



# Gracemount High School

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Committed to Care  
and Excellence

**Head Teacher**  
Mr Ross Hunter

**Depute Head Teacher**  
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**Depute Head Teacher**  
Mrs Dee Scott

**Business Manager**  
Mr Scott Mackenzie

2 April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am aware it has been a few days since I have been in contact with you. I am, like most of you, eagerly awaiting the SQA announcement regarding the certification model. **You will find a statement from Lorna Sweeney, Schools and Lifelong Learning Service Manager, at the end of this letter.**

I realise this continues to be a very worrying time and there are many unanswered questions. As soon as we are aware of the proposed way forward we will consider the implications and be in touch.

In the meantime, please continue to stress the importance to your young person regarding engaging positively and proactively with the on-line learning tasks that are being set. I'm trying to do the same at home with my own children and I appreciate the demands of this.

We have sent out packs of work to families who cannot access on-line learning, but this is an exception and these packs are only for those families that do not have access to a computer or the internet. The packs were posted early this week and should be arriving with families any day now.

We know that most pupils are engaging to some extent and there are some fantastic examples of work being sent in by pupils. As difficult as it may be, please encourage them to keep going. The work they are doing now will support them as they prepare to move into next session.

My own focus has been on supporting the opening of Gracemount as a hub school for key worker children across four primary and two secondary schools. We are pleased to have been able to offer this service and anticipate we will continue to do so after the Easter break.

Please note that as a hub, we will not be open during the Easter break and I have asked my staff to take some time off and recuperate. As a result, online learning tasks and feedback won't be given during this time however they will resume after Easter. In most cases pupils will have enough to be progressing with however it is important that they also take some time away from the demands of school work.

We hope to be able to issue the current S3 with their I-pads after Easter. A parent pay account has been set up for families to pay their deposits and we encourage all parents of S3 pupil to pay their deposit by 21 April. We can and will offer financial support to families who require this. In the first instance please contact us through [admin@gracemount.edin.sch.uk](mailto:admin@gracemount.edin.sch.uk)

We hope to begin our new timetable slightly earlier than usual and more detail on this will follow.

There are still several issues for us to consider and we will do so in due course, working closely with other schools and the local authority.

Our thoughts and best wishes are extended to all members of our school community at this very difficult time. We appreciate your support, patience and understanding. Please take care and be safe over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely



Ross Hunter  
Head Teacher

### **Statement from Lorna Sweeney, Schools and Lifelong Learning Service Manager**

Dear pupils, parents and carers

I am writing to you to provide you with the information we currently have regarding SQA processes for certification this session. I appreciate that this is a very difficult time for our senior students, and I hope that this letter reassures you that we are doing all we can to ensure that their achievements are recognised and rewarded.

SQA have yet to release details of what they have referred to as their “alternative certification model”. We will of course share these details when they finally arrive. You will appreciate that some of the information set out below may change in line with the SQA guidance, but it is accurate at time of writing and has been prepared in conjunction with council officials to state the position in City of Edinburgh schools.

#### **SQA certification for session 2019-20**

The SQA will ask teachers to provide an estimated grade for each pupil in each course, in line with their advice. These estimates will be submitted to SQA in late April. The SQA will then award final grades, taking into consideration the school’s estimated grades and other factors (e.g. prior achievement in National 5 if being presented for Higher this year in the same subject).

The SQA have stated that results will be issued no later than 4 August, as planned, and they have encouraged pupils to sign up online for the *MySQA* service, to access their results electronically.

The SQA’s Post-Results Service will continue to run as usual for the current session: this is the process where you can (via the school) query a final grade, if it seems lower than expected and the school has evidence to support a higher grade.

#### **SQA Coursework**

The latest SQA advice, issued on 24/03/20, states that schools are no longer required to submit coursework for marking in Higher or Advanced Higher courses. Any coursework completed thus far can however be considered by teachers as supporting evidence for an estimated grade.

For National 5 courses, most of the coursework has already been submitted to SQA, but any remaining National 5 coursework which was due to be picked up from school for marking will no longer be collected.

#### **Estimated grades**

We are still waiting for definitive advice from SQA regarding estimated grades for this session. An estimated grade is usually based on a range of evidence, which includes formal assessments, coursework, practical or performance elements and a teacher’s professional judgement of pupil progress. We know that sometimes a pupil who performs poorly in an assessment earlier in the school year can then significantly improve in the final examination, and we will look for evidence to recognise where pupils have made such improvements.

We are aware that there has been some call for pupils to be allowed to sit a “second prelim” or other formal assessment online, during school closures, to generate additional evidence. We are not setting any such tasks for our pupils. We do not wish to add any further pressure to young people who are already stressed about the current situation; nor would any such online task meet the SQA’s stringent guidelines for administering assessments.

You will appreciate that estimated grades are still in the process of being agreed by teachers and Curriculum Leaders, therefore we have no information to share at this point. As soon as we receive the next SQA update, we will confirm the next part of the process.

I hope that you find this information useful and that you have a relaxing Easter holiday.

