**Supporting Notes for Attainment Statistics (Education Authorities – August 2018) Tables**

The tables contained within this release represent the first statistical summary of SQA attainment data broken down to by all of Scotland’s 32 education authorities, together with similar tables for ‘Colleges’, ‘Independent’ and ‘Other’ centre types.

These tables were produced in response to a request from parliament during 2018 and are now being released on the SQA website. The underlying data represents a statistical snapshot of SQA National Qualification data taken in July 2018, prior to certification.

In future years, this information will be produced and released alongside the Annual Statistical Report using the statistical data collected in **December**, after the conclusion of the Post Result Services (PRS) procedure. Additionally, the format and content of the 2020 publication will be reviewed and may be altered to best meet the needs of the users of such information.

Future publication dates will be detailed on the statistical publication schedule, at least 3 months prior to publication.

**Data specifics**

Education Authority entry and attainment data is not routinely collected in SQA statistical datasets. The allocation of entries (and awards) to local authorities was determined by merging in recorded SQA local authority data (ea \_id) from the live SQA database. Although education authority data is relatively static and not a variable which is routinely altered by centres, it is simply noted in this publication that such data represents what was held in SQA live centre data at the point the information was collected, and may be subject to change in the future.

Entries allocated to a centre of centre\_type (9) were allocated to ‘FE College’, (8 or 10) to ‘Independent’, and any not assigned to centre\_type (3, 5, 8, 9, or 10) allocated to ‘Other’ (These include training providers, voluntary sector organisations etc.). Centre types 3 and 5 thus remained as the final category, and these correspond to Education Authority centres. Any entry allocated to ‘Education Authority’ was then assigned to a specific authority based on the ea\_id variable held by SQA at the point the data was extracted, by linking the centre\_id to the ea\_id held at the point the data was extracted. There are 32 relevant ea\_id values, corresponding to the 32 Education Authority tables presented.

Candidates may be entered for a number of SQA qualifications by more than one centre in a single academic year, possibly including centres from a number of different local authority areas. This set of tables assigns entries (and awards) to local authorities *based on the centre that SQA have recorded alongside the entry – SQA statistical data records a single centre against each entry*. SQA are aware that some candidates may study at a ‘base’ centre and then attend other centres for additional qualifications, perhaps even having centres formally working in partnership with the base centre. SQA can only assign such entries to the centre submitting the entry; in cases where the base centre and other centres are located in different local authorities, a single candidate’s entries and awards may subsequently be split over a number of local authorities in these tables.

As a consequence of all of the above, SQA would expect some discrepancies to exist between any data individually collected by local areas/centres and this SQA release. SQA cannot advise as to why any specific data here does not match data reported elsewhere by other organisations. In such instances SQA can only advise interested parties to contact the organisation(s) responsible for any publications to understand the criteria used in any reporting and for any supporting notes that detail limitations, caveats and the underlying data, together with any reporting decisions that have been made (such as not reporting certain groups, grouping attainment in certain ways, or introducing additional data etc.).

It is also noted here that at a date close to certification day, SQA provide data to the Directors of Education for each local authority, and a similar file to the Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS), which represents a subset of independent centres. These files also involve a static snapshot of data. It is noted here that the Director of Education (DoE) files are provided at qualification record level, so is simply an extract of raw data from which different authorities are free to summarise in a manner appropriate for their needs. The DoE files do not formally partition the SQA statistical records – records which are not assigned to any local authority, or a SCIS centre, will not feature in any DoE files.

Organisations may also use data from the Scottish Government Insight tool to monitor, and report on, entries and attainment. The Insight tool uses different date criteria to allocate entries and awards to academic years – this difference is due to Insight including a much wider range of qualification types that can be taken over a variable time period. Additionally, organisations may use/present data originating from other organisations such as software suppliers; SQA cannot comment on the base data and/or criteria used in output arising from such parties.

**Limitations and Caveats**

Attainment in qualifications may be influenced by a number of factors. SQA report the attainment observed without attempting to control for a number of factors which may impact on assessment outcomes. Variation in the observed attainment between education authorities therefore does not necessarily reflect variation in the level of resources, and/or the teaching and learning experience within each area, and/or the standard of education provision within each area. A more detailed analysis, working with candidate level data, that controlled for various factors would be required before any reasonable attempt could be made to draw conclusions about any apparent differences in attainment, and any possible reasons for such differences, between areas. This type of analysis is not undertaken by SQA, nor do we hold the necessary candidate level variables to attempt such an analysis. Other organisations have directed significant effort to presenting attainment measures in context, and developing approaches to compare performance at a local level through the creation of suitable comparator measures. The Scottish Government Insight tool represents an example of one such tool, which considers attainment information alongside contextual information such as:

* Learners recorded as having additional support needs
* Learners recorded as having English as an additional language
* Learners with a Looked After Status (LAC)
* The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data value for each learner

Insight access is restricted since it is a tool for professional reflection and self-evaluation, and is therefore not accessible to parents, pupils and the wider public (SQA do not have access to the Insight tool). Information aimed at parents and the wider public, including extracts from the tool at centre level, can be found on the Education Scotland Parentzone web site.

As these SQA tables are a simple aggregation of attainment data for centres assigned to a particular education authority area, with no controlling for, or consideration of, other variables, we can only caution against any attempt to make direct comparisons between the attainment of regions.

**References**

SQA statistical publication schedule, 2018, [Website] <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48513.8316.html>, retrieved on 9 April 2019

Scottish Government Insight – Benchmarking for Excellence [Website] https://www2.gov.scot/insightbenchmarking, retrieved on 9 April 2019.

Education Scotland Parentzone [Website], https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/my-school/School%20information%20dashboard, retrieved on 9 April 2019.