

# Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

## Action Plan

This section is completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment. Due to the importance of embedding equality in SQA through our actions the Action Plan will be the focus and record of ongoing actions.

<b>Agreed Schedule Review Date</b>	<b>December 2024</b>	<b>Additional Schedule Review Date</b>	<b>December 2024</b>
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Explain how you will monitor and record the actual impact on equality groups, including how the evidence can be revisited to measure the actual impact.

<b>Required Actions</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment &amp; Review</b>
Monitor any patterns emerging from requests to translate complaints handling procedure into alternative formats or community languages, to identify any further action required.	<b>Strategic Planning &amp; Governance Head of Service</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>	
Monitor any patterns emerging from requests to provide adjustments to help individuals access and use the complaints procedure, to identify any further action required	<b>Strategic Planning &amp; Governance Head of Service</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>	

Identified Actions	General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
[LIST]	[CROSS REFERENCE]			
Monitor equality monitoring data gathered following the complaints process to identify any further action required, in a way that protects individuals' rights in relation to information law, and that does not deter individuals from accessing the service.	<b>Advance Equality of Opportunity</b>	<b>Strategic Planning &amp; Governance Head of Service</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>	

## Policy Aims

<b>Name of Policy or practice</b>	SQA Complaints Handling Procedure
<b>New Policy or Revision</b>	Revision
<b>Name of Policy Owner</b>	Head of Service, Strategic Planning & Governance
<b>Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion</b>	December 2022

### **What is the rationale for this policy or practice?**

SQA is a body under jurisdiction of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). As a result, SQA has statutory obligations to comply with SPSO's mandatory model for complaint handling and operate a complaints procedure that meets SPSO's requirements.

SPSO has revised the mandatory complaints handling procedure (CHP), which SQA adopted and implemented in February 2021.

The policy and procedure referred to within this document is set by SPSO with limited scope or opportunity for public sector organisations to amend or change.

### **What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?**

SQA is required to implement a complaints handling procedure in line with SPSO's mandatory model complaints handling procedure for public sector organisations.

### **What are the aims of this policy or practice?**

The aims of this policy, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, are to provide opportunity for any individual to make a complaint, either verbally, including face-to-face, or in writing by phone, letter, or email. The policy is designed to support all individuals who interact personally with SQA services. To this end we aim for the policy to be easily accessed by all demographics, without any barriers, so that every individual has the opportunity and support to express their dissatisfaction about SQA's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on

behalf of SQA.

SQA's complaints handling procedure, set by SPSO, aims to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the customer wherever this is possible. Where this is not possible, we will give the customer a clear response to each of their points they have raised with us.

**How is the content of these aims relevant to equality groups?**

The aim of this policy, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, is to support any individual with a mechanism to help them express their dissatisfaction about SQA's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of SQA. This will require consideration of each equality group as a complaint can be expressed by any individual that interacts with SQA services.

## Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?	
This policy is a statutory requirement which follows the model procedure as set by the SPSO, who carried out engagement with stakeholders across the public sector landscape in advance of releasing the mandatory requirements for public sector organisations.	
What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?	
<b>Age</b>	SQA's Equalities Monitoring Report 2022: <a href="https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/equalities-monitoring-report-2022.pdf">https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/equalities-monitoring-report-2022.pdf</a> confirms most entries for National Qualifications are from individuals between 15 to 19 years of age. It is reasonable to consider that individuals of this age may prefer someone to act on their behalf (parent/carer) rather than directly communicate themselves. SQA's complaints handling procedure provides opportunities for complaints to be raised on behalf of another, with consent of the main complainant.
<b>Disability</b>	SQA's Equalities Monitoring Report 2022: <a href="https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/equalities-monitoring-report-2022.pdf">https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/equalities-monitoring-report-2022.pdf</a> confirms 2.1% of entries are declared/assessed as disabled. SQA recognises the importance in providing an accessible complaints handling procedure and complainants can complain in a variety of ways: verbally, in person, by phone, by email, by web form or with another person acting on their behalf. Our complaints handling procedure and website invites complainants to confirm <i>"Is there anything we can do to help you make your complaint?"</i> and we will consider all requests to support individuals in making their complaint with us.
<b>Race</b>	<p>The Scottish Government's Race equality framework for Scotland 2016 to 2030 confirms that significant inequalities remain in many areas of life for minority ethnic people and that no one in Scotland should experience disadvantage due to structural racism or discrimination on the grounds of colour, nationality, ethnicity, or national origin. All must be able to achieve equal outcomes in every area of social, economic, civic, and political life. <a href="https://www.gov.scot/publications/race-equality-framework-scotland-2016-2030/pages/4/">https://www.gov.scot/publications/race-equality-framework-scotland-2016-2030/pages/4/</a></p> <p>SQA understands its obligations to our wide range of learners from across different races. While SQA's qualifications are primarily conducted in English, there is acknowledgement and appreciation that individuals may prefer to communicate in a language other than English and should be supported in doing so. SQA's complaints handling document: <a href="https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/sqa-awarding-customer-complaints-handling-procedure.pdf">https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/sqa-awarding-customer-complaints-handling-procedure.pdf</a> can be produced, on request, in alternative formats, including numerous community languages.</p>

<b>Religion or Belief</b>	SQA has considered this characteristic and has determined this is not a factor that would negatively impact an individual's experience of using our complaints procedure.
<b>Sex</b>	SQA has considered this characteristic and has determined this is not a factor that would negatively impact an individual's experience of using our complaints procedure.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	SQA has considered this characteristic and has determined this is not a factor that would negatively impact an individual's experience of using our complaints procedure.
<b>Gender Reassignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	<a href="#">LGBT Youth</a> indicate that <i>'More young people feel confident to 'come out' to their friends and families as transgender at a younger age.'</i> SQA welcomes all individuals to use their preferred identity and pronouns and identifies no barriers in this regard but does consider those undergoing reassignment or having transitioned; these candidates may contact us under a different name to that held on SQA records, this should be handled in a sensitive way in line with any applicable corporate policy and/ or guidance.
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	SQA has considered this characteristic and has determined this is not a factor that would negatively impact an individual's experience of using our complaints procedure.
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	A complaint may be made in a variety of ways and individuals with this characteristic are welcomed to indicate to SQA if there is anything we can do to help them make a complaint. As such SQA considers this is not a factor that would negatively impact an individual's experience of using our complaints procedure.
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	<p><a href="#">SQA's Corporate Parenting Plan 2018-21</a> confirms SQA's commitment that <i>SQA understands and is alert to the needs of care experienced children and young people to inform its policy, planning and practice.</i></p> <p>The complaints handling procedure supports care experienced individuals to make a complaint in several different ways – in person, in writing, by telephone and by email. SQA considers the policy and procedure apply equally and are widely accessible with arrangements in place to support young people in raising complaints through a representative or with additional support as identified.</p>

## Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy or practice has on an equality group may be different and this requires to be recorded. The impact may not always be negative. Actions are taken to address any differential impact, and include actions to mitigate against any negative impact, to advance equality and to foster good relations between groups.

Each section contains questions for each equality group. These questions are here to support consideration; however, you can provide further detail. Focus initially on the equality groups that would be affected by this policy. If you do not consider that certain equality groups would be affected by this policy, you may leave these sections.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Age	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>There is no differential impact identified in terms of different age groups. The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all people regardless of age and seeks to continually monitor, evaluate, and remove any barriers that may become apparent through the live application of the procedure.</p> <p>SQA also considers that people of any age group may not be comfortable in raising their complaint with us. Therefore, SQA will accept complaints via a representative (such as a parent, carer etc.) and has mechanisms in place to seek authorisation from individuals to permit another person to act on their behalf.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>SQA considers that provision of several ways to interact with SQA (Phone, Email, Letter) supports individuals of different ages; it cannot be assumed that age will determine the way in which an individual chooses to interact with us, however it is recognised that certain age groups may have preferred methods of communication.</p>

	SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to further advance equality of opportunity in this area.
	Foster good relations
	No impacts identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Disability</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010



Positive impact

It is recognised that there could be various barriers for some people in accessing the policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO.

The complaints handling procedure explains that SQA will consider any request for translation of this procedure into alternative formats and community languages, in line with corporate policy.

SQA will consider any requests received and will monitor any patterns emerging from any such requests to determine any further actions required.

Disabled people/those with additional support needs may have different communication styles or require additional support to make their complaint.

Information could be made accessible in alternative formats and customers can contact us in a variety of different ways, including by telephone and through the website.

Provision is also made for British Sign Language (BSL) users to make initial contact with SQA by using Contact Scotland BSL interpretation service via our website.

Advance equality of opportunity

	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>In September 2021, SQA began asking complainants through the online complaints forms whether there are adjustments that would help them to engage with the process. An example would be agreeing to a request to communicate primarily by telephone with a complainant who indicates that this would be a reasonable adjustment where they struggle with the written word because of dyslexia.</p> <p>SQA will consider any requests for adjustments and will monitor any patterns emerging from such requests to determine any further action required. We have also added information to SQA's Complaints web pages signposting to advocacy and support services to help customers raise their complaint with us.</p> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to further advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p>
	Foster good relations
	No impact identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Race</b>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive impact</li> </ul> <p>The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all people regardless of race.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity

	<p>Positive impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The complaints handling procedure explains that SQA will consider any request for translation of this procedure into alternative formats and community languages, in line with corporate policy. SQA will consider any requests received and will monitor any patterns emerging from any such requests to determine any further actions required.</li> </ul> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to further advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p>
	Foster good relations
	No impacts identified.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>Positive Impact.</p> <p>The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all people regardless of religion or belief. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>No impacts identified.</p> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
	Foster good relations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive Impact</li> </ul> <p>The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all, regardless of sex. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p>
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	Positive Impact
	The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all, regardless of sexual orientation. No barriers have been identified in accessing the service identified for this group.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p>
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Gender Reassignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	Positive Impact.
	The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all, regardless of gender. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group however, consideration should be given to those undergoing reassignment as candidates may contact us under a different name to that held on SQA records, this should be handled in a sensitive way in line with any applicable corporate policy and/ or guidance.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to advance equality of opportunity in this area.</li> </ul>
	Foster good relations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>No impacts identified.</p> <p>The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all, regardless of marital/civil partner status. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.</p>
	<b>Advance equality of opportunity</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p>
	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	<p>No impacts identified.</p> <p>The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, apply equally to all, regardless of pregnancy or maternity. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.</p>
	<b>Advance equality of opportunity</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p>
	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impacts identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Considered by SQA</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	<p>Positive Impact.</p> <p>In recognition of SQA’s role as a corporate parent, we aim to encourage consideration of the needs of Care Experienced Young People in the development and delivery of services.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive impact.</li> </ul> <p>The policy and procedure, which follows the model procedure as set by SPSO, will ensure anyone can make a complaint in several different ways – in person, in writing, by telephone and by email. Therefore, like the equality groups listed, the policy and procedure apply equally and are widely accessible. Arrangements are in place to support young people in raising complaints through a representative.</p> <p>SQA may use any feedback gathered from individuals on conclusion of their complaint to advance equality of opportunity in this area.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>Positive Impact.</p> <p>By accepting complaints through various methods, including by a representative, SQA is of the view that good relations with care experienced individuals will be fostered as it encourages individuals from all backgrounds to reach out to us and raise their concerns in a way that is supportive of their experience of the education system.</p>



**Rationale**

If you are proceeding with a decision that may have a negative impact and are not putting in place actions to mitigate against this, please explain how this is objectively justified.

Not applicable.