

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE –2 NOVEMBER 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Qualifications Committee

held at 10pm on Wednesday 28 September 2022 by Microsoft Teams

For approval

Members

- * Prof K Thomson (Convenor)
- * Mr S Hagney
- * Mrs J Handley
- * Dr W Mayne
- * Mr D Middleton
- * Prof J-A Baird
- * Mr D Swinney
- * Mr J Reid
- * Mr S Hewitt

Officers

- * Ms F Robertson
- * Ms J Blair
- * Mr J McMorris
- Dr G Stewart
- Mr M Ware
- * Ms M Farragher
- * Mr J Booth

In Attendance

- * S Borley, SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * L McGrath, SQA

* indicates present

113/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convenor welcomed members to the meeting, including Emma Sinclair, Head of Senior Phase and OECD Curriculum Reform Unit, Scottish Government; Liz McGrath, Education Reform Programme Director; and Margaret Farragher, newly appointed Director of Policy, Analysis and Standards.

Apologies were noted from Simon Hewitt and Jon Reid.

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

113/2 PREVIOUS MEETING

i Approval of minutes from previous meetings:

- 9 March 2022 – approved as an accurate record of the meeting
- 31 March 2022 – approved as an accurate record of the meeting
- 11 May 2022 – approved as an accurate record of the meeting

ii Action Grid

The Committee noted the update included on the action grid detailing the volume of work being undertaken across equalities and monitoring. This would come to the Committee in November for a full report.

Noted the action grid.

iii Workplan 2022

The Committee noted the contents of the workplan, accepting that it was subject to change throughout the year.

113/3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no other matters raised that would not be covered in the course of the agenda.

113/4 NQ QUALIFICATIONS REFORM

The Committee were joined by [REDACTED], Policy and Research Manager, to provide an overview of SQA's current and future activity in support of the Independent Review Group (IRG) that had been established to support the reform of national qualifications and assessment being led by Professor Hayward.

In support of the IRG's work, SQA had set up a Collaborative Community Group (CCG) for qualification providers and other regulatory bodies with a view to consulting directly with key stakeholders. Membership had been subsequently agreed with Professor Hayward and the IRG Secretariat to include members of SQA's Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee, supplemented by representatives from SQA Accreditation, Education Scotland, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, and the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

[REDACTED] provided a progress report on the three key tasks that were involved in the work of the CCG, noting that the first had been completed and the second due to conclude in December 2022. She reported that, in January 2023, as part of the third task, SQA would be asked to comment on Professor Hayward's submission of options for future of assessment.

Professor Hayward would be providing an informational webinar to SQA staff on the process to ensure this is as inclusive and informative as possible.

The Committee noted the update and were comfortable with the direction of travel. Members were supportive of the strong spread of input in the collaborative community groups and commended the focus on evidence gathering and engaging with the community in the programme of work. In discussion, the Committee noted that there were high expectations at grass roots level for change, and it was important that the recommendations from the high-level review work provide a solid foundation for the reform itself.

113/5 WORK RELATED/BASED LEARNING - INTRODUCTION

Welcomed [REDACTED], Product Development Manager, and [REDACTED], Policy and Research Manager, to the meeting.

[REDACTED] provided a brief introduction to the programme of work that they would be reporting to the Committee on in this section of the agenda.

113/6 SQA'S WORK BASED LEARNING STRATEGY

[REDACTED] provided an overview of the approach taken to developing SQA's work-based learning strategy. She led the Committee through the three key phases of the work; SWOT analysis, policy scanning and broad engagement, noting that extensive engagement had been undertaken throughout.

The key achievements SQA hoped to obtain through this work include driving parity of esteem and to promote and clarify the products, services, and expertise SQA have to support current Government policy and initiatives.

[REDACTED] reported on the work being undertaken to address confusion regarding articulation and pathways, providing more clarity to the system and to learners of the options available in skills for work courses.

In outlining the draft guiding principles and initial strategic action plan, [REDACTED] recognised that this work would be organisation wide and so would anticipate the action plan to grow substantially as it progressed, with the eventual aim of this strategy becoming embedded in SQA as an organisation. An ongoing literature review was being undertaken to identify best practice that already exists in the organisation and to draw and build on existing work and expertise.

The Committee welcomed the presentation and supported the development of the strategy, acknowledging it's importance. In discussion, colleagues noted that external advisory engagement in the development of this work would be welcomed and discussed the possibility of establishing an advisory group to bring in externality, collaboration, and alignment. Committee members noted their willingness to support the development of this work where required.

113/7 FOUNDATION & MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] delivered a presentational update on foundation and modern apprenticeships.

██████████ provided an overview of the Review of Foundation Apprenticeship provision across Scotland, undertaken by Education Scotland at the request of the Scottish Government. She highlighted that overall, whilst the report documents where there are areas of good practice, it finds there are a number of fundamental aspects of the FAs where there could be significant improvements. As a result, the Foundation Apprenticeship Enhancement Group has charged its member with identifying short, medium and long actions to address the findings of this report. This will include guidance in the short term and a review of the original purpose and design and structure of these frameworks as a longer-term action.

Reporting on the five Foundation Apprenticeship pilot awards at Level 4 and 5, which are the result of collaborative working between SQA and SDS, ██████████ noted that these aimed to:

- enhance the experiential and work-related nature of existing Skills for Work (SfW) and National Progression Award (NPA) provision;
- introduce the unlevelled meta-skills framework; and
- assess candidates through a project-based approach and (where possible) in partnership with an employer through the Work-Based Skills Challenge unit.

██████████ reported that evaluation work was now concluding on this pilot, and it was presently unclear how long SDS intended to support the scheme. SDS have indicated that the new Model being used to develop Modern Apprenticeships would be modified and be used to shape Apprenticeships at these SCQF levels but, as yet, SQA Awarding Body do not yet have any detail around this proposal or how that aligns with the work of the Foundation Apprenticeship Enhancement Group.

██████████ updated the Committee on new model developments in Modern Apprenticeships, noting that SQA had taken forward developments in 3 sectors to date, Customer Services in a Financial Services Sector, Digital Technologies and Aquaculture with a further 16 qualifications being approved to be developed in Digital Technologies/Telecoms and Construction sectors. General feedback on the process had been collated and shared with SDS but more strategic and system level questions remained.

██████████ shared the new model impacts on SQA Awarding Body, highlighting that the outputs from the new model development process (Work Situations) are not as comprehensive as NOS and, as Work Situations are set to replace NOS, this would have ramifications for SQA's other national WBL provision based on NOS.

As Qualifications derived from the new model process would be Awards, Certificates and Diplomas and not SVQs, there is concern about the impact on the well respected SVQ branding and the qualifications transferability UK-wide.

The Committee welcomed the presentation, in agreement of the importance that understanding the impact of all the proposed changes was critical to those who accredit and deliver these qualifications. It was agreed that Dr Stewart would engage with Mr Brown, Head of SQA Accreditation, to ascertain what action had been taken from an Accreditation perspective.

113/8 APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

Professor Thomson reported that the SQA Appeals Sub Committee (ASC) had convened on 31 August to consider two escalated appeals from the NQ examination diet regarding prohibited items: mobiles phone.

The Appeals Sub-Committee heard evidence in terms of the factors that are considered by SQA in making a determination that candidate malpractice had taken place, and any penalty that should follow. It heard evidence in relation to the balance sought between fairness through consistent treatment of similar circumstances at national level, and the application of appropriate discretion where relevant mitigating factors apply in particular instances. In both cases, the Appeals Sub-Committee found no mitigating evidence to support the escalated appeals and so the original appeal decisions of cancellation were upheld.

As a result of its considerations, the Appeal Sub-Committee recommended that SQA explore the viability of introducing a pre-screening stage prior to a full meeting of the Appeal Sub-Committee, where a decision could be made based on documents submitted in evidence and the decision point was a matter that is settled. The viability of this was being investigated by Corporate Office colleagues and an update would be provided when a conclusion had been reached.

The Committee noted the update.

113/9 REGULATORY AUDIT UPDATE

██████████ joined the meeting to provide the Committee with the regulatory audit update, noting that SQA Awarding Body were expecting a full audit by SQA Accreditation in 2023.

The annual Statements of Compliance for SQA would be collated over the next two months, the final versions of which would be provided to the Committee for approval at the November meeting, or virtually afterwards.

The Committee noted the update.

113/10 QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE STANDING ORDERS

██████████, Committee Manager, presented the Committee Standing Orders as per the annual review schedule, noting that it was a critical document, and some minor amendments were proposed.

The Committee endorsed the amendments and agreed that the Standing Orders would be presented to the SQA Board for formal approval at its October meeting.

113/11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

113/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee would meet again on Wednesday 2 November.