8 December 2000

Mr M Verity
Clerk to the Committee
Room 2.07
Committee Chambers
George IV Bridge
EDINBURGH EH99 1SP

Contact Name – Jean Blair
Direct Line - 0141 242 2419

For the attention of Mrs Mary Mulligan MSP
The Convener – Education, Culture and Sport Committee

Dear Mrs Mulligan

Additional information for the attention of the Committee

You will recall from my attendance at the Committee on 1 November that I gave an undertaking to provide further information on pass rate statistics for Diet 2000 and timelines for Diet 2001 as soon as this data became available. I'm sorry I have not been able to come back to you before now with this.

Pre appeal pass rates

You will appreciate that there is work ongoing within SQA to produce the post appeal data with our resolution of Standard Grade appeals not due to be notified to centres until 15 December. I am, however, anxious to provide some information to the Committee, but given that it is work in progress and I wanted to submit this information to you today, I would ask you to note the caveats under which I provide the following statistics for SCE and National Courses 2000. The figures in brackets are pre appeal statistics for 1999.

CSYS A-C rate = 76% (76%)

SCE Higher = 68% (70%)

The SCE Higher pass rate fell from 70% to 68%. This difference can be explained by the mix of subjects taken at SCE Higher - in 2000, almost 60% of SCE Higher entries were in English (the subject in which fewest centres moved to the new variant), and English as is usually the case had a lower than average pass rate of 66% pre-appeal.

Higher course* success rate = 71%

Intermediate 2 course success rate = 64%

Intermediate 1 course success rate = 69%

* These are the new National Courses developed through Higher Still and certificated for the first time in the summer of 2000.
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Mr M Verity

It is important for recipients of this data to note that, for a number of reasons listed below, it will be hard to make meaningful comparisons between pre-appeal data for 2000 and for previous years.

Pass rates have always varied across subject areas, across courses within a subject area and from year to year. This variation is to be expected because presentation patterns and candidate performance varies. Results are awarded on the basis of the standard of performance achieved by individual candidates, not on the basis that a given percentage of candidates should pass each exam.

This is the first year in which candidates have been presented for the new Higher Still courses. As such, there are no prior pass rates to compare this data with.

The usual 'derived grades procedure' that the SQA use to upgrade results based on school estimates was not implemented this year for Higher Still courses. It is therefore possible that across different types of course, several thousand candidates may have made an appeal this year who would have received a 'derived grades' upgrade in another year. That would have the effect of lowering pre-appeal pass rates, and increasing the number of appeals.

There has been a large increase in the number of appeals lodged by schools this year. An unknown proportion of that increase may be because of the lack of derived grades procedures. The success rate of these appeals is not yet known. It is therefore, not possible to speculate on the significance of any pre-appeal data until post appeal data is available.

This year, for the first time, candidates who initially entered for a Higher in the new National Courses had the opportunity, if the work was proving too difficult, to switch to an Intermediate 2 course instead. In previous years, many such candidates would have struggled through the rest of the SCE Higher course and perhaps failed the examination. The availability of Intermediate 2 in such circumstances means that some candidates will have had a positive achievement at Intermediate 2 rather than a failure at Higher.

For the pass rate statistics, the effect will be to take such candidates out of the population of Higher 'fails'. Thus the pass rate for Higher will have been raised slightly compared to previous years. It is difficult to estimate how much of an effect this will have had on the pass rate this year but it is not expected to be large. The effect applies only to the new Highers, not to SCE Highers taken in 2000.

**Timelines**

These timelines (attached) are defined for those schools intending to enter candidates for the 2001 diet of National Qualifications. The dates are indicative and are subject to internal consultation with staff who may suggest amendments. The timelines are dependent on schools providing information to SQA on time for processing and staff in schools confirming that the data is accurate and complete.

You may be aware that SQA was asked by the Minister to provide a compliance statement in response to the independent inquiry. Our document *Current and planned actions for Certification 2001* is now available on the Scottish Executive's website.
1 December 2000

Mr M Verity

It states that SQA will provide critical success factors and dependencies for management control and communication purposes. We intend to publish this information and issue reports on a monthly basis as a means of providing our stakeholders with a mechanism for monitoring our progress with Certification 2001.

I hope this letter meets your request for further information and provides assurance on our plans for Certification 2001.

Yours sincerely

Bill Morton
Chief Executive

Encs
### TIMELINES

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<th>Task Name</th>
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<td>Monday 23 October 2000</td>
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<td>Question Papers/Marking Instructions</td>
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<td>Approval of Centres</td>
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