



Annual Equality Review 2010

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Foreword

I am pleased to present SQA's Annual Equality Review 2010.

SQA has a responsibility to currently promote equality of opportunity under the public sector duties for disability, gender and race. These duties are central to the policies and practices of SQA.

We are proactive in meeting the needs of our customers and stakeholders across diverse community groups. Moreover, we cultivate an enabling culture in our organisation that is free from discrimination and inequality.

This review sets out our progress and achievements over the last twelve months, and highlights areas where we have further work to do.

We welcome the new Equality Act 2010, which came partially into force this year and will next year extend the public duties to include disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and age. We are preparing for the fresh challenges and opportunities it will bring.

Dr Janet Brown
Chief Executive

About this review

This annual review summarises our progress and achievements in relation to our public sector equality duties.

Equality in SQA

SQA is the national body in Scotland for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications (other than degrees). Our main functions are set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996. We are a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate.

The core purpose of SQA is to set and maintain standards in education and training through the qualifications and assessment we deliver in schools, in colleges, and in workplace learning. In addition, our accreditation function sets and maintains standards for awarding bodies and accredited qualifications, such as Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

Governance and responsibilities

As illustrated in appendix A, a structure is in place to support SQA in meeting its equality duties. This structure is being reviewed to ensure that it continues to apply in relation to the new Equality Act 2010.

SQA's Board of Management exercises its duty to ensure compliance, and governs the implementation of the race, disability and gender equality schemes and action plans. SQA's Audit Committee oversees how we fulfil our equality duties on behalf of the Board. The Audit Committee is responsible for the approval of SQA's Equality Schemes and Annual Equality Review. It also receives twice-yearly reports on progress towards implementation of SQA's Equality Schemes. SQA's Board of Management receives the Annual Equality Review.

SQA's Chief Executive is accountable for the fulfilment of SQA's equality duties.

SQA's Equality Steering Group supports the Chief Executive in her responsibility for the implementation of SQA's Equality Schemes. Its key responsibilities include:

- ◆ overseeing the implementation of the actions set out in the Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes
- ◆ monitoring the progress being made to implement data collection and monitoring
- ◆ monitoring the progress being made in conducting impact assessments
- ◆ monitoring the training provided for staff and other groups
- ◆ ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place

The Steering Group has met twice over this reporting period.

Equality sub-groups are in place for SQA's Directorates. These provide guidance and support for meeting the equality duties, reporting to the Equality Steering Group. The equality sub-groups have the following responsibilities:

- ◆ supporting the development and implementation of SQA's equality objectives/plans
- ◆ identifying resource issues for the work required to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs)
- ◆ allowing issues to be shared and communicated
- ◆ providing a reporting mechanism to the Steering Group

The sub-groups have met twice over the reporting period.

SQA's corporate lawyer advises on equality issues, and the SQA's Equalities Officer (Public Equality Duties) co-ordinates Equality Impact Assessments and the Equality Action Plan, supported by the Steering Group and sub-groups.

The SQA Inclusion Group was formed in October 2008. It brings together key partners and stakeholders with an active interest in exploring and developing ways to increase choice and opportunity for learners who are vulnerable, disengaged and hard to reach.

The Inclusion Group encourages and enables innovative, evidence-based discussion from representatives from a range of sectors, including Scottish Government, education, training, community development, and youth. The Inclusion Group is an important part of SQA's 'More Choices, More Chances' communication and engagement strategy, ensuring that key partners and stakeholders can bring about positive change and are kept up-to-date with progress and activity.

The group, managed by SQA's Policy and New Products team, has met twice over the reporting period.

Monitoring legislation and best practice

We continue to monitor changes in legislation in relation to equality, and good practice in other organisations, to ensure that our processes and policies keep pace with developments.

We have representation on the Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) Equality Group. This is a Scotland-wide group which meets three times a year to discuss equality issues and to share experience and best practice in the workplace.

Equality Schemes

We continue to monitor and measure progress against SQA's single Equality Action Plan, which includes the actions identified in our current Equality Schemes:

- ◆ Disability Equality Scheme 2010–13
- ◆ Race Equality Scheme 2007–10
- ◆ Gender Equality Scheme 2010–13

In each case, many actions have been updated to apply across the six equality strands, and additional actions continue to be identified as we carry out EqlAs across our policies and functions.

Disability Equality Scheme (DES)

In December 2009 we reviewed and updated our Disability Equality Scheme (DES) for 2010–13. Many of the previous actions are work in progress and are represented in the 2010–13 DES.

Race Equality Scheme (RES)

We continue to monitor progress with the actions in our Race Equality Scheme for 2007–2010. Many of the original actions have been completed, or updated and taken across to the Equality Action Plan.

Gender Equality Scheme (GES)

The Gender Equality Scheme and action plan for 2010–13 was approved by the SQA Board and published in July 2010. The new Gender Scheme sets out our response to the statutory duty to improve gender equality across SQA. The scheme also highlights progress made against the previous Gender Equality Action Plan for 2007–10.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqlAs)

We developed new Equality Impact Assessment (EqlA) templates and guidance in March, and improved our EqlA tracking and monitoring process. We carried out EqlAs using the new tools to identify actions that will be necessary to meet the equality duties for disability, race, and gender, as well as age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

Equality Impact Assessments are carried out in two stages. Stage 1 determines whether a policy is likely to have a potential discriminatory or adverse impact on equality groups. A full stage 2 EqlA is only required when stage 1 has highlighted potential for an adverse impact. It is expected that a full stage 2 impact assessment will involve a detailed investigation of the issues identified and include consultation with diverse groups.

Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out for all major existing SQA policies. When a new policy is developed, an EqlA is carried out before the policy is finalised.

Equality Action Plans

We have revised and updated our Equality Action Plan, which includes actions from our Equality Schemes, and we will continue to update this plan as new actions are identified throughout the EqIA process.

Equality training

We continue to deliver equality training to SQA staff. Over this reporting period, we have reviewed and updated the equality information in the new staff induction process.

We have delivered training and prepared easy-to-follow guidance material for staff on the EqIA process, from identifying policies to undertaking a full assessment. Some staff attended further EqIA training which took place outside the organisation.

Progress in 2010

Qualifications and assessment

The Equality Act 2010 has introduced significant changes to the way that accessibility to general qualifications for disabled candidates is considered. SQA has therefore revised its processes to remove barriers where possible and, with reasonable adjustments to overcome disadvantage, to have regard to:

- (a) the need to minimise the extent to which disabled people are disadvantaged in achieving the qualification because of their disabilities,
- (b) the need to make sure that the qualification gives a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the person on whom it is conferred,
- (c) the need to maintain public confidence in the qualification.

Assessment arrangements (AA) for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

We continue to develop and improve access to assessments for disabled candidates and those with additional support needs. We work in partnership with centres to identify and deliver assessment arrangements for those candidates who need them.

The total number of assessment arrangement requests for exams in 2010 was 48,416, submitted on behalf of 13,962 candidates. This represents an increase in the total number of requests (up 5.7%) and candidates (up 6.5%) from the previous year.

Table 1: Number of candidates and requests for assessment arrangements (AA), 2007–2010

Year	Total number of candidates requesting AA	Total number of AA requests for individual qualifications
2007	11,400	42,194
2008	12,284	44,356
2009	13,041	45,612
2010	13,962	48,416

We continue to promote access to National Qualifications for disabled candidates. To this end, we have published a number of case studies on alternative approaches to assessment for disabled candidates on our website. These have been welcomed by centres and parents. We also recently held an event for teachers of Physical Education, which provided the opportunity to consider ways of making National Courses in Physical Education more accessible to disabled candidates.

Table 2: Requests for assessment arrangements by level, 2007–2010

Level	Requests for Assessment Arrangements							
	2007		2008		2009		2010	
Standard Grade	23,356	55.4%	23,945	54.0%	23,404	51.3%	23,770	49.0%
Intermediate 1	4,297	10.2%	5,010	11.3%	5,403	11.8%	6,015	12.4%
Intermediate 2	5,790	13.7%	6,481	14.6%	7,245	15.9%	8,068	16.6%
Higher	7,995	18.9%	8,098	18.3%	8,758	19.2%	9,669	19.9%
Advanced Higher	756	1.8%	822	1.9%	802	1.8%	894	1.8%
Total	42,194	100%	44,356	100%	45,612	100%	48,416	100%

The profile of AA requests by level is broadly the same as for previous years. Just under half of the requests came from Standard Grade candidates; however, this proportion has continued to drop over the past few years. Intermediate 1 and 2 requests, as a proportion of all requests, have increased. This mirrors the changing profile of overall entry numbers.

Table 3: Requests for assessment arrangements by type, 2007–2010

Arrangement	Number of AA Requests			
	2007	2008	2009	2010
Adapted certificate	94	181	119	139
Braille	32	57	31	59
Calculator	734	556	660	684
Coloured paper	1,468	1,523	2,050	1,964
Digital question papers	152	514	1,167	2,001
Enlarged print question papers	1,064	1,056	1,305	1,209
Extra time	33,285	34,530	35,636	36,962
Modified large print question papers	139	202	277	267
PA referral	996	781	540	465
Prompter	1,470	1,879	2,099	2,404
Reader	16,122	16,936	16,554	16,863
Rest period	1,077	1,517	1,434	1,636
Scribe	14,121	14,811	14,197	14,313
Separate accommodation	25,460	25,793	26,381	28,689
Transcription with correction	1,214	1,215	1,179	1,110
Transcription without correction	668	751	626	590
Use of ICT	3,560	4,741	6,253	7,622
Use of tape recorder for responses	34	30	37	36
Total	12,702	15,003	17,777	20,186

Uptake of adapted digital question papers for disabled candidates and those with additional support needs continues to increase, and we received 2001 requests for their use in exams in 2010. This represents a large increase in such requests since their introduction in 2007. This is a reflection of both the promotion of their availability by SQA and the increase in candidates who use ICT and assistive technologies in teaching and learning.

Table 4: Requests to use sign language in assessments, 2007–2010

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of requests for question papers to be signed to candidates	83	43	57	52
Number of requests for candidate responses to be signed	62	40	42	38
Total	145	83	99	90

SQA is currently working with the Scottish Sensory Centre at Edinburgh University on a project looking at the feasibility of developing a BSL version of an external question paper. An interim progress report has been produced and delivered to SQA's Signed Transcription Reviewers Group.

In 2010 SQA provided adapted format question papers for entry requests in the following formats:

Table 5: Adapted format question papers (including digital format)

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Braille	32	58	31	59
Large print	263	399	279	287
Colour copies	601	536	1346	1964
A4 size on white	660	662	707	828
Adapted print	567	637	1028	893
Digital	274	514	1167	2001
Total	2397	2806	4558	5278

SQA as an employer

SQA expects all members of SQA staff to practise our core values and principles, to be treated fairly and treat others with respect and without bias. Five values define the way SQA staff work with each other, with customers and with partners in delivering services for Scotland's learners:

- ◆ Quality
- ◆ Integrity
- ◆ Innovation
- ◆ Partnership
- ◆ Service

Workforce equality monitoring

As of 31 March 2010, SQA's workforce comprised 65% female staff and 35% male staff. During the financial year April 2009 to March 2010, 1492 applicants for vacancies were received. Of these, 61.6% were from females. 93% of all applicants were from applicants giving their ethnicity as White. Of our current staff, the majority of staff preferred not to disclose their ethnicity.

Improving our diversity data

In 2009, SQA conducted a questionnaire to gather information from staff in respect of all six strands of equality: race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, and religion and belief. This was in addition to our normal procedures to capture such information from external applicants. This information was intended to be used for monitoring and reporting purposes, but also for identifying any disparities between groups and improving our policies.

This questionnaire resulted in a low response rate. SQA identified that we needed to develop ways to encourage current employees to provide equality and diversity data, so that reporting and analysis could be improved.

As a result of this, we are currently in the process of developing a self-service HR system where staff may upload their own personal details, including an opportunity to update their own diversity data. This information will be held confidentially, and only used for the purposes of monitoring, statutory reporting and policy improvement.

Staff Opinion Survey

SQA's Staff Opinion Survey provides an opportunity for all members of staff to express their views on working for SQA. The survey invites staff to indicate their degree of agreement with statements about SQA's commitment to promoting equality and diversity.

The statements are as follows:

- ◆ I believe that SQA demonstrates it is an equal opportunities employer.
- ◆ I believe SQA demonstrates commitment to equality and diversity in its work.

The latest survey took place in September 2010. It highlighted that 80% agree that we demonstrate our intent to be an equal opportunities employer, with 80% also agreeing that SQA demonstrates commitment to equality and diversity in our work.

Partnership Group and policy improvements

Our Head of Human Resources chairs the SQA Partnership Group. This brings together SQA management and trade union representatives from Unite (T&G), Unite (Amicus) and Unison on questions relating to staff matters, policies, and to consult on collective bargaining agreements. The Partnership Policy Working Sub-Group has recently reviewed a number of staff policies, taking into account feedback from interested parties.

As part of these reviews, SQA's Staff Leave Policy; Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy; and Flexible Working Policy have been reviewed. Our Flexible Working Policy has been reviewed to ensure that all staff are clear on the opportunities available to them to balance work and home life responsibilities. Our Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy has also been reviewed, notably to align adoption pay with our provision for maternity pay. These policies were launched in October this year.

Mental health awareness

In response to recommendations from SQA's award-winning Make A Change (MAC) Group, training in mental health awareness is being introduced. We have done this via e-learning to offer a constantly available resource for line managers to access, but also to minimise time away from the desk. The training, which is for all line managers, supports the launch of our recently updated Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, and is being rolled out in recognition of new legislation. The e-learning package can be completed in bite-sized chunks when time permits.

The MAC group, established in 2002 to promote health and wellbeing issues, consists of staff volunteers at different grades from across SQA, supported by the Chief Executive and Directors. The group organised more than 50 events during this reporting period, and has carried out eight staff surveys, most recently on stress in the workplace. The MAC Group recently achieved the Healthy Working Lives Gold Award, for which raising awareness of mental health issues is a key criterion.

Equal pay update

We produce an Equal Pay Audit annually. The 2009–10 Equal Pay Audit was carried out in September 2010 and has now been 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 at 64% to 36%. We have a greater percentage of women employed in lower graded posts, which results in and explains an overall gender pay gap. However, when we compare staff undertaking work of equal value, there is no significant gender pay gap. We continue to pay close attention to these matters via the performance management review system and workforce development activities.

Procurement

The Race Equality Action Plan 2007–2009 included an action to: 'Develop an implementation plan which puts a revised procurement manual into practice covering areas such as:

Advertising to reach diverse suppliers

Pre-qualification questionnaire

Contract requirements in tender documents and monitoring arrangements'

Our Terms and Conditions stipulate that, in line with SQA policy, all contracts with a value over £25,000 are awarded by the Procurement Department. They are advertised on the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) advertising portal, which is open and free to all suppliers. As part of the evaluation criteria, suppliers must produce their current equality policy and any evidence as required. For contracts below £25,000, there is no requirement for the supplier to provide an equalities statement; however, under the terms and conditions of contract, suppliers must demonstrate that they are meeting the current equality legislation.

SQA, as a listed public body, has a 'responsibility to ensure that its suppliers shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of the terms and conditions provided in relation to equality and discrimination by all employees and representatives of the Supplier.' (Taken from SQA's *Standard Terms and Conditions for Products/Works and Services*.)

All suppliers on SQA or Government Frameworks have produced their equality policy as part of the vetting process.

We have updated the SQA website 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.

Communications and marketing

Show Racism the Red Card

SQA was the main supporter of the 2010 creative competition run by Show Racism the Red Card. The competition invited students from across Scotland to design a piece of creative work that would clearly promote an anti-racism message. A total of 1281 students took part from across Scotland, representing special schools, primary schools, secondary schools and FE colleges. The winning entries were used in a marketing campaign to consolidate an anti-racism message through Scotland's education and public sector organisations.

SQA was responsible for planning and administering the competition and awards ceremony, which successfully brought together a number of organisations to promote the message that racism is not welcomed in Scotland.

The future

The new public sector equality duties are planned to come into force in April 2011. The duties require us to give due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across the eight protected characteristics. In addition to disability, gender and race, these are:

- ◆ age
- ◆ religion or belief
- ◆ sexual orientation
- ◆ gender reassignment
- ◆ pregnancy and maternity

We will review our approach to equality in light of the new duties, to ensure that we have the right processes in place and that these processes continue to make a real difference.

Further information and contacts

The SQA website at www.sqa.org.uk includes our current Equality Schemes and Action Plan, as well as previous annual equality reports.

We welcome your feedback and would be happy to receive your thoughts and comments.

You can contact us by:

e-mail:	equality@sqa.org.uk
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Appendix A: Governance and responsibilities in relation to equality

