

## Assessment and National Qualifications

The NASUWT, represented by Mike Corbett National Executive Member, took part in a series of meetings of an Assessment and National Qualifications Working Group during February and March 2016.

The Group was established to explore issues relating to the new National Qualifications in relation to excessive teacher workload and to agree solutions to these, some to be introduced in 2016 and others in the longer term.

In addition to the NASUWT, Group members included Scottish Government, Education Scotland, SQA, Scotland's Colleges, Universities Scotland, SLS, ADES, EIS and SSTA and was chaired by Dr Alasdair Allan, MSP, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages.

The aim of the Working Group was to publish a joint statement with recommendations for action to address excessive teacher workload by 23 March 2016 when Parliament rises prior to the Scottish elections.

### Recent developments

After six meetings, a draft joint statement was produced. However, the recommendations did not address the immediate workload concerns for teachers and only promised greater action for 2017/18.

### The NASUWT position

The NASUWT refused to sign the joint statement for the following reasons:

- the NASUWT has presented evidence of excessive teacher workload to the 2014 Reflections on New National Qualifications Working Group, the reconvened 2015 meetings of the same Group and the current Working Group on Assessment and National Qualifications, but this, despite the evidence of excessive workload, has led only to minor changes to the outcomes and no significant impact on the workload of teachers;
- the working hours of secondary teachers remain far in excess of the suggested 35 hours per week;
- following two official Tackling Bureaucracy reports in the past two years, there is little evidence of significant progress in reducing bureaucracy;
- despite the acknowledgement that teachers have not had the time to access the advice and guidance on internal assessments provided by the SQA, there has been no move to provide this time;
- there is no willingness to address the immediate concerns of excessive workload relating to the duplication of assessment evidence, despite the NASUWT having provided an easy short-term solution to this; and
- the NASUWT remains unconvinced that there will be anything concrete agreed in the long term to reduce teacher workload that is not already part of the SQA's normal review requirement.

*continued overleaf*

## **The next steps**

The Scottish Government promised to revisit the initial recommendations by 23 March 2016. However, no revised statement has been forthcoming. The working group cannot reconvene until after the 5 May Scottish election. The NASUWT remains willing to meet with the SQA and the Scottish Government to address the workload problems arising from the new qualifications, but until progress is made members should follow the following advice.

The issues the NASUWT has been pursuing in its trade dispute with the Scottish Government over workload are not addressed by this joint statement.

The NASUWT's action short of strike action instructions already provided key protections for teachers against excessive and unnecessary workload.

The NASUWT has worked hard with stakeholders to seek to ensure that the excessive teacher workload arising from the new qualifications is taken seriously by the SQA and the Scottish Government, but they have failed to take the necessary steps to address teachers' concerns. The Union action therefore continues.

Members are advised to take control of their work/life balance by implementing in full the NASUWT action short of strike action instructions, particularly the instruction on working hours, including the 35-hour week.

The NASUWT action is designed to support members by empowering them to take control of their working hours. We know that members would not want to do anything to adversely affect the life chances of the young people they teach.

By following our action instructions, members can protect themselves, whilst continuing to provide the necessary support for students by prioritising work relating to national qualifications classes within the 35 hours they will work.

All workplaces that returned a positive result in the ballot continue to have a mandate for action.

If you are unsure of the ballot status of your workplace or wish to be balloted to be included in the action, contact the NASUWT Scotland Centre.

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**[www.nasuwt.org.uk/ScotlandActionInstructions](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/ScotlandActionInstructions)**