

Alternative Venue Guidance - Engagement

In attendance

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Senior Operations Manager, SQA

[REDACTED] Operations Manager, SQA

[REDACTED] Liaison Manager, SQA

[REDACTED] opened the meeting by setting the scene for the Alternative venue service. In Scotland the service is used for learners who are unable to sit exams in their centres. Internationally, the service is used for people who are moving country or have a cultural or sporting reason for requesting they sit a paper overseas. SQA have had feedback on some problems from last year and would also like to take a fresh look at this service now it is being used again following the pandemic. It is difficult to draw a line as to what is eligible for this service, but SQA must protect the integrity of the exam system.

Feedback from SQA Co-ordinators

[REDACTED] We have had no issue in Scotland, very concerned about our responsibility for papers sat in the rest of the World though. We had [REDACTED] candidates requiring the service for Cheerleading and I had concerns about the appropriateness of the venue/my responsibility for risk assessing and whether the requests were appropriate and reasonable.

How can I quality assure a venue I will never see? I felt compromised and when I tried to push back to check the appropriateness of the invigilation arrangements and the suitability of the invigilator, I don't feel I got the appropriate support from SQA.

[REDACTED] We had candidates at the same competition, we also had learners going to Romania, the Netherlands and Bulgaria. Learners wanted to book early flights but we didn't do the request until the 5th of January and then there was a new system and we had to resubmit on the 30th January with new paperwork. This was challenging. If the service is continuing it needs brought forward much earlier in the year.

We would also like to request a change to management of invigilators and their training. We had two pupils in our school, but seven schools were involved and there is no overview on who is responsible for invigilator training if the same invigilator is involved. Are they all training? Is no one?

██████████ We had learners go to Florida. I am very uncomfortable undertaking a risk assessment on a venue I can't see. The whole thing was problematic. We trained an invigilator but were not comfortable with their experience. The exams involved were also problematic. We had ██████ learner doing an ██████████ exam that required printing and another doing ██████████ with no contingency for speaking the listening paper should they not be able to play it. The burden of responsibility is on the school but we can't do anything. None of my concerns were addressed.

██████████ We did feel supported using the service but had concerns. Once we got approval, the burden was on us to arrange and this took a great deal of time. I made a checklist to help. There's a huge cost around travel of an invigilator and postage to return a paper. ██████████

[REDACTED] I was not at all happy with the burden of responsibility for getting the papers there and risk assessing. How do we know the security requirements are being met and the paper is sat at the right time or day? A national paper was posted to [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] We know the same invigilator was used by different schools, can SQA organise this centrally?

Afterwards, we were chased for the return of a paper that went with an invigilator. We don't have it – it went to Florida with the invigilator and they are supposed to send it back. [REDACTED] agreed with this and contributed that she was told off for mispackaging a paper that was returned to SQA. I couldn't work out how it had happened until I realised it had been a paper sent back directly from an Alternative Venue invigilator.

Four or Five schools in our area were involved. Up to Christmas, we thought we were doing one thing and then the process changed. This didn't help, but with so many schools involved, there is a huge duplication of effort. Can't SQA take responsibility for that?

We feel that many of these competitions are representing local clubs. Not the country. What happens if local teams for other sports like Football want to do the same thing? We have no ability to say no to learners either. Clubs are telling learners they are allowed to do this and their school will sort it.

We got our [REDACTED] teacher to do a risk assessment. The arrangement agreed was that the exam would be sat in an office. The learner came back and we found out that she'd done it in her hotel room. The agreed conditions were not met. The paper didn't arrive back in the time allocated either.

We rejected [REDACTED] learner as not representing her country. She came back straight away with a two sentence statement claiming attendance was “Essential to future career aspirations”. SQA accepted this.

We need to know what level of competition is national. Clubs choosing to attend an event is surely not national?

██████████ We've had learners going to Cheerleading competitions and I'm compelled to support it but we need to be clear and consistent.

██████████ I'm happy to be the person who says no if the criteria is robust and early. We're getting very tight for time. The career aspiration is not important.

██████████ It shouldn't be the school saying no, it needs to be SQA. We need clear criteria and guidelines.

█████ thanked the SQA Co-ordinators for their feedback and explained that SQA will consider this as we review the service.

In attendance: [REDACTED] – Sport cheer Scotland
info@sportcheerscotland.org.uk

Information

- [REDACTED] represent SportCheer Scotland. The governing body for Cheer and Performance Cheer (Dance) in Scotland and is affiliated to the International Cheer Union (ICU), European Cheer Union (ECU) and SportCheer UK. SportCheer Scotland is managed by a board of directors and governed by statutes. The International Cheer Union (ICU) was established on 26 April 2004 and is the recognised world governing body of Cheer (Cheerleading & Performance Cheer).
- Two recognised competitions backed by governing body:
 - ICU – The Worlds
 - ISF – Cheerleading Cup
- 2024 dates:
 - ICU = Wed 24th – Friday 26th April
 - ISF = Sat 27th – Sun 28th April
 - Arrive Friday 19th to climatise.
- These days and pattern are the same every year.
- Some might compete in both. If not, free to go home 27th April.
- 2025 longest possible stay from 18th April – 28th April.
- **Allstars and Summit** are not recognised by the governing body. In 2024 the Florida Dance and Cheer calendar looks like this:
 - Allstar World Championship 18th – 21st April 2024
 - Summit Championship May 2nd – 5th 2024
- Many of these competitions are business based with no selection criteria.

Discussion

- [REDACTED] are extremely keen to support SQA, protect the service and communicate this to participants.
- They confirmed that many competitions are not representing their country. Only 10 learners out of the 58 requests are officially representing.
- Flights often booked in September's sale. Never encouraged by Sportcheer but common.
- Selections are made in August.
- Sportcheer reiterate importance of SQA and to wait for exam timetable but ultimately this is a parental decision.
- Raised various concerns:
 - some requests [REDACTED] did not authorise as learners could have gone home, we then approved with another invigilator to oversee the exam.
 - some learner attendance is not only for competing in those not recognised but to simply watch competitions.
 - early morning exams are not conducive to performance in the exam or competition. To manage this, they are looking to employ an invigilator. It is also difficult to secure room bookings early morning.
 - posting exams back can be difficult. Cost, risk and ability to meet deadline.
 - exam papers were sent to Florida last year and not invigilator's home. They believe it was more of a risk to travel with the exam and prefer hotel delivery. Equally a risk.

- being strict with the criteria of days should be reviewed case by case due to exams in the following days and on departure days.
- They have offered to provide a letter to acknowledge official representation. Also offered to give us a list of names but this won't be needed if we include criteria of a letter.
- They are keen to protect the service and integrity and would include SQA guidance on their website, Socials and include in cheer packs.
- While our criteria is generic, they are happy to add detail suited to their needs. For example, include the specific dates required before the event and requirement to go home one day after, depending on exam timetable, their duty to provide a letter and will only do so for the two recognised events.
- We are all in agreement this update needs to be communicated early due to summer selections in most teams and likelihood of flight bookings.

Actions

- Firm up our guidance to include letter criteria, with the addition of requiring competition titles, dates and period required beforehand for preparation and training. A focus on this would eliminate many of the requests. This needs to be actioned ASAP for early comms.
- Discuss the content permissible on their website, socials, and learner packs.
- Look at addressing and including common themes of early morning exams, exams taking places mid-air, delivery to venue, possibility to bring exam papers back instead of postage if within a set number of days, remote invigilation due to issues raised last week.

Possible Sportcheer website information

- Advice on specific dates when to arrive and leave. Arrival is weekend before the Wednesday – Friday competition. Should leave day after the competition.
- Do not book flights before publication of the exam diet.
- Issues with mid-air examinations. Still to discuss
- Issues with early morning examinations. Still to discuss.
- Alternative venue services requires an independent person to undertake invigilator training and take responsibility for the security of question papers. This cannot be a parent.

ID	Start time	Completion time	Email	Name	Last modified time
1	6/21/23 11:51:56	6/21/23 11:55:25	anonymous		
2	6/21/23 12:29:35	6/21/23 12:32:07	anonymous		
3	6/21/23 12:29:27	6/21/23 12:32:24	anonymous		
4	6/21/23 12:32:30	6/21/23 12:33:04	anonymous		
5	6/21/23 12:28:28	6/21/23 12:44:54	anonymous		
6	6/21/23 12:59:45	6/21/23 13:00:45	anonymous		
7	6/21/23 13:41:35	6/21/23 13:49:41	anonymous		
8	6/21/23 17:30:20	6/21/23 17:31:11	anonymous		
9	6/21/23 17:27:15	6/21/23 17:55:52	anonymous		
10	6/21/23 18:31:07	6/21/23 18:34:38	anonymous		
11	6/26/23 10:11:52	6/26/23 10:14:13	anonymous		
12	6/27/23 10:26:14	6/27/23 10:27:50	anonymous		

How easy did you find applying for an alternative venue?

Very easy

Somewhat easy

Somewhat easy

Somewhat easy

Quite difficult

Very easy

Somewhat easy

Very easy

Quite difficult

Somewhat easy

Somewhat easy

Very easy

Do you have any feedback about the application process?

It was quite straight forward

It was not initially easy to determine where to apply.

When I submitted the initial application, it was unable to proceed as I did not have the exact details of the venue for the exam. It was a hotel [REDACTED] which was unable to be finalised until much later. Given the papers were to be sent to the invigilator's home address, it was unclear as to why the whole application had to be put on hold. When I did get the details of the hotel finalised, I then had to resubmit everything from scratch (including the invigilator nomination form) which

Having completed the process previously, I was aware of the requirements and the information needed.

We had parents and the invigilator contact us to confirm that the application had been confirmed but we were unable to tell them anything. Essentially once we

It's a lot to get your head around when doing it for the first time. However, now that I've gone through the process it will be a lot easier if required in the future. It would have been useful to have had more information at the start of the process about the practicalities of script management, how the invigilator receives the I felt that it was difficult to find out information about the process and wasn't aware that this could be done initially.

No.

Everyone was very helpful when I called for advice.

How confident were you in ensuring the requirements outlined in the Notes and Requirements document (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/8421.2588.html>) were met

Very confident

Fairly confident

Fairly confident

Very confident

Very confident

Fairly confident

Fairly confident

Very confident

Very confident

Very confident

Very confident

Fairly confident

Do you have any feedback about the requirements?

None

There should be different paperwork/ application for separate venue:
another secondary
medical
abroad
and these should be 'tabbed' on the website

There are some issues about the access to digital papers for those pupils who require AA and access to a workable printer as they will not have secure SQA log-ins.

As the SQA coordinator I can put in all the training and provide all of the information but at the end of the day I just need to trust people to do what is expected.
The problem I felt with the system is my confirmation everything was being done correctly and according to the rules but I have no way of verifying this. It is hard to
We met with the invigilator (Dance teacher) and was satisfied that they would follow protocols
All the onus is on the presenting centre with no help from SQA.

Do you have any feedback about ensuring the security of exam materials?

Can't really comment.

Cannot speak to

Materials were sent to the wrong invigilator. Although they were all part of the same extended team, the papers were sent incorrectly.

I appreciate the need for security but it is also a lot to expect the invigilator to remain at home to receive the scripts. This could have been a deal breaker if the invigilator didn't have the flexibility to take a day off work. I don't know if it would be possible to do sign for mailing which could be sent to a place of the invigilator

no

No.

How did you ensure that the nominated invigilator was trained?

They attended training with the Chief Invigilator;They completed the online training course;

They attended training with another centre;

They attended training with another centre;

They completed the online training course;

They attended training with the Chief Invigilator;

They completed the online training course;

They completed the online training course;

They attended training with another centre;

They attended training with the Chief Invigilator;They completed the online training course;

They attended training with the Chief Invigilator;They completed the online training course;

They attended training with the Chief Invigilator;They completed the online training course;

They attended training with another centre;

Do you have any feedback on the training process?

None

I was not expected to determine the invigilator's training.

n/a

The invigilator noted the online training was good. The person identified to invigilate was very conscientious and diligent and in addition to the online training was prepared to attend a meeting and training with myself and the chief invigilator.

no

No.

How did you find communicating with the nominated invigilator to ensure the exam was delivered appropriately?

Telephone conversations and meeting prior to leaving. No issues

You did not nominate the invigilator - I did.

Myself as SQA coordinator and the chief invigilator were both able to communicate with the nominated invigilator without issue. I'm not sure what communication he had directly from SQA.

Straightforward. Meeting arranged and discussion took place.

We had set up contacts so these worked smoothly.

No problem. Was done through phone messages and email

They remained in good contact around the process and followed the invigilator handbook

Tricky as it relied on the candidate passing information to me initially which they were slow to do.

It was difficult as the person was in England and did not understand AAA.

Do you agree that SQA should continue to offer this service?	When would you like the application window to open?
Yes	October
Yes	January
Yes	October
Yes	
Yes	October
Yes	November
Yes	
Yes	
Yes	October
Yes	January
Yes	January
Yes	October

Please provide any other feedback about the service

Pupils travelling abroad for sporting events may not know until a short time before

It would be good to have confirmation that the candidate has indeed attended.

When I had to call to follow up on papers and issues the staff were very friendly and followed up on all of our queries. However, confirmation of the application and updates on its progress would be helpful.

Although I don't imagine the service will be used often, it is necessary on the odd occasion and therefore is a valuable part of the assessment process. Much of the success of the system is reliant on the competency of the nominated invigilator. On this occasion that turned out not to be a concern that made the process simple
Allows us to support individuals, in this case international athletes, to continue with the exam process and not be disadvantaged

N/A