



## Banchory Academy

Schoolhill  
Banchory  
Kincardineshire AB31 5TQ

☎ 01330 823357  
Fax: 01330 825409

[banchory.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:banchory.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

[www.banchoryacademy.co.uk](http://www.banchoryacademy.co.uk)

Rector Judith Wight

June 2017

Dear Parent(s),

### **CHANGES TO NATIONAL 5 QUALIFICATIONS 2017-18**

This month your child started courses, which may lead to a National 5 qualification in August 2018. In September 2016, the Scottish Government announced changes to the National Qualifications, which will result in the removal of the compulsory unit assessments, initially from National 5 qualifications in 2017-18 and then from Higher qualifications in 2018-19 and finally Advanced Higher qualifications in 2019-20. These unit assessments are known as "UASPs" currently.

The main reason for these changes is to reduce the amount of assessment young people experience as part of their National Qualifications and the teacher workload created as a result of administering these units. On average for each course at National 5 Level or above, pupils currently undertake three unit assessments, course assignments, estimate exams and a final exam. It was felt that this was taking away important time from high quality learning and teaching.

**It is important to note that the course aims, rationale and content has not changed for any of the courses.**

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has the responsibility to ensure that the credibility and standards of the qualifications are maintained. By removing the unit assessments this means that the course assessments have to be strengthened and this has resulted in one or more of the following changes to every National 5 course:

1. Extension of the existing question paper
2. Extension or modification of the existing item of coursework
3. A new question paper
4. A new item of coursework

Revised course documentation has been provided to schools by the SQA between 28<sup>th</sup> April and 5<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and staff are currently using this for courses which are being taught.

For the majority of pupils at Banchory Academy, they will be presented for their National 5 qualification at the end of one year of study. Sometimes pupils are presented for individual units within the National 5 qualification as opposed to the full qualification and this will remain possible to support the needs of individual learners. The SQA has asked schools to carefully consider how decisions around which level a pupil is

presented for. At Banchory Academy, we have a robust system which takes account of progress in S1-3 and we will continue to develop this further to support the changes taking place in National Qualifications.

The Senior Phase (S4-6) spreads over three years for pupils and it is important that their learning journey is planned over this time regardless of whether they remain in school or not. For guidance, parents should expect the following progression routes from S3:

For those who are working at second curriculum level in the Broad General Education (BGE S1-S3), progression would be expected onto National 2 or National 3 Level in the Senior Phase.

For those who are working at third curriculum level in the BGE, progression would be expected onto National 4 Level in the Senior Phase.

For those who are working at fourth curriculum level in the BGE, progression would be expected onto National 5 Level in the Senior Phase.

Parents can find the level their child is currently working at in a particular subject on their full report.

The SQA will ask schools to indicate each November the levels of presentation for the final examinations in May the following year. This means that schools will have to ensure that accurate progress data is available to inform this decision making process. Banchory Academy has been working effectively to support developments around this through our tracking and reporting system.

A further change to the system is around grade boundaries. Currently a candidate who achieves 45% or above in a national course receives an award. Over 50% will be an A-C grade whilst 45-49% is a D grade. In 2017-18, the D grade boundary will extend to 40-49% for National 5 qualifications, which brings it in line with the ranges for Grades B and C. Currently there is a system whereby if a pupil does not gain a D grade or above at National 5 as long as they have completed relevant units at National 4 they can gain their National 4 qualification. This is known as Recognising Positive Achievement. However, this is going to be discontinued as part of the changes to National Qualifications. It will be available for some time to allow schools to present candidates for units that were formerly part of the National 5 qualifications and the fully revised National 5 course. This measure will only be in place until any changes to the assessment of National 4 have been introduced.

I appreciate that this is a lot of information to pass on to yourself but I felt it was important to update you on the changes that have taken place now that the new courses have started. If there are any changes or amendments, I will be back in touch.

Yours faithfully

Judith Wight  
Rector