



Gender Equality Scheme Progress Report 2008



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Foreword



SQA is committed to promoting diversity and practising equality of opportunity. We are trying to build an organisation that is truly inclusive, that understands, appreciates and values the diversity of each individual and that incorporates measures to make people feel valued and able to participate and achieve their full potential.

As a service provider, SQA aims to promote equality of access to SQA qualifications. We will seek to ensure that our qualifications are free from real or perceived barriers to learning and that they offer candidates an equal opportunity to achieve *their* full potential.

Dr Janet Brown
Chief Executive

About this report

This report provides a summary of the equality and diversity achievements for 2007-2008. Some of the material in this report will also have been covered in our December 2007 update where we reported upon the progress towards achieving the goals laid out in all of our equality schemes.

This report allows us to demonstrate developments. The purpose is twofold. First, there is a statutory requirement to report annually on issues within the Equality Schemes. Second, it will tell you how the Schemes and the application of the specific duties are having a tangible effect on SQA.

Whilst you can read this report on its own, you will gain a deeper understanding of its contents by reading the equality action plans — these are available on our website.

The report is comprised of two main sections. The first section highlights individual successes during the year in promoting Gender equality at SQA both in service provision and as an employer. The second section is a matrix which is derived from our original Equality action plans. The second part of this report allows you to track our actions over time and gives you a broader perspective.

The legislative context

In recent years there have been many changes to equalities legislation, reflecting a fundamental change in the way we pursue a society free from unfair discrimination, and in which everyone can reach their full potential. We are moving to a proactive approach to the promotion and protection of equality.

The Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities)(Statutory Duties)(Scotland) Regulations 2005 and the Sex Discrimination (Public Authorities)(Statutory Duties)(Scotland) Order 2007 require us to report annual on the progress of our Disability and Gender Equality Schemes respectively. Our specific public sector duties are the road map that we use to meet our general equality duties. These are laid out here:

GENERAL DUTIES	
Race	<p>SQA, in carrying out its functions, must have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ eliminate unlawful racial discrimination ◆ eliminate unlawful racial harassment ◆ promote equality of opportunity ◆ promote good relations between people of different racial groups
Disability	<p>SQA must, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ eliminate unlawful disability discrimination ◆ eliminate disability related harassment ◆ promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and non-disabled persons ◆ take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than non-disabled people ◆ promote positive attitudes towards disabled people ◆ encourage participation by disabled people in public life
Gender	<p>SQA, in carrying out its functions, must have due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ eliminate unlawful sexual discrimination ◆ eliminate unlawful sexual harassment ◆ promote equality of opportunity between men and women

Strategic implementation and governance

SQA is a non-departmental public body established by the Scotland Education Act (1996). It is accountable to the Scottish Government.

Our commitment to delivering on our equality action plans is reflected in our corporate objectives. Our commitment is clearly stated in our Corporate Plan for 2007–10 (paragraph 4.1.2), which deals specifically with ‘people policies’ (although our commitment is much wider). This ensures that we have the high-level buy-in necessary to realise our goals.

Our approach is an integrated one and to find out about the work that we have been doing to ensure that all equality stands are mainstreamed into our daily business please contact us or visit our website.

Equal Pay

In line with SQA's commitment to achieve equal opportunities for all staff, the organisation supports the principles that all employees should receive equal pay for the same or like work or work rated as equivalent or of equal value. We aim to eliminate any sex bias in our pay system. In 2007 we had the opportunity to reinforce our commitment to a fair pay system by publishing our equal pay statement. Further details of how we have performed in relation to equal pay can be found on our web site. There are no statistically significant pay gaps¹ at SQA between men and women. This is something that we are proud of and will work hard to maintain.

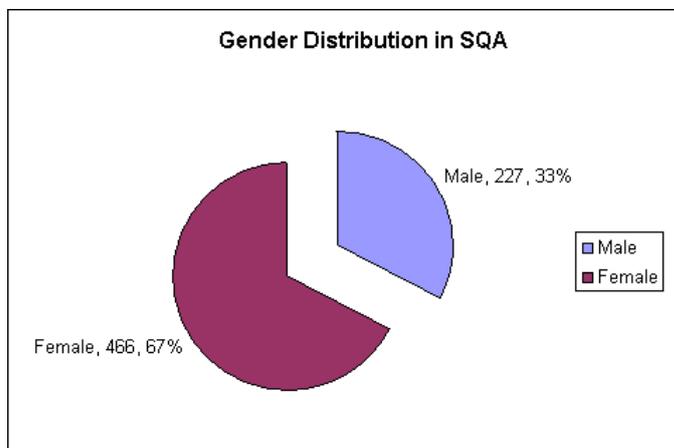
Our approach to Equal Pay is much wider than the traditional concept of ensuring men and women are paid equally and through a process of internal consultation we have drafted our Child Care Voucher Policy. As of 1 April 2008, the Childcare Voucher Policy was made available - this is an addition to SQA's benefits package. Staff have been encouraged to find out more about it through our staff magazine. It is just one of the ways in which we are working to become more reactive to the diverse needs of our staff.

Delivery of Training

An external training provider has provided equalities awareness training to all current staff and the SQA Board. Training in the conduct of Equality Impact Assessments has been provided to targeted staff. The Equalities officer is now delivering equalities training to new staff as part of the induction process. Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) is invited to send its new staff to this training. This forms part of the SQA's shared service agreement with LTS.

Monitoring

In 2007 we made developments to our software systems to allow us to gather more complex information about how we work and progress at SQA. We can now analyse information about our employment ratio of women to men against training, progression and a range of other factors.



¹ By statistically significant we mean a margin of more than 5%

There are more women than men at SQA: 464 (67%), compared with 228 (33%), a ratio of 2:1.

With the exception of one grade, women are over-represented at the lower grades. At the middle grades, men and women are fairly evenly represented, with the exception of one grade where women are under-represented. At Business Manager grade, women outnumber men by 12 to 11 (52% to 48%), and at senior management level the split is even.

Partnership and Communication

The wider equality and diversity work that we carry out at SQA is only possible because staff and stakeholders work in partnership. We have developed a co-ordinated response and ensure that we use various ways of securing internal and external engagement.

With transparency and partnership sitting at the core of our work, we can continue to work towards the delivery of meaningful and ambitious action plans.

In the last year SQA approached Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), an organisation with similar responsibilities for examinations in Northern Ireland, to follow-up from benchmarking activity undertaken by Audit Scotland as part of its recent Performance Management Study, ahead of development of a wider benchmarking strategy. In April 2008 SQA took part in further benchmarking exercises with CCEA. One area covered was legislative compliance on equality and diversity. The key objective of the joint benchmarking program is for both organisations to be able to identify and implement measurable improvements to effectiveness or efficiency of their key processes, through insight into alternative approaches used by their benchmarking partner. This feeds into our wider commitment to work in partnership with other organisations towards best practice.

As part of an ongoing continuous improvement program at SQA we have set up a policy review team which works through the partnership forum (a group which acts as a platform for the productive engagement between management and unions) to review all of our people policies. We are continuing to ensure that staff are involved from the outset of policy development through this forum.

An example of a successful initiative emerging from this group has been the formation of a Work/Life Balance Group. The group is wide ranging and has representatives from HR, Partnership Group, Informal committee and the equalities officer.

We have also started preparations for our men's health and life choices day. This will take place in our Glasgow Optima building. The day is expected to take place during November. It is expected that there will be Exhibitions, workshops and demonstrations aimed at promoting health and well being for men.

Qualifications Development Strategy review

Equality has long been the domain of the human Resources department. In recent times with the introduction of the public sector duties we have seen that focus from employment be transformed into a wide ranging portfolio of equalities law which allows us to make our services more responsive to the needs of our customers. At SQA during November 2007 SQA began an Impact Assessment of the Qualification Development Strategy (QDS) which incorporates the seven stages of qualifications development and review. This document is central to the operations of the business. As a result of the Impact Assessment, equality and diversity will become more prominent within the development cycle. Discussions are underway to agree the consultation process with stakeholders to ensure that the revised QDS is fit for purpose.

What's next?

We will:

- ✓ Move towards a Single Equality Scheme which brings together equality schemes in the areas of disability, race and gender through a common framework with separate chapters on the issues in each of the three areas. Taking a more holistic approach to the protection and promotion of equalities will make our products sensitive to the specific needs of the communities we serve, while still ensuring that we meet our requirements under the legislation. As we move toward reviewing our schemes we
- ✓ Continue to align the equality schemes with our corporate operational plans, and build on the current infrastructure to monitor and sustain progress against the plans.
- ✓ Drive implementation of the equality mainstreaming policy.
- ✓ Further develop our involvement and consultation work — we will continue to develop new ways to engage people.
- ✓ See that our commitment to the delivery of equality of opportunity is progressively realised and informed by the findings of our impact assessments and the associated processes.
- ✓ Ensure that the Board and Executive Team reinforce their commitment to this agenda.

Contacting SQA

We recognise that our equality schemes are part of our on-going equalities work. We welcome feedback and would be happy to receive your thoughts and concerns.

You can contact us by:

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