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By email to: [ECYP.committee@Parliament.Scot](mailto:ECYP.committee@Parliament.Scot)

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Dear Ms Webber

### **Publication of research into 2021 alternative assessment approach**

At the Committee session that I attended on Wednesday 7 September, I signalled our intention to publish a series of research reports around the alternative certification (ACM) approach to assessment that was required in 2021 following the Scottish Government's cancellation of exams.

This body of research has now been published and includes the views and experiences of more than 3,000 learners, teachers and lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Scotland's national awarding body, it was essential for us to evaluate the Alternative Certification Model that was put in place in 2021, and to hear the lived experience of those who used it.

The research will also contribute to the national discussion on the future of education and to the work of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment.

Among the findings:

- Over 90% of practitioners felt confident or very confident in making marking judgements
- Most learners and practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that the grades they received were fair. However, there were mixed views around whether the system was fair for all learners
- Most practitioners felt their workload was higher or much higher than in a year with an exam diet owing to the increase in marking and ACM's quality assurance processes
- While some learners preferred the alternative assessment model, around half felt their stress levels were higher than they would have been in a normal exam year
- Practitioners felt developing strong and effective networks of support was fundamental to the successful implementation of the ACM

The early findings of the evaluation helped to inform the approach to assessment and communication in academic year 2021-22. The work is now also informing plans for the coming year, including the early confirmation, in April, that modifications to assessment will continue in the current academic year, freeing up more time for learning and teaching to support continued recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

The reports have helped to build a picture of the experiences of learners, teachers and lecturers from across Scotland in 2021. They reflect the diverse and often differing experiences and views of our education community, for example, while some felt positively towards the ACM, others reported feeling more stress or having a higher workload than in a normal exam year.

Eight reports have been published, as well as an overall summary of the findings. The research includes four independent reports by academics at the University of Glasgow and the University of Oxford on perceptions of assessment standards among teachers and lecturers, learners, parents and carers, employers and society more generally – the first empirical work on stakeholders' views of the meaning of assessment standards in Scotland.

You can find the full evaluation of the 2021 Alternative Certification Model at [www.sqa.org.uk/research](http://www.sqa.org.uk/research)

At the Committee session, I also signalled our intention to publish Course Reports for the 2021-22 session. Course reports provide teachers and lecturers with a summary of how learners have performed in their exams and coursework for each subject at National 5, Higher, and Advanced Higher level. We will start to publish these on our website tomorrow.

I hope you find this useful. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Robertson  
Chief Executive and Scotland's Chief Examining Officer