



Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA):

Arrangements for Assessment of National Qualifications in 2022

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Summary of impact assessment

Potential impact

Children and young people may feel anxious about the first diet of exams since 2019 and be uncertain about whether exams will go ahead or not.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Clear, regular communications to children and young people and a range of key stakeholders from the beginning of 2021–22, explaining the plan for exams in 2022 as well as contingency arrangements.
- ◆ Course modifications continued from 2021 aim to help all learners during their learning and teaching.
- ◆ In 2021–22, support provided by SQA to centres on assessment arrangements and on supporting learners with exam stress and poor mental health.

Potential impact

Disruption to learning is difficult to mitigate in a consistent way while maintaining the validity of the qualification. Individual learners have been impacted in different ways.

Applies to UNCRC Articles 2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Course modifications continued from 2021 aim to help all learners during their learning and teaching.
- ◆ Assessment arrangements (including reasonable adjustments) continue to support individual learners who require them.
- ◆ Qualifications are based on the demonstrated attainment of learner. Exams provide opportunity to demonstrate that they have the competence required to achieve the qualification.
- ◆ EECCS in place for 2022 to support individual candidates who are impacted on the day of the exam.
- ◆ EECCS provides opportunity for review of alternative academic evidence to arrive at a grade.

Potential impact

EECCS is not directly accessed by learners.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Centres want to have this responsibility — they know their learners best.
- ◆ Centres will identify and support eligible candidates to access this service.
- ◆ SQA will provide supportive guidance to centres on operating EECCS.
- ◆ Centre access reduces the risk of EECCS being perceived as 'alternative' to exam.

Potential impact

It is important to note that grades awarded through EECCS *based only on alternative evidence* will be at the lowest band. This predates EECCS and was a feature of previous SQA appeals processes.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Affects small number of candidates.
- ◆ It is alternative evidence/centre-generated evidence of attainment that is being assessed and is therefore non-standardised. This makes it very challenging for examiners to 'fine tune' the evidence into bands, especially across bands that have very small margins. SQA advises examiners to consider the totality of the evidence suggestive of the skills, knowledge and understanding associated with a specific grade descriptor/characteristic.
- ◆ Where a learner has attempted some of the exam paper, it is possible for the higher band to be awarded.

Potential impact

EECCS appeals can go up or down

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3

Mitigating actions

- ◆ EECCS Appeals uses same evidence both pre-certification and post-certification.
- ◆ Occurrence of grade going down likely to be exceptional.
- ◆ Centres should ensure they keep learners informed as to the grade of the evidence produced during the year.

Potential impact

It is difficult to determine a fair and equitable way to measure how disruption to learning has impacted learners' exam performances. Individual learners have been impacted in different ways.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 12, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Learners were consulted on SQA's approach to awarding and grade boundaries to ensure the most fair and equitable option was taken forward.
- ◆ Reintroducing the exam diet ensures that all candidates undertake the same assessment, at the same time, under the same conditions. Learners felt that this approach removed the potential for unfairness in a teacher-led approach to assessment.

Potential impact

Qualifications could be used in a way that creates unfairness. For example, higher education institutions may seek to introduce additional entrance tests or interviews as part of the selection process, particularly if the profile of outcomes (such as the number of A grades) remains high.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ SQA has had dialogue with the further and higher education sectors to ensure children and young people, in particular those from widening access backgrounds, are not disadvantaged by any decisions made by further and higher education institutions.

Potential impact

Children and young people may not agree with the grade that has been awarded by SQA.

Applies to UNCRC Articles 2, 3, 12, 17, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Children and young people can appeal directly to SQA if they meet eligibility criteria. The service is free.
- ◆ SQA will continue to publish information on SQA's website and social media with information about the Appeals 2022 service.

Potential impact

Children and young people may not be in a position to submit an appeal independently, particularly if this is due to an equality protected characteristic.

Applies to UNCRC Articles 2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Where authorised by the child or young person, an authorised representative can submit an appeal on their behalf.
- ◆ SQA will continue to publish information on SQA's website and social media with information about the Appeals 2022 service.

Potential impact

Children and young people's place at university, a further education institution, or a training or employment opportunity may be contingent upon the grades they achieve.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 3, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ A priority appeals service will be available between 9 August and 16 August 2022 for children and young people whose appeal is time contingent (for example, when they have received a conditional offer for further or higher education).

Potential impact

Disabled children and young people may have been disadvantaged by a centre's failure to determine or verify their need for AAs in internal assessments (used to determine their estimated grades), as required by SQA guidance.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Children and young people, or their authorised representative, can submit an appeal on the grounds of a centre's failure to determine or verify their need for AAs in internal assessments.
- ◆ SQA will continue to publish information on the SQA website and social media with information about the Appeals 2022 service.

Section 1: Background and context

This document summarises the ways in which SQA has considered children's rights and wellbeing in the development of arrangements for the assessment of National Qualifications (NQs) in 2022. SQA supports lifelong learning, and awards qualifications to learners across the age spectrum, but many learners taking SQA graded national courses are aged 15, 16 or 17, and would identify as children or young people.

SQA reviewed a range of available evidence to inform its decisions in the context of its duties as the statutory national awarding body in Scotland for qualifications other than degrees. These duties are set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996, as amended.

August 2021

On Wednesday 18 August 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills confirmed that exams will be held for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses in the summer of 2022.

The Cabinet Secretary informed the Scottish Parliament that:

'The central planning assumption is that an examination diet for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses will be held in session 2021–2022. This decision has been informed by the views of stakeholders, including the National Qualifications Group, and by public health advice.'

Also on 18 August, SQA set out the key detail on plans for assessment of National Qualifications in 2021–22. SQA exams will take place from 26 April to 1 June 2022, with results day on 9 August 2022. Detailed planning for delivering exams began with SQA — and the whole education system — also planning for any further disruption that may occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic and seeking to ensure the resilience of examinations in the face of this disruption. SQA continued to discuss with the National Qualifications Group 2022 (NQ22) any additional measures that will help the education system respond to further significant disruption to learning or changes to public health conditions.

SQA has endeavoured to ensure that, in this approach, the credibility of qualifications in 2022 is maintained while acknowledging the distinct issues facing learners brought about by impacts of the pandemic, such as the overall disruption to learning and the impact of exams not being held since 2019. SQA also sought to ensure that, with the stakeholders represented on the NQ 2022 groups and engagement more widely, all learn lessons from the collective experience of responding to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and reflect these lessons in approaches to 2022. At the same time, all would need to recognise that the challenges presented in the 2021–22 academic year will differ in some respects from those faced in 2020 and 2021.

On Wednesday 15 September 2021, SQA released the [following statement](#):

‘As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause disruption in all our lives, SQA understands that teachers, lecturers, parents/carers and learners have questions on how National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses will be assessed in 2021–22.

Following the decision by Ministers that exams should go ahead in 2022 if it is safe to do so and the [related statement on 18 August 2021](#), SQA is continuing to monitor public health advice to prepare for a range of scenarios.

These scenarios and the associated contingencies, agreed by partners in the National Qualifications 2022 (NQ22) Group, acknowledge the possibility of further disruption in the months ahead and will help to ensure the safe delivery of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.’

Three scenarios were agreed:

Scenario 1: Current public health advice: SQA exam diet with modifications, as published

SQA has kept most of the modifications made to course assessments (exams and coursework) in session 2020–21. This means that, in most courses, learners will do less assessment than in a ‘normal’ year with exams, and more time will be available to focus on learning and teaching. You can view a summary of all the modifications at sqa.org.uk/nqmodifications.

Scenario 2: Increased levels of disruption: SQA exam diet with modifications (as above) plus additional measures

If there is further significant disruption to learning and teaching this session, appropriate additional support measures for learners will be put in place to help reduce pre-exam stress. For example, where possible in some subjects SQA may provide additional information to help learners focus their study on the run-up to the exams. This will not be possible in all subjects due to the types of modifications which are already in place. The actual assessments will not change under this approach. If additional measures are required, they will be introduced at the end of March 2022.

Scenario 3: Public health advice leads to SQA exams being cancelled: teachers and lecturers determine provisional results

If the COVID-19 pandemic gets worse to the point where physical gatherings are restricted at the time of the exams, the SQA exam diet will be cancelled. If this happens, teachers and lecturers will be asked to determine provisional results by using their professional judgement of evidence that shows each learner’s skills, knowledge and understanding.

Section 2: CRWIA Stage 1 Screening: key questions

Arrangements for the assessment of National Qualifications in 2022

This CRWIA assesses the potential impacts on candidates who are children and young people of arrangements for assessment of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher NQs in 2022. How any potential negative impacts identified could be mitigated has been considered as part of the iterative process of designing scenarios for 2022 and development of this impact assessment.

Many organisations and interest groups working with and on behalf of children and young people (see Appendix 2) report that those facing inequality, disadvantage, and deprivation have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and the associated challenges, including absence (of both learners and teaching practitioners) from school/college, learning loss, increased anxiety and impacts on mental health due to ongoing uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

Scenarios 1 and 2 have been created in the context of this disruption to enable examinations to take place. The arrangements for both scenarios provide support to **all learners** (communications, course modifications; additional support for learners [Scenario 2]; awarding and grade boundaries) and **individual learners** (Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) 2022, Assessment Arrangements and Appeals 2022). This CRWIA first considers the impacts of:

- ◆ Communications (all learners)
- ◆ Course modifications (all learners)
- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (AAs) (individual learners)
- ◆ EECCS (individual learners)

and will be added to, to demonstrate assessment of the impacts of the following arrangements, **when information on these arrangements is made available publicly between March and April 2022:**

- ◆ Additional support for learners [Scenario 2]
- ◆ Appeals 2022
- ◆ Awarding and grade boundaries

It is important to note that in developing arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022, the best interests of children and young people were core considerations. Several services have been created specifically to address the varying impacts of the pandemic on learners during 2021–22. SQA has had to approach things differently in 2022, so: arrangements for EECCS 2022; modifications to course assessment implemented in subject-specific ways; additional support for learners; Appeals 2022; and awarding and grade boundaries, have been tailored to the circumstances faced by all learners in 2022.

What aspects of the service will affect children and young people up to the age of 18?

SQA supports lifelong learning, and awards qualifications to learners across the age spectrum, but many learners taking SQA graded national courses are aged 15, 16 or 17 and would identify as children or young people. Therefore, all aspects of arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022 have the potential to affect those children and young people taking SQA graded national courses in 2022.

What likely impact — direct or indirect — will the service have on children and young people?

The arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022 will enable children and young people to complete their selected National Qualifications courses under COVID-19 restrictions, and to be awarded grades that reflect their achievement. They will be able to celebrate their attainment and progress to continued education, training or employment where entry relies on SQA grades.

Which groups of children and young people will be affected?

SQA understands that 'child' means every human being below the age of 18. We also understand that our corporate parenting responsibilities under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 apply not only to children who are looked after by local authorities, but also to young people up to the age of 26 who were looked after at age 16 or later.

SQA recognises that arrangements for assessing National Qualifications in 2022 will impact on all children and young people due to take exams between April – June 2022.

Will this require a CRWIA?

While there is no formal or legal requirement for SQA to undertake or publish a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment, SQA recognises that arrangements for assessing National Qualifications in 2022 will impact on children and young people. In line with good practice, SQA has described in this document its assessment of arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022, and actions adopted to maximise positive impacts and minimise negative impacts. SQA respects the rights of the child described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights.

Section 3: The CRWIA

3.1 The CRWIA context

Scotland is set to directly incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into domestic law. The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1 September 2020. When enacted, it will be unlawful for public authorities to act in any way that is incompatible with the incorporated UNCRC requirements. The Scottish Government stated that it fully recognises ‘that young people are rights-holders and key stakeholders within the education system.’

3.2 The CRWIA: key questions

3.2.1 Which UNCRC articles are relevant to the arrangements?

SQA considers that the following articles are particularly relevant to the arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022. The formal United Nations definitions of these Articles are explained in [Appendix 1](#). The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) [child-friendly descriptors](#) have been set out below.

Article 2: non-discrimination

All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason.

Article 3: best interests of the child

When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents, or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job.

Article 12: respect for children’s views

Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.

Article 17: right to information

Children have the right to get information from the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, books and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful. Governments should encourage the media to share information from lots of different sources, in languages that all children can understand.

Article 23: children with disabilities

Every child with a disability should enjoy the best possible life in society. Governments should remove all obstacles for children with disabilities to become independent and to participate actively in the community.

Article 28: right to education

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children's rights and never use violence.

Article 29: aims of education

Children's education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.

3.2.2 What impact will the arrangements have on children's rights?

SQA has developed arrangements for the assessment of National Qualifications in 2022 with consideration of learners at the centre, constrained by the fluid and challenging circumstances affecting the education sector due to the ongoing pandemic. The arrangements have the potential to advance the realisation of children's rights in Scotland.

The list below outlines the UNCRC rights that will be engaged by each key element of the arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022.

Article 2: Non-discrimination

Diet of exams
Course modifications
Communications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Awarding and grade boundaries
Appeals

Article 3: Best interests of the child

Diet of exams
Course modifications
Communications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Awarding and grade boundaries
Appeals

Article: 12 Respect for children's views

Assessment arrangements
Communications
EECCS
Awarding and grade boundaries
Appeals

17 Right to information

Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Appeals

23 Children with disabilities

Diet of exams
Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Awarding and grade boundaries
Appeals

28 Right to education

Diet of exams
Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Awarding and grade boundaries
Appeals

29 Aims of education

Diet of exams
Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Awarding and grade boundaries
Appeals

Section 4: Assessment of impact and mitigations

Key elements

This part of the impact assessment further examines the key elements of arrangements for the Assessment of National Qualifications in 2022 in line with the relevant UNCRC Articles as outlined in section 3.2.2 and considers:

- ◆ whether the arrangements may have different impacts on different groups of children and young people
- ◆ what mitigating actions might be adopted if a potential negative impact was identified for any area of rights or any group of children and young people
- ◆ where the arrangements for the Assessment of National Qualifications in 2022 can contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland

4.1 Communications (all learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

A range of evidence (Appendix 2) suggests that children and young people may feel anxious about the first diet of exams since 2019 and may be uncertain about whether exams will go ahead or not.

SQA has communicated regularly with a range of children and young people and other stakeholders, since announcing the arrangements for assessment of National Qualifications in 2021–22, on 18 August 2021. These communications include updates for learners, parents and carers, centres and stakeholders, including:

- ◆ weekly e-newsletter ‘SQA News’ for SQA co-ordinators, practitioners and subscribers
- ◆ monthly SQA Co-ordinator Update e-newsletter
- ◆ direct email covering key statements for all educational stakeholders, parents/carers and learners
- ◆ dedicated web page: www.sqa.org.uk/nq2022
- ◆ dedicated learner web page: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/71526.html>
- ◆ NQ Awarding 2022 news page: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/98805.html>
- ◆ NQ Awarding FAQ web page: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/faq>
- ◆ blog posts for practitioners, parents/carers and learners on key topics: <https://blogs.sqa.org.uk/qualifications2022/>
- ◆ social media video clips, static images and Q&A gifs
- ◆ hard copy and digital booklets for learners: Your National Qualifications; Your Exams

SQA communications for learners, and for parents and carers, are tailored specifically, taking into consideration plain English and appropriate tone of voice, as well as incorporating feedback from SQA’s Learner Panel, the Scottish Youth Parliament and National Parent Forum for Scotland.

SQA aims to make communications as accessible as possible, in a variety of ways:

- ◆ For anyone who has problems accessing pages or documents published on the SQA website, SQA will provide the relevant information in an accessible format.
- ◆ Many publications can be produced in alternative formats, including large type, braille and community languages.

Relevant parts of UNCRC

Article 2: non-discrimination

Article 3: best interests of the child

Article 12: respect for children's views

Article 17: right to information

Steps taken by SQA to mitigate impacts

The variety and frequency of communications demonstrates that SQA has explained what is happening or could happen (when possible to so do due to ongoing changes caused by pandemic) using a range of methods, to key groups including learners, parents & carers and stakeholders. This also indicates the progress of decisions reached in consultation with and advice from partners in the system.

The specific tailoring of communications for learners, and for parents and carers, including the use of clear language and availability in community languages is likely to be beneficial to a range of children and young people. The communications strategy in place supports the right to non-discrimination (article 2); acts in the best interests of the child (article 3); direct communications aimed at young people supports article 17; and the engagement with young people and representative organisations supports article 12 — children's rights to have their views heard and be given due consideration.

4.2 Course modifications (all learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

For session 2020–21, modifications to course assessment were made to respond to the changing circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. These modifications were not trivial and aim to help **all learners** during their learning and teaching. The assessment changes were implemented in subject-specific ways to ensure the continued integrity of courses and maintain public confidence in the qualifications.

Due to the continuing impacts of the pandemic on teaching and learning, modifications remained in place for 2021–22. For most National 5 to Advanced Higher courses, these are the same modifications that were put in place for 2020–

21. The modifications are intended to give learners more opportunities to show their knowledge and skills and to help reduce the volume of assessment and ease teachers', lecturers' and learners' workloads. In response to feedback from teachers and lecturers, SQA adjusted the modifications in around 70 courses for 2021–22 to give learners more opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Full details were published on [SQA's website](#) in June 2021. Modification summary documents, which provide more detail and explain the assessment requirements to help teachers and lecturers prepare learners for coursework and/or exams, were made available at the end of August 2021.

Coursework has been reinstated in some, but not all, courses and will operate in the same way it always has — informed by equalities considerations in design, delivery and assessment.

Relevant parts of UNCRC

Article 2: non-discrimination

Article 3: best interests of the child

Article 17: right to information

Article 23: children with disabilities

Article 28: right to education

Article 29: aims of education

Steps taken by SQA to mitigate impacts

Modifications were designed to mitigate against the impact of disruption, and support learners and help them to succeed. Feedback suggests that they are having an impact in this respect, though the impact is unknown and variable. The course modifications have the potential to impact positively on all children and young people undertaking NQs in 2022 — they are designed to support the assessment and certification of SQA NQs in 2022 and to ensure that the achievements of children and young people are recognised through our qualifications system.

The modifications help to mitigate any potential negative impact on children's rights to non-discrimination (article 2); act in the best interests of the child (article 3); have been communicated clearly from early in 2021–22 to children and young people and a range of stakeholders (article 17); support the duties and rights provided in article 23; and support children's rights to education (articles 28 and 29).

4.3 Assessment Arrangements (AAs) (individual learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

During 2021–22 SQA identified several issues that may impact on potentially all candidates taking examinations in 2022. This includes, but is not limited to:

- ◆ The rise in mental health conditions in children and young people
- ◆ Heightened anxiety and stress for children and young people sitting external exams for the first time
- ◆ Using relatively new IT devices in coursework

SQA operates a needs-led model for provision of Assessment Arrangements and reasonable adjustments. This ensures that disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs get the right arrangement for the right subject at the right level. SQA does not require a formal diagnosis of disability or additional support need or medical issue. We work closely with centres who know and understand their learners to ensure that appropriate support is in place for learners' assessments and exams.

SQA continues to consider reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates as they are received. Reasonable adjustments are unique arrangements based on an individual candidate's assessment needs. Under the Equality Act 2010, SQA has several specific duties: it must make reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates and, at the same time, maintain the integrity of the qualification. This means SQA must carefully balance allowing a candidate to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways, while maintaining the national standard of the qualification.

Relevant parts of UNCRC

Article 2: non-discrimination

Article 3: best interests of the child

Article 17: right to information

Article 23: children with disabilities:

- Have a right to access National Qualifications
- Should have confidence in the integrity of the qualification they are being awarded
- Have confidence that their certificate is a reliable indicator of what they know and can do

Article 28: right to education

Article 29: aims of education

Steps taken by SQA to mitigate impacts

Based on this knowledge, SQA provided a programme of support for centres to aid with applying and requesting AAs. This included:

- ◆ More effective and direct communication regarding AAs including the most up to date guidance and reminders about deadline dates for Adapted Papers.
- ◆ A webinar to support centre staff in following SQA processes for ensuring that the right candidates get the right arrangements for the right subjects at the right level.
- ◆ Meeting local authorities to discuss how individual schools manage increased candidate anxiety; insights gained from conducting senior phase assessments and sharing good practice.
- ◆ Working with external partners to ensure these messages reach as wide an audience as possible.

For centres who are supporting candidates with mental health difficulties, there are a range of AAs that can be put in place depending on the needs of the candidate. For candidates with heightened anxiety and stress due to not having sat an exam before, a webinar was developed on how best to support these candidates with input from experienced practitioners. A [Case Study](#) outlining good practice on how to ensure that both sets of candidates get the support they need is available on SQA's website.

Information was also gathered from the Appeals System in place under the Alternative Certification Model in 2021. A range of appeals were made around failure to provide agreed AAs. The process and types of appeals were reviewed to consider lessons learned and information shared with colleagues. This helped to understand the range of impacts faced by learners especially those with disabilities or additional support needs.

The AAs service contributes to children's and young people's right to non-discrimination (article 2), the right to information (article 17), supports children and young people with disabilities (article 23) and supports articles 28 and 29 (right to education).

4.4 Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) 2022 (individual learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

As outlined in this impact assessment, adjustments and accommodations have been made that will help **all learners** and **individual learners** taking exams in 2022, in respect of the experienced disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) in 2022

has been developed to provide greater support to **individual learners** who experience disruption at the time of the examination.

Usually, an exceptional circumstances (EC) service responds to learners who are unable to take an examination or who are affected by an exceptional circumstance that impacted on their ability to perform on the day of the exam. The EECCS appeals process outlines a procedural irregularity in SQA's handling of an EECCS request. In this case, the centre would submit full details of its challenge to SQA. An appeals panel may seek relevant information to inform its decision.

The main change for 2022 is that EECCS applies to issues that prevent the learner attending, or completing, the exam, or that occur during the exam. It does not apply when learners have completed the exam, even if they feel they have underperformed due to a disruption or personal circumstance that occurred in the run-up to the exam. A learner may be unable to attend an examination due to an unplanned incident on the day or a reason out with their control (for example, a medical issue, a bereavement (which may occur before exam day) or having to self-isolate following a positive COVID test), or may be affected during the examination by a disruption, or other exam circumstance, reported by the centre's chief invigilator. A key point for eligibility to use this service is that the learner, subject to public health guidance in place at the time, must have intended to take the exam.

This service is not for learners who experience disruption in the run-up to the examination. The arrangements for assessing NQs in 2022 have consideration of the impacts of the pandemic on all learners already built in via course modifications, additional support for learners (Scenario 2), awarding and grade boundaries.

Centre-accessed service

Eligibility for EECCS in 2022, as in previous years, will be determined by the centre based on guidance provided by SQA and authorised by the head of centre. In other words, centres access the service to help support fairness of access — there is no direct access for learners. The service guidance explains that the responsibility for determining eligibility to use the service lies with the head of centre. This is to ensure use of the service is as legitimate and consistent as possible. SQA has trust in the head of centre role, and regards centres as being closer to the circumstances and detail learners find themselves in.

Grades awarded via EECCS

In its normal processes, SQA awards both a grade (A – D and No Award) and a band (1 – 9) corresponding to the grade. It is important to note that grades awarded through EECCS *based only on alternative evidence* will be at the lowest band of each grade. This predates EECCS and was a feature of previous SQA appeals processes. This is done because it is alternative evidence/centre-generated evidence of attainment that is being assessed, and is therefore non-standardised. This makes it very challenging for examiners to 'fine tune' the evidence into bands, especially across bands that have very small margins. SQA advises examiners to consider the totality of the evidence suggestive of the skills, knowledge and

understanding associated with a specific grade descriptor/characteristic. Where a learner has attempted some of the exam paper, it is *possible* for the higher band to be awarded. By exception, in cases where a candidate holds a conditional offer from a university, college or in employment that is conditional on an A1 band, should the candidate's alternative evidence justify an A grade, the appointee will also determine the appropriate band.

EECCS Appeals

As for all assessment processes, once they have received their results, learners should be able to appeal an EECCS result issued on results day so that an error in the process can be remedied. An appeal for EECCS is based purely on process error/administrative error and will be conducted by SQA staff (heads of service). It will not include a review of the academic judgement.

This process is not the same as Appeals 2022. EECCS appeals are different because the same evidence is used both pre-certification and post-certification, whereas exam model Appeals 2022 involves two sources of evidence (exam script and alternative academic evidence). For this reason, an EECCS appeal is:

- a a review of the original process. If the review of the original process identifies that not all procedures were fully adhered to, the alternative evidence will be reviewed again by an experienced appointee who was not involved in the original review
- b the results based on for the same source of evidence can stay the same, go up or go down
- c the outcome will be final

The aspect that results can go up or down after review could potentially have a negative impact on learners who require EECCS. Heads of centre can appeal on a candidate's behalf if:

- ◆ they believe that SQA's decision to refuse an examination exceptional circumstances consideration request which was submitted within the published timescales is, based on all the evidence available to SQA at the time, wrong
or
- ◆ they believe that there was procedural irregularity in SQA's handling of an examination exceptional circumstance consideration request, which contributed to a decision that is, based on all the evidence available to SQA at the time, wrong

Relevant parts of UNCRC

Article 2: non-discrimination

Article 3: best interests of the child

Article 12: respect for children's views

Article 17: right to information

Article 23: children with disabilities

Article 28: right to education

Article 29: aims of education

Steps taken by SQA to mitigate impacts

Centre-accessed service

When the EECCS process for 2022 was being considered, SQA set up an external advisory group with a wide range of representatives including school and parent groups drawn from the National Qualifications 2022 Working Group. This group was unanimous in its support for all requests to come via the head of centre in the interests of fairness to learners. This approach was also supported by the National Qualifications 2022 Strategic Group. SQA will provide supportive guidance to centres which will give heads of centre a framework to operate the EECCS. The guidance acknowledges that it does not and cannot reflect every possible scenario that may occur, but does include examples of likely scenarios to aid decision making.

This approach also mitigates the real risk of EECCS being perceived as an alternative to taking the exam. Arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022 are based on the central planning assumption that exams will take place. The policy makes it clear that EECCS is not intended as such and that it is a service to support individual learners who have issues impacting on them on the day of the exam.

Grades awarded via EECCS

SQA appointees will judge the grade-worthiness of the alternative evidence in conjunction with the non-exam evidence (coursework), where this is part of the assessment. The standards applied in judgements will align with the performance standards set within the course specification and exemplified in Understanding Standards materials. Alternative evidence is judged holistically against existing grade descriptors and exemplifications. Standards set through the grade boundary process will apply to any attempted exam scripts if appropriate. However, it is likely that most cases for EECCS will be absentee consideration, ie the candidate did not attempt the exam. Standards set through the grade boundary process only apply to SQA assessment so will only have an impact on EECCS if the candidate actually sits the exam.

Any grade or grade change awarded via the examiner's (or senior appointee's) review of alternative evidence submitted by the centre will be at the lower band. The only exception to this will be where the learner has a place at university, college or in employment conditional on a specific band. If a grade, or grade change, is awarded based upon a review or clerical check of an SQA exam or assessment script then all bands can be used.

No appeals for movement between bands will be allowed.

EECCS Appeals

A procedural irregularity check would be heard by an appeals panel consisting of SQA heads of service. If the panel uphold the appeal, the evidence may be reviewed by a SQA experienced appointee not involved in the original review. It is possible, though unlikely, that the outcome of this second review is a change of grade with it going down.

EECCS relies on only one set of evidence to assess. In terms of mitigating the impacts of this, centres should ensure they are keeping learners informed as to what grade the evidence they produce throughout the year is assessed at, and this should match the centre estimate provided for that learner.

EECCS has been developed to provide greater support to **individual learners** who experience disruption at the time of the examination. This service aims to support children's rights to non-discrimination (article 2); children with disabilities (article 23); and rights to education (articles 28 and 29). Because the service is not directly accessed by learners, this may be regarded as not meeting the spirit of article 12, respect for children's views. However as outlined above, the position taken by SQA is that centres know their learners best and can provide support to learners to access the EECCS process. This is intended to support article 3 — to act in the best interests of the child; and article 17 — right to information. It may also be regarded that the fact an appeal result can go up or down is not in the spirit of the right to non-discrimination (article 2). In terms of mitigations, as this is a process review it is highly unlikely that a result may go down as the result of an appeal.

4.5 Additional support for learners (for all learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

SQA continued to constantly monitor public health advice and levels of disruption across the country, and following discussion with partners across the education system, and agreement by the SQA Board of Management, SQA invoked Scenario two. Scenario two aims to strike a balance between providing more support to children and young people who are learners, which include those with a range of protected characteristics, to recognise the time lost due to disruption, while not undermining the integrity of assessment. This means that in addition to the modifications announced in August 2021, additional guidance and support will be published for learners during week beginning 7 March 2022 to help them with their revision in the final run-up to their exams.

All courses with an exam will get some form of revision support. It is difficult to specify the impacts these arrangements will have on learners as it is likely to be variable. However, the intention is that all learners get some benefit from this approach across the courses they are studying. All proposals for additional support were subject to the 'equality review of qualifications process' discussed earlier in the first iteration of this impact assessment.

The aim of providing additional information from 7 March 2022 is to try and avoid invalidating the assessment if the information was shared too early. SQA's approach is to avoid the narrowing of learning and teaching, which would negatively impact learners' breadth of course knowledge and understanding. This is especially important for children and young people as the aim is to best support them to progress further (into higher level qualifications, vocational training, further or higher education, or employment) without gaps in their subject skills, knowledge and understanding.

As most learners entered for National Qualifications are of school age, these learners are regarded as children and young people who will most likely be affected by SQA's decision. The impact of disrupted teaching and learning has affected all learners, potentially more so for learners in areas of socio-economic deprivation and those who have not been able to attend classes in person. By introducing additional support for learners, including revision materials such as study guides or permitted resources in the exam, the aim is to further reduce any disadvantage to learners most impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions that have been in place since the start of the 2021–22 academic year.

SQA recognises that, in addition to disruption to teaching and learning, there are challenges for those learners who are children and young people who lack access to technology and digital connectivity, and disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs who use assistive technology or in-person support from schools. SQA's decision to move to Scenario two and provide additional revision support to learners aims to:

- ◆ reduce the level of exam stress that all learners across the country are experiencing, and
- ◆ allow teachers and lecturers sufficient teaching and learning time to cover the necessary content with learners without compromising the integrity of SQA's exams.

As far as possible, Scenario two aims to mitigate the effects of further disruption to teaching and learning as a result of the pandemic, in order to minimise disadvantage and enable all those learners who are children and young people to have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their attainment in the external exams.

Relevant parts of UNCRC

Article 2: non-discrimination

Article 3: best interests of the child

Article 17: access to information from the media

Article 23: children with a disability

Article 28: right to education

Article 29: goals of education

Steps taken by SQA to mitigate impacts

The disruption to teaching and learning has resulted in greater stress and uncertainty from learners, teachers and lecturers about the 2022 exams. The additional support for learners has the potential to impact positively on all children and young people undertaking National Qualifications in 2022 as they are designed to support the assessment and certification of SQA's National Qualifications in 2022 and to ensure that the achievements of children and young people are recognised through our qualifications system during an uncertain year.

SQA's decision to move to Scenario two and introduce additional support for all learners due to take exams considers the impact of disruptions to all candidates, taking into account that this decision should apply to every child without discrimination (article 2). SQA recognises that the disruption to teaching and learning may have had a greater impact on disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs who require AAs and/or who may have had difficulty accessing technology at home.

The additional support aims to mitigate any disadvantage to learners and to ensure all children and young people are given equal opportunity to demonstrate their attainment in SQA's external exams (articles 3, 23, 28 and 29). To keep all children and young people informed of any decisions made by SQA, information is published on SQA's website, and this is also shared on SQA's social media channels to ensure this information is accessible to all learners by various means (article 17).

Summary of potential impacts

Potential impact

Children and young people may feel anxious about the impact of disrupted teaching and learning on their exam performance.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Clear and regular communications were delivered to children and young people and a range of key stakeholders from the beginning of 2021–22.
- ◆ Course modifications were announced in August 2021 to take account of likely disruption to learning and teaching in session 2021–22, commensurate with that in session 2020–21.
- ◆ Additional support for all courses was provided, to help all learners with their revision.

Potential impact

Individual learners have been impacted in different ways by disruptions to teaching and learning. It is difficult to determine the best method to support children and young people to prepare for the 2022 exams.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Introduction of additional support for learners for the upcoming 2022 exams to ensure the assessment is as equitable as possible for all learners.

Potential impact

Some learners may not have access to technology at home to make use of the additional support provided.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Additional support materials published by SQA are to be made available from 7 March 2022. All children and young people, their parents/carers and teachers/lecturers will be able to access the additional support material via the SQA website and Ushare.
- ◆ Clear and regular communications from SQA have been issued to children and young people and key stakeholders to inform them that additional support materials are available. Learners can contact their teachers and lecturers for support if required.

4.6 Awarding and grade boundaries 2022 (for all learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

Awarding is a key component of SQA's statutory duties and responsibilities, as outlined in [SQA Awarding Code of Practice](#). The process of awarding involves using a mixture of specific subject expertise combined with available qualitative and quantitative evidence to evaluate exam performances. 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, regardless of protected characteristics or socio-economic status. This process ensures that awarding is objective, and eliminates prejudice and discrimination. Information about the identities of individual children and young people and the centres they attend is not available to the panel who make awarding decisions. This process contributes positively to equality of opportunity in terms of the PSED.

This year, SQA designed a package of support measures in partnership with stakeholder groups. A full statement covering the [support for learners](#) was published on 1 February 2022.

To inform our decision on the approach to awarding for 2022, SQA considered the views of children and young people, representatives from schools, colleges and universities, the Association of Directors of Education, the National Parents Forum of Scotland and the Educational Institute of Scotland. SQA believes that the well-established processes for awarding and certification treat all children and young people fairly and equitably, and the experience of senior SQA appointees in making those judgements based on candidates' performance protects the credibility of the qualifications. The stakeholder groups mentioned above didn't raise any concerns about the potential impact of the process on children and young people with protected characteristics, ongoing monitoring will be necessary to ensure that this remains the case.

Engaging with children and young people was core to developing the approach, and feedback from them highlighted some important considerations:

- ◆ For some young people, the fact that exams went ahead in 2022 is an important signal that society is returning to normal again.
- ◆ Learners spoke about the ongoing impact of disruption to learning, and some learners expressed the view that by having sat exams, universities may treat them more fairly compared with other cohorts who had not had that opportunity.

SQA believes the approach to awarding in 2022 will deliver fair grades for all children and young people, but acknowledges that there is a risk that qualifications could be used in a way that creates some unfairness. For example, if the profile of outcomes — particularly the number of A grades — remained high, higher education institutions may seek to introduce additional entrance tests or interviews as part of the selection process. This may disadvantage children and young people from widening access backgrounds, and benefit those who attend schools with more experience in preparing learners for entrance tests or interviews. To mitigate this risk, SQA has ensured the awarding process is as objective, fair and equitable as possible and we have ongoing dialogue with the further and higher education sector.

One of the benefits of reintroducing the exam diet is that it ensures that all children and young people undertake the same assessment, at the same time, under the same conditions. This removes the potential for unfairness in a teacher-led approach to assessment — a fact that was highlighted by some children and young people during SQA's engagement activity. The importance of ensuring fairness to all children and young people was at the centre of discussions. The views of children and young people and other key stakeholders with a particular interest in equalities were integrated into the decision-making process to ensure the approach to awarding and grade boundaries in 2022 meets SQA's equality responsibilities and requirements as an awarding body.

Relevant parts of UNCRC

Article 2:	non-discrimination
Article 3:	best interests of the child
Article 12:	respect for the views of the child
Article 23:	children with disabilities
Article 28:	right to education
Article 29:	goals of education

Steps taken by SQA to mitigate impacts

The existing awarding procedure was modified to take account of the unique circumstances of 2022, including modifications to course assessments, to mitigate the impact of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. SQA engaged with learners as well as other key stakeholders to ensure the views of children and young people were respected and taken into consideration (article 12) to ensure a fair and equitable approach to awarding.

The awarding procedure and grade boundary decisions apply to all candidates regardless of their protected characteristics (articles 2 and 23). This process will ensure the best interests of children and young people (article 3) and ensure those with disabilities are given an opportunity to demonstrate their attainment in an assessment that is not affected by any potential teacher bias (article 23). Reintroducing the exam diet contributes to children and young people's right to education (article 28) and ensures they are assessed in an objective, fair and equitable manner. SQA has ongoing dialogue with the further and higher education sectors to ensure children and young people — particularly those from widening access backgrounds — are not disadvantaged by any decisions made by those institutions (article 29).

Summary of potential impacts

Potential impact

It is difficult to determine a fair and equitable way to measure how disruption to learning has impacted learners' exam performances. Individual learners have been impacted in different ways.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 12, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Learners were consulted on SQA's approach to awarding and grade boundaries to ensure the most fair and equitable option was taken forward.
- ◆ Reintroducing the exam diet ensures that all candidates undertake the same assessment, at the same time, under the same conditions. Learners felt that this approach removes the potential for unfairness in a teacher-led approach to assessment.

Potential impact

Qualifications could be used in a way that creates unfairness. For example, higher education institutions may seek to introduce additional entrance tests or interviews as part of the selection process, particularly if the profile of outcomes (such as the number of A grades) remains high.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ SQA has had dialogue with the further and higher education sectors to ensure children and young people, in particular those from widening access backgrounds, are not disadvantaged by any decisions made by further and higher education institutions.

4.7 Appeals 2022 service (individual learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

As outlined earlier, adjustments and accommodations have been made which will help all children and young people taking exams in 2022, in respect of the disruption experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Appeals 2022 service, along with the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service in 2022, have been developed to provide greater support to individual children and young people who:

- ◆ experienced disruption at the time of their exam(s)
- ◆ experienced additional exam stress because of the disruption
- ◆ are taking external exams for the first time

SQA held several focus groups with learners to explore these services. Proposals were discussed in detail with the National Qualifications Strategic Group, the National Qualifications Working Group and individual stakeholders. The proposals were very welcomed, as they are seen as a response to some of the difficulties, additional stress and challenges associated with:

- ◆ ongoing disruption to teaching and learning
- ◆ learners not having taken exams for several years
- ◆ indications that higher numbers of learners than normal find the exam process stressful

In establishing an Appeals 2022 service, SQA is striving to mitigate the disruption some children and young people may face, to enable those in such circumstances to receive a qualification and grade which is a fair reflection of their knowledge, understanding and skills.

A key point in the development of the service was that the mechanism must be fair to all children and young people — not just those who access the service. The service should not advantage some learners at the expense of others.

SQA considered the challenges and difficulties associated with taking account of every child and young person's differing experiences of disruption in the assessment process. Essentially, the degree and impact of disruption is unique to each individual. In terms of the range of disruptions experienced, SQA considered lost teaching time and learning, the nature of the subject and the exact topic or parts of topics that were missed. The disruption is not possible to quantify in a simple or single metric (for example, the number of learning days missed); and any other possible measure would in itself present insurmountable problems to quantify fairly across different learners, with different experiences and in different schools or colleges. This challenge is not unique to SQA and, thus far, no other country in the UK has been able to identify a fair measure. Furthermore, it is important that the grades children and young people are awarded in August 2022 are based upon demonstrated attainment, to maintain the integrity of SQA qualifications.

The Appeals 2022 service means that children and young people who are unhappy with the grades they receive through external assessments (in other words, exams and/or coursework) can submit an appeal directly to SQA if eligibility criteria are met. There will also be a priority service for children and young people whose place at university, education, training or employment is contingent upon the grades they achieve.

On such occasions, SQA appointees review the alternative academic evidence supplied by the centre, and any coursework, to determine a grade. SQA appointees are not aware of learners' estimates or current certificated grades. In the appeals process, SQA also review exam scripts and/or coursework for clerical/administrative errors only (not for marking errors). Learners will be awarded the higher of the two grades based on either:

- ◆ a clerical check of their SQA assessments (exam scripts and/or coursework)
- ◆ a review of the assessment evidence submitted by their centre, taking into account their performance in coursework

Grades can go up or stay the same. There is a very small chance that a grade could also go down but this would only be in the event of a clerical check identifying an error that reduces the original certificated grade **and** the centre evidence not supporting the original certificated grade.

The Appeals 2022 service aims to provide a 'safety net' for all children and young people for whom the exam experience did not go as well as it could have.

Relevant parts of UNCRC

Article 2: non-discrimination

Article 3: best interests of the child

Article 12: respect for the views of the child

Article 17: right to information

Article 23: children with disabilities

Article 28: right to education

Article 29: goals of education

Steps taken by SQA to mitigate impact

Children and young people can directly access SQA's Appeals 2022 service if they feel their performance in exams has been impacted due to either disruptions around the time of the exams, or the additional stress of sitting exams for the first time, so long as eligibility criteria for an appeal are met.

In all scenarios, SQA's appeals service aims to ensure children and young people have the opportunity to appeal whenever they disagree with the grade they are awarded (articles 28 and 29). The service also aims to take the affected child or young person's views into account (article 12). If an appeal is submitted because a centre failed to determine or verify a child's or young person's need for AAs in the internal assessments (used to determine their estimated grades), as required by SQA guidance, the child or young person will be able to submit written commentary to SQA (articles 2, 3 and 23).

SQA has maintained open communications through its social media channels and by publishing articles on the SQA website. This content is available to all children and young people and relates to developments with 2022 National Qualifications. We will maintain communications for the Appeals 2022 service (article 17).

Summary of potential impacts

Potential impact

Children and young people may not agree with the grade that has been awarded by SQA.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 12, 17, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Children and young people can appeal directly to SQA if they meet eligibility criteria. The service is free.
- ◆ SQA will continue to publish information on SQA's website and social media with information about the Appeals 2022 service.

Potential impact

Children and young people may not be in a position to submit an appeal independently, particularly if this is due to an equality protected characteristic.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Where authorised by the child or young person, an authorised representative can submit an appeal on their behalf.
- ◆ SQA will continue to publish information on SQA's website and social media with information about the Appeals 2022 service.

Potential impact

Children and young people's place at university, a further education institution, or a training or employment opportunity may be contingent upon the grades they achieve.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 3, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ A priority appeals service will be available between 9 August and 16 August 2022 for children and young people whose appeal is time contingent (for example, when they have received a conditional offer for further or higher education).

Potential impact

Disabled children and young people may have been disadvantaged by a centre's failure to determine or verify their need for AAs in internal assessments (used to determine their estimated grades), as required by SQA guidance.

Applies to UNCRC Articles: 2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29

Mitigating actions

- ◆ Children and young people, or their authorised representative, can submit an appeal on the grounds of a centre's failure to determine or verify their need for AAs in internal assessments.
- ◆ SQA will continue to publish information on the SQA website and social media with information about the Appeals 2022 service.

Section 5: Evidence and consultation

What evidence have you used to inform your assessment?

In assessing the arrangements for the Assessment of National Qualifications in 2022, SQA reviewed evidence from a range of sources:

- ◆ desk-based review of research, evidence and information published by equality, equity and education stakeholders (Appendix 2)
- ◆ review of research and reports published in response to impacts of the pandemic (Appendix 2)
- ◆ information and reportage provided through SQA's media and parliamentary monitoring service and Liaison Team
- ◆ inbound communication and queries

Have you consulted with relevant stakeholders?

SQA has engaged with the National Qualifications 2022 Group and discussed the arrangements for the Assessment of NQs in 2022 with this group and its supporting working group on a number of occasions. SQA considers the range of views expressed in discussions with this group as part of the overall evidence base. Other work that informed the development of the impact assessment included:

- ◆ Engagement and consultation with learners who are children and young people, stakeholders and education professionals, including teachers, lecturers and senior management within schools and colleges.
- ◆ Engagement with organisations who hold regulatory roles in terms of relevant areas of law.
- ◆ Engagement with organisations in other areas of the UK who have similar responsibilities to SQA.
- ◆ Engagement with the senior committees within SQA that have specific experience and responsibility for decisions relating to the principles of assessment, awarding and appeals.

Have you involved children and young people in the development of this policy/measure?

Yes. SQA met with the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland to discuss arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022.

Several focus groups took place with learners between September and December 2021, which explored the range of services available to support assessment of NQs in 2022.

Learners are directly impacted by decisions SQA makes as they progress through the education system. Throughout their education journey they will have various information needs that change over time. It is important SQA listens to what learners tell them they tell us and that SQA communicates in a way that suits them, so they can easily access and understand the information.

School aged learners

SQA currently works with the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) to run a monthly Learner Panel which consists of MSYPs (members of Scottish Youth Parliament), school learners from S3–S6, college learners, and care-experienced learners. There is also a sub-group of the panel who work with SQA on their communications to provide feedback to help shape SQA messages and campaigns for a learner audience.

As well as continuing to seek learner views on issues directly related to the arrangements for assessment of NQs a result of the pandemic, SQA will seek the views of learners on the future of assessment, qualifications, communications and services.

College learners

SQA works closely with sparqs (student partnerships in quality Scotland) to ensure the college learner perspective is captured. SQA has sparqs representation on the NQ Steering Group, the Learner Panel, and dedicated representatives to provide college learner input on our communications.

Parents/carers

SQA has engaged with parents and carers, and their representative organisations, for many years. There are two principal organisations that SQA engages with on a regular basis: Connect and the National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFS).

Section 6: Conclusion

This CRWIA suggests that reasonable steps have been taken by SQA within a highly complex set of circumstances, to consider the needs of learners who are children and young people along with the requirement to ensure the integrity of qualifications in arrangements for assessment of NQs in 2022.

This impact assessment identifies the principal sources of evidence reviewed by SQA, the positive and negative impacts identified within that evidence, and the decisions taken by SQA to maximise the positive impacts of the arrangements for children and young people's rights and wellbeing and to mitigate any negative impacts identified.

The rights of children and young people have been a primary consideration in the development of these arrangements. The arrangements for Assessment of NQs in 2022 are designed to further advance the realisation of children and young person's rights, while ensuring SQA can deliver qualifications that provide a reliable indicator of knowledge, understanding and skill.

Further information-gathering is required to assess the impact on learners, as the range of arrangements in place for 2022 are operationalised. SQA will carry out monitoring work to understand and evaluate the impacts of different arrangements on candidates.

Appendix 1: UNCRC Article Definitions

Article 2: non-discrimination

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Article 3: best interests of the child

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her wellbeing, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.
3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

Article 12: respect for children's views

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 17: right to information

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the 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. To this end, States Parties shall:

- (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- (b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- (c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- (d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- (e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her wellbeing, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

Article 23: children with disabilities

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.
2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.
3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.
4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international co-operation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 28: right to education

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
 - (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
 - (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
 - (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
 - (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
 - (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.
3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international co-operation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29: aims of education

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
 - (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
 - (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
 - (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
 - (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Appendix 2: Sources of evidence

[COVID-19 Education Recovery Group: children and young people infographic — gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/COVID-19-Education-Recovery-Group-children-and-young-people-infographic)

[202110 Covid-Commission-Report_04-REPORT.pdf \(rsecovidcommission.org.uk\)](https://rsecovidcommission.org.uk/202110-Covid-Commission-Report-04-REPORT.pdf)

[Written question and answer: S6W-03503 | Scottish Parliament Website](https://www.parliament.scot/Written-question-and-answer/S6W-03503)

[Your National Qualifications 2021-22 guidance booklet - SQA](#)

[1566 \(parliament.scot\)](https://www.parliament.scot/1566)

[1494 \(parliament.scot\)](https://www.parliament.scot/1494)

[july2021-lockdownlowdown-v3-survey-report.pdf \(syp.org.uk\)](https://syp.org.uk/july2021-lockdownlowdown-v3-survey-report.pdf)

[COVID-19 - research studies on children and young people's views | RCPCH](#)

[Equality evidence - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/equality-evidence)

<http://aplaceinchildhood.org/project/young-scots-covid-19/>

[Improving outcomes for young people through school education | Audit Scotland \(audit-scotland.gov.uk\)](https://audit-scotland.gov.uk/improving-outcomes-for-young-people-through-school-education)

[Arrangements for the assessment and awarding of Vocational and Technical Qualifications and Other General Qualifications in 2021 to 2022](#)

[Exams and Assessments 2022 — fairness and clarity — The Ofqual blog](#)

<https://www.edge.co.uk/research/projects/impact-covid-19-education/The-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-Education-Perspectives-on-the-impact-of-lockdown/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/aug/12/grade-inflation-what-to-do-next-with-exams>

<https://education.gov.scot/media/t4qki0h0/national-overview-of-practice-in-remote-learning-10-complex-learning-needs.pdf>

<https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/cepcovid-19-023.pdf>