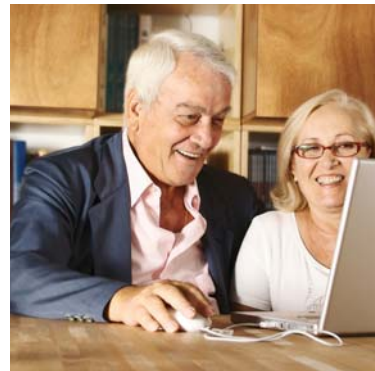


SQA Annual Review 2006–07



growing together

Foreword

by John McCormick Chairman



Welcome to our Review of 2006–07. It's been another exciting and productive year for us, and this Review highlights our significant progress and achievements.

I was always confident that the detailed processes and plans we introduced to monitor our performance and services were working well. This was confirmed by Audit Scotland, who completed a detailed review of our performance management arrangements during the year. It highlighted our ever growing maturity as an organisation with a distinctive role to play at the heart of Scotland's education and training system. But, of course, we can never be complacent, and there is still much to do as we develop and modernise our services to support Scotland's people and economy.

I was delighted to welcome Dr Janet Brown as our Chief Executive in March. Janet brings a wealth of industrial and business experience to SQA, and is relishing the challenges of working with the Board and leading the staff to move our development plans forward. Tom Drake OBE took on the role of Interim Chief Executive following the departure of our previous Chief Executive, and I would like to pass on the Board's sincere thanks to Tom for his leadership and direction over the transition period.

There are many challenges and opportunities ahead for SQA — the Curriculum for Excellence, essential modernisation and funding our work through commercial and international activities, to name a few — but we are in great shape to move these forward. My confidence is down to our staff and all in the Scottish education and training community who work with us. Thank you all for your ongoing commitment, energy and dedication.

Please enjoy reading this Review — it is an impressive record of a successful year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McCormick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John McCormick
Chairman
June 2007

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Introduction

We are the national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees and some professional qualifications. Our main functions are set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996. We are a non-Departmental Public Body, sponsored by the Education Department of the Scottish Executive.

Our core purpose is to set and maintain standards in education and training through qualifications and assessment across schools, colleges and in workplace learning. There are SQA qualifications for everyone:

- students in schools and colleges
- trainees and apprentices
- people who already have qualifications, and those who don't
- people who are in employment, and those who aren't

We've published this Review so you can see how we're doing against the objectives we set out in our Business Plan for 2006–07. (The objectives are agreed with the Scottish Executive.) Our five main objectives for 2006–07 were:

- 1** Provide qualifications and support to match the needs of individuals, society and the economy of Scotland.
- 2** Inform and support national policy development and implementation.
- 3** Re-design our services and processes to make them better to use and more efficient.
- 4** Develop a highly-skilled, motivated and effective workforce.
- 5** Increase the use of SQA qualifications and services nationally and internationally.

This Review breaks all of the objectives down into smaller parts, and gives a broad outline of what we've achieved in each area. There's more detailed information in our Annual Report 2006–07, which, from September, will be available to download from www.sqa.org.uk, and as hard copy from our Customer Contact Centre:

tel: 0845 279 1000
 fax: 0845 213 5000
 e-mail: customer@sqa.org.uk

Our values



We've already mentioned our objectives for 2006–07. But we also have a set of corporate values. Our corporate values underlie everything we do, and give direction to all our decisions. Our corporate values are:

- quality
- integrity
- innovation
- partnership
- service

Here are some brief examples of how we've put them into practice over the last year. There are more details on all of these activities later.

Quality

We've improved our Estimates, Derived Grades and Appeals procedures. We've published guidance on the changes, and hosted Understanding Standards events for teaching staff to support the new guidance.

Integrity

We're actively exploring ways to make assessments more flexible, for instance for people with disabilities, so that everyone has the same chance to demonstrate their potential. Last year, we piloted the use of digital question papers.



resultsonline

Innovation

This year we piloted a secure website that allowed students to see their exam results online. This is in addition to our text alert service. The pilot is being extended for 2007, and will soon be available to all our candidates.

Partnership

Two HNCs that we had developed in 2005–06 with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) for Allied Health Professions were accredited by the Society and College of Radiographers during 2006–07. These HNCs in Diagnostic Imaging and Radiotherapy are now being delivered by Dundee and Stow Colleges in partnership with local hospitals.

Service

We've reviewed our Accreditation function, finding that the majority of users are satisfied with the level of service we provide. The review also found that we should extend the remit of our Accreditation Unit.



Objective 1

Provide qualifications and support to match the needs of individuals, society and the economy of Scotland

We are committed to providing qualifications and support to meet the changing needs of our stakeholders. This is our main responsibility, so we'll cover this objective in more detail than the others.

Exams and certificates

2006 Diet of Exams

One of the most important parts of our year is the diet of exams for National Courses for candidates in schools and colleges across Scotland.

Every year, in addition to the annual peak of exam activity from May to August, we design assessments, recruit appointees (Markers, Setters, Veters, Verifiers and others), quality assure coursework and assessments, and deal with appeals. We also monitor our progress across this range of tasks to make sure it meets the targets that have been agreed with the Scottish Executive.

We met all our performance targets for August certification, issuing certificates to 150,050 candidates.

Revised Scottish Qualifications Certificate

In January we introduced a revised Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC). We worked with candidates to improve the layout and make the certificate easier to understand. The new certificate has three sections:

- **Summary of attainment**, listing all the Group Awards, Courses and stand-alone Units that the candidate has achieved.

- **Detailed record of attainment**, giving more detail about the qualifications achieved.
- **Profiles**, showing the candidate's current achievements in Core Skills and SCQF credits.

What we offer — our 'portfolio' of qualifications



Skills for Work

We are developing and piloting a suite of Skills for Work Courses for young people, (this was one of the developments recommended in *Curriculum for Excellence*).

In August 2006, we issued certificates to 188 candidates for the five pilot Skills for Work Courses, and published an evaluation of the pilot so far. The feedback we've had from candidates has been overwhelmingly positive — 98% enjoyed their Courses, and 95% said they'd learned useful things

about the world of work and about the skills and attitudes employers want.

Five more Skills for Work Courses are now being piloted, and 5,000 learners are now completing these ten Courses. All ten will be available for mainstream use from 2007–08, and we launched three more Courses in April 2007.

Modernising Higher National Qualifications

Our project to modernise Scotland's Higher National qualifications (HN qualifications) will be finished in December 2008. The aim of the project is to bring HN qualifications up-to-date and make them as relevant as possible to Scotland's present and future needs.

We validated 37 revised HN qualifications that will be available for delivery by all approved centres. We also validated 14 specialist qualifications.

Objective 1

Provide qualifications and support to match the needs of individuals, society and the economy of Scotland

National Qualifications Group Awards

We started work on 27 National Certificates and eight National Progression Awards. We've now presented five National Certificates and 12 National Progression Awards for validation. We've also started development work in five more occupational sectors. We publish monthly updates on the programme's progress on our website.

COREskills

Core Skills for the Future

Research showed that the Core Skills of *Numeracy, Using Information Technology* and *Working with Others* needed to be refreshed. This is now being done, and we are keeping stakeholders informed.

Accreditation

Review of Accreditation

We completed a review of our Accreditation function, and found that the majority of awarding bodies, Sector Skills Councils and other Standards Setting Bodies are satisfied with the level of

service we provide. The staff of our Accreditation Unit are seen as one of our key strengths in this area.

The review recommended extending the remit of the Accreditation Unit to cover a wider range of qualifications. We will now agree the next steps with the Scottish Executive.

Accreditation of Security industry qualifications

We approved five awarding bodies in the Security sector, and accredited 13 Security qualifications. We carried out the first audits of these new awarding bodies in February 2007.

Allocating SCQF level and credit to SVQs

In 2006–07, the Scottish Executive funded the second year of a three-year project on bringing SVQs into the SCQF. The project now also covers Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks.

We have now allocated SCQF credit and level to 762 Units from 34 SVQs, and to 55 Vocationally Related Qualifications (133 Units) from eight Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks.

Providing information, materials and training to support qualifications and assessment

Understanding Standards

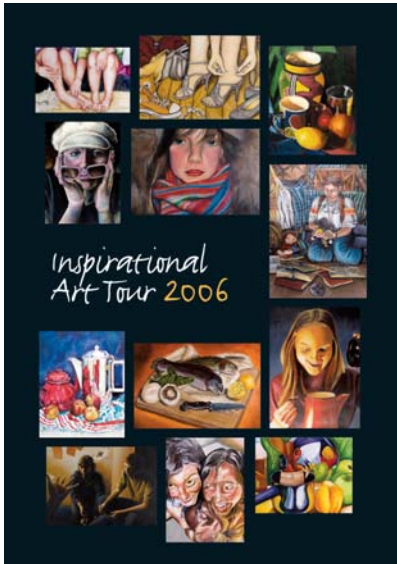
Our 2006 programme of NQ Professional Development Workshops covered 21 Courses. Ninety-four percent of the delegate places were taken, and 98% of delegates reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with these events.

We have expanded the information available on our Understanding Standards Website. It now covers 86% of all candidate entries at Higher and 45% at Intermediate 2.

SQA Academy provides online materials to help teachers and lecturers work with our qualifications and assessments. We piloted six packages of materials through the Academy website during 2006–07, including workshops on objective testing, and we provided support for training and consultation exercises. We plan to extend the number of packages in 2007–08.

We are working with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) to ensure that teaching professionals accessing SQA Academy or Understanding Standards materials can use them for professional recognition.





Inspirational Art tour

Our exemplification of standards in Art and Design National Courses took a new and creative twist in 2006 with the Inspirational Art Tour. We took the very best artwork from young artists to destinations throughout mainland Scotland during October and November in our bus-turned-art-gallery. It was a phenomenal success and welcomed by teachers and candidates. Eighteen exceptional pieces of artwork from the tour are now on permanent loan to the Scotland Office in London and Edinburgh — providing a fantastic showcase for the creative skills and talents in our schools and colleges.



Understanding your needs and priorities

Customer Charter

We are totally committed to delivering exceptional service to all our customers. A significant step forward will be the publication of our 'Customer Charter' which outlines our service level promises and feedback procedures.

Candidate engagement

For the first time, we conducted a survey of our candidates to find out what they thought about the qualifications they are undertaking. The survey findings included:

- The main motivating factor for NQ candidates is access to further study.
- Almost all candidates felt their qualifications would help them achieve their goals.
- Most NQ candidates and a significant proportion of SVQ and HNC/D candidates will go on to do more SQA qualifications.
- A minority of candidates are sceptical of increased use of technology in assessment and learning.
- Most candidates enjoyed and were satisfied with their qualifications.
- We have published a full report in the Research Bulletin area on our website.



Objective 2

Inform and support national policy development and implementation

Government policies drive much of our work, but we are also able to contribute to the way policies develop, and by working in partnership with many organisations in Scotland, in the UK, and internationally, we can make sure we carry them out as effectively as possible.

Strategic relationships with national and international partners

UK Skills Agenda

We reviewed our strategy for engagement in the UK-wide skills market. Our representation on the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme Board continues. We also submitted an extensive response to the Scottish Executive's consultation on the refresh of Scotland's Lifelong Learning Strategy.

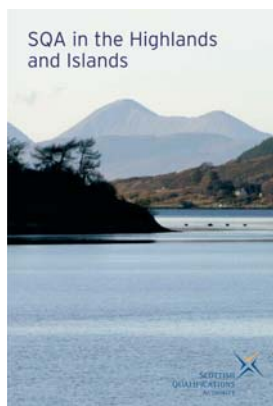
We have also secured recognition by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to operate as an awarding body in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Working with Higher Education

We have continued to work with higher education to ensure our qualifications are recognised. Eight Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs) now accept our new Higher in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for admission.

We have also been promoting recognition of our Advanced Highers — we gave presentations to eight English HEIs, and attended Oxbridge fairs in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

We began work to ensure that National Certificates and National Progression Awards (at SCQF level 6) are included in the UCAS tariff.



Highlands & Islands Strategy

We published a strategy to ensure that our qualifications and services meet the needs of candidates and employers in the Highlands & Islands. The launch event included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of the Highlands & Islands Millennium Institute.

We have also established a steering group to advise on the special priorities of the Highlands & Islands.

Mapping Polish qualifications

The value of migrant workers to Scotland's economy is growing, so we have developed an online resource that helps employers and training providers to understand the key features of Polish qualifications.

Microsoft Partners in Learning

We lead the Scottish advisory council for Microsoft's 'Partners in Learning' global educational initiative, which aims to encourage innovative use of

technology in learning and teaching. The partnership funded a number of projects, including:

- Using podcasting, MP3 players and Personal Digital Assistants with data logging equipment.
- Animation projects and making videos in class.
- Class voting systems.

We hosted a showcase event for the most successful projects in February. This also included awards for Innovative Teachers.

We piloted an online Business Enterprise game in 35 schools, with a range of resources for Scottish teachers. The game, in which students run a virtual Sports Store, will be launched in May 2007.



DIVA

Our Digital Media and ICT Vendor Alliance (DIVA) now includes 12 global IT companies. DIVA's aims are to help Scottish learners attain global standards; provide IT skills development for lecturers, teachers and trainers; provide access to free or heavily discounted learning resources for students and centres; and position Scottish education alongside the best in the world. New members of DIVA for this year are: Autodesk, Serif, IBM, Digidesign, and Certified Internet Webmaster (CIW).





Providing information and advice to inform policy

Research Bulletins

During 2006-07, we published eight Research Bulletins on our website.

Consultation responses

We responded to consultations from:

- Scottish Executive
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
- Disability Rights Commission
- Equal Opportunities Commission
- e-skills UK
- Sector Skills Development Agency
- Department for Education & Skills
- Audit Scotland

Review of Estimates, Derived Grades and Appeals

We completed a review of Estimates, Derived Grades and Appeals. The final report recommended that, starting from the 2007 exam diet, the derived grades procedure (which was an automatic upgrade for candidates who narrowly missed a grade) should be withdrawn. Instead, all candidates with a result at a lower grade than their estimate will now be eligible for appeals, instead of some candidates receiving derived grades. We believe this will be fairer to candidates, and will allow more of them to achieve grades that reflect their performance.

We published guidance on the revised procedures, and hosted Understanding Standards events for teaching staff to explain them.

Implementing government policy

Curriculum for Excellence

We are involved in all strands of the *Curriculum for Excellence* programme of work, along with our partners: the Scottish Executive, Learning and Teaching Scotland, and HM Inspectors of Education. Our main role is to lead work on qualifications and assessment.

We were asked to help prepare options for a consultation on options for qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (the same level as Standard Grade and National Courses at Intermediate 1 and 2). The consultation is planned for 2007-08.

Assessment is for Learning

We continued to refresh the 5-14 National Assessment Bank, and completed translation of all the reading, writing and numeracy tasks in Gaelic.

We played a leading role in the Scottish Survey of Achievement, which provides a snapshot of the attainment levels of primary and secondary school students across the country (this year focusing on social subjects enquiry skills). 36,000 school pupils across Scotland took part in the 2006 Survey. We have also completed task development for the 2007 Scottish Survey of Achievement, which will focus on science.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

The SCQF Partnership company

A new company limited by guarantee has been formed to manage the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The first meeting of the Board of the *SCQF Partnership Ltd* took place in November 2006.

SCQF on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate

SCQF information is now reported in more detail on the revised Scottish Qualifications Certificate.

UK and international developments

We hosted the annual meeting of the UK and Ireland *Five-Country Qualifications and Framework Group* in September 2006. This forum allows delegates from each country to publicise and discuss qualification framework and quality assurance issues and developments.

We participated in research to explore ways of aligning the SCQF more closely with the developing Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We represented the UK on the Technical Working Group developing a proposal for a European credit transfer system for vocational education and training.

Objective 3

Re-design our services and processes to make them better to use and more efficient



We need to make sure that our services are of high quality. We also need to be sure that they're easy to use, cost-effective, and flexible, and that they don't cause unnecessary delays. We do this by continuously reviewing them.

Managing candidate information

Results Online

In August, more than 400 candidates taking National Courses and Standard Grades at centres in the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland took up the option to view their results online (and a day early). Half of these candidates also used our results text alert subscription service. Results Online will soon be available to all our candidates.



Working with Highlands & Islands Enterprise

We had already developed a service to enable colleagues from Scottish Enterprise to access entry information for funded trainees who are completing our qualifications. This year, we completed preparations to extend this service to Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE). We are planning to make the service go live early in 2007–08.

E-assessment and e-learning resources

E-assessment in action

In the 2006 exams, 63 candidates in seven centres used computers to sit part of the Higher and Intermediate 2 exam in Biotechnology. Feedback from both the candidates and teaching staff was positive, so we intend to deliver the Biotechnology assessment on-screen again as part of the 2007 diet. We will also offer candidates at some centres the opportunity to sit part of the Physics Intermediate 1 examination on-screen.

Candidates in 27 centres were also offered access to electronic National Assessment Bank

materials (e-NABs) in Higher Mathematics, and in Intermediate 1 and 2 Computing and Computing Studies.



We have continued our partnership with the Scottish Funding Council and the European Social Fund to create e-learning and e-assessment support materials to support HN qualifications, and created: 443 assessment exemplars; 94 learning and teaching packs; 300 e-assessments.

Social software

We began an innovative project to explore the use of social software — a way of strengthening the validity and reliability of assessment of group work by identifying the contribution of each member of the group. In 2007–08, we will pilot the new approach in one subject area.

Question paper production and security

After initial piloting, we have made a secure forum and e-mail service available to our examining teams to support setting of question papers. Question paper setting teams can now post materials to, and communicate electronically in, a secure environment.

Adapted formats

For the 2006 exam diet, we piloted digital question papers for 34 candidates at eight centres. Our evaluation of the pilot showed that digital question papers can meet the needs of some candidates with disabilities

and/or additional support needs who use ICT regularly in class. There are additional resource implications for us and technical resource implications for our centres.

Web-based marking and quality assurance

Web-based marking

We launched a secure website for our Markers in seven National Qualifications subjects. In the 2006 diet of exams, Markers recorded marks for more than 570,000 question items from 13,710 scripts.

An enhanced pilot will run as part of the 2007 diet of exams.

Appointee Services website

In January we launched a website for all potential and current appointees. The website provides information for those who want to find out more about working as an appointee, and information and services for existing appointees.



Objective 4

Develop a highly-skilled, motivated and effective workforce

Everything we do depends on our people. We are committed to ensuring that our staff and appointees have the skills, knowledge and motivation they need to provide the qualifications and services needed for a successful Scotland.

Human resource policies

Competence frameworks

During the year, we developed competence frameworks for our leaders, managers and staff, and agreed a Succession Planning Model to support a more structured approach to staff development. We will begin to implement this model in 2007–08.

Our performance review calendar has also been aligned to our corporate planning timetable. We streamlined the quality assurance

process for performance review and simplified our arrangements for performance improvement planning. We have agreed an increase in the number of performance categories available to managers when reviewing performance during 2007–08.

Our appointees

We improved human resources processes for the thousands of professionals who enrol as appointees every year. We defined the competences necessary for Principal Assessors (PAs), Senior Verifiers and Senior Examiners, and developed training packages for appointees.

We consulted with PAs on approaches to performance management for our Appointees, and PAs will begin to complete performance records for their examining teams following the

appeals process for the 2007 diet of certification.

We also began a review of appointee remuneration in 2006–07.

Performance measurement and monitoring

Audit Scotland review

Our external auditors, Audit Scotland, completed a Performance Management Study, looking at our operational effectiveness and how efficient and economic we are in meeting our responsibilities. Following on from this, we developed a scorecard of performance indicators to help us monitor progress towards achieving our corporate objectives.



Integrated Human Resources and Financial system

New HR and Finance software

In 2006-07, we implemented the first phase of an integrated Human Resources and Financial software system, covering HR, Payroll and Finance processes.

Estates and facilities management

Accommodation

Now that our Glasgow staff are all based in our new offices, we de-commissioned and completed sale and end-of-lease negotiations for our previous properties.

Having relocated with Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), we have already achieved efficiencies in print, cleaning, security, mailroom and maintenance services. We will continue to explore opportunities for sharing services to create efficiency savings. We meet with our LTS colleagues regularly to discuss efficiency.

For our Dalkeith site, we have been working with the Scottish Executive to finalise the business case for relocation to more flexible and fit-for-purpose accommodation.

Corporate social responsibility

We have begun a programme to maintain staff awareness of Health and Safety issues, and secured Silver level recognition from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for this.

In December 2006, our Glasgow site matched Dalkeith in achieving the 'Scotland's Health at Work' programme Silver award



for promoting health in the workplace. Highlights included smoking cessation support sessions for staff and raising £1,450 for Sport Relief by 50 staff completing at least one mile in their lunch break. Both sites received Gold Shaw awards in April 2007.

We reviewed our Environmental Management system, and established an Environment Forum to keep staff informed of developments.

We provided time and resources to support staff in raising funds for their annual nominated charity. Our Informal Committee led a programme of fundraising events and individual sponsorship challenges, which culminated in the presentation of a cheque for £8,500 to Cancer Research Scotland in March.

Equality

Three key new pieces of equalities legislation have come into force for public bodies: the Disability Equality Duty, Gender

Equality Duty and Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006. We developed an equalities strategy covering all these strands in July 2006.

We set up an equality and diversity project team, and will change our HR policies and procedures accordingly. We have begun to roll out a programme of workshops for all staff to increase awareness and understanding of equality issues and legislation.

We have started work on Gender and Disability Equality Schemes, and refreshing our Race Equality Scheme, for publication in June 2007.



Objective 5

Increase the use of SQA qualifications and services nationally and internationally



Delivering SQA qualifications in wider markets in the UK and internationally enhances their reputation and leads to more investment. We will take advantage of new opportunities to deliver our qualifications and services at home and internationally.

International awarding and consultancy

Market development

We co-ordinated a number of inward learning and study visits to demonstrate the key points of Scottish education and training to overseas governments, government agencies and educational bodies. We worked with international partners to provide consultancy services to overseas governments, government agencies and educational bodies. The projects are funded from a variety of sources, including the World Bank and the European Union.

International awarding

We also worked with partners to ensure that Scottish qualifications are recognised and respected internationally. We continue to provide international partners with a range of academic and vocational qualifications.

National awarding and consultancy

Customised Awards

Our Customised Awards service is a commercial activity, where the cost of the award development, certification, and quality assurance is fully covered by the customer.

One example of this was Peterhead-based engineering firm Score Group plc, which approached us with a proposal for a Better Driving Skills award for its 17–25 year-old apprentices — this is the age group at greatest risk of injury or death from road traffic accidents caused by dangerous or careless driving.

The qualification was developed by Score Group, with the training provided by Grampian Police. It covers theory and underpinning knowledge, vehicle safety and maintenance checks, and practical elements of safe driving skills, such as skid control. The first successful candidates got their certificates in October 2006. To date, 91 candidates have achieved this Customised Award.

Trading subsidiary

To identify alternative sources of funding and reduce our reliance on public funds, we have developed a proposal to create a separate trading entity.

During 2006–07, we worked with the Scottish Executive to finalise the Business Case to establish the trading subsidiary. The final Business Case has now been formally submitted to the Scottish Executive.

Dangerous Goods Driver Training

In January 2006, we were awarded the contract to award the Dangerous Goods Driver Training examinations by the Department for Transport from 1 October 2006. To deliver the contract, we developed and implemented a web-enabled database. Since the contract started, 11,717 candidates sat 60,309 exams, resulting in the issue of 10,889 Vocational Training Certificates in Dangerous Goods Driver Training.





More information There will be more detailed information in our Annual Report, which is published in September 2007.

It will be available on our website www.sqa.org.uk, or in print from our Customer Contact Centre:

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ISBN 978 1 85969 647 7

www.sqa.org.uk

FE3176

June 2007