



Directors of Education

cc. COSLA

23 January 2024

Dear Director of Education,

Progression into the Senior Phase and the importance of well informed and accurate presentation decisions

In 2017, the Assessment and National Qualifications Group issued guidance which included reference to the importance of well informed and accurate presentation decisions for our young people.

Since then, there has been a significant increase in the number of candidates who are dual presented for National 4 and National 5 in the same subject. Preliminary SQA entry data for 2024 shows this trend increasing further.

Significant numbers of candidates who are dual presented are performing poorly at National 5, which is not a positive experience for the young people concerned. For example - in 2023, 14% of candidates were entered for both National 4 and National 5 Mathematics. 40% of those learners received no award and a further 27% received a grade D at National 5.

At the moment, young people are sitting prelims and assessments and considering course choices for 2024/25. Additionally, schools are beginning to confirm entries for the 2024 diet. Therefore, we are writing today to reiterate the position set out in 2017 on presentation decisions.

Dual presentation at National 4 and National 5

Schools make important judgments about the most appropriate National Qualifications pathway for each individual young person, and are best placed to make these decisions. In a very limited number of exceptional circumstances, presenting young people at both National 4 and National 5 may be in the best interests of the learner. However, the dual presentation approach is not an intended or expected presentation pattern to be applied to whole cohorts of students.

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The learning and pathways within Curriculum for Excellence are designed to be centred around the individual young person. There should, therefore, be no occasions where large numbers of candidates in a centre are being presented for both National 4 and National 5 in S4.

National Qualifications have been designed to be flexible. Individual presentation decisions should be reached in consultation with young people and their parents and carers. These decisions should consider what young people's long-term aspirations are, and should take account of the full range of qualifications and pathways available to them. In some circumstances, it might be beneficial for learners to spend one or two years undertaking a national qualification.

These decisions must also be informed by effective tracking and monitoring of learners' progress through the Broad General Education. Entering young people into National 5, when reliable assessment information suggests they are not yet prepared, can result in unnecessary additional workload as well as a discouraging learning and assessment experience, and negatively impacting upon their confidence in that subject. Equally, dual presenting a young person who is on track to safely achieve at National 5 level also results in unnecessary additional workload and over assessment.

As your schools begin to confirm entries for the 2024 diet and look ahead to course choices for the next academic session, we ask you to communicate to your schools the importance of appropriate presentation decisions which focus on the interests of the individual young people.

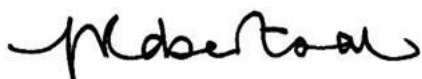
We also ask you to work with your schools, and with other local authorities, to review entry data at the end of each academic session to understand how learners are being presented across the country and consider any impacts on assessment workload and attainment.

Thank you for your ongoing support to learners at this time, and as important decisions on presentation and progression are made.

We trust this information is helpful



Jenny Gilruth
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills



Fiona Robertson
Chief Examiner



Janie McManus
His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education

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