are still reporting a lack of confidence with new courses and the standards being applied. Many new courses are only being taught for the first or second time by some staff and therefore standards have yet to be fully embedded. The Teachers' Side would submit that estimates should not therefore be the main consideration in submitting appeals.

Moreover, it has been stated, albeit anecdotally, that there is considerable variability in the application of standards even at SQA level. It may be that in these cases a re-mark is warranted and past experience proves that some students have been successful in their applications for upgrade. The policy being applied by Renfrewshire Council may, in some cases therefore,

seriously disadvantage the young people of Renfrewshire and narrow their opportunities for exam success and delay college or university enrolment or admission to other, positive, work-related destinations.

The teachers' side of the JNC would also question Renfrewshire's SQA Appeals policy as it seems that other Local Authorities may not be applying the same restrictions with the same rigidity.

Furthermore, the policy may further impact Renfrewshire's young people by putting them at a disadvantage relative to other sectors, namely, the private sector which is three times more likely to submit appeals on behalf of students.

In summary, the teachers' side feels that if budgetary considerations are dictating appeal submissions then this can only lead to unfairness, social inequality and reduced attainment- all contrary to Renfrewshire Council's stated policy priorities.

Recommendation

The JNC agrees to support the attainment of young people of Renfrewshire by taking a more flexible approach to SQA appeals and widening the scope of those pupils entitled to appeal and advising Headteachers and teaching staff accordingly.