

Agenda Item	4.
Report No	EDU/1/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Education

Date: 25 February 2026

Report Title: Highland Qualifications Scotland Presentation Policy

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Each year young people in secondary schools in Highland are presented for National Courses and Units certificated by Qualifications Scotland (QS). The Highland QS Presentation Policy (**Appendix 2**) will provide a reference point for pupils, parents/carers, and staff with regard to the various aspects related to presentation within all QS courses National, Higher or Advanced Higher.
- 1.2 The policy aims to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to build up a profile of attainment, which will allow them access to the next levels of study appropriate to their ability. This policy supports the ongoing work on raising attainment in Highland.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **approve** the Highland Qualifications Scotland Presentation Policy.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations this report.
- 3.2 Legal - There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.3 Risk - There are no risk implications requiring an addition or amendment to The Highland Council's risk register arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – There are no health and safety implications arising from the recommendations this report.
- 3.5 Gaelic - There are no specific implications for Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learners Education courses. The Highland QS Presentation Policy applies equally to both Gaelic and English medium education.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on the Highland SQA Presentation Policy. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are positive impacts on children and young people from the adoption of the policy. Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3 Impact Assessment Area Conclusion of Screening Assessment

Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and Young People – positive• Children affected by disability – positive• Older adults – positive
Socio-economic	positive
Human Rights	positive
Children's Rights and Well-being	positive
Island and Mainland Rural	no impact
Climate Change	no impact
Data Rights	no impact

5. Overview

5.1 The purpose of the Highland QS Presentation Policy (**Appendix 2**) is to ensure Highland schools have the highest expectations and aspirations for our learners. Presentation in the Senior Phase should build on the secure foundations of the Broad General Education and should always allow young people to achieve at the highest possible level. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that procedures relating to course choice, presentation for examinations and course/level changes are clear and consistently followed by our schools. This policy applies to all QS Qualifications from National 1 courses to Advanced Highers and courses studied through school-college link arrangements.

- 5.2 The policy is based on the national advice, which has been received on the National Qualifications, and on the good practice, which has been established in school. It is underpinned by Article 28 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.
- 5.3 The policy adopts an aspirational approach with schools encouraged to present students at the highest possible level they can realistically achieve. It has been created in partnership with all our secondary headteachers and our LNCT (Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers) teachers panel.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 8 February 2026

Author: Fiona Grant, Chief Officer Education (Secondary)

Background Papers:

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 – Highland QS Presentation Policy

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

About proposal

What does this proposal relate to? Policy

Proposal name: Highland SQA Presentation Policy

High level summary of the proposal: The purpose of this policy is to ensure Highland schools have a consistent approach in their presentation in the Senior Phase that is aligned with setting the highest expectations and aspirations for our learners. This policy should provide a reference point for pupils, parents/carers and staff with regard to the various aspects related to presentation within courses at National, Higher or Advanced Higher in line with Qualifications Scotland's guidance to schools. The policy aims is to ensure that all pupils are assigned to complete, to the best of their ability, courses of study which offer them appropriate challenge and the potential for success and to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to build up a profile of attainment, which will allow them access to the next levels of study appropriate to their ability.

Who may be affected by the proposal? Children, Young people and Staff

Start date of proposal: 25/02/2026

End date of proposal:

Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service? No

Does this relate to an existing proposal? No

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Sign off date: 2026-01-27

Equalities, poverty, and human rights

Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

Sex: No impact

Age: Positive

Disability: Positive

Religion or belief: No impact

Race: No impact

Sexual orientation: No impact

Gender reassignment: No impact

Pregnancy and maternity: No impact

Marriage and civil partnership: No impact

Protected characteristics impact details: All children and young people, in their senior phase will be positively impacted by the policy as it set out high expectations for the attainment of all learners

Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

Prospects and opportunities: Positive

Places: No impact

Financial: No impact

Poverty and socio-economic impact details: All children and young people, in their senior phase will be positively impacted by the policy as it set out high expectations for the attainment of learners which should result in improved outcomes

Human rights

Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal?

What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people? Positive

Human rights impact details: There should be positive impacts on children's rights as a result of a consistent approach towards presentations for qualifications in the Senior Phase of school

Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights? Positive

impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Children's rights and wellbeing

What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people? There should be positive impacts on children's rights as a result of a consistent approach towards presentations for qualifications in the Senior Phase of school

Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal? You are working in the best interests of the child (Article 3), Children have a right to education (Article 28)

Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected: All the rights selected will be positively impacted by the policy as it is aligned with setting the highest expectations and aspirations for our learners

Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Data protection

Will your proposal involve processing personal data? No

Data protection screening assessment

What change will there be to the way personal data is processed? No personal data will be processed

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Island and mainland rural communities

Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities? No

Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities? No difference

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂e)? No

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? No

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? No

Provide information regarding your selection above:

Climate change screening assessment

Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known? No

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Highland QS Presentation Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Highland schools have a consistent approach in their presentation in the Senior Phase that is aligned with setting the highest expectations and aspirations for our learners. Presentation in the Senior Phase should build on the secure foundations of the Broad General Education and should always allow young people to achieve at the highest possible level.

This policy should provide a reference point for pupils, parents/carers and staff with regard to the various aspects related to presentation within courses at National, Higher or Advanced Higher in line with Qualifications Scotland's (QS) guidance to schools.

AIM

The overall aim of this policy is aspirational and is to enable pupils to be presented, and achieve success, at the highest appropriate level for them.

The specific aims of this policy are twofold:-

1. To ensure that all pupils are assigned to complete, to the best of their ability, courses of study which offer them appropriate challenge and the potential for success.
2. To ensure all pupils have the opportunity to build up a profile of attainment, which will allow them access to the next levels of study appropriate to their ability.

COURSE CHOICE/PRESENTATION LEVELS

Within Curriculum for Excellence, each pupil's pathway is confirmed at the end of S3. Schools need to use robust assessment information from the Broad General Education to ensure that learners make appropriate choices and are presented at the right level for qualifications.

Young people should be encouraged to select the subjects which will provide the chance for them to succeed at the highest, and most appropriate, level possible. The potential levels of achievement for every child will be different. This approach allows us to help young people maximise their potential and in time, achieve a positive destination when leaving our school.

All pupils should be encouraged and supported in planning for relevant pathways through the Senior Phase and beyond. Choices should be made based on rigorously moderated assessment in the BGE with pupils able to base their choices on their achievement of a level in each of their subjects in the BGE years. Literacy and numeracy data can also be used to help pupils make informed course choices.

Decisions about presentation levels should always be positive and aspirational. All staff should encourage young people to aim high and maximise their potential and decision-making around levels should reflect this.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances,

in S4 all pupils take a minimum of six National Courses;

in S5, all pupils take a minimum of five National Courses; and

in S6, all pupils take a minimum of a minimum of four National Courses or if appropriate three Advanced Higher Courses.

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

All assessment for regulated qualifications must be drawn up and administered in line with the Qualifications Scotland publication "[Assessment: A guide for Centres offering Regulated Qualifications](#)" (updated May 2025).

Progress in all QS courses should be continually reviewed. Interventions must be timely, documented, and shared with parents/carers, Pupil Support, and Senior Leadership Teams as needed. Principal Teachers of Guidance have a key role in monitoring pupil performance as they have a broad overview of how each pupil is performing across their subjects by monitoring tracking data.

Formal assessments should not be used to discover whether a student is ready but to confirm the teacher's judgement that the student has reached the required standard in the work concerned. This decision will be based on the department's/faculty's policies for assessment and student performance and progress.

QUALITY ASSURANCE/INTERVAL VERIFICATION

Verification is a crucial element of quality assurance. The purpose of internal verification is to ensure that all assessments that contribute to an QS qualification are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair and that assessment standards have been applied uniformly and consistently.

Faculties should have quality assurance procedures in place in line with the QS publication '[Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres Offering Regulated Qualifications.](#)' (Updated March 2025)

Every QS centre is responsible for operating an effective and documented internal quality assurance system.

SUPPORTING PUPILS TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL

As a young person progresses through a course, it may become evident that they could benefit from additional or targeted support, tailored to their individual circumstances.

Schools should have tracking systems in place to allow early identification of young people who could benefit from tailored support.

To meet the needs of all learners it is important that schools have procedures to capture the attainment of those young people who are at risk from disengaging from education and not achieving.

Schools should have a range of supports in place to ensure all young people leave school with the minimum qualifications and skills required to ensure they enter a positive destination. It is our aspiration that all young people in Highland leave our school with a minimum of 5 qualifications at a level appropriate to their skills and aspirations.

In our pursuit of the highest quality learning experience for every pupil in Highland, pupils are supported to make appropriate course choices. Where a change is required, for example post-results, pupils are supported to make alternative course choices, prioritising attainment and the achievement of a positive destination. Once any post results changes are agreed, there is no option for a young person to 'drop' or withdraw from any subject completely. Our aim to maximise the attainment and achievement of every pupil and allow them to reach their potential means that we expect every young person to attain positively in every subject they choose. Departments must aim to ensure that an alternative qualification can be gained within their current class. It is expected that in most circumstances, courses selected at the start of an academic session will be completed by the pupil for the whole session.