

SQA SCHOOL EXAMINATION RESULTS 2024

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) 2024 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 2023/24 will be updated by the SQA in December 2024 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 recent years.
 - II. Notes the outcome of the initial SQA examination results for pupils in academic year 2023/24, and that the performance of Argyll and Bute Schools in 2024 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 three measures (National 4, 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 2024 and February 2025.

SQA SCHOOL EXAMINATION RESULTS 2024

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 On 1st August 2024 the Council received SQA examination results for all pupils entered for National Qualifications in session 2023/24. 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) 2024 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 three years, with reference to 'pre-pandemic' data in 2018/19.
- II. Notes the outcome of the initial SQA examination results for pupils in academic year 2023/24, and that the performance of Argyll and Bute Schools in 2024 is above the current national performance in SQA examinations in two of the four measures (National 4 and Advanced Higher) at A-C, and above in three measures (National 4, National 5, 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 2024 and February 2025.

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 2024. 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 recent years.

In 2022, following the return of exams, SQA adopted a generous approach to grading. This meant, where required, significant

adjustments were made to grade boundaries compared to in a normal year. Setting standards and grading in 2023 continued to be sensitive to the extent of the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

In 2024 full course assessment, including learners completing of coursework across a range of courses, often for the first time, returned to SQA assessments. Marking and grade boundaries also returned to pre pandemic standards and were less sensitive than 2022 and 2023.

As a result, there have been significant different approaches to course content, coursework and 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.

‘Given the return to full course assessment in 2024, and the significantly different approaches to awarding between 2020 and 2023, comparisons with other years should be treated with some caution, noting that it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions on any changes in education performance.’

SQA, SQA News 6th August 2024.

- 4.4 For A-C grades, the performance of Argyll and Bute schools in 2024 is above the current National performance in SQA examinations in two of the four national measures: National 4 and Higher.

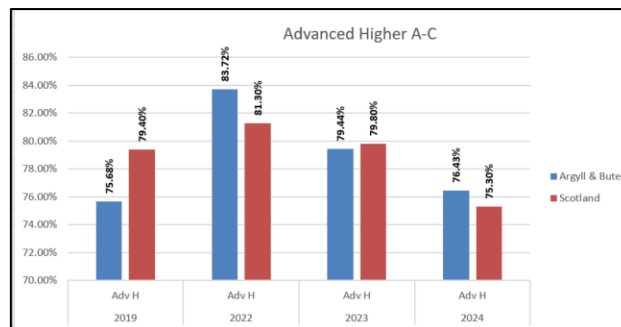
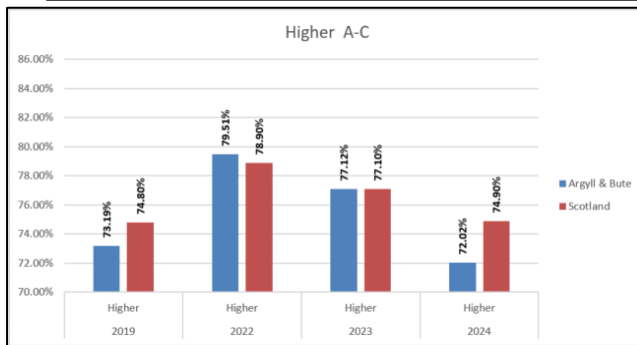
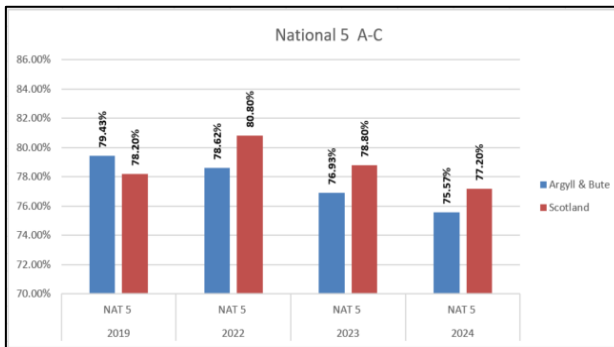
Table 1 below present the overall performance of candidates in Argyll and Bute across all course levels at Grades A-C in years 2022, 2023 and 2024 and, for context, references attainment to ‘pre-pandemic’ data in 2018/19. It also compares 2024 Argyll and Bute A-C attainment with 2024 national attainment.

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, 2020 and 2021 results have not been included.

Table 1– A-C Awards 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2024 – A&B/National – National 4, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher

Course (A-C)	2018/19 A&B Attainment %	2021/22 A&B Attainment %	2022/23 A&B Attainment %	2023/24 A&B Attainment %	A&B Difference 2023 to 2024	2023/24 National Attainment %	Difference A&B 23/24 to National A-C %
Nat 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	0.00%	84.50%	15.50%
Nat 5	79.43%	78.62%	76.93%	75.57%	-1.36%	77.20%	-1.63%

Higher	73.19%	79.51%	77.12%	72.02%	-5.10%	74.90%	-2.88%
Adv H	75.68%	83.72%	79.44%	76.43%	-3.01%	75.30%	1.13%



Our National 4 course pass rate is 100%.

Our National 5 A-C pass rate has reduced by 1.36% on 2023. It also remains 3.86% below the 2019 pre pandemic level. In 2024 it is 1.63% below the national measure for National 5.

Our Higher A-C pass rate has reduced by 5.1% on 2023 figure. This is also 1.17% below the 2019 pre pandemic level. In 2024 it is 2.88% below the national measure for Higher.

Our Advanced Higher A-C pass rate has reduced by 3.01% on 2023 figure however it is 0.75% above the 2019 pre pandemic level. In 2024 it is also 1.13% above the national measure for Advanced Higher.

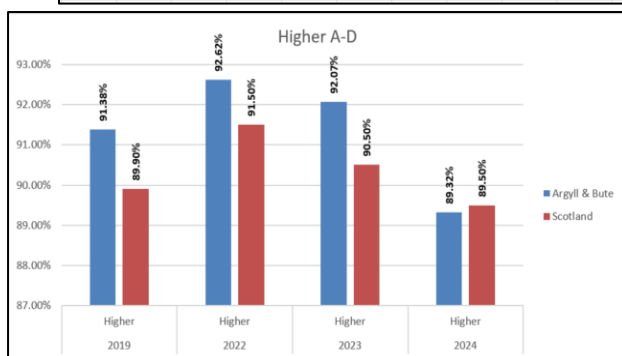
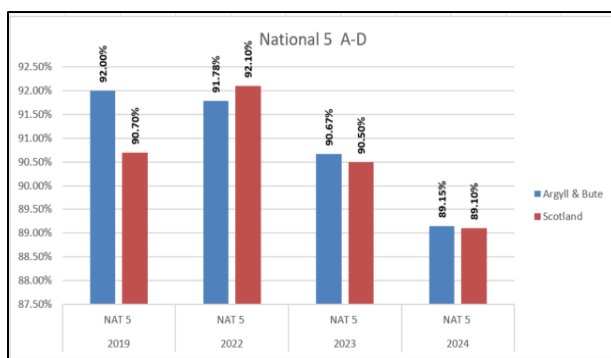
4.5 For A-D grades, the performance of Argyll and Bute schools in 2024 is above the current National performance in SQA examinations in three of the national measures: National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

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 academic years 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2024. It also compares 2024 Argyll and Bute A-D attainment with 2024 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 and 2024 – A&B/National – National 4, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher

Course (A-D)	2018/19 A&B Attainment %	2021/22 A&B Attainment %	2022/23 A&B Attainment %	2023/24 A&B Attainment %	Difference 2023 to 2024	2023/24 National Attainment %	Difference A&B 23/24 to National A-D %
Nat 4	100%	100%	100%	100.00%	0%	84.50%	15.50%
Nat 5	92.00%	91.78%	90.67%	89.15%	-1.52%	89.10%	0.05%
Higher	91.38%	92.62%	92.07%	89.32%	-2.75%	89.50%	-0.18%
Adv H	87.64%	96.51%	93.03%	90.45%	-2.58%	89.90%	0.55%



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%
2024	NAT 5	71.5%	78.0%	77.5%	79.2%	72.7%	80.7%	48.3%	74.0%	95.3%	69.5%	75.6%	77.2%
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	70.9%	79.3%	85.1%	86.0%	76.3%	75.2%	78.1%	66.4%	60.5%	77.5%	78.6%	80.8%
2019	NAT 5	72.6%	83.8%	83.8%	85.5%	79.2%	73.8%	65.7%	88.3%	67.6%	80.6%	79.4%	78.2%
2024	Higher	58.0%	78.7%	72.2%	82.9%	70.6%	75.5%	57.6%	74.2%	58.3%	64.3%	72.0%	74.9%
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	73.0%	78.3%	84.8%	85.3%	82.2%	74.9%	70.9%	64.2%	76.5%	91.4%	79.5%	78.9%
2019	Higher	67.4%	75.9%	78.3%	73.3%	70.1%	70.6%	53.9%	66.7%	50.0%	77.4%	73.2%	74.8%
2024	Advanced H	69.6%	81.6%	80.3%	46.2%	82.9%	74.5%	66.7%	50.0%	NP*	100%	76.4%	75.3%
2023	Advanced 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	Advanced H	76.9%	73.3%	87.0%	94.7%	75.9%	85.4%	73.7%	100.0%	NP*	100.0%	83.7%	81.3%
2019	Advanced H	80.0%	69.6%	79.6%	81.8%	94.4%	51.7%	76.5%	66.7%	33.3%	76.9%	75.7%	79.4%

*No Presentations

Table 4 – SQA data for Individual secondary schools – National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher in 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2024 – A-D Grades

Diet Year	Course A-D	CGS	DGS	HA	IHS	LJC	OHS	RA	Tar A	Ti HS	To HS	A&B	National
2024	NAT 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	84.5%
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%
2024	NAT 5	84.8%	91.0%	89.5%	90.8%	87.9%	93.2%	68.5%	88.6%	100%	91.1%	89.2%	89.1%
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%
2024	Higher	82.5%	91.8%	90.2%	95.1%	86.1%	90.2%	83.3%	87.1%	91.7%	91.4%	89.3%	89.5%
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%
2024	Advanced H	91.3%	95.9%	90.6%	84.6%	91.4%	89.4%	83.3%	75.0%	NP	100%	90.4%	89.9%
2023	Advanced H	92.9%	91.7%	92.6%	100%	91.3%	96.2%	81.8%	100%	NP*	100%	93.0%	92.7%
2022	Advanced 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 %	92.3 %	87.6 %	87.8%
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*No Presentations

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 2024, all 10 secondary schools maintained their 100% course pass rate for National 4.
- At A-C, five of our secondary schools were **above** the 2024 national average measure for National 5.

At A-D, six of our secondary schools were **above** the 2024 national average measure for National 5.

- At A-C, three of our secondary schools were **above** the 2024 national average measure for Higher.

At A-D, six of our secondary schools were **above** the 2024 national average measure for Higher.

- At A-C, four of our secondary schools were **above** the 2024 national average for Advanced Higher.

At A-D, five of our secondary schools were **above** the 2024 national average for Advanced Higher.

One school did not present at Advanced Higher 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
- 6) NQ awards at Nationals 1-3 (no formal examination)

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 2024 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. Since 2023 the appeals service does not entail alternative assessment evidence (e.g. prelim evidence from schools) being 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.

The appeals service will open on Results Day, Tuesday 6 August 2024 at 9 am, and the learner direct submission deadlines are:

- Tuesday 13 August at 11.59 pm for priority appeals
- Tuesday 27 August at 11.59pm for all other appeals

An appeal can only be prioritised if there is a conditional place at university or college, or in training or employment that is dependent on the grade.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report presents a summary of the initial analysis of the 2024 SQA external examination outcomes for Argyll and Bute pupils at authority level and in each of the ten secondary schools.
- 6.2 In 2024 the performance of Argyll and Bute schools compared relatively positively with national measures. For results at A-C and A-D, Argyll and Bute attainment is higher than the national average for five out of eight measures.
- 6.3 The Education Service are taking forward a refreshed programme of support and challenge with all 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 2024 following the publication of updated national performance information on Insight released in September of each year.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 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 | Legal | None |
| 7.4 | HR | None |
| 7.5 | Fairer Scotland Duty: | |
| 7.5.1 | Equalities - protected characteristics | |
| 7.5.2 | Socio-economic Duty | |
| 7.5.3 | Islands | |
| 7.6 | Climate Change | |
| 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 Service | This report provides Elected Members with an overview of Service Performance. |
| 7.9 | The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that every young person is given the opportunity to succeed. | |

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