

SQA's support for colleges during regionalisation

Introduction by Janet Brown

SQA is committed to continuing its collaboration with colleges as they move into new regional structures and mergers. We will continue to work in partnership with you in the development and maintenance of qualifications, and I am confident that we can provide support to help the restructured college sector to meet the needs of learners, local communities and the wider economy.

Through this period of change, SQA will continue to work in partnership with colleagues from Scotland's colleges in the on-going development and maintenance of our qualifications. We particularly value the positive engagement of college staff in groups such as Qualification Design and Support Teams and Award Validation panels. To support you, we will continue to run our highly successful Network Support Events aimed specifically at the college sector. We are committed to supporting colleges as you introduce revised structures, management teams, ways of working, and product ranges and services. Drawing on our experience of merger activity in the past, this document tells you what we are doing to help as the changes begin to take effect. It suggests ways to handle SQA processes that might be affected by regionalisation.

To help you, we have established a set of regional teams. For each college region there is a dedicated Regional Manager, who will be your main point of contact for all SQA enquiries. You can find their contact details at the end of this document, and I hope you will make full use of this resource as, together, we take on the opportunities and challenges presented by the new Post-16 landscape.

Information for merging colleges

Centre number

All colleges have a unique centre number. When merging, colleges need to agree which centre number the new college will use or if they wish to use a completely new number. Colleges, who need to separate from one centre into two so they can merge with other regions, can also request an interim centre number to help with this process. You should discuss and agree this as early as possible with the Scottish Funding Council and SQA.

A new centre number or SEED number must be requested from the Scottish Government.

The contact person for this is Colin Gallacher:

Colin Gallacher
The Scottish Government Education Analytical Services
ScotXed Unit
Area 2-D (South) Victoria Quay Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
mail point 29 Tel 0131-244 0317
colin.gallacher@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

When to start using the number

We recommend that you start using your new centre number from the beginning of an academic year for SQA processes. This does not need to be the same academic year as the vesting date of the new college. It should be noted that these timescales may not apply to other organisations, such as the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and you should make separate agreements with them.

Previously, merging colleges have operated as separate entities using their existing centre numbers for a full year from their vesting date to allow them time to harmonise systems and procedures.

Notifying SQA

You will need to notify SQA of your new centre number so that we can update your college's profile on our Awards processing System (APS). A date of changeover will be required.

It is also important to confirm the address that should be used for delivery and collection of exam stationery and candidate evidence, and for visiting assessment and verification.

To notify SQA of changes, please click [here](#).

SQA Co-ordinator

A named SQA Co-ordinator will need to be confirmed with their contact details.

New SQA co-ordinators can find helpful guidance on all SQA processes on our [website](#).

Our Business Development Team can provide one-to-one support and advice. Please click [here](#) for their contact details.

Qualification approval

Qualification approval is linked to the centre number. Each college has its own unique approval profile. Some colleges may be approved for qualifications that other merging colleges are not.

SQA will ensure that the transfer of approval profiles happens once the new centre number is in use. The new college will be given approval for all the courses and units for which approval was held by the previous centres. No candidate entries should be made using this number until the approval profile is in place.

At some point your college should review its approval profile and remove any units or courses that you will not be delivering. You can reinstate these later, if required.

Candidate data

All candidates should be entered using the new centre number from an agreed date — preferably at the start of an academic year. At this point there may be candidates entered under the old centre numbers who have still to complete their course. We will transfer these candidates to the new number, but will include the previous centre name for identification. You should not enter these candidates again using the new centre number, as this will result in another entry charge.

We recommend that all invalid historical candidate data be cleared from the old centre numbers. We will close these numbers down when this has been done. ('Invalid historical data' refers to any entry data for candidates who are no longer studying at the college.)

Although the centre number will appear as closed on APS, it will still be possible to view historical data for that college. Our centre support team can assist with any queries on this, and can be contacted by e-mailing candidate.records@sqa.org.uk

Sqa.net

Each college has its own sqa.net account and can only input and view data for that college. During the merger process, SQA can allow merging colleges to have access to each other's sqa.net accounts.

Our centre support team can assist with any queries on this, and can be contacted by e-mailing centre.records@sqa.org.uk

Devolved authority

Each college has its own unique profile of devolved authority for approval and validation of qualifications. Some colleges in a merger may have devolved authority for areas which others do not. Where this happens, devolved authority will also be given to the new college, and SQA will issue a new Devolved Authority contract to the newly merged college.

Quality assurance

Colleges have been offered the opportunity to sign up for the new approach to Quality Assurance. Where one college in a merger has signed up but others have not, all will be offered the chance to do so.

SQA's Quality Enhancement Managers (QEMs) can provide support and guidance to determine the earliest and best time to move over to the new approach. You can find their contact details at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42426.2761.html

Assessment

Merging colleges that offer the same qualifications may have different assessment instruments and processes. SQA has highlighted this to External Verifiers (EVs), so there should be no queries on this during verification visits. You are advised, though, to harmonise your assessment practice.

College staff who are employed as EVs by SQA should be aware that they cannot verify their own centre. Once the new centre details have been confirmed, SQA can begin the process of migrating appointees' details from the predecessor colleges to the new college. Any queries about this should be discussed with SQA — contact asv@sqa.org.uk

E-assessment

Regionalisation is likely to drive some harmonisation in Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and e-Portfolio systems. You may wish to consider how e-assessment can be linked into these systems, providing additional support for learning and teaching.

Multi-campus colleges may need a more flexible approach to assessment, with candidates taking assessments in the location of their choice. SQA has worked alongside colleges to ensure they can deliver this flexibility using e-assessment. To speak to someone in SQA about e-assessment contact eal.requests@sqa.org.uk

Your college may already be using the SOLAR system for e-assessment. You can continue to use your existing logon details during the merger process. Once the merger is complete, contact SQA to arrange for new logon details for the merged college — solar@sqa.org.uk

Finance

Colleges are invoiced by SQA according to their centre number. Monthly invoices are based on candidate entries under that centre number. Payments are reconciled using the centre number and the invoice number.

We understand that it may be some time before the new centre number is used throughout, and it may be simpler to continue using individual centre numbers until the end of the financial year.

Once the new centre number is in use for all the merging colleges, all entries (and therefore charges) will be recorded using a single centre number.

Please continue to comply with SQA's requirements to pay all invoices within 30 days and confirm the college address for invoicing purposes.

Note that the end of SQA's financial year is 31 March (unlike the college financial year which is 31 July). However, it is possible for changes to be made at any point during either financial year to accommodate the merger process.

Please discuss financial matters with SQA as early as possible to ensure college and SQA staff understand the respective business requirements. This can include, for example, where transferring outstanding debts from one of the predecessor colleges to the new merged structure creates difficulties for colleges and SQA. To contact our Finance team, please e-mail jean.jack@sqa.org.uk

Information for Federations

Federations should in the main take a 'business as usual' approach, bearing in mind the key points below. However it is recognised that some regions will have mergers taking place as well. In these cases, colleges who are merging should use the previous guidance to assist them and once merged should ensure they have considered the issues below.

Candidate data

Colleges in a federation delivering any new qualifications should ensure that they have approval for the qualifications before entering candidates.

Devolved authority

Colleges in the federation who do not have devolved authority must continue to have approval and/or validation of qualifications carried out by SQA.

Quality assurance

Colleges can operate using different quality assurance processes within a federation. College staff may verify other centres in the federation, but not their own centre.

Finance

SQA would expect existing arrangements to continue in a federation. However, should an alternative arrangement be proposed by the federation, this should be discussed with SQA's finance department.

Communication and support

SQA's Business Development and Customer Support Team are on hand to support you, and are your first port of call for any queries about SQA. Your Regional Manager (RM) should already have been in touch with you to offer their assistance and provide contact details. Here is the list of RMs and the college regions they are supporting. To check this information please click [here](#).

College Region	Colleges	Regional Manager
Edinburgh	Edinburgh College Newbattle Abbey College	Theresa McGowan Theresa McGowan
Glasgow	City of Glasgow College Glasgow Clyde College Glasgow Kelvin College	Kelly Milford Derek Houston Derek Houston
West	West College Scotland	Kelly Milford
Highlands & Islands	Perth College Argyll College Inverness College Lews Castle College Orkney College Shetland College Moray College West Highland College North Highland College Sabhal Mor Ostaig College	Geraldine Balfour Graham Campbell Graham Campbell Graham Campbell Kelly Milford Alistair McKay Alistair McKay Graham Campbell Graham Campbell Graham Campbell
Ayrshire	Ayrshire College	David Ross
Lanarkshire	New College Lanarkshire South Lanarkshire College	Julie C Lynn Julie C Lynn
Central	Fife College West Lothian College	Janice Anderson Janice Anderson
Tayside	Dundee & Angus College	Geraldine Balfour
Borders	Borders College	David Ross
Dumfries & Galloway	Dumfries & Galloway College	David Ross
SRUC	SRUC	David Ross

Merged colleges and SQA: checklist

This is a list of the steps you'll need to complete to make sure that a merging college's systems and data are up to date and harmonised with SQA's. Contact details are given for every stage, and there's a space you can use to check that it has been completed.

Task	Contact	Date
Notify SQA of new centre number and changeover date	mycentre@sqa.org.uk	
Confirm contact details for SQA Co-ordinator		
Request approval file for new college created	assessment.standards@sqa.org.uk	
Notify Appointee Management to transfer appointee details		
Notify Verification of changeover date to new centre number		
Request devolved authority contract for new college	asv@sqa.org.uk	
Notify QA of selected approach to QA		
Begin harmonisation of quality processes and assessment and verification processes		
Contact SQA finance department	jean.jack@sqa.org.uk	
Begin cleansing historical data from old centre numbers	candidate.records@sqa.org.uk	
Request access to sqa.net accounts from merging colleges	centre.records@sqa.org.uk	
Notify SOLAR to request new login details for merged college	solar@sqa.org.uk	
Change over to new college number		
Agree with data management any candidates to be carried over to new number	candidate.records@sqa.org.uk	
Complete data cleanse from old numbers		
Continue with harmonisation of quality processes and assessment and verification processes	asv@sqa.org.uk	