



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

Arrangements for Assessing National Qualifications in 2023

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Contents

Summary of impact assessment	i
Section 1: Background and context	1
April 2022	1
November 2022	2
Section 2: CRWIA Stage 1 — Screening: key questions	4
Arrangements for assessing National Qualifications in 2023	4
Section 3: The CRWIA	6
3.1 The CRWIA context	6
3.2 The CRWIA: key questions	6
Section 4: Assessment of impact and mitigations	9
Key elements	9
4.1 Communications (all learners)	9
4.2 Course modifications (all learners)	10
4.3 Assessment arrangements (individual learners)	12
4.4 Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) 2023 (individual learners)	13
4.5 Standards and Awarding 2023 (for all learners)	16
4.6 Appeals 2023 (individual learners)	18
Section 5: Evidence and consultation	23
5.1 What evidence have you used to inform your assessment?	23
5.2 Have you consulted with relevant stakeholders?	23
5.3 Have you involved children and young people in the development of this policy/measure?	23
Section 6: Conclusion	25
Appendix 1: UNCRC Article Definitions	26
Appendix 2: Sources of evidence	30

Summary of impact assessment

2022 EqIA themes	Potential impacts considered	Mitigating actions	UNCRC article	2022 NQ evaluation feedback from learners	Considerations for 2023–24
Course modifications	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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 learners. Exams provide opportunities to demonstrate that they have the competence required to achieve the qualification. 	2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Helped to relieve pressure and focus revision. ◆ Some young people did not feel they had enough time to consolidate all learning — time was spent catching up with work they missed. ◆ Some young people did not have any modifications made to their courses. ◆ Few young people felt less knowledgeable across the breadth of content taught in courses (vectors in National 5 Mathematics cited), failing to prepare for progressing to Higher and Advanced Higher. ◆ Removing the dissertation from certain Highers removed the opportunity to learn crucial skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Modifications remain in place to support a gradual return to full course assessment, according to specifications in response to continued disruption to teaching and learning. ◆ Course modifications were helpful to some learners, but not considered helpful to others. Feedback to be taken into consideration for 2023–24 arrangements. ◆ Difficult to balance different learning styles of young people with equipping them with the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills for further or higher education and/or employment. This may be considered for future of qualifications and assessment as part of education reform and Hayward Review of Assessments.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some modifications did not account for variations in learning styles which disadvantaged some young people who have exam-only courses (with coursework component removed). ◆ Modifications were unclear — confusion around what would and would not be assessed. 	
(EECCS)	EECCS is not directly accessed by young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ EECCS in place for 2023 to support individual candidates who are impacted on the day of the exam. ◆ EECCS provides an opportunity to review alternative academic evidence to arrive at a grade. ◆ Centres want to have this responsibility — they know their learners best. ◆ Centres will identify and support eligible candidates to access this service. 	2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Definition of 'exceptional circumstance' in SQA Guide for Centres is too vague — it is unclear who determines whether circumstances are considered 'exceptional', which introduces an element of bias from centre staff. ◆ No concerns raised by young people about direct access to EECCS. ◆ Service needs to be more empathetic in nature — for young people who are young carers or have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ EECCS criteria for 2023 must be flexible enough for the service to be used appropriately and consistently by centres to reduce teacher bias and ensure fairness for all young people. ◆ Criteria needs to balance flexibility with prescription — criteria that is too restricted could create operational issues for SQA and centres. This can also disadvantage young people who may have been significantly impacted but may be excluded from EECCS if this is not a 'valid' exceptional circumstance according to SQA criteria.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ SQA will provide supportive guidance to centres on operating EECCS. ◆ Centre access reduces the risk of EECCS being perceived as 'alternative' to exams. 		<p>long-term chronic conditions, disruption could also have impacted on alternative academic evidence.</p>	
	EECCS appeals can go up or down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ EECCS appeals use the 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. 	2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ An appeal to EECCS should not result in a learner's award going down if marking was completed to standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ It is expected this would only occur in very exceptional circumstances where a child or young person was unable to attempt the exam and the grade awarded is based only on alternative evidence submitted by the school, college or training provider.
Appeals	Children and young people may not agree with the grade that has been awarded by SQA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Children and young people can appeal directly to SQA if they meet the eligibility criteria. This service is free. ◆ SQA will continue to publish information on SQA's website and social media with information about the Appeals 2023 service. 	2, 3, 12, 17, 28, 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ If a candidate used EECCS, they could not also use the Appeals service. ◆ Maintaining a free appeals service would remove the financial barrier and make the service accessible to all learners. ◆ Need for clearer breakdown and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ EECCS should not be perceived as an alternative to taking the exam. ◆ Young people have direct access to Appeals 2023 rather than via their school, college or training provider. This is particularly if they are not supportive of the young person's intent to do so. ◆ Access to Appeals 2023 not linked to teacher estimate.

				<p>transparency about how marks were allocated or how decisions on grades are determined.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Support from centres on allocation of marks to help learners decide whether it would be appropriate to appeal. ◆ Need for greater transparency on how marks are allocated. 	<p>Appeals 2023 reviews quality of marking in external assessments and avoids issues with equity, access and fairness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Schools, colleges and training providers to consider a young person's estimate when deciding whether to submit a request for Appeals 2023 — need to consider how this would counter any potential teacher bias when estimates were determined.
	<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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 2023 service. 	<p>2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Appeals 2023 should meet the needs of young people, even if it differs from other UK awarding bodies. Scottish education system should meet the specific needs of Scotland's young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ SQA service must balance needs of system with needs of learners. ◆ Service to be learner direct and allow authorised representative to submit request on learner's behalf.

	<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A priority appeals service will be available between 9 August and 16 August 2023 for children and young people whose appeal is time contingent (for example, when they have received a conditional offer for further or higher education). 	<p>3, 28, 29</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Outcomes need to be issued in a timely manner. Some young people were waiting on the results of 2022 appeals and missed the deadline for UCAS applications. ◆ Suggestion that SQA should communicate outcomes directly to young people and not just their school, college or training provider. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Priority Appeals 2023 will still be available for young people whose result is contingent on a conditional offer for further or higher education or employment. ◆ Due to volume of appeals submitted in 2022 and outcome letters issued to schools, colleges and training providers, consideration would need to be given for a new process of managing how young people would be informed of the outcome.
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<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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 2023 service. 	<p>2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28, 29</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Communications to young people need to be clearer and easier to understand. ◆ Language needs to be more user-friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ SQA to continue to engage with young people to ensure communication and information are age-appropriate, clear and easy to understand. ◆ To support young people who may not feel comfortable submitting a request directly to SQA, they will be able to authorise a representative to do so on their behalf.
<p>Appeals can go up or down.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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. 	<p>2, 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learner Panel felt five downgrades from 2022 were five too many — learners should not be awarded a lower grade than what was awarded in August. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Process in place to protect the integrity of SQA qualifications. ◆ Anticipated that a young person's grade going down would only happen in very exceptional circumstances.

Section 1: Background and context

This document summarises the ways in which SQA has considered children's rights and wellbeing when developing arrangements for assessing National Qualifications (NQs) in 2023. SQA supports lifelong learning, and awards qualifications to learners of all ages, but many learners taking SQA graded National Courses are aged 15, 16 or 17, and 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.

April 2022

On 28 April 2022, SQA announced that modifications to assessment in National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, as well as some National 3 courses and freestanding units, would remain in place for session 2022–23. The decision taken in view of the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching caused by COVID-19.

All [modifications to course assessments for 2022–23](#) are already in place and there are no plans to provide any further advanced notice of question paper content or contexts. Ongoing support for teachers, lecturers and training practitioners will help them to maximise their learners' performance in exams and other assessments.

Modification summary documents are available for every subject that has modified assessments. These documents are for teachers, lecturers and training practitioners and they explain how courses will be assessed. For some subjects, they also include information on modifications to freestanding units.

As with last year, the types of modifications depend on the subject and may include removing or reducing elements of an exam or coursework, providing more choice or time during an assessment or removing a topic from the exam.

Decisions around whether to continue using the modifications in session 2023–24 will be discussed with partners and communicated later in this session.

SQA continues to discuss the potential impacts of any approach taken for the Exam Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) 2023 and Appeals 2023 with the National Qualifications Strategic Group 2023¹.

¹The National Qualifications Strategic Group 2023 consists of representatives of the following organisations:

- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- Colleges Scotland
- Education Scotland

November 2022

On 16 November 2022, [SQA explained](#) that it was planning for exams to take place from 24 April to 30 May 2023, with results day on 8 August 2023. SQA recognises that we continue to live with COVID-19 and that this can be unpredictable. SQA knows this is a concern for schools, colleges and training providers, particularly if it may involve cancelling the 2023 exams. While the clear expectation is that exams will go ahead, SQA recognises that contingency planning is important and sensible. As with the contingency for 2021–22, if exams were to be cancelled due to public health advice, teaching practitioners would be asked to determine learners' provisional results by using their professional judgement of the evidence available which represents each learner's skills, knowledge and understanding. Provisional results would be based on in-year assessments that normally take place during the session, such as prelims, practical activities, performances, and class tests.

SQA recognises that the impact of COVID-19 is still being felt by learners and practitioners and the approach to setting standards and grading in 2023 will continue to be sensitive to the extent of this ongoing impact. The approach will be grounded in evidence and take into consideration the significant modifications made to National Course assessments.

SQA explained in its statement:

'We have made modifications to assessment only — it is important to be aware that we have not removed any content from National Courses. You should continue to deliver the full course content with your learners and allow them opportunities to develop the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding.'

For example, if a coursework assessment has been removed, learners should still complete activities during class time to develop their knowledge and skills that would normally be assessed through the coursework.

This can support learners when completing their assessments this year, as there may be instances where they can draw on their knowledge and experience of other parts of the course. For example, exposure to practical work in science can help learners tackle certain questions in the exam.

It will also equip learners with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding they will need when progressing to further learning, training or employment. In addition, it may provide you with evidence of how well these skills have developed, which may be useful in supporting a learner's estimate.'

-
- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
 - National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS)
 - School Leaders Scotland (SLS)
 - Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)
 - Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
 - Scottish Government
 - Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

The [National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates](#) is still relevant for the 2022–23 academic year and is an essential document for practitioners to refer to when using assessment evidence to support an estimate, and when estimating the appropriate grade and band for a learner.

In addition, an SQA Academy course ([Quality assurance of estimates for National Courses 2021–22](#)) has been developed for practitioners that focuses on what makes good evidence and gives examples of how to apply the national standard to that evidence.

SQA continued to provide [Understanding Standards support in 2022–23](#) to help strengthen practitioners' understanding of how to apply the national standards required for assessing courses. A range of subject-specific webinars and in-person events were hosted where attendees went through the standards for assessment, looking at how the assessments are marked, and discussing examples of assessment evidence. A vast range of Understanding Standards materials have also been made available online, including webinar recordings, audio presentations, candidate evidence and commentaries, and practical skills videos.

[Course reports](#) for each National Qualification also highlight areas of the 2022 assessments where learners performed well and any areas that proved demanding. They contain key messages as well as helpful and constructive advice on preparing learners for assessment this session, making them a vital support for teachers, lecturers and training practitioners.

These resources play an important part in helping practitioners prepare learners and gather high quality evidence to support estimates.

The main focus for schools, colleges and training providers will continue to be learning and teaching, with assessment to support that process. With this in mind, and in preparation for the possibility that exams cannot go ahead, teachers and lecturers should use the type, quality and volume of evidence that would be needed to support quality assured estimates in a 'normal' year. This will also serve as the basis of the evidence needed to support the submission of provisional results if it is not possible to run exams.

Under this approach there is **no requirement** for schools, colleges and training providers to run additional assessments. Doing so would place excess workload on teachers, lecturers and learners. Estimates for learners should be based on in-year assessments that normally take place during the school year such as prelims, practical activities, performances and class tests.

Consideration also needs to be given for those learners with additional support needs (ASN) and who would normally use specific assessment arrangements during their exams. Schools, colleges and training providers should ensure that appropriate assessment arrangements are put in place for normal in-year assessments to ensure equity.

The SQA [website](#) has further information and guidance on assessment arrangements.

Section 2: CRWIA Stage 1 — Screening: key questions

Arrangements for assessing National Qualifications in 2023

This CRWIA assesses the potential impacts on candidates who are children and young people of arrangements for assessing National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications in 2023. How any potential negative impacts identified could be mitigated has been considered as part of the iterative process of designing scenarios for 2023 and development of this impact assessment. Equality evidence also contributed to the development of an equality impact assessment.

The 2023 arrangements provide support to **all learners** (communications and course modifications) and **individual learners** EECCS 2023, assessment arrangements and Appeals 2023. This CRWIA first considers the impacts of:

- ◆ communications (all learners)
- ◆ course modifications (all learners)
- ◆ assessment arrangements (individual learners)
- ◆ EECCS 2023 (individual learners)
- ◆ Appeals 2023 (individual learners)

It is important to note that in developing arrangements for assessing National Qualifications in 2023, the best interests of children and young people were core considerations. The arrangements for EECCS 2023, modifications to course assessment implemented in subject-specific ways and Appeals 2023 have been tailored to ensure all learners are adequately supported in completing their courses in 2023. Underpinning the decisions made for these services, SQA and the National Qualifications Strategic Group 2023 agreed the following core principles:

- ◆ Fairness to all learners, including those with protected characteristics.
- ◆ Safe and secure certification of qualifications, while following the latest public health advice.
- ◆ Maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualifications system, ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners.

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 assessing NQs in 2023 have the potential to affect those children and young people taking SQA graded National Courses in 2023.

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

The arrangements for assessing NQs in 2023 will enable children and young people to complete their selected NQs courses 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 NQs in 2023 will impact on all children and young people due to take exams between April–June 2023.

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 NQs in 2023 will impact children and young people. In line with good practice, SQA has described in this document its arrangements for assessing NQs in 2023, 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 assessing NQs in 2023. The formal United Nations definitions of these Articles are explained in [Appendix 1](#). The United Nations Children’s Fund [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 NQs in 2023 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 assessing NQs in 2023.

Article 2: Non-discrimination

Course modifications
Communications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Appeals

Article 3: Best interests of the child

Course modifications
Communications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Appeals

Article: 12 Respect for children's views

Assessment arrangements
Communications
EECCS
Appeals

17 Right to information

Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Appeals

23 Children with disabilities

Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Appeals

28 Right to education

Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
Appeals

29 Aims of education

Communications
Course modifications
Assessment arrangements
EECCS
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 NQs in 2023 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 assessing NQs in 2023 can contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland

4.1 Communications (all learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

SQA continues to communicate regularly with a range of children and young people and other stakeholders about the arrangements for assessing NQs in 2022–23. 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: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/nq2023>
- ◆ dedicated learner web page: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/84153.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/qualifications/>
- ◆ 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, taking into account any potential changes to public health advice) 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. SQA ensures that the language used and level of information provided in its communications are appropriate to the target audiences by considering feedback from SQA's Learner Panel, the Scottish Youth Parliament and National Parent Forum for Scotland.

Feedback from learners who participated in SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project suggested that communications relating to the 2022 approach to awarding was sometimes unclear and that this caused confusion. SQA has considered this feedback and will continue to ensure that decisions made relating to 2023 arrangements are clear and easily accessible to young people and their parents/carers. The communications strategy SQA has in place for 2023 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 — the right of children to have their views heard and be given due consideration.

4.2 Course modifications (all learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

SQA announced in November 2022 that modifications to course assessment that were made in 2020–21 would remain in place for the 2022–23 academic year. 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.

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. Modifications were made in around 70 courses in response to feedback from teachers and lecturers in 2021–22 to give learners more opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Full details of the modifications were published on [SQA's website](#). 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.

Coursework that had been reinstated in some, but not all, courses 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 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

Modifications were designed to mitigate against the continued impact of disruption to teaching and learning, and support learners and help them to succeed. Feedback from learners who participated in SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research projects suggests that modifications are having a positive impact in this respect and that this relieved some of the pressure they experienced and that it helped them focus revision for exams. Some young people have also commented that they felt the modifications to courses meant that they did not learn essential skills they need to progress to higher levels of the course. The course modifications have the potential to continue to impact positively on all children and young people undertaking NQs in 2023. They are designed to support the assessment and certification of SQA NQs in 2023 and to ensure that the achievements of children and young people are recognised through our qualifications system. While a large number of young people supported the view that modifications to course assessment should remain for the 2023–24 academic year, SQA also acknowledged that this had an impact on young people who felt they missed the opportunity to gain crucial skills, knowledge and understanding and that they felt less prepared to start Higher and Advanced

Higher courses. These views will be considered by SQA when deciding on the approach to assessment in 2023–24.

Modifications to course assessments were put in place to mitigate any potential negative impacts of individual disruption to teaching and learning on young people and aims to allow them to catch up with course content that may not have been taught (articles 2 and 3). SQA communicated its decision to keep modifications to course assessment in April 2022 to give young people and stakeholders plenty of notice to prepare for the 2022–23 academic year (article 17). The potential impacts of modifications to course assessments on young people with disabilities were considered (article 23) and it is recognised that this arrangement supports the rights of young people to have an education and achieve the aims of education (articles 28 and 29).

SQA also considered the views of children and young people (article 12) and whether this arrangement should remain in place for the 2023–24 academic year (articles 28 and 29). It is intended that any decisions made to course assessments, including whether modifications will remain, in 2023–24 will be communicated clearly with children and young people and stakeholders as soon as possible (article 17).

4.3 Assessment arrangements (individual learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

SQA operates a needs-led model for providing assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments. This ensures that disabled children and young people and/or those with ASN get the right arrangement for the right subject at the right level. SQA does not require a formal diagnosis of disability, ASN or medical issue as evidence of a need for assessment arrangements to enable a young person to access teaching and learning and assessments. We work closely with schools, colleges and training providers who know and understand their young people. This ensures that appropriate support is in place for their assessments and exams.

SQA continues to consider reasonable adjustments for disabled learners as they are received. Reasonable adjustments are unique arrangements based on an individual learner's assessment needs. Under the Equality Act (2010), SQA has several specific duties: it must make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners and, at the same time, maintain the integrity of the qualification. This means SQA must carefully balance allowing a learner 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 schools, colleges and training providers to aid with applying and requesting assessment arrangements. This included:

- ◆ More effective and direct communication regarding assessment arrangements, including up to date guidance and reminders about deadline dates for adapted and digital papers, and submitting assessment arrangements to SQA for external exams.
- ◆ Information about assessment arrangements for young people and separate information for their parents/carers.
- ◆ A series of webinars to support staff in schools, colleges and training providers in following SQA processes for ensuring that the right young people get the right arrangements for the right subjects at the right level.
- ◆ Working with external partners to ensure these messages reach as wide an audience as possible.

For schools, colleges and training providers supporting young people with mental health difficulties, there are a range of assessment arrangements that can be put in place depending on their needs.

Providing assessment arrangements supports children and young people with disabilities, their best interests in an education setting and their right to non-discrimination (articles 2, 3 and 23), while enabling them to access their right to education and to meet the goal of education (articles 28 and 29). By publishing information on assessment arrangements aimed at young people, SQA acknowledges this is in the best interest of children and young people with a disability or ASN (articles 2, 3 and 23). It is hoped that the information tailored for young people will enable them to access information that is relevant to them and support their right to, and goal of, education (articles 2, 3, 17, 23, 28 and 29).

4.4 Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) 2023 (individual learners)

Potential impacts on children and young people

As outlined in this impact assessment, adjustments and accommodations have been made to help **all learners** and **individual learners** taking exams in 2023. The EECCS in 2023 has been developed to provide support to **individual learners** who experience disruption at the time of the exam.

Usually, an exceptional circumstances (EC) service responds to learners who are unable to sit an exam or who are affected by an EC 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 school, college or training provider would submit full details of its challenge to SQA. An appeals panel may seek relevant information to inform its decision.

EECCS applies to issues that prevent the learner attending, or completing, the exam, or that occur during the exam. A young person may be unable to attend an exam 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-19 test), or may be affected during the exam 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 must have intended to take the exam.

Centre-accessed service

Eligibility for EECCS in 2023, as in previous years, will be determined by the school, college or training provider based on guidance provided by SQA and authorised by the head of centre or their delegate. In other words, centres access the service to help support fairness of access — there is no direct access for young people. The EECCS guidance explains that the responsibility for determining eligibility to use the service lies with the head of centre or their delegate. SQA has trust in the head of centre role to ensure use of the service is as legitimate and consistent as possible as schools, colleges and training providers are closer to the circumstances young people find themselves in.

EECCS Appeals

An appeal for EECCS is based purely on a process or administrative error made by SQA. It will not include a review of the academic judgement made by SQA's examiner.

Heads of centre or their delegate can appeal on behalf of a young person if:

- ◆ they believe that SQA's decision to refuse an examination 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 exam exceptional circumstance consideration request, which contributed to a decision that is, based on all the evidence available to SQA at the time, wrong

This process is not the same as the Appeals 2023 service. EECCS appeals are different because alternative academic evidence is reviewed alongside other information available to the appeals panel, whereas the Appeals 2023 service involves a review of the marking of the learner's exam script and/or coursework. For this reason, an EECCS appeal is:

- a. a review of the original process. If the review of the original process identifies that procedures were not fully followed, the alternative evidence will be reviewed again by an experienced SQA examiner who was not involved in the original review

- b. the results based on the same source of evidence can stay the same, go up or go down. SQA recognises that a young person's result going down could have a negative impact on those who require EECCS. It is anticipated, however, that a decision for a learner's result to go down would only occur in very exceptional circumstances, such as when a young person did not attempt the exam and the alternative evidence submitted by the school, college or training provider does not support the grade awarded.

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 considered, SQA set up an external advisory group with a wide range of representatives including school and parent groups drawn from the National Qualifications Working Group 2022. 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 Strategic Group 2022. In the interest of maintaining fairness to all young people across Scotland, SQA has kept this criteria for EECCS 2023. Because the service is not directly accessed by young people, this may be regarded as not meeting the spirit of respecting the view of the child (article 12). However, as outlined above, the position taken by SQA is that schools, colleges or training providers know their learners best and can support them in accessing relevant information about the EECCS process (article 17), thus acting in the best interest of the child (article 3).

Feedback from SQA's Learner Panel suggested that the scenarios in previous EECCS guidance were open to interpretation and that this had the potential for bias from teaching practitioners about what is defined as a 'disruption' or 'exceptional circumstance'. SQA acknowledged this feedback from young people on SQA's Learner Panel and from those young people who participated in SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project (articles 2, 3, 12, 17, 23, 28 and 29). Using this information, SQA will produce supportive guidance for centres, with input from key stakeholders, which will give heads of centre a framework to operate the EECCS. This will include greater clarity on the eligibility criteria for heads of centres to decide whether to submit a request for this service. The guidance acknowledges that it does not and cannot reflect every possible scenario that may occur, but does include clearer examples of likely scenarios to aid decision making.

EECCS has been developed to provide greater support to **individual learners** who experience disruption at the time of the exam. This service aims to ensure that young people impacted by a disruption or exceptional circumstance are still able to receive a grade that reflects their demonstrated attainment (article 2), particularly young people with a disability or ASN (article 23), and to allow them to achieve a qualification that would provide them with the skills, knowledge and understanding to allow them to progress to further and higher education or career pathway of their choosing (articles 28 and 29). This approach also mitigates the real risk of EECCS being perceived as an alternative to taking the exam. Arrangements for assessing NQs in 2023 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 (articles 2, 3, 23, 28 and 29).

EECCS appeals

An appeal submitted on the grounds of a refusal of an EECCS request or procedural irregularity would be considered by an appeals panel consisting of SQA heads of service. If the panel uphold the appeal, the evidence may be reviewed by an SQA experienced examiner who was 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. It is expected that a grade going down would only occur in very exceptional circumstances where the academic evidence submitted by the school, college or training provider does not support the estimate. However, SQA has the responsibility to ensure that the integrity of its qualifications are maintained for these to be seen as credible and robust assessments of a young person's attainment. To mitigate the impact of such instances, SQA will produce further guidance to schools, colleges and training providers on the types of alternative evidence that could be used to support an EECCS request (articles 2, 3, 23, 28 and 29).

In instances where a young person was unable to attempt the exam, EECCS relies on only academic evidence submitted by the school, college or training provider to assess and determine an appropriate grade. To mitigate potential negative impacts of this, schools, colleges and training providers are asked to ensure they keep young people informed as to what grade the evidence they produce throughout the year is assessed at, and this should match the centre estimate provided for them (articles 2, 3, 17, 23, 28 and 29).

4.5 Standards and Awarding 2023 (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 and setting grade boundaries 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 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 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 (Articles 2, 3 and 29).

Following the progress that was made in 2021–22, SQA has again designed a package of support for children and young people undertaking National Qualifications in 2022–23, in partnership with stakeholder groups. This package includes modifications to course assessments, an Exam Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service, a sensitive approach to awarding and grade boundaries as well as an Appeals Service 2023.

To inform our decision on the approach to awarding for 2023, SQA considered the views of young people, representatives from schools, colleges and universities, and engaged with a range of stakeholders through the evaluation of SQA’s approach to awarding in 2021–22.

SQA believes that using well-established processes for awarding and certification treat all children and young people fairly and equitably, and 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 (Articles 2 and 29). The stakeholder groups mentioned above did not raise any concerns about the potential impact of the process on children and young people with protected characteristics, however ongoing monitoring will be necessary to ensure that this remains the case (Articles 2 and 23).

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. The importance of ensuring fairness to children and young people was at the centre of discussions (Articles 2, 3, 12 and 29). The views of key stakeholders with a particular interest in equalities and the best interests of children and young people were integrated into the decision-making process. This ensures the approach to awarding and grade boundaries in 2023 meets SQA’s equality responsibilities and requirements as an awarding body (Articles 12 and 23).

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 impacts

The existing awarding procedure was modified to take account of the unique circumstances of session 2022–23, including modifications to course assessments, to mitigate the impact of the continued disruption to teaching and learning. SQA engaged with key stakeholders to ensure the views of children and young people were taken into consideration to ensure a fair and equitable approach to awarding (Articles 2 and 29).

SQA recognises that the removal of subject-specific revision support that was available to children and young people in the 2021–22 academic year may have a negative impact, particularly on those with the protected characteristic of disability. However, feedback from disabled children and young people and/or those with additional support needs who responded to SQA’s 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research suggested that there were differing opinions on whether they found SQA’s revision support helpful (Article 12). It is anticipated that, as course modifications from the 2021–22 academic year have remained in place, this would mitigate any concerns of additional workload and stress for children and young people in session 2022–23.

While SQA recognises the impact of continued disruption to teaching and learning, and that removing revision support and retaining modifications to course assessments will have an impact on some children and young people, it is difficult to accurately and fairly determine how the impact will affect them. At the grade boundary setting stage, SQA will remain sensitive to the impact of these factors on children and young people this session and take account of the context and the overall cohort performance to set grade boundaries in a way that is fair and equitable for all. SQA’s approach to awarding in 2023 ensures that awarding is objective and eliminates prejudice and discrimination, while ensuring that grades awarded are a fair representation of children and young people’s performance in external assessments (Article 29).

The awarding procedure and grade boundary decisions apply to all children and young people regardless of their protected characteristic (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 meets national standards (Articles 23 and 29). 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 (Articles 2 and 29). 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 (Articles 3 and 29).

SQA will also engage with children and young people to ensure that communications around the process of setting grade boundaries are clearly understood and accessible to them, including those with the protected characteristic of disability (Articles 12, 17 and 23). This will allow them to be confident that the grades they are awarded in August are valid, robust and comparable to other children and young people who gained a National Qualification in another academic year (Article 29).

4.6 Appeals 2023 (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 2023. The Appeals 2023 service, along with the EECCS in 2023, 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
- ◆ have a concern about the marking of their coursework and/or exam scripts

Proposals were discussed in detail with the National Qualifications Strategic Group 2023, the National Qualifications Working Group 2023 and individual stakeholders. The PRS was a well-established service which was offered by SQA between 2014 and 2019 until the Appeals 2020 service 2020 was introduced. The Appeals 2023 service will be available after learners have been issued with their certificates on 8 August 2023. If it is believed that a young person's grade did not reflect what they were estimated to achieve, a request can be made for SQA to review their coursework and/or exam scripts.

The previous PRS offered until 2019 involved two separate strands:

- ◆ clerical check — an administrative check to ensure the totality of the marks had been accurately recorded
- ◆ marking review — a review of the marking of the exam scripts and any coursework to ensure these have been marked according to national standards set by SQA

In 2023, an appeal request will be subject to a young person's exam script(s) and/or coursework being reviewed by an SQA examiner **and** an administrative check to ensure the calculation of marks has been carried out correctly. The service will also be free of charge and learners can submit a request directly to SQA if they are unable to do so via their school, college or training provider.

In establishing Appeals 2023, SQA is striving to provide re-assurances to learners who believe an error was made in the initial marking process. SQA want learners to receive a qualification and grade which is a fair and accurate 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 young people — not just those who access the service. The service should not advantage some young people at the expense of others.

As explained earlier in this assessment, SQA's aim of keeping modifications to courses in the session 2022–23 is to support teachers, lecturers and young people in catching up with course content that may have been missed in recent academic years as a result of the disruption from COVID-19. The aim of providing the EECCS 2023 and Appeals 2023 alongside the course modifications is to continue to support teachers, lecturers and young people to achieve credible qualifications without adding pressure on teaching and learning.

SQA considered feedback from teachers, lecturers and young people when determining the approach to be taken for a post-certification service in 2023. In SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project, a majority of young people who participated in the survey indicated that they were not satisfied with the Appeals Service in 2022 and felt that it was unfair. The young people who responded to SQA's survey and SQA's Learner Panel also fed back that the information in SQA guidance and communications was unclear and that language used needed to be easier to understand and user-friendly. SQA had also

received a number of enquiries and complaints from young people who were keen to use the Appeals Service in 2022 but believed the service did not meet their needs as there was no opportunity for their exam scripts to be reviewed.

Fairness was also an overarching theme from all audience groups. Young people felt that the Appeals Service 2022 was misleading, that there were inconsistencies in how evidence was reviewed between subjects and that greater transparency on how marks were allocated was needed. Young people also fed back in SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project that it was important for them to be able to submit a request directly to SQA without going through their school, college or training provider. Young people felt that being able to submit a request directly to SQA would eliminate any potential teacher or lecturer bias; one young person explained that initial conversations with their school suggested an appeal was going to be submitted on their behalf. However when this was followed up, an appeal had not been submitted in 2022 and the young person was not given any further information about the reasons for this.

The Appeals 2023 service builds on the existing service offered in 2019. This is a longstanding SQA service and is of benefit to all young people who believe an error has been made in the assessment of their exam scripts and/or coursework. In the Appeals 2023 service, exam scripts and coursework completed by young people will be reviewed by an SQA examiner to ensure all materials have been marked according to national standards. If any discrepancies are identified, an appropriate amended grade will be awarded.

In the PRS 2019, a request could only be made for **either** a clerical check of the calculation of marks awarded or a review of an SQA exam script or piece of coursework completed by a learner. One of the main changes between the PRS 2019 and the Appeals 2023 service is that requests will now include **both** a clerical check and a review of the SQA exam script or piece of coursework.

Eligibility for the PRS 2019 was determined by the centre based on guidance provided by SQA and authorised by the head of centre or their delegate. Centres accessed the service to help support fairness of access and learners could not access the service directly. SQA will review and strengthen the guidance to schools, colleges and training providers with key stakeholders to ensure the information is clear. Schools, colleges and training providers are required to support their learners to make an informed decision about whether a request would be submitted for the Appeals 2023 service on their behalf. As the school, college or training provider know their learners best, they are best placed to explain the purpose of the service to their learners.

To ensure fairness and equity to all learners, particularly for those with a range of protected characteristics, if the learner is unable to reach an agreement with their school, college or training provider, there will be a facility for the learner to submit a request directly to SQA for the Appeals 2023 service. Communications will be reviewed to ensure this is clear and easy to understand for learners with the protected characteristic of disability. A provision will also be made for learners with a disability or ASN, or those who do not feel confident in doing so independently, to authorise a representative to submit a request on their behalf.

The previous service offered in 2019 was a charged service which had the potential to affect young people. Although SQA intended for the fee to be met by schools, colleges and training providers, SQA does not have evidence to determine whether this was the case or whether,

in some instances, young people and their families were charged by the school, college and training provider to meet these costs. SQA acknowledges that to ensure the service is fair and accessible to all young people, the Appeals 2023 service must be free of charge.

Offering the Appeals 2023 service addresses the balance between the needs of the system (variable quality and volume of alternative academic evidence submitted by schools, colleges and training providers) and the needs of young people undertaking SQA NQs (equity for all learners). As the Appeals 2023 service involves a review of coursework and/or exams set by SQA, these will be marked and reviewed against national standards. This reduces the possibility of any potential teacher bias introduced in internal assessments that were submitted for the Appeals 2022 service. By reviewing SQA-set assessments as part of the Appeals 2023 service, this ensures fairness for all young people as the quality of evidence will not differ across Scotland based on geographical area. The existing robust quality assurance processes in SQA's assessment process, which is also part of the Appeals 2023 service, will also reduce any potential bias when marking assessments completed by young people.

Grades can go up or stay the same. There is a very small chance that a grade could also go down. It is expected that this would only happen in very exceptional circumstances where an error has been identified during the clerical check that reduces the original certificated grade. SQA examiners undertake rigorous training to ensure they are clear on the marking process and that these must meet national standards, however errors, albeit minimal, do occur. SQA acknowledged feedback from learners that this will have a negative impact, but it is a difficult decision SQA must make to ensure the integrity of its qualifications.

There will also be a priority and non-priority service — the priority service will be available for learners whose place at university, further education, training or employment is time contingent upon a grade. Full details of this will be released in due course.

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

Young people can directly access SQA's Appeals 2023 service if they have a concern about the grade they have been awarded and they have attempted to discuss their concerns with their school, college or training provider but were unable to reach an agreement. By ensuring there is a facility for young people to directly access the Appeals 2023 service if their school, college or training provider are not supportive of their intention to do so, SQA acknowledges the rights of the child and provides them with an opportunity to be involved in a service that impacts their education (articles 2, 3, 12, 23, 28 and 29). Young people who do not feel comfortable submitting a request directly to SQA will also be able to authorise a representative to do so on their behalf (articles 2, 3, 12 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 2023 NQs. SQA has considered feedback from young people about the need for clearer and user-friendly language. SQA will consult with young people to ensure any communications issued for the Appeals 2023 service are age-appropriate and accessible to those with a disability or ASN (articles 2, 12, 17 and 23).

Section 5: Evidence and consultation

5.1 What evidence have you used to inform your assessment?

In the arrangements for assessing National Qualifications in 2023, 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)
- ◆ field research conducted as part of SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project and consultation with SQA's Learner Panel
- ◆ information and reportage provided through SQA's media and parliamentary monitoring service and Liaison Team
- ◆ inbound communication and queries

5.2 Have you consulted with relevant stakeholders?

SQA has engaged with the National Qualifications Strategic Group 2023 and discussed the arrangements for the assessment of National Qualifications in 2023 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

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

Yes. SQA gathered the views of children and young people through its 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project. Interviews with young people were also held between December 2022 and January 2023 for SQA to gain a better understanding of their comments. SQA also engaged with its Learner Panel in January 2023 to gather feedback and to understand the educational needs of children and young people and their views of any changes that could be made to SQA services.

Children and young people 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 children and young people say 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 to run a monthly Learner Panel which consists of 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 assessing NQs a result of the pandemic, SQA has sought the views of learners on 2023 assessment, qualifications, communications and services as part of SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project. This included interviews with learners, and focus groups for learners with a disability or ASN. The full 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation Report, with findings from SQA's research project, will be published in due course. SQA will continue to seek the views of children and young people on any proposed changes to 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. College learners were also invited to participate in the interviews and focus groups held to gather in-depth, qualitative information as part of SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project. The full report, with findings from this research project, will be published in due course.

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. Parents/carers were also invited to participate in the survey as part of SQA's 2022 National Qualifications Evaluation research project. The full report, with findings from this research project, will be published in due course.

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 assessing NQs in 2023.

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 assessing NQs in 2023 are designed to further advance the realisation of the rights of children and young people, 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 2023 are operationalised. SQA will carry out monitoring work to understand and evaluate the impacts of different arrangements on learners.

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

[2022 Appeals statistics — SQA](#)

[2022 Attainment statistics — SQA](#)

[2022 Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment — SQA](#)

[2022 Equalities Monitoring Report — SQA](#)

[2022 Equality Impact Assessment — SQA](#)

[2022 National Qualifications Evaluation Report — SQA \(not yet published\)](#)

[Achieving Excellence and Equity: 2023 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan \(Dec 2022\)](#)

[Children and Young People's Mental Health in Scotland — The Scottish Parliament](#)

[Equality Evidence](#)

[Relationship between teacher estimates and results in Scotland — SQA \(3 November 2022\)](#)

[Review of exams and assessments](#)

[Scottish Funding Council. Joint call for Scotland's colleges and universities to address inequalities](#)

[SQA confirms assessment changes will remain in place for 2022–23 — SQA](#)

[Students in affluent areas more likely to challenge grades | Tes 6 December 2022](#)

[The Impact of the Pandemic on Requests for Access Arrangements | Membership | Communicate-ed](#)

[Your National Qualifications 2022–23 \(College edition\) — SQA](#)

[Your National Qualifications 2022–23 \(School edition\) — SQA](#)