



# Consultation on the review of the Annual Statistical Report (ASR)

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# Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Ad-hoc reporting/requests	1
3	Proposals	1
4	Proposed timescales for implementation and how to respond	4
5	Handling your response	4
6	Further information	5

# 1 Introduction

The Annual Statistical Report (ASR) is published annually by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and provides details of the entries and results for numerous qualification types in each academic year. Currently the ASR is comprised of 19 separate reports containing figures for 29 different qualification types.

During August and September 2013, the SQA statistics team gathered feedback through an online web survey made available on the statistics section of SQA's website. Responses totalling 165 were received from various individuals ranging from SQA learners, to education providers such as teachers and lecturers.

The feedback was then reviewed and considered alongside the usual ad-hoc requests for statistical information. Consideration was also given to the content most appropriate for inclusion in a report primarily concerned with national attainment of qualifications across Scotland. This process has informed a set of proposed changes to the ASR, and these are set out in this consultation document. The consultation seeks views on the proposed changes which are intended to streamline reporting, to ensure a consistent layout, and improve ease of use.

The content and nature of this consultation has largely been directed by the guidance provided in the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* published by the UK Statistics Authority (<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/>). Significant effort has been made to ensure that the principles detailed in this code of practice have been satisfied by this particular consultation. Specifically, 'Protocol 1: User engagement' details the need to consult users before making changes that affect statistics or publications.

## 2 Ad-hoc reporting/requests

The SQA statistics team will continue to support ad-hoc requests for statistical information that is not contained within annual publications, whilst larger statistical requests will continue to be dealt with through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. Any changes made to the ASR will not affect these services.

## 3 Proposals

A concise summary of the proposals, expressing the issues, is detailed in the sections below. More detail can be found on SQA's website in the supporting documentation (Appendices 1–4) which contains examples of the new reporting formats and shows exactly what the new ASR qualifications tables will look like under these proposals.

### **3.1 Reporting style**

The current ASR is structured as a suite of tables by qualification type. No change to this reporting style is proposed. Reporting by qualification type offers users familiarity with the current report and easy access to qualifications of interest to them.

### **3.2 Removal of the ‘Outwith Scotland’ tables**

Currently the ASR contains a small number of tables which break down attainment between entries made within and outwith Scotland. From feedback received from the user survey, it was identified that the ‘Outwith Scotland’ tables are not of interest to many users of the ASR and it is proposed that they are removed.

### **3.3 Introduction of reporting for new qualification types**

From 2014, learners across Scotland will start to be presented for the new National Courses (National 2 to National 5). It is proposed to include these qualifications from the 2014 ASR onwards. In addition, qualification types have been identified that are currently not being reported in the ASR and it is proposed that inclusion with their own tables may result in the publication better meeting user needs.

Personal Development and Skills for Work Courses will be reported in their own tables, whilst Scottish Vocational Qualification Units are proposed to be reported in line with National Units and Higher National Units. The new National 1–5 Units will be reported alongside the existing National Units.

### **3.4 Removal of ‘progression routes’ tables**

Tables showing progression routes between National Course levels (reporting of the percentage of entries that have progressed from different qualification levels in the previous year) are proposed to be removed. Progression tables were not identified as being routinely referenced by users and it is argued that by removing these tables from the ASR, the resources used to produce them can be diverted to other ASR reporting activities that better meet user needs.

### **3.5 Consistency in reporting formats**

The proposed changes to the ASR aim to introduce consistency in reporting and improve readability so that groups of qualifications with similar characteristics are reported in identical formats. Examples of the proposed format of the tables are provided alongside this consultation document on SQA’s website in Appendices 1–4.

### **3.6 Reduction in some reporting variables**

It was identified from user feedback that reporting by some variables was not particularly informative to the users of the ASR. It is proposed to remove reporting on a number of variables which include: age, superclass (for Units), and the average number of entries per

candidate for Higher National Units. This proposed change allows resources previously directed to this activity to be directed towards the reporting of the new qualification types, and to other variables that have been identified as being of particular interest to users of the ASR.

### **3.7 Change to the reporting of highest uptake qualifications**

Currently, the top 50 qualifications (in terms of total number of entries or awards) within a given qualification type are reported in select tables within the ASR. It was identified, through user feedback, that these tables are not of particular use and it is proposed to reduce the number to incorporate only the top 20 qualifications (in terms of total number of entries). Reporting the top 20 maintains the purpose of the report — to detail high uptake qualifications — without extended reporting which offers little additional value for most users.

### **3.8 Introduction of reporting by additional variables**

The SQA statistics team have identified requests for statistical information that are commonly encountered through the ad-hoc service in relation to the previous and existing National Qualifications. It is proposed to include additional reporting of attainment by these variables in the revised ASR. These variables include entries by stage, entries and attainment by gender, and the number of Courses per learner.

### **3.9 Removal of the reporting of appeals and assessment arrangement figures within the ASR.**

Statistical reporting of appeals currently takes place *twice* during each academic year, first in December (on SQA's website) and then in March (within the ASR). This process involves considerable duplication of work as the data used to create these tables does not change after the initial reporting, meaning that the inclusion of appeals content within the ASR offers little additional value.

It is proposed to remove all information regarding appeals from the ASR and to report on such data in a dedicated report elsewhere, prior to the ASR's publication. The ASR also includes a figure for various qualification types to detail the percentage of all entries for which assessment arrangements were requested; this information was not identified as being particularly useful in the feedback and so it is proposed that it be removed.

### **3.10 Reporting qualifications in alphabetical order**

It is proposed to consistently report qualifications in alphabetical order rather than by subject area to be consistent with other SQA report formats. This will improve readability and allow users to easily locate qualifications of particular interest to them.

## **4 Proposed timescales for implementation and how to respond**

SQA's proposals cover a number of changes to the current ASR which we believe should be implemented. We would like to seek your views through consultation. Any changes as a result of this consultation will not be implemented until the ASR 2014 publication which is currently scheduled for March 2015.

An online version of the consultation questionnaire can be completed at the following web page: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WRPH2ZF>

Alternatively, the consultation questionnaire is available alongside this document on SQA's website and responses should be e-mailed to [sqa.statistics@sqa.org.uk](mailto:sqa.statistics@sqa.org.uk) or posted to the address below to arrive by 28 February 2014.

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On completion of the consultation, the results will be collated and a record of decisions and actions will be published.

## **5 Handling your response**

We need to know how you wish your response to be handled, and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public. Please consider carefully the respondent information section at the start of the consultation questionnaire; this will ensure that we treat your response appropriately. If you ask for your response not to be published we will regard it as confidential.

All respondents should be aware that SQA are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request for information relating to responses to this consultation, under the Act.

## 6 Further information

### Appendices

Appendices 1–4 contain tables demonstrating the proposed new formats and can be found on SQA’s website alongside this consultation document. The reporting formats are numbered from 1 to 4.

### Qualification types

The revised ASR proposes consistent reporting formats across related qualification types. This consistency aims to aid user familiarity with the report and therefore improve readability.

In order to achieve consistency, the revised ASR will be streamlined to contain only four reporting formats. The following tables show the qualification types and their reporting formats. The tables are divided into qualifications where reporting is being continued; those where it is being discontinued; and those where it is being introduced for the first time.

#### Reporting continued

Qualification type	Reporting format
Higher National Units	1
National Units (including new National 1–5)	1
Awards	1
Higher National Certificates and Diplomas	1
National Certificates	1
National Progression Awards	1
Professional Development Awards	1
Professional Development Awards (Workplace)	1
Scottish Vocational Qualifications	1
Access 2	2
Access 3	2
Intermediate 1	3
Intermediate 2	3
Higher	3
Advanced Higher	3
Baccalaureate/Interdisciplinary Project	4

## Reporting discontinued

Qualification type
Outwith Scotland — Group Awards
Outwith Scotland — Higher National Certificates and Diplomas
Outwith Scotland — National Qualifications
Outwith Scotland — National Units
Outwith Scotland — Professional Development Awards
Outwith Scotland — Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Progression

## Reporting introduced

Qualification type	Reporting format
National Workplace Units	1
Scottish Vocational Qualifications Units	1
National (Workplace) Courses	1
National 2 Courses	2
National 3 Courses	2
National 4 Courses	2
Personal Development Courses	2
Skills for Work Courses	2
National 5 Courses	3