

**QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2022 For approval**

Minutes of the meeting of the Qualifications Committee held at 10pm on Wednesday  
11 May 2022 by Microsoft Teams

**Members**

- \* Prof K Thomson (Convenor)
- \* Mr S Hagney
- \* Mrs J Handley
- \* Dr W Mayne
- \* Mr D Middleton
- \* Professor J-A Baird
- \* Mr D Swinney
- \* Mr J Reid
- \* Ms C Turnbull

**Officers**

- \* Ms F Robertson
- \* Ms J Blair
- \* Mr J McMorris
- \* Dr G Stewart
- \* Mr M Ware
- \* Ms B Black
- \* Mr J Booth

**In Attendance**

- \* Mr S Borley, SQA
- \* [REDACTED], SQA
- \* [REDACTED], SQA
- \* Ms L McGrath, SQA
- \* Mr M Ware, SQA

\* indicates present

**112/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Convenor welcomed members to the meeting, including:

- Steve Borley, in his new role as Head of Chief Executive's Office, and
- Liz McGrath, Head of Qualifications Portfolio Management.

There were no apologies noted.

Prof Thomson noted that he had been invited to join Professor Hayward's advisory committee. He confirmed that this had been agreed with the SQA Chair and Chief Executive and did not present a conflict of interest.

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

## 112/2 PREVIOUS MEETING

### i **Approval of minutes from previous meetings:**

The Committee noted that the minutes from the meetings on 9 March and 31 March would come to the next meeting of the Committee in September.

### ii **Action Grid**

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.

It was agreed that a National Qualifications Reform Update would be added to workplan as a standing agenda item.

## 112/3 MATTERS ARISING

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

## 112/4 NQ QUALIFICATIONS REFORM

The Chief Executive provided an update on the NQ reform work being undertaken by Professor Louise Hayward, noting that the independent review group that would oversee that work had met for the first time earlier that week.

It was anticipated that a number of engagement groups (communities) would be set up with membership including learners and parents. Themes of importance emerging from conversations between SQA colleagues and Professor Hayward included:

- Balance across qualifications;
- Understanding policy intents and how these are put into practice;
- Good approach to change management across all levels from Local Authority to National;
- Culture change across the education system.

Overall, the aim of the review work is to create qualifications that are adaptable and age specific to meet the needs learners and prepare them for life in the modern world, tying in with the intentions of the Next Generation HN work.

The Committee noted the update and discussed different models of development. Members noted that the final report was scheduled to be delivered by March 2023. It was agreed that the Committee would receive regular update on the review as work developed and, as a group, generate and discuss ideas for the Chief Executive and Prof Thomson to feed back into the review group.

## 112/5 WORK RELATED/BASED LEARNING

### i Apprenticeships

Mr Ware presented slides updating on key developments in work related/based learning, noting the evolving language currently being used in this space to encompass both work-related and work-based learning.

Mr Ware provided an overview of the background to the work, including work undertaken with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in support of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), progress in SQA, the review of Education Scotland and proposed next steps.

The Committee welcomed the presentation. Members discussed the work being undertaken regarding Foundation Apprenticeships and what could be done to improve the retainment rate for learners throughout the course. It was agreed that route map development would be crucial to help learners and parents decide the most appropriate way forward.

The Committee discussed the range in difficulty between different foundation apprenticeships and the need for content to be aligned across SCQF levels of subjects in similar disciplines. Members agreed that it was important to remain cognisant that it was not just National Qualifications being delivered in centres. A blend of SCQF pathways offered to learners as per the most appropriate method of assessment would help to facilitate foundation apprenticeship delivery as well as a range of other pathways. The route map discussed would be critical to illustrate to individuals how foundation apprenticeships fit into all other pathways and options available to them.

### ii Proposed Review of Skills for Work Courses

The Committee welcomed [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to the meeting to present a proposal on how SQA might consider enhancing the Skills for Work (SfW) qualification suite through the lens of new and emerging policy themes by building on research and evidence activities conducted in 2018-19.

The paper proposed that SQA review existing Skills for Work qualifications under the banner of the Next Generation project, by undertaking a range of research and engagement activities.

[REDACTED] provided a background to the SfW qualifications and outlined the proposal that this qualification product would be reviewed with consideration to both the aims of SQA's Next Generation project and equally, consideration of remit for the Qualifications and Assessment Independent Review Group being led by Professor Louise Hayward.

Colleagues provided an overview of the proposed approach to the review of SfW qualifications noting that it was a piece of work that should be considered in light of the current educational policy landscape to ensure the SfW qualifications would continue to reflect the broad principles of assessment: practicability; reliability; credibility; validity; authenticity; and fairness.

The project would develop and be implemented with other key significant strategic developments under consideration such as the embedding of meta-skills and digital learning which has, and will continue to, infuse all places and forms of work as technology continues to provide new ways of connecting and learning globally.

The Committee thanked colleagues for the presentation, commenting that it was an interesting and informing piece of work.

The Committee discussed timescales noting that, in the immediate term, the focus would be on undertaking a comparative study before picking up engagement with centres and delivery partners in September. Learner engagement would follow this to allow them to experience delivery ahead of engagement.

Members discussed the opportunity to consider this work within a wider scope, including the context of shorter focussed courses for those retraining for the workplace.

Dr Stewart updated the Committee that Skills Development Scotland would be working with team around New Model Apprenticeships, trialling a new model before rolling out across all areas, with construction being the next target area.

These first pilots would be used to understand the implications for SQA as an awarding body and colleagues would bring this back to a future Committee meeting to report on emerging themes from this work.

The Committee welcomed the programme of work, agreeing that all aspects should be carefully considered, including time, resource, and union engagement, to ensure that new apprenticeships are made up of quality and accredited products.

## 112/6 **ANNUAL MALPRACTICE REPORTING**

### i **Centre Malpractice Report 2021**

██████████ joined the meeting to present the centre malpractice report from calendar year 2021, for Committee awareness ahead of its publication.

██████████ provided an overview of the report and the SQA processes undertaken following identification of centre malpractice, culminating in the invoking of the Appeals Sub-Committee. The Committee noted the report.

### ii **Candidate Malpractice Update 2021**

██████████ provided a verbal update to the Committee, noting that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of exams, there had been no cases of candidate malpractice to report.

The Committee noted the update and expressed that with the following report, they would welcome a trend analysis over the years.

## 112/7HN NEXT GENERATION UPDATE

The Committee was joined by [REDACTED] to provide an update on the HN Next Generation programme.

[REDACTED] reported that webinars had been well received and well attended, with rescheduled webinars to be delivered in June. These and the academy models were open to all, not just pilot centres.

[REDACTED] provided an overview of the approach for the HNC Television evaluation that had been running in New College Lanarkshire and Edinburgh College.

The Committee received an overview of the communication channels, including a revision of the website with the addition of quality assurance information and links to newsletter and subscription options for continued updates.

The Committee welcomed the update, commending the positive working relationships between pilot centres and SQA and discussed strategy to maintain support levels to all centres when the qualifications are rolled out further. [REDACTED] noted that expertise will remain close with centres and easy to reach and engage with. Each team will have new product development manager who will be the key point of contact to assist with each centre.

The Committee thanked [REDACTED] for the update and look forward to hearing more as the project continues to progress.

## 112/8APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

Prof Thomson reported that the SQA Appeals Sub Committee (ASC) had convened on both 28 February 2022 and 25 March 2022 to consider two escalated appeals relating to centre de-approval following centre malpractice decisions. In each case, a director-level appeal had considered the original de-approval decision and upheld that decision.

The Appeals Sub-Committee had made no further recommendations to SQA following these meetings.

## 112/9REGULATORY AUDIT UPDATE

[REDACTED] joined the meeting to provide the Committee with the regulatory audit update, noting that SQA Accreditation's Provider Monitoring Visits report had been received by SQA awarding body on 13 April 2022. The report contained two issues and nine recommendations to which SQA awarding body would submit a response and action plan by 27 May 2022, which is on track.

The Ofqual audit, ongoing since 2019, had concluded and SQA had received a letter from Ofqual in January detailing their findings across nine broad areas and proposals for next steps.

The response to Ofqual's specific had been returned to Ofqual on 31 March 2022 and has been acknowledged by Ofqual.

A Project Board and Team reporting through the Legal, Statutory and Compliance Programme had been set up to take forward work required towards the formal response required by 30 June 2022. This would include confirming actions that have already been taken since the Audit in 2019 and whether there are any further actions required.

The Committee noted the update.

#### **112/10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair closed the meeting by noting that it was Carol Turnbull's final meeting of the Qualifications Committee before her retirement and expressing the thanks of the Committee for all her valuable thanks contributions during the period of her co-option.

No other business was raised.

#### **112/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee would meet again on Wednesday 14 September 2022, which would be a joint session with the SQA Board of Management.