

National Qualifications 2024 Strategic Group

Date: Friday 29 September 2023

Time: 09:30 – 10:30

MS Teams

Members: Fiona Robertson; Andrea Bradley; Anne Campbell; Cheryl Burnett; Clare Hicks; Gerald Prescott; Graham Hutton; James Cowan; Jamie Dunlop; Jean Blair; John Booth; Justin Walker; Olivia Brown; Sara Lightbody; Tim Chan; Olaf Stando

Attending: Donna Stewart; Robert Quinn; [redacted name]; Gill Mann; [redacted name]
Richard Pidgeon

Apologies: Gill Stewart; Gillian Hamilton; Graham Hutton; Lorraine Davidson; Martyn Ware; Ollie Bray; Stewart Nicolson; [redacted name], Stewart Nicholson

Notes

Item	Topic
1.1	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the NQ24 Strategic Group.</p>
1.2	<p>Overview of NQ24 Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Remit of NQ24 Group- Proposal for workplan and frequency of meetings <p>Donna Stewart shared the draft remit for the NQ24 Strategic Group which was based on previous versions updated to reflect the specific context of this year. It was noted that membership will be updated to reflect that SSTA and NASUWT have joined the group. The Group agreed the remit was appropriate.</p> <p>The NQ24 Group workplan, which outlined the proposed frequency of meetings and topics to be discussed, was also shared. Donna Stewart noted that whilst the meeting frequency is currently set as monthly, the regularity of the meetings could be subject to change, as required. Members agreed the proposed workplan.</p> <p>It was noted that the NQ24 Group was a strategic advisory group and that a diversity of views will be reflected in the minutes of the meetings and in any advice provided to SQA's Board of Management.</p> <p>It was also noted that consideration of the impacts of industrial action are not directly a matter for this Group. Whilst feedback on additional topics is welcome, it was noted that the focus of this group is NQ24 delivery and does not go beyond that.</p> <p>The impact of disruption to learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic on the health and wellbeing of learners was noted as a continued concern and something that this Group should be mindful of during discussions.</p>

1.3	<p>Review of NQ23 and overview of arrangements for this academic year</p> <p>Robert Quinn provided an overview of NQ results in 2023.</p> <p>Over 140,000 learners received their results in August, an excellent achievement despite legacy impacts from the pandemic continuing to be felt. Robert noted that congratulations were due to learners and to all teachers and lecturers for their contribution to this success. It was noted that whilst there is growth in the diversity of qualifications being achieved, there remains work to do in this area.</p> <p>Robert provided an overview of the ‘sensitive’ approach to grading used in 2023. This involved the use of normal grade boundary processes and evidence in addition to considering the impact of course assessment modifications and continuing challenges learners faced as a consequence of Covid-19. SQA observed that within some courses, skills development has been adversely affected due to the impact of Covid-19, for example receptive skills in Modern Languages. As part of the application of the policy of sensitivity, this was taken into consideration during Awarding.</p> <p>John Booth provided an overview of the communications plan that was put in place for Results 23 including information on what activities worked well and outlining lessons learned. Social media continues to be an important method of communicating, with a significant increase in engagement year on year.</p> <p>Robert Quinn updated members on the new appeals process which was introduced this year. Priority appeals were delivered on time and the outcome of standard appeals will be communicated at the end of October 2023. Robert thanked the teachers and lecturers, in their appointee roles, for supporting this year’s appeals. A full evaluation of awarding 2023 will commence after the appeals process is concluded, the results of which will provide important lessons and contribute to the debate on future of assessment and qualifications.</p> <p>[redacted name] provided an overview of arrangements for assessment of National Courses in 2023/24. As already confirmed, the majority of courses have returned to full course assessment. Modifications to assessment are being retained in 28 courses where evidence has shown that they had a positive impact while still allowing learners to show their skills, knowledge and understanding. In addition, an Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service will be retained for those learners whose performance is impacted by exceptional personal circumstances either on the run up to the examination or during the examination itself. Members discussed the impact of reintroducing full National Course assessments from 2023 and acknowledged that this will increase teachers’ and learner workload. Notwithstanding, it was recognised that the modifications have had an impact on skills development and progression. SQA will consider how best schools and learners can be supported with this work via our Understanding Standards programme. It was noted that these challenges continue to be recognised and consideration will need to be given to dealing with this in awarding for 2024.</p>
1.5	<p>Next Steps/AOB</p> <p>No other business was raised.</p>
	<p>Date of the next meeting - Friday 27 October 2023</p>