

Letter from James Cluckie, Academic Depute

Friday, 29th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

No doubt you will be aware that the Scottish Government will be making an announcement next Tuesday (Feb 2nd) on whether schools will be able to open after the mid-term break. Given that we have prelims scheduled from 16th February, this announcement has particular significance. Understandably, many of our pupils are anxious about this and unsure about how to plan their study. We hope in this letter to provide some clarity about our contingency plans, which we have spent many hours discussing, trying to work out what is best for our young people.

As stated previously, it is not our intention to move the prelim exams again. Prelims as normal, with pupils physically allowed in, is clearly our preferred choice, but we are pragmatic in realising that a return on 16th February may prove aspirational and unachievable given the current national situation.

Therefore, should this not be feasible, we would wish to proceed with the prelims being delivered through a secure electronic portal (Exam.net – see below). Students would follow the exact same timetable (enclosed) beginning on 16th February, whether physical or virtual. This will allow students to consolidate their learning of the work done up to Christmas and demonstrate their progress so far. Teachers will be able to give detailed individual feedback of individual strengths and weaknesses, while there is still enough time for pupils to remediate any problems before the final assessments in May.

These prelim exams, which have robust remote invigilation procedures, can be used as part of the evidence of attainment for SQA certification. Just like a physical exam, we would need to be sure that each pupil's submitted work is their own, completed under exam conditions. We also feel that the process of sitting the prelim and obtaining feedback is very worthwhile. Ultimately, though, the best evidence for students will come from their May assessments, with other sources, including assessments done in first term, acting as a backup.

This system of delivery can also act as a backup for pupils who may have to self-isolate during the prelim diet, even if the rest of the school is able to return.

Exam.net is a secure online exam delivery system, widely used for state exams in Sweden. Other Scottish Independent Schools are already using it. We have also liaised extensively with a very large Catholic independent school in England that has already gone through this process to gain from their experience. The pupils sign up with a unique code and the exam paper becomes available at the correct time. Students read the questions on screen, answer on paper then, when the time allocation is up, they upload scans of their answers to the same system.

Security

- The secure version locks their computer so that they can only access the exam on that device and nothing else.
- Invigilation would be provided through Teams, running on a mobile phone arranged so that the invigilator can see and hear the student and their workspace. Invigilators will monitor a small group of students and before the exam begins there will be a camera sweep of the room. Recordings will be kept in case of investigation. We would utilise Senior Leaders, support staff and class teachers for this 'invigilation' process

Supporting Students

- Students will be provided with a checklist to help them set up their work environment and advice on how to avoid suspicious behaviour during the exam.



- We will arrange a brief run-through for all pupils on the afternoon of Wed Feb 3rd, allowing students to gain familiarity, check their system and iron out difficulties.
- Sufficient time will be allowed at the start of the exam to ensure that everyone is correctly set up before the timed paper begins.
- No student should be disadvantaged by this system and individual adaptations and exceptions will be made where necessary. E.g. those who require readers and scribes would be considered vulnerable and be offered the possibility of coming in to school. Likewise, we would attempt to ascertain where working at home was very difficult to achieve due to poor Wi-Fi or sibling caring responsibilities
- Pupils who would normally type their answers, with or without spellcheck, can do so within the system. Extra time is provided where appropriate.

Conditions for SQA Evidence

- Students should not access prohibited materials (physical or online) or collaborate with third parties (physically present or online). A sweep of the room needs to be completed before the exam to ensure this.
- Students need to be visible and audible on Teams throughout the exam.
- Students must remain locked in to the Exam.net system throughout the exam.
- Students must complete the exam in a College booklet which will be mailed out (except those entitled to type on-screen).
- SQA require us to review results to look any unusual or unexpected patterns, for example: Are any identifiable individuals or groups of candidates doing better or worse than expected? Does this in any way correlate with the feedback you have received from video evidence or invigilators?

Therefore, regardless of whether we are running prelims remotely or in person, next week's lessons will be revision based with subject teachers providing guidance on preparing for the prelims. The February week will be an important time for revision and then students will be on 'study leave' for the period of the prelims whether they are in person or being held remotely. Staff will be available throughout next week and the period of prelims to deal with questions and to provide support, but please be aware that they will still be teaching S1-S3 lessons and at times invigilating. However, staff are not expected to mark submissions or deal with emails during February week and I am sure you will want to respect this holiday period after such an intense half term of on line learning.

We will be issuing further detailed information, arranging training for pupils and issuing a set of FAQs at the start of next week and once we have heard from the First Minister on Tuesday.

Kind regards

James Cluckie

Academic Depute

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GREAT THINGS HAPPEN IN THE GREEN BLAZER

February - March 2021

	Morning (09:00 Start)	Afternoon (13:00 Start)
Tuesday 16 th February		N5 Chemistry
Wednesday 17 th February	N5 Mathematics	
Thursday 18 th February		N5 Biology
Friday 19 th February	S4 Higher Italian N5 Modern Studies N5 Classical Studies	
Monday 22 nd February	N5 Spanish N5 Graphic Communication	N5 Art & Design
Tuesday 23 rd February	N5 English	
Wednesday 24 th February	N5 Business Management	N5 History
Thursday 25 th February	N5 Latin	N5 Drama
Friday 26 th February		N5 RMPS
Monday 1 st March	N5 Geography	
Tuesday 2 nd March	N5 Physics	
Wednesday 3 rd March	N5 French	
Thursday 4 th March		
Friday 5 th March	N5 Computing Science	N5 Music



February - March 2021

	Morning (09:00 Start)	Afternoon (13:00 Start)
Tuesday 16 th February	Higher Biology Higher Media Studies AH Modern Studies	Higher Computing AH Biology
Wednesday 17 th February	N5 Mathematics Higher Latin	AH Physics AH RMPS
Thursday 18 th February	Higher English AH Spanish	AH Computing
Friday 19 th February	Higher Business Management Higher Italian	Higher Art & Design AH Drama
Monday 22 nd February	Higher History AH Mathematics AH Latin	Higher PE
Tuesday 23 rd February		Higher Chemistry AH Geography AH Chemistry
Wednesday 24 th February	Higher Modern Studies Higher French AH Business	
Thursday 25 th February	Higher Mathematics AH History	
Friday 26 th February	Higher Geography AH French AH Mechanics AH Music	
Monday 1 st March	Higher Spanish AH English	Higher Physics
Tuesday 2 nd March	Higher Music Higher RMPS	Higher Economics
Wednesday 3 rd March	Higher Classical Studies Higher German AH German	
Thursday 4 th March	Higher Drama AH Italian AH Economics	
Friday 5 th March	Absentee sittings	Absentee sittings