



# Child rights and wellbeing impact assessment (CRWIA) for awarding and grading policy

## CRWIA stage 1 — Initial assessment of impact

### 1. Brief summary

#### Awarding and grading policy

Awarding is a core part of SQA's business as an awarding body. We have well-established procedures for awarding that are used every year. In previous years, changes have been made to the approach to applying these procedures that have merited a separate policy. This policy sets out SQA's full return to its established awarding approach.

It also incorporates a second existing policy and provides a single point of reference for all policy regarding awarding and grading.

SQA's approach to awarding for National Courses is that grade boundaries should be set to recognise specific levels of attainment of skills, knowledge and understanding. This approach, in line with the attainment referencing concept, is for subject matter experts to set grade boundaries which take the difficulty of the assessment into account while rewarding candidates appropriately for the quality of work produced. A range of qualitative and quantitative information is used to support the decision-making process. A [video on how SQA set grade boundaries in 2024](#) is available on our YouTube channel.

It is an inherent feature of this approach that it applies to every learner regardless of equality group. SQA are committed to ensuring that potential impacts are identified and addressed within the qualification and assessment design process.

SQA are committed to ensuring that all impacts on equality groups are addressed within the qualification design and assessment-setting processes. SQA provide training on equality, diversity and inclusivity, and designing inclusive assessments that is available to everyone involved in the process of designing and setting assessments, including SQA staff and appointees. All new qualifications go through an equality review process, and all subsequent changes to the qualification are also reviewed. Staff within SQA have undertaken anti-racist training and Equalities team members are involved in the planning process for grade boundaries.

Other services support learners, including those with protected characteristics, by ensuring equality of access to assessments. These include the Assessment Arrangements, Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) and Appeals services.

These measures do not impact the grade boundary and awarding process but are in place to ensure that all potential impacts on protected characteristics are considered prior to grade boundaries.

## **2. Which aspects of the decision will affect children and young people up to the age of 18?**

This policy affects every learner who sits a National Qualification with SQA. All parts of this policy affect learners sitting National 5 exams and Higher and Advanced Higher exams.

## **3. Which groups of children and young people will be affected? (Guidance, pages 9–10)**

This policy affects every learner who sits a National Qualification with SQA. It also affects all appointees involved in the grade boundary process for National Qualifications.

### **Declaration**

## **4. Is a Stage 2 assessment required? (Tick relevant requirement)**

Stage 2 required      ☒ No explanation required, please complete question 5

Stage 2 not required      ☐ Please explain why below.

### **Sign and date**

Signature and date of sign off:

EqIA manager – January 2025

## **CRWIA stage 2 — Assessment of impact**

## **1. What evidence has been used to inform the assessment? What does it tell us about the impact on children's rights? (Guidance pages 12–14)**

This approach applies to graded National Courses and only applies to learners taking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications in schools, colleges and with training providers. The age range would normally be 15+, and learners are enrolled in a range of National Courses at schools and colleges in Scotland.

A breakdown of the ages of learners who were entered for a National Course in the academic year 2022–23 can be found in SQA's [Equality Monitoring Report 2024](#). In summary, 99.3% of entries at National 5, 99.2% of entries at Higher and 99.6% at Advanced Higher are from candidates aged between 15 and 18.

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## **2. Evidence from stakeholders/partner organisations (Guidance page 15)**

The Awarding and Grading Policy sets out SQA's established awarding approach. Awarding is a key component of SQA's statutory duties and responsibilities, as outlined in [SQA Awarding Body Code of Practice](#). The process aims to ensure the level of demand for a qualification, and the standard, is set appropriately for the qualification. Once the appropriate grade boundaries are determined, the standard is applied consistently to all children and young people. Information about the identities and protected characteristics of individual children and young people, and the centres they attend, is not available to the panel who make awarding decisions.

## **3. Evidence from children and young people (Guidance pages 15–17)**

SQA carried out an evaluation of the approach to assessment and awarding used in 2023. This involved surveys and in-depth interviews with learners and practitioners. Survey responses were received from approximately 3,437 learners and 1,237 practitioners, followed by 24 interviews with learners and practitioners. The [findings of this research](#) were published on SQA's website.

## **4. How have the findings outlined in questions 1–3 influenced the development of this decision? (Guidance page 17)**

The findings outlined in sections 1–3 above have been used to inform the content of and SQA's approach to communicating its approach to awarding and grading, with a particular focus on ensuring effective communication for learners.

## **Impact on children and young people — Assessing for impact against the UNCRC (Guidance pages 17 and 18)**

## **5. Positive impact (Guidance pages 18–19)**

### **Article 2: Non-discrimination**

The process of setting grade boundaries and awarding involves using a mixture of specific subject expertise combined with available qualitative and quantitative evidence to evaluate how the course assessment has performed. The process aims to ensure the level of demand of a qualification, and the standard, is set appropriately for the qualification. Once the appropriate grade boundaries are determined, the standard is applied consistently to all children and young people. Information about the identities and protected characteristics of individual children and young people, and the centres they attend, is not available to the

panel who make awarding decisions. This process ensures that awarding is objective and eliminates prejudice and discrimination.

SQA believes that using well-established processes for awarding and certification treats all children and young people fairly and equitably. In this way, the expertise of SQA principal assessors, working with senior SQA staff in making judgements based on the performance of children and young people, protects the credibility of the qualifications.

### **Article 3: Best interest of the child**

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### **Article 12: Respect for the views of the child**

One of the benefits of the exam diet is that it ensures all children and young people undertake the same assessment, at the same time, under the same conditions. This ensures the approach to awarding and grade boundaries in 2025 meets SQA's equality responsibilities and requirements as an awarding body throughout the awarding and grade boundary process.

### **Article 17: Access to information from the media**

Every child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral wellbeing, and physical and mental health. The article is principally about the mass media but SQA recognises that the information it produces contributes to the fulfilment of article 17.

### **Article 23: Children with a disability**

SQA has additional processes in place (for example Assessment Arrangements, and the Exceptional Examination Circumstances Consideration Service) to support disabled children and young people. These ensure that these learners are not disadvantaged in the external assessment, and that their grade reflects their demonstrated attainment.

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### **Article 28: Right to an education**

Every child has the right to education no matter who they are, regardless of race, gender or disability, or if they are in detention, or if they are a refugee. While SQA does not determine

the right to education in Scotland, it does have a responsibility to provide assessment and certification of SQA qualifications for all learners.

### **Article 29: Goals of education**

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## **6. Negative impact (Guidance pages 19–20)**

None identified

## **7. Options for modification or mitigation of negative impact (Guidance pages 20–21)**

No negative impacts were identified, therefore, no mitigations explored.

### **Mitigation Record**

Issue or risk identified per article/ Optional protocol

N/A

Action taken/ to be taken

N/A

Date action to be taken or was taken

N/A

## **8. Impact on wellbeing: will the decision contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland? (Guidance pages 21–24)**

No groups experiencing differential impacts have been identified. Where learners have individual characteristics (such as disability), other policies (such as assessment arrangements, reasonable adjustments) are in place through other policies. Awarding is determined irrespectively. Alongside this CRWIA, an EqIA has been completed, and will be published alongside this impact assessment.

**9. How will the organisation communicate to children and young people the impact that the decision will have on their rights? (Guidance page 24)**

A policy on awarding in 2025 will be published alongside this CRWIA.

**10. Planning for the review of impact on child rights (Stage 3) (Guidance pages 24–26)**

This awarding practice is an annual undertaking for SQA. We have scheduled for this CRWIA to be revisited in 2028 by Qualifications Scotland.

**11. Sign off (Guidance page 26)**

Signature and date of sign off:

EqIA Manager – January 2025

Head of Standards, Malpractice and Complaints – January 2025