Exam grade gaps may leave pupils guessing

By Iain Fleming

HUNDREDS of pupils will have missing or wrong exam grades on Thursday, the Scottish Qualifications Authority has admitted.

It claimed yesterday it had met the August 10 deadline for publishing the results, but said a ‘tiny fraction’ of the certificates may not be correct.

A spokesman estimated that between 200 to 300 students could be affected, but promised to sort all the errors within a few days.

He said: ‘We are confident that 99.75 per cent of exam certificates will be correct, but that some will not reflect the student’s final result.

The new Scottish Qualifications Certificate introduced this year will list and update all qualifications achieved by a candidate to leave them

with a certified, up-to-date record. It is also the first year candidates were entered for National Qualifications, a range of new subjects introduced in August last year.

But the move has seen the number of Higher courses almost doubled from 34 to 82.

And the new arrangements mean that a number of courses are assessed throughout the year, in addition to the final ‘external’ examination. It is here the authority has hit problems.

It said marking had taken slightly longer than expected, but had eventually been completed well within the timetable it set itself.

All three-and-a-half million papers taken by 147,000 students in April and May have now been marked, and the new certificates are currently being printed, ready for delivery from Thursday onwards. The spokesman stressed: ‘This year, for the first time, we are having to merge results sent to us throughout the year from each centre along with marking the final exam paper.

‘In a small number of cases we have received final results too late to be able to incorporate them into the certificate.’

The Authority said it was completing its statistical analysis of the results of the examinations and would announce them tomorrow.

An authority spokesman said: ‘When it became clear that we were falling behind in the timetable we tried to recruit more markers, but that proved unsuccessful for a number of reasons.

‘As the timetable was later in the year than previously, we were still marking in early July, after most schools had closed for the summer.’

By Lucy Adams

A SQA source said: “There are still some glitches with the computers and although most things have been marked there are doubts about accurately meeting the deadline.”

Ron Tuck, the chief executive of the SQA, held meetings with the heads of teaching unions and officials last week to explain the results procedure and will be having further meetings tomorrow.

David Eaglesham, the general secretary of the Scottish Secondary Teachers’ Association, who met Tuck last week, said: “Children should not be concerned but they may receive one envelope on Thursday and then a corrected certificate a few days later.”

One Glasgow headmaster claims that there are still problems collating data for coursework. His school had been warned by the SQA that these marks may be omitted from the certificates.

“A man may well be the case that some pupils find exams they took completely missed off the paper. They [the SQA] have met the deadline but at what cost?” he said.

A helpline number will be printed on the certificates accompanied by an explanation of why some exam results may not appear.

The SQA refused to comment on claims that certificates will be incomplete.