

QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2022 For approval

Minutes of the meeting of the Qualifications Committee held at 1.30pm on Thursday
31 March 2022 by Microsoft Teams

Members

- * Dr 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

- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * I Morrison, SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], Scottish Government
- * [REDACTED], Scottish Government

* indicates present

111/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convenor welcomed members to the meeting, including:

- [REDACTED], SQA
- Iain Morrison, Head of Humanities, Care and Services, SQA
- [REDACTED], SQA

- [REDACTED], SQA
- [REDACTED], Scottish Government (observer)
- [REDACTED], Scottish Government (observer)

Apologies were noted from Carol Turbull and Seán Hagney.

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

111/2 **STANDARDS SETTING AND MAINTAINING IN 2022**

Mr Ware and Mr Morrison provided a brief recap of the slides shown to the Committee at the previous meeting, providing an overview of the approach to national qualifications in 2022 in standards and grade setting.

The Qualifications Committee and the Board of Management had agreed previously that SQA's approach to awarding in 2022 would be based on the principle of using normal awarding processes and adopting grade boundaries to reflect an intermediary position for outcomes between 2021 and pre-pandemic that would maintain performance standards in light of disruption throughout the academic year. In addition to this, SQA had moved to address disruption through modifications to assessments and the provision of study support materials.

Mr Morrison provided an overview of the stepwise approach, including pre-awarding input and other considerations that would be standard in a normal awarding year.

The Committee welcomed the presentation, supporting the plan to widen the evidence and agreeing that engaging with markers in this process would be valuable in collating qualitative evidence.

The Committee acknowledged that the grade boundary process was an accepted, standard part of the awarding process, taking place in every normal awarding year. It was agreed that this, with the additional support of the exceptional circumstances and the appeals processes would ensure fairness for learners.

The Committee discussed communication of the approach to the system, commenting that clarity was critical, in particular around the exceptional circumstances and appeals processes available to support learners in various circumstances. The integrity of estimates from centres would be important in these processes.

The Committee supported the direction of travel, noting the whole system approach that had gone into the work.

111/3 **TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE INTENTIONS OF SCOTLAND'S CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE AND THE DESIGN OF NATIONAL 5, HIGHER AND ADVANCED HIGHER COURSES? AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH**

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] presented a research report providing a contribution to the current debate around the alignment of SQA's Senior Phase

qualifications with the intentions of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Building on the findings of the OECD report *Implementing education policies, Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence into the future* (OECD, 2021), the report examined the relationship between the intentions of CfE and the design approach taken to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Courses. The aim of the research was to identify the degree of alignment between these courses and the intentions of CfE, and the extent and nature of, and reasons for, any misalignment.

██████████ provided an overview of the key findings of the research and reported that overall, the report highlighted a need for future reform of the Senior Phase to go beyond qualification design alone and include cultural, structural, and systematic challenges facing the wider education system as a whole.

The Committee commended the report and noted that it would be published on the SQA website and shared with Professor Hayward as part of her review work. It was agreed that the report should also be shared with the Curriculum Assessment Board and the Chief Executive would provide an update on the findings to the Scottish Education Council.

111/4 **POLICY REVISION: THE QUALIFICATION COMMITTEE'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION OF SQA VALIDATED QUALIFICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS AND STANDARD SETTING PROCESSES**

██████████ presented the revised policy that had been reviewed in light of the changes made to qualifications since the introduction of CFE. She reported that the policy had been updated in order to refine the title of the policy to better reflect the purpose of the policy, as consultative and to extend the policy to reflect the Committee's role in relation to consultation on all SQA validated qualifications, assessments and standard setting processes.

The Committee reviewed the changes and were content to approve.

111/5 **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES IN HIGH-PERFORMING JURISDICTIONS AND HOW THEY SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL ASSESSMENT, CURRICULUM AND QUALIFICATIONS**

██████████ presented a research report exploring specific examples of education systems in high-performing jurisdictions.

Following its 2021 review, OECD recommended that Scotland look overseas for inspiration, to countries that already have specialist curriculum agencies, specifically in terms of aligning curriculum, qualifications and system evaluation. ██████████ noted the considerations in the report of the specific inter-organisational structures involved in delivering curriculum, qualifications, assessment and regulation in 11 jurisdictions and aims to identify contextual features and other factors that may assist Scotland's review of current practice and its planning for the future.

██████████ reported that the research had concluded that there was no singular approach to education governance that is common across all jurisdictions and that could be directly associated with success. By extension, there was no singular

organisation within the education structures explored that can be considered a 'template' for success.

The Committee endorsed the report as a strong piece of reference work. Members discussed the identification of the common pieces across jurisdictions that make up the systems that do work well and the possible conclusions that could be drawn from investigations of lower performing systems.

111/6 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Dr Stewart reported that the Hayward review remit was currently out for consultation with responses requested by 8 April. She noted that the proposed remit encompasses a wide range of qualifications, both those used within the senior phase and 16-18 delivered elsewhere in the system out with NQ.

SQA had identified risks in this approach as some qualifications falling within this remit are used elsewhere in the system for other purposes and learners out with the 16-18 bracket. It is important that proposed changes do not affect these other groups of learners.

There was no other business raised.

111/7 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Convenor noted that the Committee would meet again on Wednesday 11 May at 10am.