

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

B174/2.3 i

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT – 8 OCTOBER 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Board meeting held at 1pm on Monday 4 August 2025 on MS Teams.

Members

- * Ms S Rogers (Chair)
- * Mr N Page (Chief Executive)
- * Ms A Davis
- * Mr S Hagney
- * Mr G Smith
- * Prof K Thomson
- * Mr J Morton
- * Ms C McFarlane
- * Mr S Hewitt
- * Mr R Erskine
- * Ms M Wailes

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
- * Mr J Booth
- * Mr M Campbell
- * Mrs D Mahmoud
- Mr J McMorris
- * Ms D Stewart
- * Mr M Ware
- * Mr D Walsh

* Indicates present at the meeting.

In attendance

Mr S Borley, Head of Chief Executive's Office, SQA
[REDACTED], SQA
[REDACTED], SQA
Mr C Boulter, Head of Data Analytics, SQA

SQA BOARD PRE-RESULTS DAY BRIEFING

Mr Page opened the meeting and welcomed the Board, noting that it was his first Board meeting since taking post as SQA's new Chief Executive.

An update was provided on the Royal Mail position, noting that services had been impacted by severe weather. The Board was assured that contingency plans were in place, and members would be kept informed of developments and handling.

Ms Stewart started the pre-results briefing presentation by providing context for the awarding level and an executive summary of attainment. Mr Boulter supplemented this with detailed analysis of attainment volumes, highlighting strong growth across National Qualifications, vocational and technical qualifications. He also outlined the grade boundary decisions for the year and the overall adjustments required, noting that these reflected normal awarding processes and confirmed a stable position. An overview of the attainment gap was presented, showing a small but positive reduction overall.

Ms Blair provided an overview of estimates versus outcomes, appeals, and assessment arrangements. She also reported on operational readiness, confirming that all results files had been transferred to centres and UCAS, and that extensive testing had been carried out with the supplier of text and email services to ensure delivery from 8am on results day. For communities impacted by severe weather, it was agreed that results would be delivered through centres for learners not signed up to text and email services. Communications would be issued that day to ensure learners and parents were fully informed of the arrangements.

Mr Booth presented the communications plan for results day, noting that the focus would be on celebrating achievements and reinforcing key messages of parity of esteem.

The Board welcomed the presentations and commended the quality and clarity of the data provided, noting the encouraging trends. Members agreed that an extension of attainment gap reporting should be explored, to cover other forms of achievement and attainment, including vocational qualifications alongside National Qualifications. The Board discussed what risk assessments had been undertaken to address potential operational issues on results day and the organisation's capacity to respond.

The rising number of assessment arrangements was discussed, with concern expressed about the increasing pressure on centres. The Board proposed that the organisation undertake further work with practitioners and school leaders to analyse the trend, supported by impact assessments. It was noted that extensive research was already underway in this area.

The Board also noted the positive response to measures introduced following issues with Higher History in 2024 and suggested implementation of a similar approach proactively across other subject areas.

Assurance was provided that extensive testing had been carried out on the vulnerabilities that had caused difficulties with text and email services the previous year. While the operation remains largely manual and system fragility presents an inherent risk, the Board was advised that all due diligence had been completed, providing the highest possible level of assurance to both the Board and the Cabinet Secretary.

The Board was updated on contingency communications relating to the weather, which were being finalised and would be issued the same day. It was confirmed that any reactive communications on results day would be managed swiftly and effectively.

The Chair thanked members for their time and reminded all attendees that the information discussed remained under embargo until publication the following day.