**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01, 05 AUGUST, 2014**

**NEW NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS – SUMMARY INFORMATION**

New National 3, 4 and 5 qualifications have been introduced by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), to replace Standard Grades, Intermediates and Access qualifications. In line with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, these new qualifications are designed to better test skills and understanding as well as knowledge and facts.

The first learners to have taken the new National Qualifications are receiving their results tomorrow (5 August).

In terms of challenge,

* National 5 is equivalent to Standard Grade (Credit); and also to Intermediate 2
* National 4 is equivalent to Standard Grade (General); and also to Intermediate 1
* National 3 is equivalent to Standard Grade (Foundation); and also to Access 3.

As SQA have made clear, **direct** comparisons between the new National qualifications and Standard Grade pass rates cannot validly be made.

For example, National 5 pass rates cannot be directly compared with the old Standard Grade pass rates.

Standard Grade pass rates recorded the proportion of all entrants who achieved Foundation level or above – the **lowest** of the 3 levels covered by Standard Grade. As such, Standard Grade pass rates were typically close to 100%. There is no identified pass rate for Standard Grade at Credit.

Those passing National 5 this year have achieved a level equivalent to the **highest** Standard Grade level – Credit but, as there is no identifiable Credit pass rate, the two can’t be compared.

This year has seen a National 5 overall pass rate of **81.1%**. This is broadly similar to that of other qualifications such as Intermediate 2, which as noted above is at the same level of challenge. The Intermediate 2 overall pass rate was 81.8% in 2013.

It is possible to make some **broad** comparisons between total numbers attaining different qualifications, while recognising that the make–up of the groups entered will differ between qualifications and between years.

As an example, in 2013 there were 45,565 entries for Standard Grade English. 20,669 of these entrants achieved Credit. There were also 19,458 passes at Intermediate 2 English.

This year, 25,091 entrants have achieved National 5 English, the level equivalent to Credit. There were also 15,823 passes at Intermediate 2 English.

Those who do not pass National 5 may nevertheless gain a National 4, if they have passed all the N5 required Course Units plus an ‘Added Value Unit’ at National 4. Some will have done this in the course of this session, and will appear within this year’s attainment figure for National 4 English. Others will be able to gain a National 4 by completing the Added Value Unit next session, and be certificated for National 4 in 2015.

As expected, the total number of entries is lower this year than last. This will largely be due to changes in curriculum models in senior phase, as many schools move to fewer subjects in S4 to provide greater depth of attainment and a richer learning experience.

As a general guide to media:

* National 3 and 4 courses are not graded – candidates receive a pass or fail.
* National 5 courses are graded A to D or ‘No Award’. Grades A-C would usually allow a learner to progress to Higher. Grade D is not a pass, but is reported on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate as a course award in its own right. Grade D indicates the candidate has achieved all the National Units for the course at that level and has achieved a band 7 in the external assessment.
* If a course assessment is failed, the learner will receive credit for the units they have achieved at that level.
* For 2013-14, Highers remained the same. From 2014-15, new Higher courses will be introduced, with new Advanced Highers introduced in 2015-16.