
SQA SCHOOL EXAMINATION RESULTS 2015

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to provide an update to elected members on the outcome of the 2015 examination diet, to outline the results for pupils entered for formal examinations and to share the successes of Argyll and Bute pupils across wider achievement.
- 1.2 Following changes to the New National Examinations, the introduction of Insight, replacing the previous STACS (Standard Tables and Charts), the Council received SQA examination results for all pupils entered for formal qualification in August 2015. Education Services undertook an initial analysis of the statistical information and provided a range of statistical data for all pupils across each of the ten secondary schools. This analysis will be complemented by further detailed statistical analysis and by the update to the 'Insight' tool which took place in September. 'Insight' is designed to assist local authorities and secondary schools to analyse, compare and improve the performance of pupils in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence. The 'Insight' tool was introduced in Session 2014-15 with a focus on the most up-to-date or most successful performance for each pupil in each subject. This reflects the holistic approach taken in Curriculum for Excellence.
- 1.3 New qualifications are being phased in over a three year period. New qualifications available in 2013/14 included National 3, 4 and 5 which replaced Standard Grade, Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications. National 1 and 2 qualifications are also available to meet the needs of learners with specific learning requirements replacing Access 1 and 2 qualifications (*Appendix 1 – Qualifications overview*). In 2014/15 the new Higher was available for the first time and in 2015/16 the new Advanced Higher will become available. To allow pupils the opportunity to repeat qualifications there was overlap with Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications continuing to be available in 2014/15. Scottish Government also agreed that for the 2014/15 session schools would be able to continue to offer the existing Higher where schools were able to demonstrate this was in the best interests of pupils. For session 2015/16 onwards only the new Higher will be available and Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2 and the 'old' Higher courses will no longer be available. These overlaps prevent direct comparisons with attainment at S4 level and at Intermediate 1 and

2 in previous years. However the 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 attainment will provide a baseline for future years' trend analysis.

As a consequence of these changes extreme caution should be exercised when making comparisons of the overall levels of performance between years.

- 1.4 Over recent years, Argyll and Bute schools have been developing courses which are increasingly relevant to their pupils' needs. Some of these courses are either not accredited by the SQA or are courses run in partnership with the post-16 sector and not credited to the school's overall percentages. A summary of wider achievement of pupils is contained within the report.
- 1.5 This paper presents an overview and analysis of the progress of schools in implementing New National Qualifications and, importantly, illustrates the performance of schools in SQA examinations in 2015.
- 1.6 As part of the Authority approach to securing improvement for all learners the Education Service is continuing to work with individual schools through a comprehensive programme of support and challenge over the course of session 2014/2015 and beyond. Section seven of this report outlines the key approaches being taken.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
 - Note the outcome of the examination results for pupils in academic year 2014/15;
 - Note the strategic programme of performance review between schools and education development and improvement staff as noted at section 7.1 of the report;
 - Continue to support the work of the Education Service in supporting schools to secure continuous improvement in outcomes for Argyll and Bute Learners and
 - Request a further report at the June Community Services Committee considering the national position arising from information released by Insight (anticipated release date in March 2016).

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 The Council received SQA examination results for all pupils entered for formal qualifications in session 2014/2015 in August. This provided comprehensive information on the outcome of examination performance for pupils across all Argyll and Bute schools. Due to changes to the presentation of statistical information no national or benchmarking ‘family’ comparisons data will be available until Spring 2016. The introduction of Insight, formerly The Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool (SPBT), presents a significant change for all Scottish Local Authorities in receiving, reviewing and presenting examination data. As a consequence of these changes, the content and style of this report differs from previous attainment reports.

3.2 The new Insight tool is designed to:

- provide data on four measures which have been carefully selected to support Curriculum for Excellence;
- replace the current STACs from August 2014;
- be easier and more intuitive to use than STACs and include data on “latest and best” pupil awards;
- include a wider range of SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) credit-rated awards and programmes. It is worth noting that work is underway by Scottish Government to align national courses in order to provide recognition for a wider range of courses within the overall tariff scores;
- include commentaries to aid interpretation and prompt a “closer look”;
- be used by secondary schools, local authorities and Education Scotland. It will be available to all teaching staff in secondary schools;
- provide more information on educational outcomes including post-school destinations and attainment in literacy and numeracy, and
- be one of a range of approaches to performance evaluations and improvement. Others include local analyses and self-evaluation processes both at school and local authority level, the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) and Education Scotland inspection processes. A key outcome of this revised approach is the functionality which allows the tracking of progress of pupils in key groups: for example, looked after young people.

The tool will encourage:

- professional reflection and compare schools to a “virtual” comparator allowing users to see how the performance of their pupils compares to a similar group of pupils from across Scotland, and

- a collaborative approach to looking at data and working together as part of the improvement process encouraging schools to identify and interact with learning partners.
- 3.3 The Insight tool was updated at the end of February 2015 to take into account school leaver data and any updated attainment results for session 2013-14.
- 3.4 The Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence began in academic session 2013-14 for pupils in S4. New qualifications are being phased in over a three year period.
- 3.5 Qualifications available in 2013/14 included National 3, 4 and 5 which replaced Standard Grade, Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications. National 1 and 2 qualifications are also available to meet the needs of learners with specific learning requirements replacing Access 1 and 2 qualifications (*Appendix 1 – Qualifications overview*).
- 3.6 In 2014/15 the new Higher was available for the first time and in 2015/16 the new Advanced Higher will become available. To allow pupils opportunity to repeat qualifications there was overlap with Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications continuing to be available in 2014/15. Scottish Government also agreed that for the 2014/15 session schools would be able to continue to offer the existing Higher where schools were able to demonstrate this was in the best interests of pupils.
- 3.7 For session 2015/16 onwards only New National Qualifications will be available and Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2, the 'old' Higher and 'old' Advanced Higher courses will no longer be available. These overlaps prevent direct comparisons with attainment at S4 level and at Intermediate 1 and 2 in previous years. However the 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 attainment will provide a baseline for future years' trend analysis.
- 3.8 As a consequence of these changes extreme caution should be exercised when making comparisons of the overall levels of performance across and between schools. Additionally, in some instances data for some schools in key qualifications is anonymised to ensure individual pupils cannot be identified.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- Note the outcome of the examination results for pupils in academic year 2013/14;
 - Note the strategic programme of performance review between schools and education development and improvement staff as noted at section 7.1 of the report;
 - Continue to support the work of the Education Service in supporting schools to secure continuous improvement in outcomes for Argyll and Bute learners and
 - Request a further report at the June Community Services Committee considering the national position arising from information released by Insight (anticipated release date in March 2015).

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 The performance of Argyll and Bute schools in 2015 is slightly below the current national performance in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations at National 5 and Higher levels and above the current national performance at National 4 and Advanced Higher levels (*Table 1: refers*). However, it should be noted that new courses and examinations were introduced during session 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 with pupils being presented for the first phase of the new examinations in May 2014.
- 5.1.1 Due to the implementation of the revised National Qualifications at level 3, 4, 5, and Higher it is not reasonable to compare statistical outcomes across earlier years. Therefore, the results for Argyll and Bute pupils in session 2014/2015 are illustrated in individual tables across each of the six course levels, and for comparative purposes with session 2013/2014 attainment in a separate table.
- 5.2 The following tables illustrate performance in each of the ten secondary schools across the New National Qualifications Framework:

Table 1: presents the overall performance of Argyll and Bute across all course levels.

COURSE	ARGYLL & BUTE AVERAGE (% A-C awards)	NATIONAL AVERAGE (% A-C awards)	DIFFERENCE (%)
NATIONAL 4	94.7%	93.3%	+1.4%
NATIONAL 5	74.8%	79.8%	-5.0%
HIGHER	76.8%	78.1%	-1.3%
ADVANCED HIGHER	83.6%	80.9%	+2.7%

Summary:

Overall, the results for pupils across National 5 and Higher are slightly below national averages. As a consequence of the reporting model and timescales it is not possible to provide a comparison against similar authorities at this time and, as such, these results should be treated with caution at this stage.

Table 2: presents the overall performance of Argyll and Bute across all course levels for 2013/2014 and 2014/2015.

COURSE	ARGYLL & BUTE AVERAGE (% A-C awards) 2014/2015	ARGYLL & BUTE AVERAGE (% A-C awards) 2013/2014	DIFFERENCE (%)
NATIONAL 4	94.7%	89.4%	+5.3%
NATIONAL 5	74.8%	81.7%	-6.9%
HIGHER	76.8%	76.6%	+0.2%
ADVANCED HIGHER	83.6%	78.5%	+5.1%

Advanced Higher Summary:

Advanced Higher awards for pupils in Argyll and Bute are positive overall. All of the ten secondary schools presented pupils for Advanced Higher certification. Seven of the ten schools pupils exceeded both authority and national performance level. However, in the remaining schools the performance of pupils in Advanced Highers is below or significantly below the national average. It should be noted that due to the small number of pupils being presented for Advanced Highers the statistical variances can be significant.

5.3 Attainment of Looked After Children and Young People in 2015

Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy for Looked After Children and Young People in 2015

(Data extracted from Insight)

	No of Entries	Argyll and Bute	National (Looked after Children and Young People)
S4 Level 4 literacy and numeracy	*	33.3%	37.0%
S4 Level 5 literacy and numeracy	*	0.0%	5.6%
S5 Level 4 literacy and numeracy	*	66.7%	50.2%
S5 Level 5 literacy and numeracy	*	16.7%	13.7%
S6 Level 4 literacy and numeracy	*	100.0%	84.5%
S6 Level 5 literacy and numeracy	*	40.0%	46.6%

NB. Where the data is less than 10 this is shown as *

Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy for Looked After Away from Home Children and Young People in 2015. (Data extracted from Insight)

	No of Entries	Argyll and Bute	National (Looked After Away from Home Children and Young People)
S4 Level 4 literacy and numeracy	*	28.6%	53.0%
S4 Level 5 literacy and numeracy	*	0.0%	8.1%
S5 Level 4 literacy and numeracy	*	25.0%	62.6%
S5 Level 5 literacy and numeracy	*	12.5%	23.5%
S6 Level 4 literacy and numeracy	*	100.0%	78.7%
S6 Level 5 literacy and numeracy	*	100.0%	41.8%

NB. Where the data is less than 10 this is shown as *

Attainment in Literacy and Numeracy for both Looked After at Home and Looked After Away from Home Children and Young People is variable. It should be noted that due to the small number of pupils the statistical variances can be significant and care should be taken in any analysis.

5.4 General educational attainment for Looked after leavers is as below:

	Argyll & Bute Looked after leavers (2014)	National Looked after leavers (2014)**
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 3 or better	83.3%	91%
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 4 or better	83.3%	74%
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 5 or better	50.0%	40%
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 6 or better	27.8%	12%
1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 7 or better	11.1%	2%
No Qualifications	16.7%	9%

*Data taken from Insight. Please note data from the 2015 leavers is not yet available.

**Educational outcomes of looked after children 2013/14, Scottish Government

5.5 Looked after Young People in Argyll and Bute who leave school are increasingly entering positive destinations (education, employment or training). In 2014, **77.8%** of looked after young people who left school entered a positive destination. Four LAC entered Further Education/Higher Education (FE/HE), 1 gained employment, 1 undertook an Activity Agreement and 2 were unemployed. There were no young persons with unknown destinations. This compares positively with **46.7%** of LAC school leavers in 2013. Information on 2014/15 School Leaver Destination Return (SLDR) will not be published until December 2015 at the earliest.

6.0 WIDER ACHIEVEMENT COURSES AND QUALIFICATIONS

6.1 Argyll and Bute schools continue to deliver a comprehensive programme of alternative courses designed to meet the needs of all learners. These courses are defined as:

- School/College Partnership Courses including Skills for Work: Hairdressing, Hospitality, Rural Skills (National 4 and National 5) and Higher Awards such as Psychology;
- Wider Achievement Qualifications: e.g. ASDAN, Duke of Edinburgh, Princes Trust XL, YASS – S6 Open University, and
- UHI Degree Module Courses for example Climate Land & People and Scottish History

The participation rates for young people are as follows:

Number of Young People studying:

Students	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Skills for Work	647	621	563	524	525
Wider Qualifications	787	1386	1491	1364	1465
S6/UHI Partnership	0	0	4	3	4
TOTAL	1434	2007	2058	1891	2018

Number of courses on offer:

Number of courses	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Skills for Work	16	16	20	16	18
Wider Qualifications	27	37	31	33	55
S6/UHI Partnership	0	0	2	6	3
TOTAL	43	53	53	55	74

7.0 MONITORING PROGRESS AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES

7.1 As part of the Authority approach to securing improvement for all learners the Education Service will continue to work with individual schools through a comprehensive programme of support and challenge over the course of session 2015/2016 and beyond. Key approaches include:

- i. an expectation that all Head Teachers will submit their initial analysis of their school's results to the Education Service following the initial release of results by the SQA in August;
- ii. members of the Education Team undertake a comprehensive review of the attainment sets for schools, including discrete subject areas, identification of key trends: positive and negative, three year averages and subject trends;
- iii. meaningful discussion of the outcome of statistical analysis of school reports between the Authority and individual schools;
- iv. ensuring evaluative discussions between school senior management team and subject department leaders take place. These will focus primarily on the performance of individual subject departments across one, three and five years;
- v. Head Teachers invite local Elected Members to a meeting with senior school staff to discuss the examination results in depth;
- vi. following the December report to the Council by the Head of Service and Education Manager, reports on achievement, including examination results, for individual secondary schools/joint campuses will be presented by Head Teachers/Principals at their respective Area Committee meeting;
- vii. Education Officers will take forward a programme of school visits to discuss detailed analysis and predictions for the next examination period. (Due to the revised timescales for the presentation of national attainment statistics, these discussions are anticipated for conclusion early in 2016). Where appropriate, improvement actions at subject level to be agreed. These may include working across schools to improve consistency of standards, and
- viii. In addition, examination results and approaches to quality improvement will be routinely discussed with the Education Scotland, Area Liaison Officer.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In 2015 the performance of Argyll and Bute schools varied across national qualification measures. In order to secure improvement for learners the work of the Education Development and Improvement Service over the course of session 2015/2016 will take forward a programme of support and challenge with schools across the authority across a range of actions and measures. The results from the 2015 examination diet will now be incorporated into improvement objectives and targets to support further improvement for examinations in 2016.
- 8.2 A further report on Educational Attainment and Wider Achievement will be presented to Community Services Committee following the publication of National Performance information anticipated in Spring 2016.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 **Policy:** This report links directly to Outcome 3 in the Argyll and Bute Single Outcome Agreement (Education Skills and Training Maximises Opportunities for All)
- 9.2 **Financial:** None
- 9.3 **Personnel:** None
- 9.4 **Equal Opportunities:** None
- 9.5 **Legal:** None
- 9.6 **Risk:** The performance of Argyll and Bute schools in national examinations can significantly enhance or detract from the Council's reputation and attractiveness as an area to work and live in.
- 9.7 **Customer Services:** This report provides elected members with an overview of Service Performance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Qualifications overview

SCQF (Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework)	New National Qualifications		Replaces
1 and 2	National 1 and National 2	>	Access 1 and Access 2
3	National 3	>	Access 3 Standard Grade (Foundation Level)
4	National 4	>	Standard Grade (General Level) Intermediate 1
5	National 5	>	Standard Grade (Credit Level) Intermediate 2
6	Higher (available 2015)	>	Higher
7	Advanced Higher (available 2016)	>	Advanced Higher

Timetable for introduction	
2012-2013	Last certification of Standard Grade (Credit, General and Foundation).
2013-2014	National 1-5 introduced and 'dual run' with Access and Intermediate courses.
2014-2015	New Higher courses introduced and 'dual run' with current Higher, Intermediate and Access courses.
2015-2016	Introduction of new Advanced Higher. All new qualifications now in place.

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database. N.B. MA Frameworks have a notional level on the SCQF, but all component parts are credit rated



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	SVQs/MAs
12	Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-2016. See www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner			Professional Apprenticeship
11				Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5
10				Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
8	Higher National Diploma		Diploma Of Higher Education	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
7	Advanced Higher Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate		Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
6	Higher			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
5	National 5 Intermediate 2			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2
4	National 4 Intermediate 1	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ 1
3	National 3 Access 3			
2	National 2 Access 2			
1	National 1 Access 1			