QUALIFICATIONS SUPPORT TEAM for the HN SCIENCE Portfolio of Awards

Minutes of meeting held at 10am on 3 October 2025 (via Microsoft teams)

Present:

Anne Marie Allen (West College Scotland), Carole Barnes (Ayrshire College), Christine Russell (Edinburgh College), Ciara Kyne (External Verifier), Conor Larkin (Glasgow Clyde College), David Whitley (External Verifier), Doug Fraser (Senior External Verifier), Graham Motion (Fife College), James Roebuck (External Verifier), Joane Mathers (Perth College), Jonathan Gillies (SQA), Julia Wright (Dundee and Angus College), May Byrne (SQA), Michael Balzo (New College Lanarkshire)**,** Michael McKenna (SQA), Sandra Spence (West College Scotland), Sion Snape (North East Scotland College)

Welcome and apologies

Jonathan welcomed all QST members to the meeting.

1.   Actions from last meeting

All actions were confirmed as being completed.

2.   Statistics for Science 2 (H8XV 34)

Software packages can now be used as part of the assessment. The unit specification has been updated to reflect this.

The ASP exemplifies an approach to assessment that does not include software packages. If software packages are to be used, centres should create their own assessments.

3.   NC in Applied Sciences

Changes to the mandatory science content to introduce more flexibility is being progressed by subject-specific working groups. The proposed new mandatory science content will be shared with QST members for discussion and sign off.

4. Low uptake qualifications

A number of qualifications have been identified as having low uptake and are at risk of being removed from the catalogue. As part of the process, Qualifications Managers/Officers are asked to provide a recommendation for each qualification. Jonathan shared his recommendations with QST members:

- SVQs in Laboratory Skills (Life Sciences) (GP4N 23 / GP4P 23 / GP4V 24)
- SVQs in Laboratory and Associated Technical Activities (GP44 23 / GP45 23 / GP45 23)

Cogent Skills are currently reviewing the science NOS and SVQs, aiming to create replacements SVQs in Scientific Technologies at SCQF levels 6, 7 and 8. Due to the on-going review, SQA should request a two-year extension from SQA Accreditation for the above qualifications to ensure that there are no gaps in provision whilst the review is on-going.

- HND in Applied Chemical Sciences (GK6H 16)
- HNC/D in Chemical Process Technology (GL6A 15 / GL6C 16)

The numbers remain sufficient for retaining the above qualifications.

- HND in Applied Bioscience (G8WY 16)
- PDA in Modern Biological Technologies (GR87 47)

Both of these qualifications are centre devised and discussions will need to take place with the centres that developed them. These qualifications should enter a lapsing period and be removed from the catalogue.

- SVQs in Scientific, Technical and Formulation Processing (GP42 22 / GP43 23)

These qualifications are accredited by SQA Accreditation until November 2026. They should be retained until November 2026 and then removed from the catalogue.

QST members should contact Jonathan if they have any concerns regarding the removal of any of these qualifications.

5. AOB

Doug asked if there was SQA guidance on exceptional circumstances for a second re-assessment attempt. Jonathan confirmed that it was at the discretion of centres and they should apply their own judgement on what constitutes exceptional circumstances.

Carole asked if there were any plans to review the practical aspects of the freestanding units that were previously part of the NQ Biology/Chemistry/Physics courses. Jonathan noted that these units were not part of his portfolio and he was not aware of any current plans to review them.

Ciara asked if members had any processes in place for detecting AI-generated work. Joanne reported that although they use AI detection systems, they also conduct mini vivas with candidates suspected of using AI in their work. This helps the assessor to check a candidate's understanding. Jonathan reminded members that there is a dedicated email address for anyone who wants to provide feedback or information on their use or engagement with artificial intelligence: AI@sqa.org.uk

ACTION GRID

Action	Date completed
Members should contact Jonathan if they have any concerns regarding the removal of any of the low uptake qualifications	
Members should provide feedback or information on their use or engagement with artificial intelligence: AI@sqa.org.uk	