

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.

Agreed Schedule Review Date	September 2025	Additional Schedule Review Date	
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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.

Required Actions	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
<i>Actions taken to monitor the implementation of policy and the impact on equality groups (evidence and consultation)</i>			
More frequent policy review and update process required	Policy author	September 2022	Policy will be reviewed every 3 years
Further analysis of number, type, trends/patterns of Assessment Arrangements	Policy Research & Standards (PRS) Equalities team	Commence Sep 2022, ongoing	Work ongoing
Obtain personal data on learners who take SQA qualifications and have assessment arrangements, for use in analysis work	PAS Data & Analytics and PRS Equalities teams	Underway	
Publish policy on SQA and invite feedback from stakeholders	PRS Equalities team	ASAP/October 2022	Approval given by Qualifications Development Management Team (QDMT) to publish policy

Policy Aims

Name of Policy or practice	Equality of Access to SQA Qualifications
New Policy or Revision	Revision
Name of Policy Owner	Director, Policy, Analysis and Standards
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	September 2022

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?

The policy explains SQA's approach to enable access to assessment and qualifications. SQA supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment, education and training, and opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics (i.e., disability, race, age, religion or belief, sex, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity or sexual orientation).

Other factors affecting learners, such as socio-economic disadvantage, or circumstances that present barriers to accessing qualifications, are also considered wherever possible. Although such factors are not covered specifically by the Equality Act (2010), SQA recognises that a wide range of factors can have an impact on a learner's ability to achieve qualifications. Furthermore, SQA has a corporate parenting commitment to ensure its equality impact assessment process considers the needs of care-experienced young people, by treating care experience as if it were a protected characteristic covered by the Equality Act (2010).

The policy demonstrates SQA's commitment to promoting and facilitating access to our qualifications while also meeting its legal responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

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

Current practice involves gathering a range of information and data from various sources to attempt to evaluate how well SQA integrates equality and inclusion in qualification development policies and activities. These activities, along with the provision of assessment arrangements and guidance and training on inclusive assessment design, are directly linked to the Policy.

- ◆ External stakeholders on our Equality & Inclusion Key Partners Group provide engagement and advice on a range of equality issues. Organisations represented included Dyslexia Scotland, CALL Scotland, EIS and Education Scotland as well as teaching practitioners.
- ◆ The original policy did not make it clear whether the policy covered all SQA qualifications. In practice, some of the mechanisms which are linked to this Policy (e.g., Equality Review of Qualifications Process) only apply in practice to National Qualifications, but not Higher National and Vocational Qualifications.
- ◆ Robust assessment arrangement data from 2020 and 2021 is not available, as alternate awarding models were in place due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team are currently beginning to examine 2022 assessment arrangements data to identify any trends.
- ◆ SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team requested legal review of the Policy and received feedback which was incorporated into the updated version.
- ◆ SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team is considering how to effectively engage with learners who have a range of protected characteristics and may require assessment arrangements.

It has been identified that there is a lack of robust equality data within SQA about learners who take SQA qualifications and how they access the qualifications and assessment. SQA is currently considering actions that can be taken to improve this to ensure decision making processes are based on robust evidence.

What are the aims of this policy or practice?

The aim of the policy is to explain SQA's approach to enable equality of access to assessment and qualifications. SQA supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment, education and training, and opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination of protected characteristics (i.e., disability, race, age, religion or belief, sex, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity or sexual orientation).

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

As this policy relates to how SQA enables access to qualifications, a positive impact on equality groups (particularly people with the protected characteristic of disability) is explicitly intended and very likely.

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?

- ◆ SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team has discussed how to consult with centres and learners. SQA recognises that centres use SQA's guidance documents on assessment arrangements, however as the Equality of Access to SQA Qualifications has been held internally within SQA, centres are not aware of this. Gaining approval to publish the policy should help anchor the guidance which centres follow.
- ◆ SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team is currently working with SQA's Learner & Parent Engagement and Communications & Engagement Teams to create new guides for learners and parents/carers on assessment arrangements, ensuring these are accessible, easy to understand and engaging. This will involve working with groups who are/represent learners and parents/carers.

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?	
Age	Age is not used as a criterion for access to any SQA qualifications.
Disability	The policy addresses directly those learners, who need support to access SQA qualifications. It explains the processes SQA uses to ensure assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments are rigorous and fair. The assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments agreed by SQA allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding while maintaining the standard and integrity of SQA's assessments.
Race	A plan to develop an antiracist approach within SQA qualifications is being created. The work aims to broaden the awareness and understanding of SQA staff to enable them to examine qualifications to ensure the qualifications are more racially just. The actions and work which will be completed will contribute to the aims and requirements outlined in this Policy.
Religion or Belief	SQA has reviewed qualifications where belief is a barrier, for example, cooking specified dishes is a key skill in the Practical Cookery and Health and Food Technology Courses which requires learners to handle meat. However, learners who are vegetarian are not required to taste the recipe and learners with dietary requirements (such as vegetarians and vegans) entered for Practical Cookery have the option to use meat alternatives.
Sex	Sex is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications.
Sexual Orientation	Sexual orientation is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications.
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	Gender re-assignment is a criterion considered for access to SQA's Drama qualifications in the Performance component. Learners who take on an acting role can choose a character that is opposite to the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent. Guidance is provided to centres on this matter and SQA colleagues are available to support centres where needed.
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Marriage/civil partnership is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications.

Pregnancy / Maternity	Any learner who is pregnant, has recently given birth or who is breastfeeding may utilise assessment arrangements if required, to ensure that they can access SQA's qualifications.
Care experience (where relevant)	Having experience of care is not a protected characteristic. However, care-experienced learners can utilise assessment arrangements if they have difficulties with accessing SQA qualifications.

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
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral impact
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral impact - anyone of any age over 16 can access SQA qualifications.
	Foster good relations
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Disability	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact - this policy has a positive impact on people with a disability and is intended to support the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy inherently about enabling access to SQA qualifications through SQA power to make reasonable adjustments and agree assessment arrangements for those candidates who require them. Main evidence is the number of assessment arrangements agreed for candidates taking exams.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact - the policy enables access to qualifications through the mechanism of making reasonable adjustments for those with a disability. This means that people with a disability should not face a barrier to taking SQA qualifications. This has the potential to advance equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and those without. • Evidence of number of candidates who have assessment arrangements in place to take exams.
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact - the policy while enabling access to qualifications through making reasonable adjustments for those with a disability, also ensures that SQA does not negatively impact on the integrity of the qualification. So, confidence in the qualification remains although adjustments made for those who require them. This has the potential to advance equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and those without.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Race	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact - the policy outlines our commitment to inclusive design within assessment and qualifications and supporting qualifications staff to do this. This should help to remove or minimise any disadvantages and • Meet the needs of people with the protected characteristic of race.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive – more inclusive assessment materials leading to qualifications will benefit all people taking qualifications
	Foster good relations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive – more inclusive assessment materials leading to qualifications, which include diverse representations of people, will raise awareness amongst all people taking qualifications
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Religion or Belief	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive impact - SQA has reviews assessment materials where belief could be a barrier to accessing the qualification (see example above)
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive impact - consideration of fasting, e.g., Ramadan is supported by centres so that learners who practise this are not disadvantaged when it comes to taking exams etc.
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive – as above
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral - sex is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral - sex is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral – sex is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral - sexual orientation is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral - sexual orientation is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral - sexual orientation is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive impact - gender re-assignment is a criterion considered for access to SQA's Drama qualifications in the Performance component. Learners who take on an acting role can choose a character that is opposite to the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent. Guidance is provided to centres on this matter and SQA colleagues are available to support centres where needed.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive impact - gender re-assignment is a criterion considered for access to SQA's Drama qualifications in the Performance component. Learners who take on an acting role can choose a character that is opposite to the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent. Guidance is provided to centres on this matter and SQA colleagues support centres where needed.
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive impact – as above
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral impact - Marriage/civil partnership is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neutral impact - Marriage/civil partnership is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications.

	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral impact
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Pregnancy / Maternity	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact - any learner who is pregnant, has recently given birth or who is breastfeeding, may utilise appropriate assessment arrangements if required, to ensure that they can access SQA's qualifications.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact – as above
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral impact
Considered by SQA	General Equality Duty
Care experience (where relevant)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact - Having experience of care is not a protected characteristic. However, care-experienced learners can utilise assessment arrangements if they have difficulties with accessing SQA qualifications.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impact – consideration of particular needs which care experience people may have, to help remove or reduce any barriers to taking SQA qualifications
	Foster good relations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral impact – care experience status may not be known to other candidates taking SQA qualifications

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.

N/A