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By email to: peegmasson@btinternet.com

Our ref: 2017/0012546

5 May 2017

Dear Ms Masson

Thank you for your email of 29 March 2017 to John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, on behalf of Speyside High School Parent Council, about changes to National 5. As an official in the Learning Directorate I have been asked to reply.

Since Mr Swinney's appointment as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, the Deputy First Minister has listened, and continues to listen, to teachers, parents, and experts from across the sector. While a range of alternative views have been, and continue to be, expressed by stakeholders, a consistent concern has been that mandatory unit assessment was one factor contributing to an unintended increase in workload that impacted upon both teachers and young people.

The Deputy First Minister has been very clear that reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and workload, freeing up teachers to teach and learners to learn, is a key priority that needs to be addressed in order to ensure that we can deliver the best educational experience for our young people. The removal of mandatory unit assessment reflects proposals from teachers' groups who felt that the cumulative impact of typically having to undertake three unit assessments, course assignments, prelims and a final exam for each course was too great. The decision followed discussions with the Assessment and National Qualifications Group, the Teacher Panel and the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Management Board, and is part of a package of measures designed to address unnecessary bureaucracy.

You will be aware that the Assessment and National Qualifications Group has issued guidance on the changes to qualifications, which has been sent to all secondary school teachers and head teachers, as well as Directors of Education.

The full guidance document is available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/WorkingGrouponAssessmentandNQs/ANQGDoc>.



