

# National Qualifications Review

## Summary of agreed policy on low uptake

Following an investigation, the Scottish Executive has endorsed a policy for dealing with low uptake National Courses.

### Key principles

SQA's management of low uptake National Courses will be guided by the following principles:

- ◆ SQA should strive to maintain a balanced portfolio of qualifications that is inclusive, addresses progression needs and reflects Scotland's economic, social, political and cultural needs.
- ◆ All qualifications should have sufficient uptake to sustain a meaningful national standard.
- ◆ Qualifications should, wherever possible, generate sufficient revenue to recover development costs and meet ongoing delivery costs.
- ◆ Qualifications which do not generate sufficient income to cover development and delivery costs must be justified on alternative grounds.
- ◆ New qualifications should be given a period of time to reach target numbers and to establish the uptake trend over that period.

### Outline of the policy

Existing National Courses will have a minimum life of five years.\* Courses at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher which have failed to attract 100 candidates a year after five years and 50 candidates a year at Advanced Higher will be reviewed to determine whether they continue to be offered - a rationale for retention will be required. Where a course has fewer than 100 entries (50 at AH), it will be required to meet the following criteria to be kept within SQA's catalogue of qualifications:

- ◆ There is a strong rationale for the retention of the course based on educational/cultural/social/economic/political need, supported by proposals for ways of reducing costs and/or financial sponsors to maintain course(s).
- ◆ There is evidence of specific and justifiable reasons influencing initial take-up of the course resulting in low entries, and that this situation has now changed and uptake will increase.
- ◆ There is evidence of the added value of offering graded external assessment over and above a coherent group of units.
- ◆ There is evidence that the course is needed to enable progression.
- ◆ There is evidence of increasing uptake over a period of five years.
- ◆ There is evidence of a sufficient number of centres running the course (a minimum of five), to provide experienced staff to deliver and maintain the course, eg by providing appointees for moderation and external assessment.

### How will the policy be implemented?

Where a National Course does not meet the criteria it will be withdrawn. Centres will be informed of the proposed withdrawal of National Courses by letter. Where there are concerns about the removal of a National Course, SQA will negotiate/consult with key stakeholders before the Course is withdrawn. Care will be taken to ensure that no candidate is disadvantaged by the timescale for withdrawal, if that is the final decision. Where a National Course is withdrawn, its component National Units will remain in the catalogue.

\* Note: For Courses at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Higher the fifth year of operation is session 2003-04. For Courses at Advanced Higher, the fifth year of operation is session 2004-05.