#### Supporting notes for Attainment statistics (December) by education authority tables

The tables in this release represent the first statistical summary of SQA attainment data broken down by all of Scotland’s 32 education authorities, together with similar tables for ‘FE College’, ‘Independent’ and ‘Other’ centre types. The underlying data represents a statistical snapshot of SQA National Qualification data collected after the conclusion of the Post Result Services (PRS) procedure.

##### 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 recorded SQA local authority data (ea\_id) from a cut of the live SQA database. Education authority data is relatively static and is not routinely amended by centres. However, readers should remember that this publication reports the data that was held by SQA’s live data centre at the point when the information was collected. This data may be subject to change in the future.

Entries were allocated to centre types as follows:

* Entries from ‘centre\_type’ 9 were allocated to ‘FE College’.
* Entries from ‘centre\_type’ 8 or 10 were allocated to ‘Independent’.
* Entries not from ‘centre\_type’ 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 were allocated to ‘Other’ (these include training providers, voluntary sector organisations etc).
* Entries from ‘centre\_type’ 3 or 5 were from education authority centres and remained as the final category.

Entries were allocated to education authority as follows:

* Each entry had a presenting ‘centre\_id’. The ‘centre\_id’ was merged with centre information held by SQA, which identified the corresponding ‘ea\_id’ for the centre. The ‘ea\_id’ in turn identified which of the 32 education authorities related to the entry.

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

Given the above, we would expect there to be some discrepancies between data individually collected by local authority areas/centres and this SQA release. SQA cannot advise why any specific data here does not match data reported elsewhere by other organisations. In such instances SQA would advise interested parties to contact the organisation(s) responsible for any such publications to understand the criteria used in their reporting. The organisation(s) may be able to provide supporting notes that detail the underlying data used, and any limitations or caveats. These might include reporting decisions such as excluding certain groups, grouping attainment in particular ways, or introducing additional data.

At a date close to certification day, SQA provides data to the directors of education (DoE) 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 provide a static snapshot of data. Note that the DoE files are provided at qualification record level, so they are simply an extract of raw data, which different authorities are free to summarise in a manner appropriate to 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.

Note that some organisations may use data from the Scottish Government Insight tool to monitor and report on entries and attainment. The Insight tool includes a wider range of qualification types than just National Qualifications, some of which can be taken over a variable time period. The Insight tool therefore uses different date criteria when allocating entries and awards to academic years, which may account for some differences in reporting. Additionally, some reports may use data from other organisations such as software suppliers — SQA cannot comment on such data or on reports based on them.

##### Limitations and caveats

Attainment in qualifications may be influenced by a number of factors. SQA reports the attainment observed without attempting to control for a number of factors which may affect assessment outcomes. Variation in the observed attainment between education authorities therefore does not necessarily reflect variation between each area in:

* the level of resources
* the teaching and learning experience
* the standard of education provision.

A more detailed analysis would be required before drawing conclusions about apparent differences in attainment between areas, and possible reasons for them. Such analysis would involve working with candidate level data, and controlling for various factors. SQA does not undertake this type of analysis, nor do we hold the necessary candidate level variables to attempt such an analysis. Other organisations have directed significant effort to present attainment measures in context, and develop 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 child’ (LAC) status
* 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 does 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](https://education.gov.scot/parentzone) website.

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 would caution against making direct comparisons between the attainment of regions.

##### References

[SQA statistical publication schedule](https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48513.8316.html), 2019 [Website] https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48513.8316.html, retrieved on 29 June 2020

[Scottish Government – National Improvement Framework](https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/) (NIF) [Website] https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/, retrieved on 29 June 2020.

[Scottish Government Insight](https://insight.scotxed.net/Account/ChooseIdentityProvider?ReturnUrl=%2f) [Website] https://insight.scotxed.net/Account/ChooseIdentityProvider?ReturnUrl=%2f, retrieved on 29 June 2020

[Education Scotland Parentzone](https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/my-school/School%20information%20dashboard) [Website]
https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/my-school/School%20information%20dashboard, retrieved on 29 June 2020.