

# Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

## Action Plan

This section is completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment. Due to the importance of embedding equality in SQA through our actions the Action Plan will be the focus and record of ongoing actions.

<b>Agreed Schedule Review Date</b>	<b>August 2026</b>	<b>Additional Schedule Review Date</b>	
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**Explain how you will monitor and record the actual impact on equality groups, including how the evidence can be revisited to measure the actual impact.**

<b>Required Actions</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment &amp; Review</b>
Actions taken to <b>monitor the implementation of practice and the impact on equality groups</b> (evidence and consultation).			<b>[ONGOING RECORD]</b>
Continue media monitoring.	Senior External Affairs Manager	Ongoing	
Continue to measure impact of external newsletters by recording open rates.	Senior Customer Communications Manager	Ongoing	Data is recorded seven days post issue to allow time for stakeholders to open newsletters.
Continue to review feedback from external stakeholders via Learner and Parent Engagement, Liaison Team, Customer Service Team and Regional Managers.	Customer Communications Team	Ongoing	Enquiries group in place to monitor enquiries. Also reported weekly at the certification programme group – CPG.
Continue to engage with educational partners such as National Qualifications (NQ) and Higher National Vocational Qualifications (HNVQ) strategic and working groups.	Senior Customer Communications Manager	Fortnightly	During key stages of the NQ diet.
Continue to support and engage with customer-facing colleagues as well as SQA's Advisory Group and use these as sounding boards for relevant issues.	Senior Customer Communications Manager & Senior External Affairs Manager	Ongoing	

Identified Actions	General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
[LIST]	[CROSS REFERENCE]			
Explore the creation of an External Communications & Engagement policy, with clearly defined responsibilities	Foster good relations	Head of Communications and Engagement	March 2024	
Customer Communications team to consider how to implement British Sign Language (BSL) formal process by December 2023	<b>Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination Advance Equality of Opportunity</b>	Head of Communications and Engagement	December 2023	

### Policy Aims

<b>Name of Policy or practice</b>	<b>External Communications and Engagement</b>
<b>New Policy or Revision</b>	Review
<b>Name of Policy Owner</b>	<b>Head of Communications and Engagement</b>
<b>Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion</b>	August 2023

<b>What is the rationale for this policy or practice?</b>
It is essential that SQA carries out effective communications and engagement with its external users such as learners, parents/carers, educators, employers, education partners. By implementing good communications practices, SQA aims to enhance transparency, promote a positive communications and engagement culture and foster an inclusive environment where external users feel valued, informed and engaged.
<b>What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?</b>

Established channels for communications and engagement are in place:

- SQA main website with dedicated space for news items, audience specific information and key topics
- SQA blog site
- Digital channels – Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitch, LinkedIn, Spotify, Google, Bing, Nano, RAAS Labs, The Guardian, The Times, Blis, and Numodo
- Newsletters – SQA News (Scotland, Rest of UK, China and International), NextGen: Higher National (HN) News, SQA Co-ordinator Update, NextGen: HN Pilot Centre Update, Accreditation News
- Direct email using Marketo system.
- Media (reactive and proactive)
- Visits – co-ordinated by Liaison Managers, Regional Managers and Learner & Parent Engagement Team
- MS Teams workshops – co-ordinated by Liaison Managers and Learner & Parent Engagement Team

Metrics are in place to measure use of these channels, including – Internet and newsletter views, likes and click-throughs, attendance and engagement numbers for centre visits and online events; digital media performance; direct email stats.

We currently have circa 46K followers on X (Twitter), 27k followers on Facebook and 2.5k followers on Instagram. Our suite of newsletters covering Scotland, the rest of UK and international markets reach around 6.2k users.

**What are the aims of this policy or practice?**

The practice focuses on a number of elements related to good communications and engagement:

- Manage SQA's external reputation.
- Keep external users informed.
- Give external users a more holistic view of SQA.
- Help to build a positive perception of the organisational.
- Engage external users, listen to their needs and give them a voice. For example via the Learner Advisory Panel and through clear information about assessment arrangements and the option to have publications translated.
- Provide channels for external users to find key and share key information.
- Provide access to support.
- Motivate staff to deliver business strategies.
- Share key reports such as the corporate plan and annual report.
- Foster good relations between SQA and its key user groups by creating channels for feedback, debate and discussion.
- Use Plain English to communicate as clearly as possible with all key audiences.

#### **How is the content of these aims relevant to equality groups?**

It emphasises the importance of being an open and transparent organisation where external users feel listened to and valued. By promoting effective internal communications and engagement, the practice aims to ensure that information reaches all individuals, regardless of their characteristics or backgrounds.

Additionally, SQA recognises that stakeholders targeted by external communication most likely represent a diverse set of protected characteristics.

### **Evidence, Consultation and Engagement**

#### **What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?**

School, college and ETP (employers and training providers) SQA Co-ordinators  
Educators and their representative bodies  
Learners and their representative bodies  
Parents/carers and their representative bodies  
Employers and their representative bodies

Partners – Scottish Government, Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland

Media

SQA senior management and staff

SQA Advisory Committee

This engagement includes:

- Formal user feedback such as Stakeholder Survey results, in-person research (via Liaison Team, Regional Manager and Learner & Parent Team visits and events) and engagement with SQAs Advisory Committee and NQ/HNVQ strategic and working groups. This engagement helps to inform how we handle various key messages. For example the fact that learners like to receive information from SQA as this reassures them that it is correct, and they are receiving the same message that other centres are receiving.
- EMT feedback on External Communications practices. This is particularly helpful for hearing the views of senior stakeholders and audience representatives.

**What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?**

**Age**

- Guides for plain English say that text should be written so that somebody with the reading ability of a 9-year-old can understand it. [Plain English | Readability Guidelines](#)
  - Plain English is mandatory for all of gov.uk websites and provides information on the positive impact on using plain English for all audiences - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/content-design/writing-for-gov-uk#plain-english>
  - Plain language benefits all users, including people who are encountering an unknown topic - <https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/use-plain-language>
  - The most basic writing techniques when writing for the general public are: use short sentences; try not to use words that are three syllables or more - <https://resources.mygov.scot/content-standards/content-delivery/creating-content/readability/>
  - More people will understand your message and there is less chance that your document will be misunderstood - <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/benefits/>
- The practice promotes and supports the work of SQA's Learner Advisory Group that gives young people a platform where they will be heard, recognised and supported to influence change and ensure SQA fulfils its commitment to be user centred. Activity includes provision and development of a learner information hub on the SQA website and achieving the Plain English crystal mark for learners' publications in English.
- Key demographics are considered during digital media planning. For example, channels such as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and Spotify have more of a learner/young person focus whereas LinkedIn, Facebook and X(Twitter) are used with educators and parents/carers in mind.

Select subject

National Qualifications

- NQ home
- Find your subject
- Learner support 22-23**
- Results
- Your certificate
- Appeals
- MySQA
- Get your coursework back
- Private candidates
- Teaching support

## Resources for learners sitting National Qualifications



### Results day

Exam results are delivered on Tuesday 8 August 2023.



### MySQA

MySQA is closed and will open again at 9 am on Wednesday 9 August.



### Appeals 2023

Appeals 2023 is a free service that you can use if you have concerns about a grade.

Hello from SQA. What can I help you with?



	 <p> <b>SQA</b>  <b>Got a question?</b>  <b>0345 279 1000</b>  <a href="http://www.sqa.org.uk/appeals">www.sqa.org.uk/appeals</a>          Twitter Facebook LinkedIn YouTube          Crystal Mark 24116          Clarity approved by Plain English Campaign          July 2023 BD8819       </p> 
<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p>Providing our messaging in a clear, concise and relevant way allows all audiences (including those with a learning disability) to access information. We also offer the provision of key learner publications in Braille for visually impaired learners or their parents/carers.</p> <p>SQA staff are encouraged to write using plain English and follow SQA's style guide for writing. Many resources are promoted internally, and training provided to encourage clear, confident and approachable writing. There is a section dedicated to this on the intranet.</p>

	<p>Digital Accessibility Guidelines are promoted to all SQA staff, in particular around how to create content and write accessibly for the website. Accessibility has become an important part of digital communications and something that can no longer be ignored.</p> <p>At least 1 in 5 people have a long-term illness, an impairment, or a disability. Many more will have a temporary or situational disability. Health conditions can impact a person’s ability to understand a message, either because of a cognitive impairment, or because they are unable to see, hear or otherwise access the information. Accessible content can be more effective because it can be accessed and understood by the widest possible audience – regardless of whether people have a visual, hearing, speech, motor, cognitive or other combination of impairments.</p> <p>SQA's communications service follows <a href="#">best practice</a> outline by The Government Communications Service (GCS).</p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>The use of plain language translates more easily into other languages - <a href="https://www.aucd.org/docs/phe/PracticalStrategiesforWritinginPlainLanguage.pdf">https://www.aucd.org/docs/phe/PracticalStrategiesforWritinginPlainLanguage.pdf</a></p> <p>While learner publications are created in English and Gaelic, SQA offers the option to translate into other languages. This approach was introduced following tracking download figures and requests for documents that had already been translated.</p> <p>Our social media strategy supports national race campaigns such as Race Equality Week and Black History Month - looking at what SQA is doing to support race equality within Scotland.</p> <p>In addition, the practice uses diverse race illustrations in SQAs learner brand.</p>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	No evidence of an impact has been identified.
<b>Sex</b>	The practice promotes a balance of male, female and non-binary illustrations in SQAs publications containing elements of design.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	No evidence of an impact has been identified.

<b>Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	The practice promotes a balance of male, female and non-binary illustrations in SQAs publications containing elements of design.
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	No evidence of an impact has been identified.
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	No evidence of an impact has been identified.
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	The practice promotes and supports communications activity around assessment arrangements, Care Experience Week and results day experiences for Care-Experienced children.

## Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy or practice has on an equality group may be different and this requires to be recorded. The impact may not always be negative. Actions are taken to address any differential impact, and include actions to mitigate against any negative impact, to advance equality and to foster good relations between groups.

Each section contains questions for each equality group. These questions are here to support consideration; however, you can provide further detail. Focus initially on the equality groups that would be affected by this policy. If you do not consider that certain equality groups would be affected by this policy, you may leave these sections.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Age	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct
	There is no expected or evidence of discrimination as a result of this practice, however, by ensuring that comms are written with Plain English in mind, it ensures that SQA's external communication does not discriminate against people on the basis of age.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	As all staff are encouraged and trained to write using plain English, SQA's external communications should be accessible to all users, regardless of age, widening access to information and opportunity. In addition, SQA tailors the use of communications channels to ensure they are age applicable. For example the use of Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok are primarily to inform young people.
	Foster good relations
SQA fosters relations between people who share a characteristic or don't by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with its learner advisory panel to better understand learner needs.</li> <li>• Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion through the use of diverse illustrations.</li> <li>• Using plain English and where possible using language suitable for age 9 years and above.</li> <li>• Social media strategy supports highlighting national causes that link to qualifications.</li> </ul>	
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Disability	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	<p>There is no expected or evidence of discrimination as a result of this practice, but by ensuring that SQA's external communications are written in Plain English, and follow Accessibility Standards, SQA can ensure that external communications are accessible to disabled people, and thus do not discriminate.</p>
	<p><b>Advance equality of opportunity</b></p>
	<p>As all staff are encouraged and trained to write using plain English, SQA's external communications should be accessible to all users, including those with learning disabilities, widening access to information and opportunities.</p> <p>SQA's Communications teams follow <a href="#">best practice</a> on accessibility outlined by The GCS. This broadens access to SQA's communications, and enables all users, including those with access needs, to better participate.</p> <p>Printed communications can be produced in Braille if a need is identified, which broadens access to SQA communications. In addition, all of SQA's communications are Digital First, which has inherent accessibility built in, through the use of screen readers and other assistive technology.</p> <p>At current, SQA does not have a formal process for providing communications in BSL. BSL communications can be created on an ad-hoc basis where a need is identified.</p>
	<p>Customer Communications team to consider how to implement BSL formal process by December 2023</p>
	<p><b>Foster good relations</b></p>
	<p>SQA fosters relations between people who share a characteristic or don't by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion through the use of diverse illustrations.</li> <li>• Using plain English and translating key documents where required/requested.</li> <li>• Working with key audience groups to ensure access to Assessment Arrangement information.</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Race</b>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>

	<p>There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this practice, or that this practice could effectively eliminate.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advance equality of opportunity</b></p>
	<p>By using Plain English in external communications, SQA's comms are to be more easily translated to other languages, removing barriers for users in foreign markets, with a different country of origin or who speak English as an additional language.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Foster good relations</b></p>
	<p>SQA fosters relations between people who share a characteristic or don't by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programming key communications to issue during working hours relevant to the receiving overseas market.</li> <li>• Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion though the use of diverse illustrations.</li> <li>• Translating key documents where required/requested.</li> <li>• Providing account managers to support the delivery of our qualifications in foreign markets including carrying out visits and understanding local traditions.</li> </ul>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this practice, or that this practice could effectively eliminate.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advance equality of opportunity</b></p>
	<p>There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Foster good relations</b></p>
	<p>Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion though the use of diverse illustrations helps to foster relations between people who share a characteristic or don't.</p>

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<b>Sex</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this practice, or that this practice could effectively eliminate.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.
	Foster good relations
	Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion through the use of diverse illustrations, to promote non-traditional roles (for example; women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), men in care), helps to foster relations between people who share a characteristic or don't.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this practice, or that this practice could effectively eliminate.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.
	Foster good relations
	Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion through the use of diverse illustrations helps to foster relations between people who share a characteristic or don't.

<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this practice, or that this practice could effectively eliminate.
	<b>Advance equality of opportunity</b>
	There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.
	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion through the use of diverse illustrations helps to foster relations between people who share a characteristic or don't.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this practice, or that this practice could effectively eliminate.
	<b>Advance equality of opportunity</b>
	There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.
	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>



<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this policy, or that this policy could effectively eliminate.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence that this practice would enhance equality of opportunity based on this characteristic, nor is there evidence of a disparity of opportunity.
<b>Considered by SQA</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no expected or evidence of discrimination either as a result of this practice, or that this practice could effectively eliminate.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Positive impact of using multiple communications & engagement channels to maximise the reach across care-experienced users.  As all staff are encouraged and trained to write using plain English, SQA's external communications should be accessible to all users – widening access to information and opportunity.  SQA is a corporate parent and celebrates the achievements of care-experienced learners at key points of the academic year, including Results Day. This includes sharing tailored messages from SQA staff and the Chief Examining Officer.
	Foster good relations

SQA fosters relations between people who share a characteristic or don't by:

- Being a corporate parent.
- Implementing a learner brand that supports equality, diversity and inclusion through the use of diverse illustrations.
- Working with learner and parent/carer representatives on how to communicate assessment arrangement information.
- Liaising with organisations representative of care-experienced learners such as Who Cares? Scotland.

### Rationale

If you are proceeding with a decision that may have a negative impact and are not putting in place actions to mitigate against this, please explain how this is objectively justified.

No negative impacts have been identified.