



National Qualifications in S4

The S3 Experience

Our S3 experiences are designed to ensure effective transition to the senior phase (S4-S6). These draw upon

- ♦ Key *Level 3 Experiences and outcomes*¹ not covered hitherto
 - ♦ Relevant *Level 4 Experiences and outcomes*
 - ♦ Appropriate elements of National 4 and 5 units/courses both to ensure articulation with these courses and to assess pupils' capacity to respond to the challenges therein
- and
- ♦ Continue to develop the skills for learning, life and work integral to the course and for progression

It is important to understand that pupils are not progressing through National 4 to National 5 in S3/S4. In some subjects there is a large overlap between Level 4 Es&Os and the National courses.

Pathways through S4

In S4 pupils will follow one of the following pathways depending on how well they have coped with their S3 programmes and their performance in term 1 of S4 including any S4 examinations

- ✓ Complete National 3 Units
- ✓ Complete N4 Units and the N4 Added Value Unit to gain the N4 course award
- ✓ Complete SCQF Units at N5 only
 - ♦ Potentially complete the N4 Added Value Unit to gain the N4 course award
- ✓ Complete the N5 course

Some 85% of our presentations will be at N5 with 15% at N4. The challenge has always been and remains to identify the best pathway for young people who find National 5 challenging, but cope comfortably with National 4.

National Courses

National 4 courses typically comprise 2 or 3 Units plus an Added Value Unit completed under controlled conditions. Candidates must pass all Units to gain the award. The award is ungraded.

Assessment at **National 5** typically comprises one or more written external examinations and an assignment completed under controlled conditions in school. Most assignments are marked externally.

N5 courses are graded A to D notionally

- Grade A 70%+
- Grade B 60-69%
- Grade C 50-59%
- Grade D 40-49%

Candidates undertake the N4 Added Value Unit and the N5 Assignment only once.

The Units which previously contributed to N5 courses continue to be available as stand-alone **SCQF Level 5 Units**¹. We continue to use these to provide recognition and success to some candidates. In particular, those who may wish to delay the N5 courses assessment until S5.

Candidates will have a maximum of two attempts to pass any Units – the original attempt and one re-assessment. Re-assessment will take place at a time best suited to the candidate's needs.

¹ Read more on our [National Qualifications](#) page.

A number of factors come into play

- The entry requirement for Higher Grade is Grade B. The national pass rate at Higher from B at N5 is 35%. The national pass rate at Higher from Grade C is 10%.
- Grade D is an award in its own right, but is not recognised as a Pass.
- The strengthening of the external assessments can make N5 more challenging for borderline candidates.
- Resitting N5 courses does not produce good outcomes. If a pupil experiences what they deem to be failure in S4, then they are not motivated to engage fully with a similar experience in S5.
- Borderline candidates are least capable of coping with the multiple demands of course assignments and preparation for external exams in term 2 of S4. The potential 'safety net' of sitting the SCQF Level 5 Units in case they 'fail' the exam simply increases that burden. Sitting fewer N5 exams reduces stress and increases the likelihood of success in the remaining N5 exams.

Our S3 reports are designed to develop a shared understanding with parents of how well each pupil is coping with the demands of their courses and of which pathways seem most likely. The reports will offer guidance as to which pathway your son or daughter will be following in S4.

We will update this guidance in October of S4. This allows pupils to decide which of the internal 'mock' exams at National 5 they wish to attempt in November. The S4 reports issued in December will provide further guidance.

S4 Internal (Mock) Examinations

The S4 diet of examinations is short and takes place in late November / early December of S4.

Pupils sit exams only in those subjects in which they have some likelihood of passing National 5. There are no external exams at National 4 and therefore no internal N4 exams in November. Our experience is that almost all pupils sit between 4 and 8 N5 examinations. We have therefore retained examination leave for all pupils as they have expressed their preference to study at home.

The purposes of these exams are

- To provide clear evidence that the pupil can cope with the demands of the final examination at N5.
- To contribute to the determination of the estimate grade which the school will send to SQA in advance of the National 5 examinations.
- To form part of the evidence in an 'exceptional circumstances' case if this becomes necessary (see below).

Criteria to Progress to National 5

As a broad indicator, candidates progressing to National 5 will be expected to have

- ✓ Achieved a minimum of Grade D in the S4 mock examination
- ✓ Achieve in class assessments at a level which offers evidence that they can cope with the demands of the external assessments
- ✓ Demonstrated the work ethic and commitment necessary to achieve an award at National 5
 - Attendance and timekeeping
 - Effort in class
 - Homework and revision

A candidate who sits and fails the N5 external assessments will receive No Award. It is important that we seek to avoid this situation.

Pupils who are likely to perform below Grade D at N5 should complete the **SCQF Level 5 Units** associated with the course instead of targeting the final examination. This will provide a positive set of achievements for two years work and can act as a stepping stone to complete the N5 course

The S4 exams are more demanding than those in S3 as candidates expand their knowledge and skills and are progressively required to integrate these and apply them in new contexts.

In term 2 of S4 pupils will be targeting either the N4 Added Value Unit or the N5 Assignment followed by the external examination. Pupils cannot do both.

S4 Reports

S4 reports are issued at the end of term 1 prior to the Christmas vacation. As in the reports you have received throughout S1 to S3 these will comment first on overall level of commitment in terms of effort, behaviour and homework.

The assessment section will report

- How well the pupil is coping with the demands of National 4 or 5
- The percentage mark achieved in the National 5 internal examination²

The teacher comment section will offer further insight into your child's progress and updated guidance on the recommended progression route.

Results Services

Appeals do not form part of the system of National Qualifications. From 2014 two separate services³ have been in operation

- **Exceptional Circumstances**

If the school believes that a candidate has suffered as a result of exceptional circumstances (for example bereavement or illness during an exam) we will inform SQA of the circumstances immediately. If SQA agrees that the exceptional circumstances procedure should apply, the school can submit alternative evidence of attainment demonstrated by the candidate, which SQA will consider. The SQA guidance to centres can be read at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/79042.html>

- **Post Results Service**

This service runs after candidates have received their certificates. If the school is concerned by a candidate's result, we can request a clerical check and/or a marking review of the script. The 'script' is the name given to the candidate's exam answer paper. If this check/review of the marking of the script, leads to a change of grade (either up or down), this will be amended and a new certificate will be issued to the candidate. There is no consideration of 'alternative evidence' with this service. If the original grade remains unchanged after the check/review of the marking of the script, the school is charged for this service.

Please note that a candidate's grade can go down if the clerical check or marking review reveals that an error was made.

The school policy and SQA guidance to centres can be viewed at <http://www.jordanhill.glasgow.sch.uk/school/national-qualifications>

² Please note that grade boundaries vary considerably amongst subjects. Marks of 75% or more are often needed to achieve an A grade in the external examination. Individual subjects can advise.

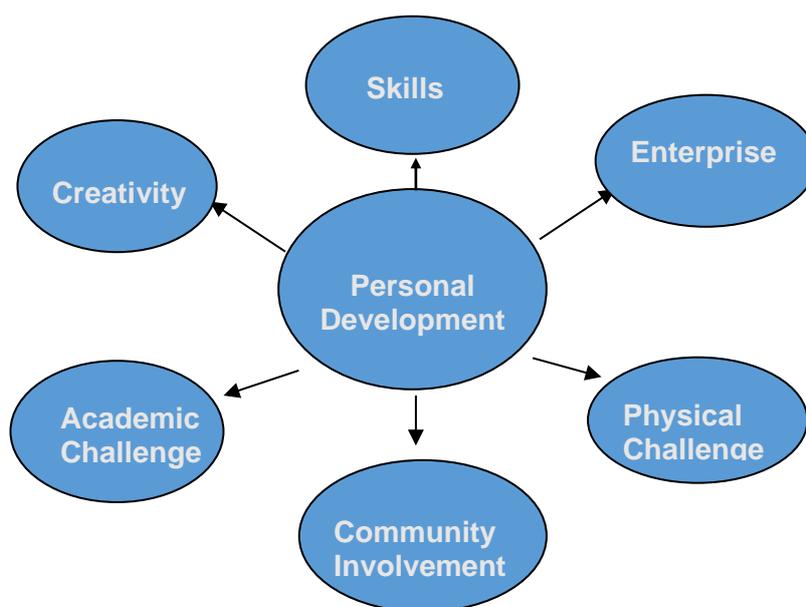
³ You can read more about these services on the SQA web site <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65427.html>

Progression to S5

The overall aim of our senior phase (S4-S6) is that young people, whatever their individual interests and needs have

- ♦ A curriculum which is coherent
- ♦ The opportunity to obtain qualifications as well as to continue to develop their personal attributes and capabilities
- ♦ Opportunities to further develop their skills for learning, life and work
- ♦ A continuing focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing
- ♦ Personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities provided
- ♦ Support in moving to a positive and sustained destination beyond school.

For pupils age 16 and over, entry to both S5 and S6 is conditional upon them developing a coherent and realistic personal development plan covering all aspects of the school experience.



The priority for the school is to ensure that, as far as is possible, every young person experiences success in the courses they are undertaking in S5 (and S6) and leaves with a set of qualifications and experiences which leads to a positive destination beyond school.

As we progress into and through S4 you will hear more about planning for each of these dimensions of learning. We shall also provide information about the relationship between academic performance in S4 and designing a personal curriculum which leads to successful pathways⁴. Entry to a specific course and combination of courses is dependent upon meeting the entry requirements and reaching a threshold of performance which offers a reasonable chance of success.

⁴ Overall attainment in S4 is a very strong predictor of attainment in S5. This leaflet offers guidance on course choice for S5 based on prior attainment <http://www.jordanhill.glasgow.sch.uk/document/2011/targeting-success-s5-course-choice-advice>