



Scottish Qualifications Authority

Gender Equality Scheme 2010–13

This edition: June 2010
Publication code: FA5522

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority
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Foreword by the Chief Executive

I am pleased to present SQA's Gender Equality Scheme for 2010–13. SQA places equality at the heart of its operations. We are deeply aware of our responsibilities towards our staff, stakeholders and service users. Education and training are at the heart of Scotland's heritage and culture. Education and training unlock potential, and bring benefits to all of us and to the communities we live in. Qualifications are how we show what we have achieved in education and training.

Gender equality is particularly important to SQA, as we continue to focus our energies on developing the widest possible access to our qualifications. We recognise that our stakeholders and beneficiaries come from diverse social backgrounds and experiences. Our commitment to equality is enshrined in our core values — quality, integrity, innovation, partnership and service — and we recognise that equality needs to be made explicit in all aspects of our work.

We welcome our Gender Equality Duty, and continue to strive to make improvements, where needed, in the level of service we offer. This Gender Equality Scheme will help to guide the work we do to ensure gender equality is considered and integral in our planning and decision making process.

As the Chief Executive of SQA, I am committed to ensuring that we continue to build on our achievements to date. This Scheme sets out our framework for continuing our work on making equality central to our practices, policies and procedures.

Dr Janet Brown
Chief Executive

1 Background

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is committed to gender equality.

The Sex Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Order 2007 places a statutory general duty on public authorities to promote gender equality across its functions.

The general duty, which came into force on 9 April 2007, requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act.

This document meets the statutory requirement to publish a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) for 2010–13. It replaces the earlier version for the years 2007–09. In it we set out how we aim to fulfil our obligations under the statutory Gender Equality Duty.

2 The role of SQA

The Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Scottish Government Learning Directorate. It is the national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees.

The statutory basis for SQA is the Education (Scotland) Act 1996.

SQA's key functions are to:

- ◆ devise, develop and validate qualifications, and keep them under review
- ◆ accredit qualifications
- ◆ approve education and training establishments as being suitable for entering people for these qualifications
- ◆ arrange for, assist in and carry out the assessment of people taking SQA qualifications
- ◆ quality assure education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications
- ◆ issue certificates to candidates

SQA qualifications include:

- ◆ National Qualifications
- ◆ Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC/HND)
- ◆ Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

- ◆ Customised Awards and Professional Development Awards

SQA is also responsible for developing and distributing 3–15 National Tests to schools as part of the Government's Curriculum for Excellence programme.

A comprehensive list of SQA functions and current corporate goals can be found in SQA's Corporate and Business Plan, which is reviewed annually and approved by Scottish Ministers. This is available on the SQA website at:

http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Corporate_Plan_2009-12.pdf.

2.1 Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is the Scottish Government's major programme of reform for the education sector.

It aims to transform education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible, relevant and enriched curriculum for young people aged 3 to 18 and by reviewing other aspects of Scotland's education system, including qualifications, assessment and learning and teaching approaches.

This will help prepare young people to take their place in a modern society and economy. It should also mean that the young person's learning experience is more relevant to life and work, as well as more enjoyable.

2.2 About Curriculum for Excellence

The curriculum includes the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated.

The totality of experiences is: ethos and life of the school as a community, curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning and opportunities for personal achievement.

The purpose of Curriculum for Excellence is encapsulated in four capacities – to enable each child or young person to be:

- ◆ a successful learner
- ◆ a confident individual
- ◆ a responsible citizen
- ◆ an effective contributor

2.3 Our role in Curriculum for Excellence

We are one of four partner organisations involved in Curriculum for Excellence. The other partners are the **Scottish Government (Smarter Scotland)**, **Learning and Teaching Scotland** and **HMIe** (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education).

SQA's role in Curriculum for Excellence is to design, deliver and implement the following new qualifications:

- ◆ National 4 and 5 (which will replace Standard Grade and Intermediates)
- ◆ Literacy and Numeracy

as well as revising:

- ◆ Higher
- ◆ Advanced Higher
- ◆ Access qualifications

Before the Curriculum for Excellence review for Higher, Advanced Higher and Access begins, we will continue to review our existing qualifications in line with our normal schedule to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

SQA also has a wide provision that currently meets the principles and values of Curriculum for Excellence and can help practitioners and centres to meet their requirements.

Staff working on Curriculum for Excellence have had equality training and further guidance is being developed to ensure that new qualifications are as inclusive as possible. This includes checklists designed to ensure that gender issues are fully considered in the development of both specifications and assessments.

For more information:

The main Curriculum for Excellence website is hosted by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and can be found at:

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/>

The SQA's role in the process is outlined on the Curriculum for Excellence pages on the SQA website at: **www.sqa.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence**

The Scottish Government's vision for Curriculum for Excellence can be found at: **<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE>**

3 Our core values and principles

Our core values are:

- ◆ Quality
- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Innovation
- ◆ Partnership
- ◆ Services

We are committed to working in partnership to provide high quality, recognised and relevant qualifications and assessment. We value the diversity and creative potential that men and women from different backgrounds and with different skills and abilities bring to the workplace.

This Gender Equality Scheme sets out the framework within which we will continue to promote gender equality. Our commitment to delivering our Gender Equality Scheme is based on the following principles.

- ◆ To provide equality of opportunity and access.
- ◆ To embed equality in all our activities.
- ◆ To continue to support a culture where everyone is treated equitably.

4 Meeting the duty

SQA will continue to work across many areas to strengthen its commitment to gender equality. The Action Plan in the Appendix sets out the key commitments and priorities for the period 2010–13.

We have updated and carried over a number of actions from our previous Action Plan. Many of these are currently being implemented. Also, organisational changes within SQA have meant that it was not practical to complete some actions within the timescales.

SQA continues to monitor and review its existing and new policies. All new policies are checked for compliance with the gender duty through the Equality Impact Assessment process.

5 Policy development and partnership

SQA recognises that our activities have a wide impact on the public. We believe that engaging and consulting with diverse groups will help us to continue to improve the way we deliver our products and services.

We engage with our stakeholders in a number of ways through the development and delivery of our qualifications and the services we provide.

This section describes some of our achievements in engaging with different groups and on the issue of gender equality.

5.1 More Choices, More Chances

Figures released by the Scottish Funding Council suggest that there are now as many girls as boys who are not in education, employment or training in Scotland. We continue to carry out many activities within the context of 'More Choices, More Chances'¹. These include Action Research Projects and new, refreshed qualifications including the new Employability Award and the National Progression Award in Enterprise and Employability.

5.2 Inclusion Group

SQA established this stakeholder group in October 2008 to ensure that:

- ◆ our qualifications and assessment arrangements recognise a wide range of skills, knowledge, abilities and experience
- ◆ our products and services are inclusive and are seen within a wider context of diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunity

The group is led by the Policy and New Products team and comprises SQA staff and representatives from Higher Education, Further Education, the Scottish Government, schools, community organisations and non-departmental public bodies. The group has met twice, with two meetings a year scheduled for spring and autumn. The group acts as an advisory body to SQA on key inclusion issues and incorporates themes such as 'More Choices, More Chances'. The group is aware that gender stereotyping can be an issue around access to qualifications, and will address this area.

5.3 Policy and New Products Team: information and events

The Policy and New Products Team run seminars for Heads of Service and key external partners. The December 2009 event highlighted the findings from the Nuffield/Rathbone review *Engaging Youth Enquiry*². This investigated why some young people do not participate in education, employment or training, the barriers that make them disengage, and how could they be supported back into learning and sustainable employment.

¹ <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/35665.html>

² <http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/>

The review concluded that young people face multiple barriers to making progress in their lives. For both sexes, these include:

- ◆ poor educational attainment
- ◆ poverty
- ◆ low self-confidence and esteem
- ◆ inner-city living

For boys in particular there is also the issue of:

- ◆ poor labour market experience

For girls, they include:

- ◆ teenage motherhood
- ◆ a lack of parental interest in their education

These events gave staff and stakeholder representatives an opportunity to update their knowledge and awareness of important issues around inclusion and access to services.

5.4 Quality and Equality Learning and Teaching Materials (QELTM) project

SQA was represented on the Steering Group of the Quality and Equality Learning and Teaching Materials (QELTM) project, funded by the Scottish Funding Council, and helped promote the inclusive Course materials it produced. These are available from <http://www.sfeu.ac.uk/qelmtm>. We continue to work with Scotland's Colleges to ensure that gender equality considerations are to the fore in the design of all Course materials.

6 Workforce development

Our Human Resources Directorate continues to work to ensure that all employees feel a strong sense of equality within the organisation.

6.1 Equality Workforce and Recruitment Monitoring Report

SQA has a specific statutory duty to monitor race in employment, and we extend this into gender. In addition to our existing procedures to capture data from external applicants to advertised posts, we recently used a questionnaire to gather and analyse monitoring data of staff in post.

This covered six strands: race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, and religion or belief. Staff were advised that data would be held confidentially and only used for the purposes of monitoring, statutory reporting and policy improvement.

SQA produced its first workforce monitoring report for April 2008–March 2009. The response rate to our request for monitoring data using the questionnaire was low. We will therefore need to develop ways of encouraging current employees and applicants to provide equality and diversity data, so that reporting and analysis may be improved. We acknowledge that employment monitoring is not just about collecting data, and that further analysis of our workforce monitoring information is important to help identify any disparities between groups.

6.2 Transgender staff and potential employees

Our last staff diversity survey did not identify transgender staff. However, we are confident that our current HR policies and support systems can support and protect potential staff across the organisation. We will continue to promote a zero tolerance policy where discrimination or harassment of transgender employees is alleged.

6.3 Staff gender ratio

As at 31 March 2009, SQA had 687 employees, which equates to 652.24 full time equivalent (FTE) posts. We recorded at this time 452 (66%) female staff and 235 (34%) male staff. During the financial year 2008–09, 1825 individuals applied for vacancies with the organisation. Of this total, 1125 (61.64%) were from females, 698 (38.25%) were from males, and 2 (0.11%) were not known.

As at May 2010 the ratio of females to males is 65% to 35%.

6.4 Promotion

The table below shows the promotional patterns.

Financial year ending	Total % of males promoted during the year
2008	11.1
2009	5.3
2010	8.4

Financial year ending	% of women promoted
2008	8.2
2009	8.6
2010	9.8

6.5 Employee/Manager Self-Service system

We are currently in the process of introducing an Employee Self-Service/Manager Self-Service system (ESS MSS) where staff can upload their own details. The system will enable staff to create and approve a number of requests and actions online. A benefit is that staff will be able to update their own diversity data.

6.6 Partnership Group

Our Head of Human Resources chairs the Partnership Group meeting. This brings together SQA management and trade union representatives from Unite (T&G), Unite (Amicus) and Unison on matters relating to staff policies and to consult on collective bargaining agreements. The Partnership Policy Working Sub-Group has recently reviewed and re-launched the Learning and Development Policy. As a result of these discussions, gender is now recorded against training activity requests.

6.7 Staff views

We conduct annual staff opinion surveys to provide an opportunity for all members of staff to express their views on working for SQA. The 2008–09 survey received a response rate of 78%, with 533 staff members participating. The following results show an improvement in overall satisfaction.

The statements below on SQA's commitment to promoting equality and diversity both had a response of 80% favourable.

1. I believe that SQA demonstrates it is an equal opportunities employer (16% did not know and 4% did not respond favourably).

2. I believe SQA demonstrates commitment to equality and diversity in its work (15% did not know and 5% did not respond favourably).

SQA will continue to carry out staff opinion surveys to ensure our understanding of equality matters is focused and current.

6.8 Views of our trade union representatives

Our union groups include Unison Scotland, Unite the Union (Amicus Section) and Unite the Union (T&G Section). They believe that SQA takes our commitment to gender equality seriously, both in terms of specific legal obligations and the wider working culture within the organisation. The regular monitoring reports — equal pay audits and workforce monitoring — have not suggested any current issues in this area. Our local representatives say that they have not received any queries from members in the period in respect of gender discrimination.

6.9 Equal pay update

We produce an Equal Pay Audit annually. At the time of drafting this scheme, the 2009/10 Equal Pay Audit is about to be published. Results indicate that there are currently no equal pay issues across the organisation.

SQA employs more female than male employees, with the current ratio 65 to 35%. We have a greater percentage of women employed in lower graded posts, which results in an overall gender pay gap. We continue to pay close attention to this via the performance management review system and workforce development activities. This ensures that opportunities to take part in training and development are accessible across all grades and are encouraged by management.

6.10 Childcare vouchers

In response to a number of requests about family-friendly policies, SQA launched its Childcare Voucher policy on 1 April 2008. This has enabled employees who are parents or have parental responsibilities to make tax and National Insurance savings on their childcare costs.

In the past year, there has been a good response to the Childcare Voucher policy. Thirty-five employees have now subscribed to the scheme.

6.11 Flexible Working Policy

Human Resources are currently carrying out a review of SQA's Flexible Working Policy. We have sought feedback on the current policy from various interested parties, including SQA's Management Team and union representatives, and this feedback has informed the development of a revised policy. The revised Flexible Working Policy will be presented at Partnership Group and Executive Team meeting for final sign-off and approval, before it is launched within the business.

7 Services: Progress update

We continue to provide high quality qualifications to approximately 1,887 centres, including schools, colleges, employers and private providers in Scotland and elsewhere. We regularly review our full range of services to ensure that they are accessible to all groups in the community.

The following updates give a flavour of our activities.

7.1 Qualifications

From our previous action plan there was an action: *‘To review integrated training programme to incorporate gender equality.’*

In response, the Policy and New Products Team delivered training sessions on equality, inclusion and accessibility to the Curriculum for Excellence Team. The training programme included a session on the requirements for the Gender Equality Duty and the issues that should be considered when designing any new qualifications in the future. The session explored gender imbalance, emphasising the role of schools, colleges, parents and employers in discovering any occupational segregation or ‘glass ceiling’ that may result from gender disparity in qualifications. Role models, case studies and effective inclusive practice were also used as good examples to further the understanding of gender equality to SQA staff.

Another action was: *‘To review and revise guidance material to ensure that at all stages of qualifications development gender equality issues are identified and addressed and gender equality is promoted.’*

We responded to this by developing new guidance. All designers of National Courses and suites of Courses, Unit writers and managers within Curriculum for Excellence development were given an ‘easy read’ version of what is called an Equality and Inclusion Code. This helped them understand the legal requirements of the Gender Equality Duty, as well as other equality legislation and duties.

The Policy and New Products Team will produce a full draft of this Equality and Inclusion Code to be used as equality guidance in the work of the Curriculum for Excellence team. The Code will address all gender equality issues and will give examples of good gender and other equality practices to promote the development of inclusive qualifications.

7.2 Accreditation

From our previous action plan there was an action to: *‘Review our criteria and procedures for accreditation of qualifications and approval of awarding bodies’.*

To address this, it was confirmed that our accreditation criteria require that awarding bodies should have implemented a diversity and equality strategy, as stipulated by the Equality Duty. This is then subject to audit by the regulation section. This is now covered by activities 1 and 2 in the 2010–13 Plan.

Another action was to: *‘Review our monitoring and auditing procedures and training provided for auditors.’*

We have addressed this by making sure our audit process ensures that awarding bodies are implementing a diversity and equality strategy. This is monitored at centre level when

we visit a sample of the awarding bodies' centres. This is now covered by activity 3 in the 2010–13 Plan.

7.3 Procurement

From our previous action plan there was an action to: *'Develop an implementation plan which puts revised manual into practice covering areas such as:*

- ◆ *Advertising to reach diverse suppliers*
- ◆ *Pre-qualification questionnaire*
- ◆ *Contract requirements in tender documents and monitoring arrangements*
- ◆ *Terms and Conditions.'*

All our contracts over £25,000 are now advertised on the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) advertising portal, which is free to all suppliers. For all contracts awarded by procurement, suppliers must produce their current equality policy as part of the evaluation criteria.

We have updated our external websites to include guidance on completing a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ). The PQQ ensures suppliers can meet SQA tendering criteria. It also asks that they provide details of their equality policies with tender submissions. Terms and conditions include requirements to meet equality standards.

7.4 Other areas of the business

Last year we provided a comprehensive response to the Scottish Government's investigation of ways to resolve gender imbalance in college Courses in relation to non-traditional subject/occupational choices.³

Our response included reference to Course design, materials and marketing aimed at ensuring equality of access and certification.

8 Equality impact assessment and monitoring

SQA continues to realign our functions and policies with our responsibility to the Public Sector Duty and to our diverse beneficiaries and stakeholders. The Board of Management, and senior officers supported by the Equality Project Team, continue to

³ See *Review of Scotland's Colleges*, Annex C:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/08154543/5> and *Tackling Occupational Segregation in Scotland: A Report of Activities from the Scottish Government Cross-Directorate Occupational Segregation Working Group*:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/08/27101332/0>

support and monitor progress against our equality targets, and to make gender equality an important consideration in the decision making process.

Equality impact assessment is the process of assessing the impact of existing or proposed policies and practices for their consequences on gender equality. This is an ongoing process in SQA, and it is important to note that equality impact assessment is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a tool to help ensure that there are improvements in gender equality and that staff, customers and stakeholders feel a sense of equality. SQA will monitor the outcome of impact assessments and keep them under review.

8.1 Policies and practices

We recognise the importance of carrying out the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) across as wide an interpretation of 'policies' and 'practices' as possible.

For the purposes of this Gender Equality Scheme, SQA interprets 'policy' widely. This includes:

- ◆ recruitment strategy and procedures
- ◆ employee terms and conditions
- ◆ performance management systems
- ◆ assessment design
- ◆ procurement strategy and procedures
- ◆ complaints procedure
- ◆ relocation plans
- ◆ communication strategies
- ◆ budget setting decisions and criteria for resource allocation
- ◆ methods for providing information to staff and service users

SQA policies are approved by SQA's Executive Team. All staff involved in policymaking must be aware of, and trained in, the need to consider equality impact assessments.

Because of SQA's size, the process of carrying out equality impact assessments on existing and new policies is ongoing. The Action Plan for this period will prioritise those policies which have to be considered for the purposes of gender equality.

Each department is responsible for identifying policies which have to be considered for gender equality impact assessment. The Equalities Project Officer will collate this information, and it will be monitored by the Director of Corporate Governance, who will report to the Board. SQA will ensure resources are provided for this process to be carried out.

Because of SQA's size, we need to impose tests of reasonableness and proportionality when considering which policies to prioritise for screening for gender and which policies will be subject to a full equality impact assessment.

SQA has in place procedures for ensuring all new policies are automatically considered for gender equality impact assessment. The Equalities Project Officer co-ordinates the departmental responses, and reports to the Director of Corporate Governance in this regard.

SQA is also mindful of the need to review our criteria for enabling us to determine the relevance of gender equality impact assessments. At present these are:

- ◆ where a policy is a major one in terms of scale or significance
- ◆ where, although a policy is a minor one, it is likely to have a disproportionate impact
- ◆ whether the impact could be considered to be particularly negative to a particular group

8.2 Who carries out impact assessments?

As a starting point, a member of the business area responsible for the policy or practice must be involved in the initial decision on the relevance of an equality impact assessment. This will be done in liaison with the Equalities Project Officer and, if required, with the Director of Corporate Governance.

8.3 Carrying out gender equality impact assessments

SQA is committed to ensuring the focus of our gender equality impact assessments is on outcomes and not on processes.

SQA has an equality impact assessment toolkit. This is used on occasion, but it is important that SQA and its staff remain flexible in the approach we take. Each policy, and each possible equality impact assessment, is different. SQA wishes to use a number of methods to ensure we give careful thought to individual approaches, rather than becoming overly reliant on a set way of doing things.

8.4 Screening for full assessment

SQA has to consider, because of the size and complexity of our operations, whether a full gender equality impact assessment is required for our policies and practices. SQA follows the statutory guidance given, ie that a full equality impact assessment is likely to be required if:

- ◆ a policy is a major one in terms of the scale or significance for SQA's activities

- ◆ there is a clear indication that, although a policy is a minor one, it is likely to have a major impact — in terms either of numbers affected or the seriousness of the likely impact, or both

SQA staff therefore need to consider whether policies fall into either of these categories, and whether it looks likely that a full equality impact assessment is required. There will, at times, be additional considerations, such as proportionality and reasonableness, that will have to be weighed up.

SQA has reviewed the criteria to be used to address the points outlined in the above paragraphs. This is an area of priority for the new Action Plan. The exact criteria are based on the following key considerations:

- ◆ number of people affected
- ◆ the nature of the policy's impact on people and the significance and consequence of the policy on people's lives
- ◆ scale
- ◆ cost
- ◆ the 'profile' of the policy (its sensitivity)

Because of SQA's size, the screening process will be carried out within departments or business areas. The officer responsible will assess policies against issued guidance in liaison with the Equalities Project Officer. Ongoing support and training will be provided to the officer responsible. The Director of Corporate Governance will monitor this process, and the Board will have an overview responsibility.

All decisions will be briefly documented and explained. The factors that are relevant to the decision should be explained.

8.5 Full assessment

The following key questions (taken from the statutory guidance) should be explored by the official involved in carrying out a full equality impact assessment. A report must be produced in relation to the assessment and should normally involve reference to these questions:

- ◆ What kind of gender equality impact might there be?
- ◆ How significant is it in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?
- ◆ For which group will there be an impact?
- ◆ Is the impact positive, negative, or both?
- ◆ Could the impact constitute unlawful gender discrimination?

- ◆ What further information is required to gauge the probability and extent of the impact?
- ◆ Where and how can that information be obtained?
- ◆ What does all the evidence tell SQA about the probable impact on gender equality?
- ◆ What action needs to be taken to reduce a negative impact?
- ◆ What action needs to be taken to increase the positive impact?
- ◆ If the action will not fully mitigate the adverse consequences for gender equality, or no action is to be taken, why is this and can it be justified?
- ◆ How will SQA know what the impact, in practice, of the proposed policies, or of changes introduced, has been?
- ◆ What has been learned from the equality impact assessment process?

The process of considering these questions will help SQA to structure and identify the nature of the equality impact assessment. The following stages should then normally be considered when conducting an assessment:

- ◆ assembling the evidence
- ◆ judging impact
- ◆ planning action
- ◆ implementing action plans
- ◆ monitoring and reviewing
- ◆ publication

Assembling evidence can, at times, require SQA to conduct research or draw on its resources to obtain fresh quantitative or qualitative evidence about the particular issue that is the subject of the impact assessment. Often, SQA will be able to consider the evidence from existing sources, both internal to SQA and external. SQA is aware that governments, local authorities, non-governmental bodies, charities and other organisations hold a wealth of statistical evidence. All sources should be used to ensure a cost-effective but rigorous approach to evidence gathering.

If existing sources of evidence are incomplete or inadequate, SQA will consider obtaining evidence by:

- ◆ surveys and questionnaires
- ◆ interviews and focus groups
- ◆ secondary sources and data reviews
- ◆ observations
- ◆ desk research
- ◆ existing diversity monitoring forums
- ◆ staff groups

SQA is aware that the collection of relevant data can be time consuming. This should not affect SQA's commitment or approach to gender equality impact assessment. In the interim, while the impact assessment is underway, SQA will normally consider what policy should be used. This may involve continuing to rely on the existing policy, implementing an interim policy, or trial running or piloting a proposed new policy. SQA will approach such decisions carefully, on a case-by-case basis. Relevance and proportionality are again relevant to this area.

Once the data has been gathered, SQA will begin assessing impacts and planning actions. This will be done in the context of SQA's statutory gender equality duty.

Consideration must be given to positive and negative impacts, to the full range of issues, and to questions of justification and proportionality. The reviewing official, or team, will have to consider whether a particular policy can be amended to achieve gender equality objectives, or whether an entirely new policy is required. It may be that a pilot policy will be required in the first place, to trial an amended policy or before the implementation of a proposed new one. Changes will always be carefully tracked. Decision making and evidence must always be properly documented.

The assessment must then be implemented. SQA is committed to ensuring gender equality impact assessments are not 'paper' exercises. A clear statement should be made either of the changes and improvements, or of why no changes are required or why they are disproportionate, not relevant or not practical.

Monitoring and reviewing should take place in relation to two distinct parts of the process: the gender equality impact assessment, and the outcome of the assessment. In order to be meaningful, both should normally be the subject of review. SQA is committed to learning from its equality impact assessments.

SQA will also consider publishing the gender equality impact assessment. This may be by way of a summary in the annual equality report, or full-scale publication of a report on the equality impact assessment.

8.6 Mainstreaming the process in SQA

SQA is committed to viewing equality impact assessments as an integral part of the administration, management, policy development and strategic thinking that makes up the organisation. It is not a 'bolt on' policy.

To that end, SQA's Board has an oversight role in relation to gender equality impact assessment, and the Chief Executive will normally be involved in the important decisions. The Director of Corporate Governance is responsible for this area and regularly reports to the Board on this issue.

Major policy changes or new policies will normally be presented to the Board with a statement about gender equality.

Appendix: Gender Equality Scheme: Action Plan 2010–13

Ref	Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Outcome(s)
Equality in Service Delivery (Human Resources)		Gender Equality Scheme: Action Plan 2010-13		
1	Ensure appropriate gender equality training is provided to staff.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Staff understand their roles and objectives under the equality duties and wider equality legislation.
2	Continue to review and analyse data collected as part of SQA's workforce monitoring exercise.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Information used to develop policy and enhance staff training.
3	Continue to improve the volume of data held on staff in relation to diversity strands.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Information used to develop policy and enhance staff training.
4	Equality impact assess all new and revised policies.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Any negative impact of policies on diversity groups is reduced/removed.
5	Continue to consult with the Partnership Group through the Partnership Policy Working Group on all policies.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Potential diversity issues are noted earlier in the process of policy development.
6	Continue to report on equality information held in relation to recruitment.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Assists SQA in identifying recruitment based equality issues.
7	Continue to report on equality information held in relation to training.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Assists SQA in identifying training based equality issues.
8	Continue to produce an equal pay audit.	Head of Human Resources	2010-11 and ongoing	Information used to identify any gender pay issues.

Ref	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome(s)
Equality in Service Delivery (Accreditation) Gender Equality Scheme: Action Plan 2010-13				
1	Equality Impact Assessment of the Common Regulations.	Head of Accreditation	by October 2010	A set of Common Regulations which reflects the diverse needs of SQA Accreditation-approved Awarding Bodies and provides a set of regulations by which all approved Awarding Bodies will be governed.
2	Equality Impact Assessment of the Accreditation Principles.	Head of Accreditation	by December 2010	A set of Accreditation Principles which reflect the diverse needs of SQA Accreditation-approved Awarding Bodies in relation to their qualification submissions. This outcome depends on the outcome of the impact assessment of the Common Regulations.
3	Staff equality and diversity training to ensure understanding of both the Common Regulations and Accreditation Principles, and how these relate to the equality standards.	Head of Accreditation	by March 2011	Staff trained in equality and diversity issues.
4	Equality Impact Assessment of the revised SVQ Assessment Strategy and revised SVQ Criteria.	Head of Accreditation	by September 2012	Confirmation that the revised SVQ Assessment Strategy and SVQ Criteria reflect the EQIA requirements.
5	Equality Impact Assessment of the Credit Rating Process and Guidance.	Head of Accreditation	by March 2011	Confirmation that the Credit Rating Process and Guidance reflects the EQiA requirements.

Ref	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome(s)
Equality in Service Delivery (Business Development)		Gender Equality Scheme: Action Plan 2010-13		
1	Ensure training sessions for website authors include specific content on gender equality and inclusiveness.	Head of Marketing	With immediate effect	Raise awareness of, and promote, gender equality.
2	Ensure recruitment for website usability testing includes users from both sexes.	Head of Marketing	Next usability test and then ongoing	Develop appropriate website services.
3	Ensure website satisfaction surveys include the ability to capture information on gender.	Head of Marketing	Next satisfaction survey and then ongoing	Ensure views of customers are representative.
4	In advance of each specific research programme in Marketing, review and agree representation in terms of gender in sample size	Head of Marketing	Next research programme and then ongoing	Ensure views of customers are representative.
5	Review and strengthen guidance for writers producing SQA publications to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in area of gender.	Head of Marketing	January 2011	Raise awareness of, and promote, gender equality.
6	Include equality training in induction and training programmes for new Business Development and Customer Support staff.	Head of Business Development and Customer Support	Next intake of new staff	Raise awareness of gender equality and responsibilities under UK legislation.

Ref	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome(s)
Equality in Service Delivery (Business Development)		Gender Equality Scheme: Action Plan 2010-13		
7	Liaise with Marketing to obtain information on gender via the customer satisfaction survey.	Head of Business Development and Customer Support	December 2010	Ensure views of customers are representative.
8	Review databases to evaluate gender representation.	Head of Business Development and Customer Support	December 2010	Promote gender equality and ensure fair representation.
9	Review existing documentation and processes with a view to including discussion/guidance on our responsibilities under UK equality legislation in relation to gender and what we expect of our customers. This would apply to: Customised Awards Credit Rating Endorsement.	Head of Specialist Awards and Services	June 2011	Raise awareness with SQA customers of our and their responsibilities under UK legislation and promote gender equality and best practice.
10	Review existing policy on Scheme Management to encourage best practice in relation to gender equality.	Head of Specialist Awards and Services	June 2011	Raise awareness contracting partners of our and their responsibilities under UK legislation and promote gender equality and best practice.
11	Review existing approaches and documentation from New Ventures team with a view to including discussion/guidance on SQA's responsibilities	Head of New Ventures	June 2011	Raise awareness with potential and confirmed partners of our and their responsibilities under UK legislation, and promote gender equality and best practice.

Ref	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome(s)
Equality in Service Delivery (Business Development)		Gender Equality Scheme: Action Plan 2010-13		
	under UK equality guidance in relation to gender and what we expect of partners/customers.			
12	Review databases and sources used to recruit international consultants to evaluate gender representation.	Head of International	March 2011	Promote gender equality and ensure fair representation.

Ref	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcome(s)
Equality in Service Delivery (Qualifications)			Gender Equality Action plan 2010-13	
1	To take account of all equality issues including gender equality in the development and delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) programme.	Head of Policy and New Products / Head of Curriculum for Excellence	As published development programme plan	The new qualifications under the Curriculum for Excellence programme will be developed with full consideration given to ensuring that there are no unnecessary barriers to access for candidates.
2	Incorporate equality awareness sessions including gender equality training in the Qualifications Directorate integrated training programme.	Head of Policy and New Products / Organisational Development Manager	TBA	The Qualifications Directorate integrated training programme will incorporate equality and diversity awareness sessions. Staff will be provided with further information to help them embed equality and diversity in their practice and within qualifications development. Staff will be able to make more informed decisions relating to equality issues in their roles.
3	To develop a training course on equality awareness for SQA Academy.	Head of Policy and New Products / Head of eAssessment and Learning	TBA	SQA Academy will include an online version of the Qualifications Directorate equality awareness training. Staff from across the organisation and appointees will have access to this resource, providing them with further awareness information on the new Equality Act and its impact on new qualifications and other SQA developments. Staff and appointees will be more informed when dealing with equality issues.