

SQA SCHOOL EXAMINATION RESULTS 2023

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide an update to elected members on the initial outcome of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) 2023 examination diet for young people in Argyll and Bute.
- 1.2** Following the release of the initial examination results by the SQA in August, awards for pupils in academic year 2022/23 will be updated by the SQA in September 2023 following the processing of appeal requests submitted by candidates or schools. As a consequence of the decisions associated with these requests, minor changes to the statistical data contained within this report may occur.
- 1.3** It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- I. Notes the guidance from the SQA, detailed below at 4.3, about qualitative comparisons of data over the last four years.
 - II. Notes the outcome of the initial SQA examination results for pupils in academic year 2022/23, and that the performance of Argyll and Bute Schools in 2023 is above the current national performance in SQA examinations in two of the four measures (National 4 and Higher) at A-C, and above all four measures (National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) at A-D.
 - III. Requests that the Executive Director provide further reports to the Community Services Committee to allow the consideration of updated statistical school and national information, scheduled to be released by Insight (school data analysis tool) in September 2023 and February 2024.

SQA SCHOOL EXAMINATION RESULTS 2023

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 On 3rd August 2023 the Council received SQA examination results for all pupils entered for National Qualifications in session 2022/23. This provided initial information on the outcome of examination performance for all pupils in each of the ten Argyll and Bute secondary schools.

2.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Elected Members of the initial outcome of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) 2023 awards for young people in Argyll and Bute. A range of statistical information is provided illustrating performance of pupils across the four National Qualification measures:

National 4
National 5
Higher
Advanced Higher

As has been the case in previous years, all data in this initial attainment report has been sourced from SEEMiS Business Intelligence Course Awards data.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:

- I. Notes the guidance from the SQA, detailed below at 4.3, about qualitative comparisons of data over the last four years.
- II. Notes the outcome of the initial SQA examination results for pupils in academic year 2022/23, and that the performance of Argyll and Bute Schools in 2023 is above the current national performance in SQA examinations in two of the four measures (National 4 and Higher) at A-C, and above all four measures (National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) at A-D.
- III. Requests that the Executive Director provide further reports to the Community Services Committee to allow the consideration of updated statistical school and national information, scheduled to be released by Insight (school data analysis tool) in September 2023 and February 2024.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Pupils in each of the ten secondary schools in Argyll and Bute in S4–S6 were presented for a range of SQA qualifications in May and June of 2023. Following the release of awards, Education Services conducted an initial analysis of the results to support the preparation of a summary report for presentation to and consideration by Elected Members.
- 4.2 This paper presents a summary overview of the examination outcomes and draws comparisons of the overall attainment of pupils in Argyll and Bute with pupils nationally.
- 4.3 Although details of SQA attainment data in 2019 and 2022 are supplied in this paper, and some comparisons have been drawn to aid contextualisation of this year’s attainment data, it is important to note the guidance of the SQA regarding the drawing of conclusions about educational performance over the last four years.

In the edition of SQA News dated 8th August 2023, SQA state:

"The 2023 results are between 2019 – the last exam year before the pandemic – and 2022, when a ‘generous approach’ was applied to awarding for the first year of the return to exams”

“There have been different approaches to awarding in each year since 2019. This means that comparisons of attainment between years should be treated with significant caution and do not allow for conclusions to be drawn on changes in education performance during this time.”

- 4.4 For A-C grades, the performance of Argyll and Bute schools in 2023 is **above** the current National performance in SQA examinations in **two of the four national measures: National 4 and Higher.**

Table 1 below present the overall performance of candidates in Argyll and Bute across all course levels at Grades A-C, and, for context, compares attainment in the three academic years 2019, 2022 and 2023. It also compares 2023 Argyll and Bute A-C attainment with 2023 national attainment.

As a result of the cancellation of examinations in 2020 and 2021, and the adoption of an assessment model based on teacher judgement and demonstrated attainment, **2021 and 2022 results have not been included.**

Table 1– A-C Awards 2019, 2022, 2023 – A&B/National – National 4, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher

	2018 - 2019	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2022 - 2023			
	A&B Attainment A-C %	A&B Attainment A-C%	A&B Attainment A-C %	National Attainment A-C %	Difference A&B 18/19 - 22/23	Difference A&B 21/22 - 22/23	Difference A&B 22/23 to National A-C
Nat 4	100%	100%	100%	87.80%	0.00%	0.00%	+12.20%
Nat 5	79.43%	78.62%	76.93%	78.80%	-2.50%	-1.69%	-1.87%
Higher	73.19%	79.51%	77.12%	77.10%	+3.93%	-2.38%	+0.02%
Adv H	75.68%	83.72%	79.44%	79.80%	+3.77%	-4.28%	-0.36%

Summary:

- Our National 4 pass rate is **100%** for the 8th year in succession. This is **12.20% above** the 2023 national measure of 87.80%
- Our National 5 A-C pass rate has **reduced** by 2.50% on 2019. It is **below** the 2023 national measure for National 5 by 1.87%.
- Our Higher A-C pass rate **is above** 2019's figure by 3.93%. Argyll and Bute's A-C Higher pass rate is **above** the 2023 national measure by 0.02%.
- Our Advanced Higher A-C pass rate is **above** 2019's figure by 3.77%. Argyll and Bute's 2023 A-C Advanced Higher pass rate is **marginally below** the 2023 national measure by 0.36%.

4.5 For A-D grades, the performance of Argyll and Bute schools in 2022 is **above** the current National performance in SQA examinations in **all four of the national measures: National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.**

Table 2 below present the overall performance of candidates in Argyll and Bute across all course levels at Grades A-D, and, for context, compares attainment in the three academic years 2019, 2022 and 2023. It also compares 2023 Argyll and Bute A-D attainment with 2023 national attainment.

As with A-C awards, it is not valid to include comparisons with 2020 and 2021 for the reasons detailed above.

Table 2 – A-D Awards 2019, 2022, 2023 – A&B/National – National 4, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher

	2018 - 2019	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2022 - 2023			
	A&B Attainment A-D %	A&B Attainment A-D %	A&B Attainment A-D %	National Attainment A-D %	Difference A&B 18/19 - 22/23	Difference A&B 21/22 - 22/23	Difference A&B 22/23 to National A-D
Nat 4	100%	100%	100%	87.80%	0.00%	0.00%	+12.20%
Nat 5	92.00%	91.78%	90.67%	90.50%	-1.33%	-1.11%	+0.17%
Higher	91.38%	92.62%	92.07%	90.50%	+0.70%	-0.55%	+1.57%
Adv H	87.64%	96.51%	93.03%	92.70%	+5.39%	-3.48%	+0.33%

Summary:

- As noted previously, our National 4 pass rate is **100%** for the 8th year in succession
- Our National 5 A-D pass rate has **reduced** by 1.33% on 2019. The Argyll and Bute figure of 90.67% is **above** the 2023 national measure by 0.17%.
- Our Higher A-D pass rate has **increased** on 2019 by 0.70%. Argyll and Bute’s figure is 1.57% **above** the 2023 national figure.
- Our Advanced Higher A-D pass rate has **increased** by 5.39% on 2019. This is **above** the 2023 Advanced Higher national average by 0.33%.

4.6 Tables 3 and 4 present the overall performance of Argyll and Bute Secondary Schools (table 3 A-C, table 4 A-D) across all course levels between the academic years 2019 and 2023 (excluding 2020 and 2021), allowing each school to be compared with the Argyll and Bute average attainment figure and the national average attainment figure.

Table 3 – SQA data for Individual secondary schools – National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher 2019, 2022, 2023 – A-C Grades

Diet Year	Course	CGS	DGS	HA	IHS	LJC	OHS	RA	Tar A	Ti HS	To HS	A&B	National
2023	NAT 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	87.8%
2022	NAT 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	86.1%
2019	NAT 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	88.5%
2023	NAT 5	75.1%	77.4%	78.8%	88.4%	73.9%	77.1%	71.0%	79.9%	65.7%	70.2%	76.9%	78.8%
2022	NAT 5	71%	79%	85%	86%	76%	75%	78%	66%	61%	78%	78%	80.8%
2019	NAT 5	73%	84%	84%	85%	79%	74%	66%	88%	68%	81%	79%	78.2%

2023	Higher	68.1%	79.5%	80.5%	90.9%	75.1%	79.2%	65.8%	57.7%	50.0%	68.8%	77.1%	77.1%
2022	Higher	73%	78%	85%	85%	82%	75%	71%	64%	76%	91%	80%	78.9%
2019	Higher	67%	76%	78%	73%	70%	71%	54%	67%	50%	77%	73%	74.8%
2023	Adv H	64.3%	83.3%	78.7%	75.0%	71.7%	88.5%	81.8%	81.8%	NP*	80.0%	79.4%	79.8%
2022	Adv H	77%	73%	87%	95%	76%	85%	74%	100%	NP*	100%	84%	81.3%
2019	Adv H	80%	70%	80%	82%	94%	52%	76%	67%	33%	77%	76%	79.4%

Table 4 – SQA data for Individual secondary schools – National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher 2019, 2022, 2023 – A-D Grades

Diet Year	Course	CGS	DGS	HA	IHS	LJC	OHS	RA	Tar A	Ti HS	To HS	A&B	National
2023	NAT 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	87.8%
2022	NAT 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	86.1%
2019	NAT 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	88.5%
2023	NAT 5	90.5%	90.3%	91.8%	97.1%	89.0%	90.9%	87.3%	91.0%	88.6%	86.9%	90.7%	90.5%
2022	NAT 5	87.9%	92.1%	95.4%	96.5%	90.0%	90.2%	91.8%	83.2%	76.3%	90.7%	91.8%	92.1%
2019	NAT 5	90.3%	92.8%	93.8%	96.4%	92.5%	89.9%	84.5%	97.7%	82.4%	93.2%	92.0%	90.7%
2023	Higher	88.9%	95.3%	92.1%	98.7%	88.9%	93.4%	86.6%	90.4%	87.5%	89.1%	92.1%	90.5%
2022	Higher	89.2%	91.7%	94.4%	96.8%	94.4%	90.8%	91.3%	86.6%	94.1%	96.6%	92.6%	91.5%
2019	Higher	88.2%	92.6%	93.3%	95.8%	89.0%	89.9%	84.4%	89.3%	75.0%	93.5%	91.4%	89.9%
2023	Adv H	92.9%	91.7%	92.6%	100.0%	91.3%	96.2%	81.8%	100%	NP*	100%	93.0%	92.7%
2022	Adv H	96.2%	100%	99.3%	94.7%	89.7%	89.6%	94.7%	100%	NP*	100%	96.5%	93.4%
2019	Adv H	80.0%	87.0%	86.9%	100%	100%	69.0%	100%	100%	100.0%	92.3%	87.6%	87.8%

Key to School abbreviations

CGS	Campbeltown Grammar School
DGS	Dunoon Grammar School
HA	Hermitage Academy
IHS	Islay High School
LJC	Lochgilphead Joint Campus
OHS	Oban High School
RJC	Rothesay Joint Campus
TAR A	Tarbert Academy
TI HS	Tiree High School
TO HS	Tobermory High School

Summary:

- In 2023, all 10 secondary schools maintained their 100% pass rate for National 4 outperforming the national measure.
- At A-C, three of our secondary schools were **equal with or above** the 2023 national average measure for National 5.

At A-D, five of our secondary schools were **equal with or above** the 2023 national average measure for National 5.

- At A-C, four of our secondary schools were **above** the 2023 national average

measure for Higher.

At A-D, four of our secondary schools were **above** the 2023 national average measure for Higher.

- At A-C, five of our secondary schools were **above** the 2023 national average for Advanced Higher.
At A-D, five of our secondary schools were **above** the 2023 national average for Advanced Higher.

One school did not present at this level. It should be noted that, as a result of the small number of presentations for Advanced Higher, statistical variance at this level must be carefully interpreted. For example, 100% pass rate can be as a result of one pupil being presented for a subject at Advanced Higher.

- 4.7** Overall, percentage pass rate data should be interpreted very carefully as schools have positive presentation policies that are designed to encourage pupils to achieve success at the highest level of qualification that they can. In some instances, and for some pupils, this may mean that they receive a D grade within a qualification level, which is a recognised award. It is also the policy in Argyll and Bute, as with other local authorities, that full discussion and consideration of both pupil and parent views are reflected in the final decision to continue with a course and to sit the external examination.
- 4.8** This policy may result in circumstances where pupils are given the opportunity to attempt a level that they may find challenging, as it may be their last opportunity to do so, for example in S6. Schools will offer these pupils the opportunity to sit the exam to improve their positive destination chances, such as access to Higher or Further Education.
- 4.9** As a Local Authority we offer a wide range of opportunities that help to meet the needs of our individual learners, whilst also supporting a variety of pathways into secure, sustainable positive destinations.

The results reported within this briefing note **do not include** the following presentations for our young people at this time:

- 1) College courses at levels 4, 5 and 6
- 2) National Progression Awards (NPA) at levels 4, 5 and 6
- 3) Skills for Work Awards at levels 4, 5 and 6
- 4) Foundation Apprenticeships at level 6
- 5) Presentation of S3 pupils at levels 4 and 5

In recent years such qualifications and accreditations have increased individual school attainment levels considerably, once added after the release of Insight data in February. Final attainment and achievement cannot be measured until this time.

5.0 Appeals

- 5.1** The SQA Appeals Service for 2023 provides learners with the opportunity to request a

marking review if they have concerns about their certificated grade. The appeals service is free and open for learners to appeal either directly to SQA, or through their school.

Candidates who have concerns about their grade and think there may have been an error with the marking of their exam question paper(s) or coursework, can request a marking review by SQA. This is different to the 2022 appeals service as alternative assessment evidence (e.g. prelim evidence from schools) will not be submitted or considered.

The SQA marking review checks that:

- all parts of SQA assessments have been marked;
- the marking is in line with national standards;
- the marks given for each answer have been added up correctly; and
- the correct result has been entered on the SQA system.

Following review, the candidate's grade can go up, stay the same, or go down. Priority Appeals continue to be available to those with university, college or employment offers pending. SQA have sent directly to every candidate a copy of their Appeals Process Guidance.

Key dates

Priority appeals	Dates
Appeals 2023 Learner Direct service opens to learners.	8 August 2023
Appeals 2023 service opens to centres on SQA Connect.	8 August 2023
Deadline for submitting priority appeals via Learner Direct.	15 August 2023
Priority appeals service for centres closes	21 August 2023
SQA issues results for priority appeals to centres.	4 September 2023
SQA confirms outcomes to UCAS.	5 September 2023
Replacement certificates issued to learners.	mid-November 2023 [†]

Non-priority appeals	Dates
Appeals 2023 Learner Direct service opens to learners.	8 August 2023
Appeals 2023 service opens to centres on SQA Connect.	8 August 2023
Deadline for submitting non-priority appeals via Learner Direct.	29 August 2023
Non-priority appeals service for centres closes	1 September 2023
SQA issues results for non-priority appeals.	October 2023 [†]
Replacement certificates issued to learners.	mid-November 2023 [†]

[†]It may be necessary to change these dates, depending on the volume of appeals .

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 This report presents a summary of the initial analysis of the 2023 SQA external examination outcomes for Argyll and Bute pupils at authority level and in each of the

ten secondary schools.

- 6.2** In 2023 the performance of Argyll and Bute schools compared positively with national measures. For results at A-C and A-D, Argyll and Bute attainment is higher than the national average for six out of eight measures.
- 6.3** The Education Service are taking forward a programme of support and challenge with schools across the authority, involving a range of actions and measures to support schools to secure further improvement in examination outcomes for pupils. In the autumn, all secondary schools will participate in an Attainment Meeting with the Executive Director, Heads of Education and the Education Manager and Officer, at which HTs will present in-depth analysis of all aspects of their schools' attainment, and indicate key areas of focus for improvement.
- 6.4** A further report on Educational Attainment and Wider Achievement will be presented to Community Services Committee in December 2023 following the publication of updated national performance information on Insight released in September of each year.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Policy:** This report links directly to Outcome 3 in the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan: Education, Skills and Training Maximise Opportunities for All
- 7.2 Financial:** None.
- 7.3 Personnel:** None.
- 7.4 Equal Opportunities:** None.
- 7.5 Legal:** None.
- 7.6 Climate Change** None.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 Customer Services:** This report provides Elected Members with an overview of Service Performance.

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