

# SQA Annual Report

## 2004/2005

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# Commentary by John McCormick, SQA Chairman

'I became Chairman of SQA in September 2004 – almost halfway through the financial year covered by this report. At the outset, I wish to express my appreciation for the warm welcome extended to me by SQA's management and staff, customers, stakeholders, our Advisory Council, and not least, my fellow Board members.

Since my arrival, I have been impressed with the dedication of SQA's staff, and the support we receive from the army of education professionals who work closely with us throughout the year to deliver our qualifications.

On the evidence of the organisation's performance last year, I have every confidence that we will meet the challenges and priorities defined in our Corporate Plan for 2005/ 08. The Board will ensure that robust governance arrangements are in place to support and measure SQA's progress against our objectives. Committees will continue to drive the maintenance of standards, quality and improvement in our products and services.

It is beneficial that SQA can access the combined expertise of the various stakeholders represented on our Advisory Council. It is hugely important that SQA continues to nurture its relationships with partners and stakeholders if we are all to succeed in delivering the education and training required for Scotland's future prosperity. In that context, I take a particular interest in the progress we make in working with others.

The Annual Report records SQA's good performance over the past year, and I am pleased to be chairing the Board of an organisation with such a clear determination to continue to improve and to deliver on its responsibilities.'

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McCormick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

**John McCormick**  
**Chairman**

# Message from Anton Colella, SQA Chief Executive

'I am pleased to present SQA's Annual Report for 2004/05 — in this, my first full year as Chief Executive.

Each year, SQA is issued with a letter of guidance from Scottish Ministers setting out their priorities in line with our statutory obligations. For 2004/5, we were asked to:

- ◆ keep under review and develop our qualifications, setting out a timetable of when qualifications would be updated
- ◆ respond to related Scottish Executive policies, such as A Curriculum for Excellence.
- ◆ work in partnership with other organisations in areas of mutual interest, such as the development of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
- ◆ continue with our efforts to reduce our deficit funding with the aim of becoming self-financing

Throughout this report, there is evidence of progress in addressing these priorities and the additional challenges set for the organisation by SQA's Board. There are also areas in which SQA must continue to improve and we remain focussed on these tasks.

SQA must not work in isolation of other key stakeholders who are equally as keen that Scotland's future economic well-being is supported by relevant developments in education and training. We appreciate the advice and support that our stakeholders provide through partnerships, working groups and committees. Our customers are right to expect that we provide quality and value for money in our products and services, and that we respond to the growing demand for those services to be enabled. Our progress over the last year outlines the developments underway to deliver on these expectations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank SQA's staff and our appointees for their continued hard work and commitment. They have made a significant contribution to the organisation's growing maturity and performance in 2004/5.'

*Anton Colella*

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Who we are

SQA is the national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees and some professional qualifications. Our functions are set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 as amended by the Scottish Qualifications Act 2002.

We are an Executive non-departmental public body, responsible to Scottish Ministers, through the Scottish Executive Education Department, and work together with key stakeholders and partners at all levels within the education sector in Scotland, nationally and internationally.

We are primarily funded through qualification entry charges. For 2004/05, we received income of approximately £12.6m in grant-in-aid and around £36m in revenue. We employ some 580 permanent staff with a further 38 secondees and fixed-term staff in Glasgow and Dalkeith. There are approximately 1,700 centres approved to offer our qualifications.

## 1.2 Our aims and objectives

Our overall aim is to manage the qualifications system below degree level to allow students to fulfil their potential to participate in the economy, society and communities of Scotland.

## 1.3 How we operate

Our 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

The qualifications we are responsible for include:

- ◆ National Qualifications (including Standard Grade and National Units and Courses at Access, Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher levels)
- ◆ Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC/HND)
- ◆ Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)
- ◆ Customised Awards and Professional Development Awards

SQA is responsible for the development of assessment materials for the Scottish Executive's Scottish Survey of Achievement and for 5–14 National Assessments.

A key element of our role is the responsibility to determine the level of competence that learners have to demonstrate to attain each qualification. This is vital for creating opportunities for Scotland's learners to progress to further learning or employment. Employers and educational institutions must continue to have confidence and understanding of the skills that a candidate offers on completion of a given qualification.

We recognise the importance of this function, and continue to develop our quality assurance processes to ensure that candidates' achievements are assessed consistently to ensure the continued credibility of our qualifications. Some of the Quality Assurance development activity which we have undertaken during 2004/05 is described in Section 2.3.1 of this report.

## **1.4 Our operating environment**

Scotland's changing employment and wider social and economic needs mean that the demands and expectations we face are constantly evolving. In recent years, new National Qualifications for schools have been introduced, we have embarked on a major modernisation programme of Higher National Qualifications in partnership with key stakeholders, and we have become more focussed in the range and type of vocational qualifications we offer.

Scotland is experiencing many challenges and opportunities for its future economic well-being, including a shrinking working-age population, developments in the global market, and changing labour markets. It is important that our portfolio of qualifications continues to provide the necessary education and skills to support the country's economic development.

We have ongoing commitments to modernise our portfolio, but we must also introduce new qualifications, such as extending vocational provision in schools. We are committed to producing

more qualifications and support materials online, and to responding to Ministerial priorities, such as the 3–18 Curriculum Review.

## 1.5 Our customers and stakeholders

Much of SQA's work requires the guidance and co-operation of others, and we have attempted to reflect this in the development of our plans for the future by engaging with our staff, customers and stakeholders.

Our customers:

- ◆ a customer of SQA is any individual or organisation with whom we interact in the performance of our duties

Our staff deal with five main types of customer: centres, candidates, stakeholders, partners and internal colleagues. We have more direct linkages with some customers than others.

- ◆ an SQA centre has approval to offer SQA qualifications. We also deal with prospective centres which are looking to gain centre approval
- ◆ a stakeholder has an interest and/or input to our work
- ◆ a partner has a working relationship and/or agreement with us

Partnership working is important. We rely on the considerable knowledge and expertise of our Advisory Council in influencing policy and responding to wider education and training developments. The Advisory Council meets four times a year to consider and advise on the needs and views of stakeholders, to help us make decisions on the development, maintenance and delivery of qualifications and awards. Topics the Council has engaged with over this year include: advice on major reviews underway of which the National Qualifications, Higher National Qualifications and Portfolio Reviews are prominent examples; guidance on developments in Computer Assisted Assessment; and suggestions for improving communications with Customers and Stakeholders.

## 1.6 How we plan

Each year we review our achievements of the last 12 months, and consider recent changes and trends in the education and training sectors. This allows us to revise our statements of core priorities over the coming three years, as set out in our Corporate Plan. At this stage, we develop these revised Corporate Plan objectives into a more detailed Business Plan setting out the priorities and activities for the forthcoming 12 months. This Business Plan is approved by Ministers at the Scottish Executive Education Department, our Sponsor Department.

Our Executive Team is responsible for delivering the commitments set out in this Business Plan, and every three months our Board of Management reviews the organisation's progress with the activities set out in the Business Plan. At the end of each financial year, we are required to produce an Annual Report, outlining our main activities and performance during the previous 12 months. This report is laid before the Scottish Parliament by Scottish Ministers.

## 1.7 Our plans for 2004/05

For the financial year from April 2004 to March 2005, our Corporate Plan objectives and Business Plan priorities were focussed on two areas: Maintaining Effective Delivery and Improving Corporate Performance. The key tasks to achieve these objectives are outlined below.

### 1.7.1 Maintaining effective delivery

- 1.7.1.1 Deliver high quality, cost effective assessment, quality assurance, certification, data management, support materials and services.
- 1.7.1.2 Develop and maintain a high quality portfolio of qualifications that meets Scotland's needs and is accessible and inclusive.
- 1.7.1.3 Contribute to the strategic development of Scotland's education and training system.
- 1.7.1.4 Play a leading role in the implementation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).
- 1.7.1.5 Develop accreditation and regulatory functions to enhance lifelong learning.

**1.7.2 Improving corporate performance**

- 1.7.2.1 To provide SQA with the necessary leadership, management systems, and resources to deliver continuous performance improvement.
- 1.7.2.2 Make SQA a customer-focussed organisation.
- 1.7.2.3 Develop partnerships that add value to Scotland's education system, and that improve SQA's delivery of products and services.
- 1.7.2.4 Ensure sustainability through viable business products and services.
- 1.7.2.5 Be recognised as an employer of choice by staff who are professional, motivated and valued.
- 1.7.2.6 Ensure SQA has appointees who are effective, motivated and valued.
- 1.7.2.7 Manage strategic development activity within a co-ordinated, cohesive framework.

## **2 Annual Report**

Our performance over the financial year 2004/05 is detailed in this report. It shows that we continue to make good progress, but also identifies areas for further improvement in our offer to our customers. As is the case with other non-departmental public bodies, we must undertake our work according to the principles of best value, ensuring that the money invested in SQA, and the fees we generate, offer value for money for the public purse.

Many of the activities described later in this Annual Report, and those which will be taken forward over the coming year, illustrate our commitment to these principles: they involve re-designing our services and processes to make them easier to use and more efficient.

## 2.1 How we have performed over the last year

This review consists of a comparison against our performance in 2003/04 and targets for achievement by 2006 for the 20 key indicators which were set out in the 2003/06 Corporate Plan and against which we reported in the 2003/04 Annual Report.

Indicator	Target for 2006	Level of achievement at 2004	Level of achievement at 2005
1 Ensure that the examination diet and certification arrangements continue to meet the published schedule and agreed performance indicators	See Appendix 1 for details of performance measures	Achieved	Achieved — see Appendix 1 for details of performance
2 Ensure high customer satisfaction ratings for the credibility of SQA qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 80% for Standard Grade, Intermediate 1 &amp; 2 and SVQs</li> <li>◆ 90% for HNC/Ds, Highers and Advanced Highers</li> </ul>	80% 90%	Standard Grade — 78% Intermediate 1 and 2 — 72% SVQs — 74% HNC/D — 83% Highers — 91% Adv Highers — 87%	Standard Grade — 84% Intermediate 1 and 2 — 78% SVQs — 80% HNC/D — 91% Highers — 92% Adv Highers — 89%
3 Ensure an 80% customer satisfaction rating for SQA's quality assurance arrangements	80%	79%	80%
4 Achieve 75% staff satisfaction with SQA as an employer	75%	82%	80%

Indicator	Target for 2006	Level of achievement at 2004	Level of achievement at 2005
<p>5 Achieve 40% staff satisfaction with SQA's staff performance management system</p>	<p><b>40%</b></p>	<p>38%</p>	<p>Not measured in Staff Opinion Survey for this year — questionnaire revised to reflect more recent organisational developments as part of improved performance measurement framework.</p> <p>2004/05 survey: 88% of staff have a clear understanding of their personal objectives and what is expected of them (89% in 2003/04)</p>
<p>6 Achieve 65% staff satisfaction with internal communication</p>	<p><b>65%</b></p>	<p>80%</p>	<p>Not measured in Staff Opinion Survey for this year — questionnaire revised as part of improved performance measurement framework.</p> <p>2004/05 survey: 74% of staff feel sufficiently informed about what is going on at SQA (73% in 2003/04).</p>

Indicator	Target for 2006	Level of achievement at 2004	Level of achievement at 2005
7 Maintain staff turnover between 10 and 15%	10 – 15%	10.2%	10.4%
8 Reduce the average staff absence rate to below 8.5 days per annum	Less than 8.5 days	10.0 working days	10.4 working days
9 Become self-financing	By 2006	Target under discussion with Scottish Executive	A mechanism has been agreed with the Scottish Executive for 2005/06 onwards
10 Achieve a 75% credibility rating	75%	70%	75%
11 Ensure that staff and other non-appointee costs remain constant in absolute terms for the period 2003–2005		Will be monitored during course of year	Revised plan has been agreed with Scottish Executive
12 Reduce the area of office space by 10%	Reduce by 10%	3%	Accommodation Reviews undergone during year.
13 Achieve an 85% customer satisfaction rating for SQA's operational efficiency	85%	79%	80%

Indicator	Target for 2006	Level of achievement at 2004	Level of achievement at 2005
14 Respond to customer complaints within published timescales		Not available – new system under development	<b>89% of complaints acknowledged within 2 days 62% of complaints received a full response within 10 days</b>
15 Achieve an 80% satisfaction rating for SQA's website	<b>80%</b>	75%	75%
16 Achieve an 80% customer satisfaction rating for the delivery of SQA's products and services	<b>80%</b>	79%	79%
17 Achieve more than 95% of data transfer through electronic means	<b>More than 95%</b>	96% for registrations and entries	<b>97% for registrations and entries</b>
18 Achieve 80% satisfaction rating for SQA's relations with partners	<b>80%</b>	18 key stakeholders surveyed. No measurement taken – new system under development for next year	<b>Stakeholder engagement programme commenced. 47 stakeholder visits completed in 2004/5.</b>

Indicator	Target for 2006	Level of achievement at 2004	Level of achievement at 2005
19 Develop strategic agreements with all partners		Ongoing — see 'review of performance'	Memorandum of Understanding agreed with Microsoft. 2 Memoranda of Understanding agreed with partners in relation to China project. Potential for several additional partnership agreements currently being investigated.
20 Achieve 75% customer satisfaction for consultation and responsiveness	75%	72%	74%

## 2.2 Uptake of qualifications

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% variance relative to previous year
Standard Grade	456,288	453,450	433,855	-4%
National Units	1,438,176	1,461,605	1,750,544	20%
Access 2	1,687	2,264	2,344	4%
Access 3	3,567	9,154	12,759	39%
Intermediate 1-2	87,861	96,940	111,514	15%
Higher	164,004	166,885	165,575	-1%
Advanced Higher	15,749	16,998	17,185	1%
Scottish Vocational Qualifications	41,863	39,418	44,119	12%
Higher National Certificates	21,872	18,168	19,097	5%
Higher National Diplomas	11,857	12,727	12,916	1%

Notable trends:

- ◆ 20% increase in National Unit entries
- ◆ 15% increase in Intermediate Courses at levels 1–2
- ◆ 39% increase in Access 3 entries
- ◆ small decreases in Standard Grade (-4%) and Higher (-1%) entries
- ◆ 12% increase in entries for SVQs
- ◆ 5% increase in HNCs

Further statistics on the uptake and certification of SQA's qualifications can be found in the Annual Statistical Digest and the Annual Statistical Report for 2004 which is available on the SQA website at [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).

## 2.3 Review of the year 2004/2005

### 2.3.1 Maintaining effective delivery

We have a responsibility to understand and anticipate how the needs of Scotland's learners and economy will develop over coming years, and to ensure that our products, and the way in which we deliver them, will continue to meet those needs. This section of the report sets out some of the development work we have been doing during 2004/05 in response to wider changes in education and training.

#### 2.3.1.1 Deliver high quality, cost effective assessment, quality assurance, certification, data management, support materials and services

##### August Certification 2004

One of our primary responsibilities is the certification of the August Diet of National Courses for candidates in schools and colleges across Scotland.

There is a year-round cycle of assessment design, recruitment of markers and other appointees, quality assurance of course-work, and processing of appeals, in addition to the annual peak of assessment and certification activity between May and August. We monitor our progress across this range of tasks throughout the year and deliver the main run of certification in August, in accordance with the key performance measures agreed with the Scottish Executive (see **Appendix 1 Performance Measures 2004**). In financial year 2004/05, we met all the agreed performance targets for August certification.

##### *Quality Assurance*

SQA's Quality Assurance team undertakes work in a number of areas — approval of centres to offer SQA qualifications, auditing of centres where we have devolved authority for approval and/or validation of qualifications, monitoring of quality systems within centres and moderation of internal assessment of our qualifications. The team organises training for Moderators to prepare them to carry out their role.

During financial year 2004/05, SQA staff dealt with 82 applications for initial centre approval to offer SQA qualifications and 837 applications from new and existing centres to offer specific qualifications from our portfolio. Of these, 67% of centre approvals and 95% of qualification approvals were from Scottish centres. The target response time for 2004/05 was 40 working days. Revised procedures were subsequently developed and

introduced which have reduced the target response time for 2005/06 to 20 working days.

Quality Audits were conducted within the college sector, consisting of 33 desk audits (which involve drawing up a profile of each centre based on information submitted by the centre and reports held by SQA), 3 audit visits and one audit visit for devolved approval. We carried out 16 visits for general development and support as well as 7 visits to review assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/ or additional support needs.

Monitoring of active centres within the Employer and Training Provider sector through routine systems verification visits or telephone contact covered 469 (67%) centres. This included 65 approval contacts, 178 development/ support contacts, 206 systems verification visits and 20 contacts to explore remedial action. We carried out 20 audits for the Scottish Quality Management System (17 of which were combined SQA and SQMS audits) within the ETP sector.

Within the school sector we carried out 42 visits to schools, including a number of independent schools, to review assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/ or additional support needs. We also contributed to a pilot which was reviewing arrangements for the storage of examination papers.

Moderator training includes induction, annual updates, moderation group meetings and a requirement for moderators to attain V2 certification (a qualification for external moderators) where operating within the Higher National Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications product areas. This activity plays a vital part in ensuring that the external moderation of our products is delivered to the standard required, and in turn making sure that national standards are maintained.

Moderation for Higher National Qualifications is organised on a sessional basis from August – July each year, and works by sampling centres' assessment decisions. SVQ moderation is required at least once each year for all active centres. Moderation for National Qualifications uses central or postal moderation. We also use visiting moderation where the candidate evidence is of a type that is unsuitable for central or postal moderation.

For HN and SVQs, a large proportion of the moderation activity for academic year 2003/04 was completed in the first two quarters of financial year 2004/05 as well as some early stages of moderation activity for academic session 2004/05. A similar annual pattern applies to moderation of National Qualifications. Some key figures for moderation visits during financial year 2004/05 are set out below:

HN/ SVQ Moderation:

2659 visits scheduled (based on predicted uptake)  
1894 visits completed  
1793 successful moderation decisions  
101 holds on certification, 83 of which have been resolved

National Qualifications Moderation:

Visits

820 visits were scheduled  
949 visits were completed  
931 successful moderation decisions  
18 holds on certification, 12 of which have been resolved

Central moderation

52 central moderation events  
1821 centres moderated  
1594 successful moderation decisions  
227 holds on certification, all of which have been resolved

### **Understanding Standards**

We have developed an 'Understanding Standards' programme to support centres delivering our qualifications. In February 2005, we launched our 'Understanding Standards Website' for all teachers in Scotland. This website exemplifies the standards set in our NQ external assessments. It provides definitive marking guidelines in a number of subject areas and examples of candidate scripts. Teachers can mark these scripts interactively and then review their marking against the standard set by SQA's examining teams. Work is underway to extend the range of subjects and levels covered on the site. As part of this programme, marking instructions have been published for a wide range of National Courses. Appeals exemplifications have also been published to help centres with appeals, and Course assessment specifications have been created for revised Courses. We have published a revised version of guidance on evidence requirements for Estimates, Absentees and External Assessment, and we have produced CD-ROMs for Art & Design to exemplify the standards of candidate work required. We also now routinely publish all Principal Assessor reports on our website each year.

We have also expanded our programme of Professional Development Workshops. Workshops were delivered to support English, Maths, French, Geography, History, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Classics, Art and Design and Media Studies. Overall, more than 2,200 delegates attended these workshops between August and December 2004, and feedback was highly supportive. An additional programme of Professional Development Workshops was delivered in Media Studies, Managing an SVQ Programme,

Estimates and Appeals, Close Reading, Assessment and Portfolio Building, Continuing to Care, and Quality Assurance for Schools. These events attracted a total of 510 delegates. As before, these events were linked to post-McCrone requirements for Continuous Professional Development (CPD), for which we are one of the General Teaching Council's recognised providers.

### **Other Achievements**

We have provided new guidance for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs. A new document clarifies our individual needs-led approach (rather than by category of disability). To support this approach and reduce the administration burden, we have made changes to the mechanism for centres to send us information about candidates and their additional support needs. Phase 1 of electronic processing of assessment arrangements requests has already delivered benefits. These include a reduction in staff costs, significant improvement in turnaround time for responding to requests, and increased management information which will facilitate detailed analysis.

Improvements in quality assurance procedures for Question Papers led to a reduction in the number of Question Paper Correction Notices issued from 11.7% of all Question Papers issued in 2003 to 4.3% in 2004.

#### **2.3.1.2 Develop and maintain a high quality portfolio of qualifications that meets Scotland's needs and is accessible and inclusive**

We have continued to review and modernise our portfolio of qualifications, including National Qualifications, Higher National Qualifications, and Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

### **National Qualifications**

Work on Phase Two of the National Qualifications Review continues on schedule. In this phase, 24 National Courses are due for implementation in either 2005/06 or 2006/07. This review programme continues to be funded by grant-in-aid from the Scottish Executive. Developments have been delivered within budget and in accordance with agreed schedules.

344 National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials and their associated packs were produced and distributed in line with the National Qualifications Review Schedules during 2004/05. The facility to gain access to new and updated materials through a secure website ensures that all centres can have easy access to the latest version of documents and procedures.

### **Higher National Qualifications**

The Higher National Qualifications Modernisation Project continues to progress according to plan, with the completion of the revision of the majority of consortium-led HNC/Ds.

Models for consortium-led HN revisions have been implemented by all HN/SVQ Business Teams. Further models for specialist collaborative or single centre led HN revisions have been disseminated to colleges in the new *HN Centre Toolkit*.

The HN Modernisation Schedule is now published on our website, with monthly updates reporting on the progress of each consortium, collaborative or single centre development.

HN Staff Development Guides have been enhanced. These allow others to know about and share the good practice of Qualifications Design Teams undertaking HN revisions using the 2003 design principles.

Additional guidance on the use of National Occupational Standards in HN qualifications is in the final draft stage.

We can now offer a number of ways to incorporate Core Skills as part of HN programmes:

- ◆ Embedded Core Skills are an integral part of a subject unit — on validation, the Core Skill is awarded along with the Unit gained.
- ◆ Named Core Skills Units are also available.
- ◆ Signposting is a further option for those instances where Core Skills cannot be embedded or named without adversely affecting the HN programme. Signposting allows the student to identify opportunities within the subject or group award, Graded Units that make up the HN award, for developing their Core Skills.

The Personal Development Planning Unit also offers candidates the opportunity to develop their Core Skills. The support materials provide candidates with the tools to assess existing skills and develop the Core Skills necessary to meet HN course requirements and progress to further study or employment.

Work Role Effectiveness Units can be used to give credit to those who are effective in an occupational role similar (but not necessarily identical) to that defined by National Occupational Standards. These HN Units are a means of claiming credit for existing skills — the candidate's claim will be authenticated by the employer and assessed by a tutor from an approved centre. Support for the delivery of these Units, which allow HN candidates to be certificated for work experience, has been produced in the form of Candidate and Tutor Guidance.

The HN Partnership Team, composed of secondees from Scotland's colleges, continues to be recognised by colleges as a valuable source of support. This year the HN Partnership Team has assisted in the revision of specialist collaborative and single-centre HNC/Ds, and has delivered training to college staff on all aspects of the 2003 design principles.

The importance of the HN Modernisation Project has been recognised by the Scottish Further Education Funding Council, who provided an additional £2 million in academic session 2004/05 to ensure that HN Qualifications continue to meet Scotland's needs.

### **Scottish Vocational Qualifications**

Our annual statistics point to increased entries for Scottish Vocational Qualifications over 2004/05. This arises from generally stronger investment by SQA in our products, and some streamlining of our portfolio.

All SVQ accreditations and re-accreditations continue to be delivered on schedule and within budget. Revised guidance for staff has been issued in the form of an *Operational Handbook* which provides colleagues with a project management template to ensure that accreditation and re-accreditation targets are met and that SVQ launches take place as scheduled.

In order to work more closely with Sector Skills Councils, we have established Sector Panels in three areas, with a view to covering all sectoral areas by end of next year. The remit of the Sector Panels is to advise and support SQA on National Occupational Standards and how these align to our qualifications development plans. We are continuing to develop sector-specific viability plans.

We continue to contribute at a strategic level to the work of the Federation of Awarding Bodies by commenting on consultations around topics such as the Framework for Achievement, Code of Practice for Awarding Bodies, Accredited Centre Status discussions, and the Bureaucracy Review. In addition, we are an active member of the Re-engineering Skillseekers Steering Group, which makes proposals for the format and content of government sponsored training programmes, such as Modern Apprenticeships.

### **Scottish Progression Awards**

Scottish Progression Awards are vocational qualifications which provide practical opportunities for developing real skills that are valid and relevant to the world of work. They have been used by some local authorities as a part of vocational programmes for schools. However, they are increasingly being used as post-16 qualifications which help develop and enhance basic skills in preparation for employment.

SPAs have continued to grow in popularity with Scotland's learners. A new suite based around National Units is being expanded. This suite already contained Building Crafts and PC Passport. In 2004, Enterprise & Employability, Sport & Recreation, Engineering and Vehicle Maintenance were added.

### **PC Passport**

PC Passport is becoming an established route to achieving the IT User National Occupational competences. Over 6000 candidates entered for PC Passport units by January 2005. We expect further uptake for this type of qualification with the re-introduction of Individual Learning Accounts in Scotland. PC Passport is now attracting interest from the qualifications market around the UK and overseas. It is supported by teaching and assessment materials, and centres also have access to online assessment where this meets the needs of the learner.

### **Online learning qualifications**

To support teachers and those with an interest in online learning, we now offer a suite of awards aimed at teaching staff.

- 1 Certificate in Online Learning
- 2 Diploma in E-Learning: Production
- 3 Diploma in E-Learning: Delivery
- 4 Diploma in E-Assessment
- 5 Advanced Diploma in E-Learning

The Certificate in Online Learning is a broad introduction to e-learning and e-assessment. Each of the diplomas focusses on one specific aspect of online learning. The Diploma in Production specialises in the creation of learning materials; the Diploma in Delivery focusses on teaching and learning; and the Diploma in E-Assessment focusses on computer-assisted assessment. The Advanced Diploma combines these individual qualifications into a single, over-arching qualification while adding some advanced topics of its own (such as a study of pedagogy as it relates to online learning). Each of the diplomas (including the Advanced Diploma) includes a practical project.

We have taken account of the activities of other organisations in the field having potential interest in e-learning and its associated technologies. These include the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) Associate membership, Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) Professional Development Framework, SEDA Associate Fellowship, FERL (Further Education Resources for Learning) Practitioners Programme, Institute of IT Training (IITT) Certificate in E-learning Programme, Skillset, Netskills, Further Educational

National Training Organisation (FENTO), European Institute for e-Learning (EIFE-L), as well as other organisations whose members potentially fulfil some of the roles involved in e-learning.

### **Customised Awards**

Our Customised Awards service continues to grow and currently has over 40 customers covering over 130 awards. Customised Awards customers come mainly from the oil and gas and related industries, though there are also significant numbers of Customised Awards in the private and public sector covering a variety of specialist skills and occupations.

#### **2.3.1.3 Contribute to the strategic development of Scotland's education and training system**

We have been playing a key role in the initial development of a Curriculum for Excellence in partnership with the Scottish Executive, national agencies and other key stakeholders.

The publication of A Curriculum for Excellence in November 2004 included reference to a new range of Skills for Work courses which will contribute to meeting the aspiration that all young people in Scotland will become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. We responded to this announcement by developing a selection of these new Courses to enable a pilot to be undertaken in 2005/06.

These Courses will be aimed primarily at 14–16 year olds and are being designed to help them to develop skills and knowledge in a broad vocational area, an understanding of the workplace, positive attitudes to learning and skills, and appropriate attitudes for employability. The courses will recognise the development of Core Skills (Communication, Numeracy, Information Technology, Problem Solving and Working with Others), as well as indicating links with National Occupational Standards, which are the basis of SVQs.

Phase 1 of the piloting of these courses in the vocational areas of Construction, Early Years Care, Financial Services, and Sport and Recreation will take place in 2005/06. This will be followed by Phase 2 of piloting in 2006/07 in vocational areas such as Engineering, Hairdressing, and Rural Skills, as well as an extension to levels for Phase 1 courses. Full implementation is planned for 2007/08.

In November 2004, the Minister for Education and Young People announced that the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) would be introduced in 2005. The SSA builds on the more limited Assessment of Achievement Programme (AAP), using a sampling approach to assess pupils' attainment in relation to the 5–14

curriculum, and providing an overview of attainment in each education authority and nationally. Around 36,000 pupils in P3, P5, P7 and S2 across Scotland are participating in the 2005 survey.

We have developed the assessment tasks for this major new survey, based on the relevant outcomes and strands in the 5-14 national guidelines. Approximately 170 assessment tasks/booklets have been created for the 2005 survey.

In addition to the work for the SSA, we are responsible for uploading and quality assuring tasks for the electronic National Assessment 5–14 bank. Teachers can download 5-14 National Assessments from the bank to confirm their professional judgements of pupils' attainment. Over the past year, we have increased the number of reading, writing and mathematics tasks in the bank as part of an ongoing process of extension and renewal.

### **English for Speakers of Other Languages**

In April 2004, we bid successfully for a funding grant from the EQUAL strand of the European Social Fund. This has helped support the development of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) qualifications in the National Qualifications framework.

Changing demographics mean that ESOL is steadily increasing in importance in Scotland. Glasgow is now the largest dispersal centre for asylum seekers outside London, and EQUAL funding is targeted at improving social and vocational integration for this vulnerable group. The EQUAL project has supported the work of an ESOL Development Officer, and activities have included:

- ◆ development, piloting, and revision of the new NQ ESOL Units
- ◆ benchmarking the ESOL NQ Units to the Common European Framework
- ◆ development of objective testing for reading and listening skills
- ◆ development visits to centres
- ◆ training events for ESOL practitioners

The EQUAL funding grant has made additional development possible in this important area.

### **Research and Information Services**

Four Research and Information Services Bulletins were published during 2004/05:

Research and Information Services Bulletin 9: Unitisation — benefits and issues.

This paper was based on a survey of initiation documents, policy papers, information documents, research reports and evaluations of unitisation and aspects of unitisation in selected countries around the world over the past twenty years.

Research and Information Services Bulletin 10: Scottish employer's attitudes towards qualifications and skills. This report aimed to improve the intelligence available to SQA to understand better employers' perspectives on the relationship between qualifications, occupations and skills and, in so doing, provide it with improved intelligence for the continuing development of its qualifications portfolio.

Research and Information Services Bulletin 11: Evaluation of the 2003–2004 Derived Grades Procedure. In 2003 new procedures were introduced to derive grades for candidates who had achieved external results below their estimate or had been absent. This report evaluated the changes.

Research and Information Services Bulletin 12: How do centres estimate pupils' attainment? This research explored how centres arrive at estimates and attempted to identify approaches which lead to more accurate estimates with a view to improving SQA's processes and issuing guidance to centres.

We tendered successfully for a piece of work, commissioned by the QCA, on 'Measuring the Readability/Reading Comprehension Age of GCSE and GCE Examination Papers'. The research covered both theory and practice on the use, applicability and issues related to the implementation of readability measures. Literature was identified and reviewed to determine which readability measures have been or could be used in question paper construction. The report also reviewed the actual application of readability measures in question paper construction and suggested best practice.

#### **2.3.1.4 Play a leading role in the implementation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework**

##### **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework**

During 2004/05, we continued our work with partners to develop the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which clarifies the relationships between qualifications with the aim of increasing the ability of Scotland's learners to progress between learning routes and towards additional education, training and employment opportunities.

A targeted communications programme was completed. It included the revision of the SCQF 'Ready Reckoner' postcard, and a mailing issued to over 9,000 employers. As part of our HN Modernisation programme, allocation of SCQF levels and credits to qualifications

progressed in line with our commitments to the SCQF action plan. We also looked into phased implementation of an SQA credit-rating service for non-SQA qualifications. This has covered qualifications in Banking (for Chartered Institute of Banking), Policing (for the Scottish Police College), and Crèche-working (for Midlothian Council).

We now also report candidate achievement in SCQF terms in the 'Additional Information' section of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate package.

### **European Framework developments**

We have been involved in work on the development of a European system for credit transfer for vocational education and training (VET). We are also involved with Scottish stakeholders in the development of a European framework for Higher Education (HE). The European Commission has established an expert group to develop a European Qualifications Framework which has been informed by both the VET and HE work.

#### **2.3.1.5 Develop accreditation and regulatory functions to enhance lifelong learning**

As part of our review of regulatory and accrediting functions, we have secured agreement with QCA that as from 1 April 2005, SQA will act on QCA's behalf to conduct monitoring visits to NVQ-approved centres in Scotland.

SQA was also invited to join with colleagues from QCA, ACCAC and CCEA to form a Joint Regulatory Authority Strategy Group, with the inaugural meeting of the four regulators held in October 2004.

### **2.3.2 Improving corporate performance**

As a public body, we have a responsibility to pursue continuous improvement and to ensure the best possible use of public resources. This section of the report sets out our response to these imperatives.

#### **2.3.2.1 Provide SQA with the necessary leadership, management systems and resources to deliver continuous performance improvement**

We have improved our budget reporting and forecasting processes. Our corporate planning process has also been revised. These new processes and time plans have allowed the Annual Budget for

2005/06 and Corporate Plan for 2005/08 to be approved by our sponsoring department of the Scottish Executive ahead of the new financial year. In turn, we have been able to develop more detailed Operational Plans for the year ahead, and tie these into our revised performance management system.

We are producing management information that reviews performance on a monthly basis. Timescales for producing information have been significantly reduced. Management information has now been realigned to business areas; this allows greater focus on accountability.

We provide the Scottish Executive with details of cash on a monthly basis, including cash projections for the balance of the financial year. This allows funding to be drawn down as required. Due to improvements in cash management and aged debt recovery in particular, we did not require to draw upon our full deficit-funding facility in 2004/05. Our increased focus on cash management has resulted in £2m of aged debt being recovered. Invoicing to customers now takes place on a monthly basis, in line with customers' expectations.

During the course of 2004/05, we have been developing and testing business continuity plans which would be invoked in the event of an incident. These plans form part of our overall approach to risk management.

Project Dawn introduced new integrated hardware and software systems and equipment to support many of our key processes. This was a major project, and depended heavily on team-working and collaboration across all areas of SQA. The project was delivered on time in September 2004 with no significant disruption to the business.

### **Review of accommodation requirements**

We completed Stage 1 of the Dalkeith Feasibility Study during 2004/05. Full evaluation of the options identified during Stage 1 will take place during Stage 2, and a report will be submitted to the Executive Team and Board in August 2005.

At the end of the period under review, full appraisals of potential new buildings in the City Centre were being undertaken.

### **2.3.2.2 Make SQA a customer-focussed organisation**

Customers now have improved access to their data on our computer systems via the free SQA.net service. SQA-RED and SQA-REX data management systems are also now available free of charge, and are used by 'smaller' customers to provide them with an

effective electronic data transfer system and a reduction in bureaucracy.

A major area of development for SQA during 2004/05 was the delivery of the SQA Style series of Customer Service training events. The programme was rolled-out across all SQA employees, with all staff attending a half-day workshop, and follow-up one-day events for senior managers and all other staff.

The aim was to provide a programme of development that would:

- ◆ change attitudes and develop skills
- ◆ create short-term change and long term improvements
- ◆ improve service to individual customers and enhance bottom line results

Each one-day event produced a Management Charter or a Customer Charter. The information from these Charters has informed our Customer Service Charter.

### **2.3.2.3 Develop partnerships that add value to Scotland's education system, and that improve SQA's delivery of products and services**

The Pass-IT research project was concluded successfully on schedule in December 2004. The project had seen SQA working with other key national bodies, including LTScotland, SFEU, the BBC, and the Scottish Centre for Research into Online Learning and Assessment (SCROLLA), to investigate the implications of moving assessment from paper to screen. Much of the work of the project focussed on National Qualification NAB assessments, with on-screen assessments piloted in a number of centres.

A vast amount of data was collected during this twenty-seven month project, and summaries of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 findings can be found on the Pass-IT website at [www.pass-it.org.uk](http://www.pass-it.org.uk). Other items available on this website include a Good Practice Guide in Question and Test Design, Pass-IT Guidelines for Online Assessment, and a link to a demonstration of Pass-IT questions in a number of subjects.

In addition to providing valuable research findings on the implications of changing the medium of assessment, Pass-IT helped to raise awareness and understanding of e-assessment in SQA and its centres.

We secured almost £2 million of external funding over the year to support work to 'e-enable' Higher National Qualifications. The funding included £700,000 from the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC), and £1.2 million from the European

Social Fund (ESF). This is the first time that SQA has attracted funding from the European Social Fund.

The primary purpose of this funding is to support the development of electronic resources to support the delivery of HNCs and HNDs. These resources include e-assessments for units in HN programmes. This will make a significant contribution to the major programme of work underway to review all of SQA's HN Qualifications, as described in Section 2.3.1.2 of this report.

As a result of a bid submitted jointly with Strathclyde University, we secured our first funding from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). JISC's main role is to encourage the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in FE and HE. Our funding, intended to support the development of item banking technology, will help to develop our thinking in this area. Item banking is a key component of high-quality e-assessment, but it can also play a significant role in supporting conventional, paper-based assessment. This funding is indicative of the strengthening working relationship between SQA and JISC.

### **International activities**

During 2004/05, we continued our involvement in consultancy work to support the expansion of education and training infrastructure in developing countries where funding is provided by international organisations. In addition, we organise and host study visits for overseas groups to provide delegates with information about a variety of topics. These topics can range across establishing national qualification frameworks, developing vocational qualification systems, managing an external assessment system, and awarding body procedures. During 2004/05, key visit programmes were organised for countries including Armenia, Botswana and Malaysia.

We also began to increase capacity for international awarding during 2004/05. SQA and the Scottish Executive have been developing a strategy to work with the Ministry of Education in China and its agencies. One of the key purposes of this work is to support the wider objectives of the Scottish's Executive's international strategy and positioning programme, while creating opportunities to deliver Scottish educational products and services in China.

The first phase of the China project focussed on promoting HNDs to establish a programme which will lead students to study towards an honours or masters degree at a UK university. In partnership with Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange, an agency of the Ministry of Education in China, we designed a small-scale pilot to establish HNDs as a recognised qualification in China and launched six HNDs in September 2004.

The initial target was to recruit 500 students at 12 universities. The pilot has exceeded expectations, and to date has involved 20 universities in China and 900 students. Good working relationships have been established with UK Higher Education Institutions to establish recognition of HNDs for both Chinese and Scottish students. Conditional offers of places at UK HEIs have been secured for all students in the first cohort.

#### **2.3.2.4 Ensure sustainability through viable business products and services**

We made considerable progress during 2004/05 in the reviews of our qualifications portfolio. This progress is outlined in section 2.3.1.2 of this report.

#### **2.3.2.5 Be recognised as an employer of choice by staff who are professional, motivated and valued**

The staff opinion survey for 2004 continued the year-on-year trend for improvement, with increased levels of staff satisfaction in important areas such as roles and responsibilities, and leadership and direction from senior management.

Although satisfaction levels on issues such as induction and staff communication have increased, much can still be improved, and work will begin on developing these areas in 2005/2006.

In addition to the SQA Style Customer Service training events, as mentioned in 2.3.2.2 above, the organisation focussed a significant amount of time and effort on Performance Management, Recruitment Selection and Induction training. The training was delivered through workshops, short briefing sessions and drop-in surgeries.

Other Workshops included Financial Training for Non-Financial Managers, Emotional Intelligence, Innovation and Creativity, Project Management, Employment Law, Application of HR Policies, Dealing with Conflict, Influencing and Persuasion Skills, Managing Self and Others through Change, Mind Mapping, and Managing for the First Time, as well as a range of IT training in use of various software packages.

This year saw the full introduction of an in-house occupational health service. The service has contributed to the management of a number of long-term health related issues by providing support and advice to staff and managers.

In addition to its contribution to Scotland's Health at Work award scheme, the service has also focussed on raising staff awareness throughout the organisation on a range of men's and women's

health initiatives. As part of the Scottish Executive's 'Scotland's Health at Work' initiative, SQA was presented with a Bronze award in April 2004.

We have continued to embed the performance management system introduced in April 2003. The system ensured that all employees had objectives aligned to the business and corporate objectives, and that there was a consistent and transparent method of categorising staff's performance. The introduction of performance management in 2003 provided a robust tool to link performance with pay progression.

Following on from this, work to introduce a new pay progression system began at the end of 2003. For the organisation, it was key that pay decisions were linked to individual performance, that the new pay system was fair and transparent, that it was in line with equal pay requirements, and that it motivated staff and provided an incentive for high performers. Following negotiations with trade unions, agreement was reached on a three-year pay deal and the new system was implemented from 1 April 2004.

We also reviewed our job evaluation scheme. This review ran in parallel with the pay progression work, and involved an overhaul of the existing scheme, and thereafter evaluation of all jobs in the organisation. The task was completed on schedule at the beginning of 2004, and ensured that posts were correctly graded before implementing the pay progression system in April 2004.

The organisation continued to work with the Trade Unions in a partnership style throughout 2004/2005. An important feature of this work was the signing of a formal document detailing the principles and codes of behaviour associated with partnership. The signing of this document was seen as an important step in SQA's desire to move to implement a full partnership agreement by the end of 2005.

#### **2.3.2.6 Ensure SQA has appointees who are effective, motivated and valued**

SQA's access to a pool of skilled appointees to carry out invigilation, marking and moderation and the setting, vetting and scrutiny of question papers and scripts, is crucial to ensuring the continued successful delivery of our qualifications.

During 2004/05, we initiated a considerable amount of work to revise our systems to improve recruitment, retention and development of these key individuals. The legal status of appointees has been clarified, and revised contracts and letters of appointment have been developed. Job titles and role definitions have been revised, and a handbook setting out each role has been issued to provide guidance to appointees.

In addition, the issue of remuneration and job evaluation was reviewed, and inconsistencies in remuneration have been identified across appointee roles. Limitations to the current payment systems have been identified, and visits to three English awarding bodies were undertaken for comparison (eg of selection criteria).

Exploratory work was also carried out in 2004/2005 to explore potential solutions to address any changes in appointee availability caused by demographic changes to the profile of Scotland's teaching and lecturing populations. This activity will carry on through 2005/06 and beyond.

### **2.3.2.7 Manage strategic development activity within a co-ordinated, cohesive framework**

SQA's strategic development activity, known as our 'Programme for Change', is now managed using methodology which is consistent with the HM Treasury Green Book guidelines. This allows us to obtain funding from external bodies, project manage and review the success of the projects we undertake.

The major business improvement activities we undertook in 2004/5 in the areas of Improving the Quality of Assessment, Modernising Products and Improving Service Delivery were project managed and progress monitored as part of monthly management reporting. They will also be subject to post implementation review.

Where funds became available for development activity in the course of the financial year 2004/5, a similar methodology was applied to internally funded projects to ensure good management and progress.

## 3 Our plans for the future

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has reviewed and developed its strategy and Corporate Plan for 2005/08, engaging its staff and stakeholders for views and comments on its contents. During this consultation, we received feedback on our intention to explore new commercial opportunities and sources of income.

During 2004/05, we have put in place a mechanism to become self-financing, and it is important that we develop new and existing markets for our qualifications and services if we are to meet this objective. This activity must place no burden of risk on the discharge of our statutory responsibilities. When developing and implementing our plans, we are conscious of our primary duty to maintain quality and standards in education, of the need to reflect broader social and economic needs, and of our on-going commitment to the delivery of our responsibilities, including our accreditation function.

Our staff participated in developing the revised mission, vision and values statements which underpin the definition of our strategic objectives and Corporate Plan.

### **Vision**

To be recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in learning and assessment.

### **Mission**

SQA will work in partnership to provide high quality, recognised and relevant qualifications and assessment.

### **Values**

SQA will:

- ◆ be customer-focused
- ◆ strive for better ways of working
- ◆ make best use of resources
- ◆ be reliable
- ◆ be supportive
- ◆ act openly and honestly
- ◆ promote equality and opportunity for all

SQA's revised Corporate Plan for 2005/08 sets out our strategic objectives and tasks for the next three years as follows:

**Objective 1 Provide qualifications and support to match the needs of individuals, society and the economy of Scotland.**

Deliver assessment and quality assurance of SQA's qualifications

Deliver the Accreditation function

Continue to implement the reviews of:

- ◆ National Qualifications
- ◆ Higher National Qualifications
- ◆ Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Introduce:

- ◆ new Skills-for-Work Courses
- ◆ new and revised Professional Development Awards
- ◆ new and revised Scottish Progression Awards
- ◆ new and revised National Certificates

Revise and extend provision at Access levels 1 and 2

Provide materials and training to:

- ◆ support teaching and assessment
- ◆ explain qualifications and progression

Implement the review of:

- ◆ quality assurance of external assessment
- ◆ quality assurance of internal assessment

Strengthen credit transfer between qualifications

**Objective 2 Inform and support national policy development and implementation**

Implement the outcomes of policy developments in relation to qualifications and assessment

Provide analysis of trends and issues to inform developments

Provide information and advice to the Scottish Executive and key stakeholders

Establish strategic relationships with key partners

Play a leading role in the implementation of the SCQF

**Objective 3 Re-design our services and processes to make them better to use and more efficient**

Expand web-based services for the management of candidate information

Establish SQA's website as the primary source of information and support for our qualifications

Expand provision of e-assessment and e-learning resources

Introduce new web-based marking and quality assurance processes

Introduce an improved Scottish Qualifications Certificate

Complete a review of our policy and processes for entry charges

Implement an integrated Human Resources and Financial system

Comply with the principles of Best Value

**Objective 4 Develop a highly-skilled, motivated and effective workforce**

Implement a workforce development plan

Strengthen SQA's partnership working with trade unions

Implement an estates and facilities management programme

**Objective 5 Raise the profile of Scottish education and training internationally to benefit the Scottish economy and users of Scottish qualifications**

Seek alliances of Scottish, UK and international organisations to promote Scottish education and training overseas

**Objective 6 Develop new markets and income streams**

Implement the commercial strategy

Establish partnerships with organisations with a track record in education and training

Extend the range of funding sources

Develop e-commerce capability

More detail of our short-term objectives for the first 12-months of this Corporate Plan are set out in our Business Plan for 2005/06 which is available on our website at **[www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)**.

# Appendix 1: Performance measures for 2004

## Performance measure: issue of results

- ◆ Electronic file sent to be sent to UCAS on 4 August (subject to confirmation), in an agreed format, showing the cumulative achievement of all relevant candidates identified by UCAS and notified to SQA.

**Our performance:** The file on results for higher education applicants was issued to UCAS on 2 August, two days ahead of schedule.

- ◆ Electronic file to be sent by 6 August to those centres that submit data electronically. The file format has been updated from last year to include a completion date field and details are available from SQA. The file will contain results for all candidates registered by the centre and entered for National Courses and units associated with these courses in the diet for 2004.

**Our performance:** Electronic versions of the statements of results (SORs) were sent to centres on 6 August. SEEMIS centres also received their files on the same day.

- ◆ Paper statement of results summary sent by receipted delivery courier to all centres on 9 August for receipt not later than 12 noon on 10 August.

**Our performance:** Achieved. Paper reports of candidate results (SORs) for centres were dispatched via special delivery service. Couriers were utilised for delivery to outlying areas. Process in place to ensure each package delivered was signed for by the receiving centre.

Directors of Education were able to access candidate results on Monday 9 August via a secure site on SQA's website.

- ◆ By 10 August, certificates, or letters advising unsuccessful achievement, to be sent to all candidates who are due to receive a certificate in respect of the Summer Diet of National Courses. If SQA is aware of any circumstances that will prevent specific certificates or letters from being issued, SQA will inform the relevant centre(s) by 10 August of the certificates or letters that will be delayed and the reasons for this. It would be responsibility of such centre(s) to advise their

candidates accordingly. SQA will notify centres of all cases where a final grade was computed on the basis of partial data (other than where a formal absence has been recorded) by 10 August.

**Our performance:** The print files for all certificates were received at the external printers by Monday 2 August, one day ahead of schedule. By Saturday 7 August, all certificates had been printed. Certificates were despatched on time for delivery on 10 August.

- ◆ SQA will issue group award certificates weekly throughout the year. However, this will be suspended from 22 July to 5 August to allow certification of the diet of National Courses.

**Our performance:** Group award certification resumed in the week commencing 9 August. Certificates were despatched by 13 August.

### **Accuracy**

- ◆ Certificates issued by SQA will be an accurate representation of the data held on SQA's database. This excludes cases where SQA know that the data held on the database is not yet complete or where inaccurate data has been supplied.

### **Our performance**

#### *National Qualifications Courses*

Course Estimates: As at 21 July, all of the 309,100 estimates expected had been processed.

#### Entries and Results

Following the stabilisation of the database on 23 July, the final total of open entries for the external assessments was 309,239. Of these cases, there were 13,201 entries where the candidate did not attempt any part of the external assessment, 212,893 entries which resulted in a pass, and 30,042 entries which narrowly failed (band 7).

Of the 212,893 external assessment entries which resulted in a pass, 4,925 failed to achieve the corresponding course award due to one or more of the contributing Units either: having a result of fail; having a missing entry; or having a missing result. Of these 4,925 entries, 755 involved the non-submission of a unit result, 1,310 involved a missing unit entry and therefore 2,860 must be due to a failed Unit result.

Standard Grade estimates and internal assessment marks:

As at 15 July, 100% of forms with Standard Grade estimates and Internal Assessment marks had been received and processed.

### **Queries and Appeals**

Where a centre reports the non-delivery of a certificate, missing entries or other queries, the SQA will:

- ◆ acknowledge receipt of the query within 3 working days and will resolve the query within a further 10 working days if possible
- ◆ indicate the reason for the delay and give a date by which the query will be resolved, if it has not been possible to resolve the query within this timescale

### **Our performance**

#### *Candidate Helpline*

The Candidate Advice line was set up in the Board Room in Hanover House between 5 August and 13 August, with 30 phones and headsets. The volumes of calls for 2004 was less than expected and as a result the Board Room was vacated a day early on Thursday 12 August. Calls to the Advice Line number were diverted to the Customer Contact Centre from Friday 13 August.

Full details of the call volume taken each day and call type received by the Candidate Advice line over the 10 to 13 August period have been collated for management information. The figures indicate a continuing fall in call volumes over the last three years, however, the rate of fall is smaller this year with only a 5% drop on 2003.

#### *Centre Helpline for Schools/Colleges*

The Centre Helpline ran from 6 – 27 August. Queries were logged and resolved within the specified turnaround times stated in the performance measures.

Appeals clearly marked as ‘Urgent’, and submitted on time with all necessary information and supporting evidence requested by SQA in the correct format, will be dealt with — and results sent to centres — by 20 September 2004 where the number of urgent appeals does not exceed 3,000.

**Our performance:** Urgent Appeals were actioned and processed and results reports were produced and issued to 203 presenting centres and 78 universities/colleges. This was four days ahead of

schedule. The final figure was 659, a 15% reduction on the 2003 figure of 774.

### **Definitions**

National Courses are defined as:

- ◆ Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher.  
**NB:** Clusters are certificated weekly as they have no external assessment. Those completed from April onwards with completion dates in the future are held and batched to go out in the main August certification
  
- ◆ Standard Grade

Performance measures for 2001 related only to the Diet. The measures for 2002, 2003 and 2004 also cover other certification such as group award and unit only certificates.