

Present:

██████████ SQA, ██████████, SQA, ██████████, President, SportCheer Scotland, ██████████
██████████, Vice President, SportCheer Scotland

██████████ set the background to where SQA have come from with changes to the Alternative Venue Service, starting with concerns from centres and then consultation with them which led to a review of the service. The intention was always that the service was there for National representation for sports but practice had become wider than that.

██████████ fed back that SportCheer understood this intention and reasoning but when they didn't receive the guidance until October they thought the discussion must have been continuing for a further year.

██████████ explained that SQA had communicated with centres and October was the date of the service opening.

██████████ expressed concern that communications from SQA directed people to contact SportCheer Scotland for a supporting letter, regardless of whether the learner was a member of Team Scotland or not and this has led some parties to believe that it is SportCheer Scotland's decision not to grant this service, not SQA's and this is not the case. ██████████ explained that many enquiries have gone round in circles between SportCheer Scotland and SQA due to the reference to recognition of the competition. ██████████ explained that SportCheer Scotland recognises the value of all the competitions in Florida, but that is only one of the criteria SQA has set. Some parties are interpreting the response to mean that it is up to SportCheer Scotland to just agree to recognise these events to gain access to the service.

██████████ confirmed that this decision has been made regarding the whole service and while SQA understands that this has impacted Cheerleading, the criteria was tightened to what it was always intended to be, for everyone, due to risks to the examination system.

██████████ asked for some clear wording from SQA that the SQA criteria means selection to the National team. ██████████ agreed to discuss changing the wording with his team. ██████████ also agreed to approach SQA Communication colleagues to have a statement drafted to clarify the position.

██████████ asked if SQA would consider giving an extension to other competitions this year due to the training and financial commitment that has already been made to attending competitions. There are also concerns about the impact on athletes mental health. ██████████ explained that centres were advised of changes to the service for 2025 in May 2024 and advice has always been that travel should not be booked before confirmation of the alternative venue request. ██████████ explained that SQA's firming of the criteria for the service for 2025 is final.

██████████ advised that SQA have been looking very closely at this service as part of this exercise and are working towards what will be available in 2026. Overall, the risk of using unknown invigilators and releasing question papers early to be carried in transit is too much of a risk to the integrity of the examination system so the service is likely to change in 2026. He confirmed that consultation needs to take place and impact assessments need to be undertaken, but the intention will be to move to an exceptional circumstance service in 2026.

■ asked that they be informed of the final decision as soon as possible. ■ pointed out that the decision to compete the following year is made in June and they will need to know before the end of the session. ■ agreed to keep SportCheer Scotland informed.