



# SQA Equality Mainstreaming Report 2023-25





# Who are we?

SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) is Scotland's national qualifications body. It ensures exams and qualifications in Scotland are fair. We help learners succeed and follow the Scottish Government's rules around equality and human rights.

We shared a new plan called 'Prospectus for Change.' This plan will help us become Qualifications Scotland in 2025. We talked to lots of people to make this plan, like learners, teachers, and workers. The plan shows our promise to treat everyone fairly and equally.

## What is equality?

Equality means treating people fairly and giving people the same choices and chances. Some people need extra help to get the same rights. Some people have certain differences or similarities. These are called 'protected characteristics', and there are nine of them.

The Public Sector Equality Duty means we must make sure our work supports equality in our services, through our jobs, and through the decisions we make.

Mainstreaming means making sure that equality and human rights are thought about in everything we do.

An equality outcome is work we want to see happen to treat people fairly.

This report shows the work we have done in 2023-25 and gives examples of how we have thought about equality.

It says what we will do next, including through our new equality outcomes for 2025-29.



## What have we done?

- Learners can now use iPads and Chromebooks for tests with internet access, which helps people with a disability. We plan to use more online tests in the future.
- Understanding Care Experience is important to us. We trained our staff to understand and help people who have been in care. This includes helping them to find and keep jobs.
- We developed an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing calendar with our staff networks, who represent our diverse workforce.



- We hired young people based on skills, not age, and we created training programmes to help young people grow their career at SQA.
- We created a group where young people can help each other. Doing all of this helped us win an award for helping young people.
- We have expanded our volunteering opportunities to be more inclusive for all staff. Employees can use 21 hours a year to volunteer. They can help with gardening, beach clean-ups, farm work, mentoring, and online reading.
- We launched our 'Get Exam Ready' campaign with study tips, past papers, and advice. We made a booklet with important exam information. Our team won an award for this campaign.
- We asked staff to give us their equality information so we can make sure we consider this when writing our policies.
- We worked with other people and groups to help us to gather feedback about our products and services and their impact on different equality groups.
- We wrote a report on the outcomes of the 2024 awarding process for different learners based on their protected characteristics.
- We wanted to teach people how to stop racism and be fair to everyone, so staff have taken part in anti-racist training that links to their job.
- We did research to get an understanding of how assessment arrangements work for everyone. We listened to learners, teachers, schools, colleges, parents and carers. This helps make sure learners are getting the best support possible.
- We made our Physical Education courses more accessible to all learners, and we hope it will encourage more disabled learners to study Physical Education.
- We looked at how certificates are written to make sure they don't discriminate against learners using British Sign Language.
- When we make plans and decisions we look at the good and bad things that could happen because of them. This is called an 'impact assessment'.
- We have groups where employees can share experiences, support each other, and learn about different cultures and issues.

# What comes next?

- We will embed our new values — open, caring, brave and connected — into everything we do.
- We will consider equalities in our policies and decision making. We will include others' voices as we do this to help us understand impacts on different groups to make evidence-based decisions.
- We will develop a new equality plan for Qualifications Scotland.
- We will continue our anti-racist work and will work with others to do this.
- We will encourage more young people to work with us and grow.
- We will continue to work towards mainstreaming equality into our operational and team plans, including our new equality outcomes and the actions required to meet them.
- We will work with other people to make our information accessible to everyone.
- We will invest in developing our leaders and employees so that they fully understand the vital role they play in embedding equality into all processes and tasks.
- We will check our assessment arrangements to help disabled learners and those with additional support needs who may need support when accessing an exam.
- We will ensure the needs of care experienced people are considered
- We will continue to deliver for learners, schools, colleges and other people interested in the work we do, to ensure a smooth transition to the new qualifications body.

