

Annual Equality Review 2008



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Foreword

This is SQA's second Annual Equality Review. In it, we take a look at all the work SQA has done throughout 2008 that impacts on equalities.

We have statutory public duties under Equalities legislation covering Race, Gender and Disabilities. We are committed to promoting equality as an organisation both in terms of the qualifications and services we provide and as an employer.

I am pleased to present this report on our progress during 2008. These achievements were only possible because our staff and stakeholders work in partnership. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for their support.

Dr Janet Brown
Chief Executive

About this review

As part of our equality duties, we have a statutory requirement to report annually on progress against our Equality Schemes. This review provides a summary of our equality and diversity achievements for 2008, reporting on actions agreed as part of our Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes.

We publish our equality schemes, action plans and annual reviews, with information on our equality and diversity work, on our Equalities web pages. These went live in August 2007. There is a direct link to them on SQA's homepage.

The legislative context

A Framework for a Fairer Future – the Equality Bill published in June 2008 proposes to introduce a new Equality Duty. This will bring the existing three separate duties for race, disability and gender equalities together with the other strands of age, sexual orientation, and religion or belief. SQA will be working towards preparing a single equality scheme in the coming year.

An extension of the Disability Discrimination Act to cover General Qualifications Bodies came into force in September 2007. Two further sets of amending regulations came into force in October 2007 and October 2008, and a statutory Code of Practice was issued in June 2008.

Governance and responsibilities

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

SQA's Board of Management is fully committed to its duty to ensure compliance with the terms of this legislation and to take a governance role in the implementation of the Race, Disability, Gender Equality Schemes, and their related action plans.

SQA's Chief Executive is accountable for the fulfilment of SQA's equality duties, and has delegated responsibility for the implementation of SQA's equality schemes.

SQA's Executive Team has responsibility for the approval of schemes, the Annual Equality Review (before submission to SQA's Audit and Performance Committee) and equality impact assessment reports.

SQA's Equality and Diversity Steering Group oversees the implementation of our equality strategy. SQA's Equalities Project Officer supports the business in meeting its equality objectives.

All members of staff have a duty to support and uphold the principles in SQA's Equality Mainstreaming Policy, other equality policies and the Code of Conduct for SQA Employees.

We are committed to promoting equality and delivering on our action plans. This is reflected in our business plan objective 4.1.4 to 'become an employer of choice through promotion of our corporate social responsibility, environmental management and equality and diversity aims'.

Monitoring

- ◆ Following the publication of SQA's Equality Schemes, we developed a comprehensive action plan to report on all three equality duties. SQA's Equality Action plan is tracked, reported on and reviewed monthly by our management team.
- ◆ SQA's Equality and Diversity Steering Group meets quarterly, and monitors the implementation of the action plan and the progress we have made.
- ◆ Formal update reports are provided to our Audit and Performance Committee every six months.
- ◆ Monitoring contributes to the on-going process of identifying improvements and addressing equality gaps.

Qualifications and assessment

Designing qualifications

We continue to ensure there are no unintended barriers in place when developing new and reviewing existing qualifications. We do this using guides, checklists and staff training.

To ensure that disability equality issues are considered in the design of qualifications, we conducted an Impact Assessment of the Qualifications Development Strategy (QDS). We continue to ensure that equality and diversity is an integral part of the development cycle.

Assessment arrangements

Guidance

We have revised our guide on assessment arrangements following internal consultation, and taking account of views we sought when formulating our Disability Equality Scheme. The Guide is available on the assessment arrangements page of our website. It has been split into sections to allow easy navigation and quicker download times.

The guide includes leaflets for parents and candidates, guidance for all users of assessment arrangements (including specific guidance), and extra information for users of Digital Question Papers and candidates who use sign language.

Software

The new Assessment Arrangements Request software is now in its second year of successful use, with centres indicating a satisfaction rate over 84%. Centres can now submit requests electronically instead of having to complete and authorise paper forms. This means that requests can be responded to more quickly. It also means detailed reports can be made, and used for statistical analysis. The software also allows SQA staff to focus attention on dealing with non-standard queries.

The total number of assessment arrangement requests in external assessments for diet 2008 was 44,356 (submitted on behalf of 12,284 candidates). For the 2008 diet, centres could either choose from a list of pre-defined assessment arrangements or make a request based on a candidate's individual needs. Centres may also request assessment arrangements for candidates' internal assessments.

Adapted formats question papers (including digital format)

In 2008 we provided adapted format question papers for 2,806 entry requests (an increase of 409 from 2007) in the following range of formats:

2008 Adapted QP Entries		
	2007	2008
Braille	32	58
Large Print	263	399
Colour copies	601	536
A4 size on white	660	662
Adapted print	567	637
Digital	274	514
Total	2397	2806

Following successful pilots in 2006 and 2007, Adapted Question Papers in digital format were available in 2008 in selected subjects as an assessment arrangement for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs. The digital format allows candidates using ICT to insert answers directly onto the question/answer page on screen, and to use speech technology to have the question read out. This table shows how uptake has increased over the last three years:

	2006	2007	2008
Number of centres	8	12	46
Number of candidates	34	80	204
Number of entries	65	274	514

Interest in Digital format papers continues to rise. Seminars were conducted in 2008 by CALL (Communication Aids for Language and Learning) Scotland, University of Edinburgh, with input from SQA. It is anticipated that the number of requests will rise again in 2009.

Using Sign in assessments

Deaf candidates can have the contents of their assessments signed to them, and may also respond in Sign. This table shows the number of requests received over the last three years:

	2006	2007	2008
Number of requests for Question Papers to be signed to candidate	69	83	43
Number of requests for candidate responses to be signed	56	62	40

Working with others

SQA made a significant input to the consultation with the Department for Children, Schools and Families on the way that the Disability Discrimination Act, recently amended to cover General Qualifications Bodies, might be further amended to provide better for the needs of disabled candidates.

We also participate on a number of external working groups. These cover areas such as meeting the needs of dyslexic learners and those with sensory impairments, and improving access to learning and assessment for learners with disabilities.

Guide to Assessment

The revised Guide to Assessment was published on our website in June. It stresses that each SQA assessment should be equitable, fair, and accessible to all learners who have the potential to be successful in it. This is a key principle of SQA assessment and is reinforced in the section on best practice in assessment.

The Guide contains links to our assessment arrangements pages and our equality strategies and action plans.

Making information about our qualifications and services accessible

House style for publications

SQA's objective is to make its publications accessible to everyone, and reflect an inclusive view of society.

We reviewed our current house style guide, *Writing for SQA: Rules and Guidelines*. This was published to staff on SQA's internal Publishing portal in July 2008. *Writing for SQA* promotes equality by giving advice on using plain English in everything we write.

We are also reviewing the typefaces used in SQA's publications to address disability related issues. Our plans will be implemented and communicated to staff by the end of February 2009.

SQA's policies on plain English, Gaelic translation, Community Languages translations, and alternative formats are being prepared for implementation and communication to the organisation by the end of November 2008.

SQA as an employer

Equal opportunities

Our approach to equal pay is much wider than ensuring men and women are paid equally. After internal consultation, the Childcare Voucher Policy was made available from 1 April 2008. Staff were encouraged to find out more about this through our staff e-zine, Inform.

In 2007 we had the opportunity to reinforce our commitment to a fair pay system by publishing our equal pay statement. There are details on our website.

There are no statistically significant pay gaps at SQA between men and women. This is something that we are proud of and will work hard to maintain.

We have made developments to our software systems to help us gather and analyse information as part of our equality responsibilities for race, disability and gender. This analysis will inform the ongoing development of our policies and procedures.

There are more female employees than male employees at SQA: 454 (66%), compared with 235 (34%), a ratio of 2:1. Women represent a large number of employees in the middle grade bands. At the higher grades, there are even numbers of male and female employees. At Business Manager level, men outnumber women by 14 to 11 (56% to 44%), and at Senior Management level the split is even.

We have started preparations for our men's health and life choices day in November. The event will raise awareness about the health, body and mind issues that affect all our male staff, and will aim to answer any questions about personal health and fitness. A similar event for female staff will be planned for next year.

Continuous improvement

We have been reviewing the way we work to sharpen the focus of SQA's products and services so that they support our customers more effectively. As a result we have been making some changes in the organisation.

This new approach will allow us to be more focused on our customers', staff's, and appointees' needs, and to be able to respond quicker when it comes to developing flexible qualifications.

Equality Impact Assessments

We developed a timetable for Equality Impact Assessments in 2007. The schedule was planned to be sensitive to the examination diet and to take account of the priority given to functions by Business Managers. Given the reorganisation, which has now been implemented, it was not possible to keep to this timetable because it was not useful to assess impacts in areas in transition or to assess policies and procedures that were likely to change.

The impact assessment schedule is now being reviewed to take account of the changes in business structure arising from the recent business reorganisation.

Training

Equalities training was delivered to Board members.

All current SQA staff have received equalities awareness training. We have also ensured that training in the conduct of Equality Impact Assessments has been provided to targeted staff.

Equalities awareness training is now part of the core training for all new employees. In 2008, we trained 43 new employees. We also invited Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) to send its new employees to this training. (This is part of our shared service agreement with LTS.) Six members of LTS staff attended training in 2008.

In September, 10 employees completed their Foundation B certificates in British Sign Language (BSL).

We held internal training events throughout 2008 on the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act for qualification design and review, and on access to assessments.

We continued to offer support to centres for meeting their candidates' assessment needs, including:

- ◆ Digital Question Paper training events were held in February, June and October
- ◆ Highland Local Authority Principal Teachers Support for Learning In-Service (January)
- ◆ Combined Ayrshire Local Authorities Support for Learning staff (January)
- ◆ Fife Local Authority Additional Support for Learning Conference (February)
- ◆ Dumfries and Galloway Local Authority SQA Co-ordinator's meeting (May)

Equalities information has been provided to invigilators and the issue has been highlighted at Chief Invigilators' training events.

SQA Sponsorship

SQA sponsors events, campaigns and organisations throughout the year. We receive more requests for sponsorship than we are able to support, so we carefully evaluate all requests to ensure the activity fits with our corporate objectives. A few examples of work we have supported recently in support of equality are:

Show Racism the Red Card

Show Racism the Red Card, in partnership with the Educational Institute of Scotland, held its annual Schools Art Competition Prize Giving at Hampden Park. The theme of this year's competition was 'Welcoming New Scots – Challenge Racism and Celebrate Diversity.' Winning schools were joined by professional footballers and BBC sports presenter Jim Duffy at the prize ceremony.

SQA was also represented by our Head of Corporate Affairs, at Show Racism the Red Card's Hall of Fame Reception at 10 Downing Street in May.

Project Ability

Project Ability is a Glasgow-based arts organisation that specialises in developing, exhibiting and celebrating artwork by people with disabilities and mental health problems. It promotes equality of access to the arts by supporting people of all ages and abilities to take part in innovative visual arts projects.

SQA supported Project Ability's book *Spectrum - A Landscape of Autism, Asperger's and Children's Art* by Janeta Platun, describing her experience of working as an artist-in-residence in the Autism Units of three schools in Glasgow.

The book showcases the creative, witty and imaginative talent of young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It has colour images of artwork and quotes by some of the 67 pupils who participated in the 16-month programme.

We have also sponsored Project Ability's 2008 Calendar, which features prints designed by artists who have taken part in the organisation's programmes. Some of the artwork is on display in our Glasgow offices. We also regularly advertise their latest exhibitions in our staff newsletter.

Stamp out Sectarianism DVD

SQA sponsored the *Stamp out Sectarianism* DVD and helped with its distribution to schools and colleges in Scotland. This short documentary film, from Anniesland College Prince's Trust Team 29, was produced by a group of young adults aged 16-25, working in partnership with the Education and Access team at the Museum of Transport in Glasgow. The team comprised students from a wide range of challenging backgrounds. Some have literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Next steps

We will:

- ◆ Work towards a Single Equality Scheme which brings together equality schemes in the areas of disability, race and gender. This is in recognition of the forthcoming Single Equality Act. Taking a more holistic approach to the protection and promotion of equalities will make our products sensitive to the specific needs of the communities we serve, while still ensuring that we meet our requirements under the legislation.
- ◆ Continue to monitor and report on progress with our action plans.
- ◆ Promote the mainstreaming of equality into all organisational activity via the Schemes, action plans and the equality impact assessment process.
- ◆ Continue to align the equality schemes with our corporate operational plans, and build on the current infrastructure to monitor and sustain progress against the plans.
- ◆ Develop our involvement and consultation work to engage with stakeholders.

Contacting SQA

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

You can contact us by:

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