

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.

Agreed Schedule Review Date	31 January 2025	Additional Schedule Review Date	
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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.

Required Actions	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
We will monitor the implementation of the policy and assess any complaints about how written communications are understood, making improvements, as appropriate.	Senior External Affairs Manager	31 January 2025	Ongoing

Identified Actions	General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
[LIST]	[CROSS REFERENCE]			

Policy Aims

Name of Policy or practice	Plain English
New Policy or Revision	Revision
Name of Policy Owner	Head of Communications and Engagement
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	July 2023

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?

SQA will use plain and accessible language in all its written communication, to make our publications as simple and clear to understand for our audience groups.

Writing in plain English is the most efficient way of working — communicating clearly means there is less need for clarification later. This means that:

- It will help us be transparent and open.
- It is a way of avoiding discrimination.
- It is good for public perceptions of the organisation.

What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?

Many of the ideas and instructions SQA communicates are complex, and there is often a lot of information to convey. Therefore, it is important that what we write is clear, concise and relevant.

Plain English has become a normal way to communicate in lots of areas, like the [UK Government's Department for Education](#), and [European law](#) has ruled for 30 years that Terms of Service can not be enforced if they aren't written in plain English.

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>

More people will understand your message and there is less chance that your document will be understood - <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/benefits/>

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 3 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 understood - <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/benefits/>

What are the aims of this policy or practice?

SQA will use plain and accessible language in all its written communication in order to:

- make it easy to interpret
- ensure our audience groups can read and understand our documents quickly
- eliminate the need for our audience groups to ask for clarity or explanations
- ensure our message/information is being received in the way it is intended
- ensure our audience groups comply with any requirements being asked of them

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

It is important that what we write is clear, concise and relevant to all our audience groups. The key audience groups for SQA's communications are both internal staff, and external stakeholders, which includes learners, teachers and parents. This wide reach means that this policy is applicable to all equality groups.

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?
Stakeholders emphasise the need for messaging to be clear and accessible for all audiences. We do get feedback from users that there is too much jargon in our information and processes can sometimes come across as complex.
We ensure our learner booklets about National Courses achieve the Crystal Mark, approved by the Plain English Campaign.

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?	
Age	Providing our messaging in a clear, concise and relevant way allows all ages of audience to access information. 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
Disability	Providing our messaging in a clear, concise and relevant way allows all audiences with a disability to access information.
Race	Plain language translates more easily into other languages - https://www.aucd.org/docs/phe/PracticalStrategiesforWritinginPlainLanguage.pdf
Religion or Belief	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Sex	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Sexual Orientation	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Marriage/Civil Partnership	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Pregnancy / Maternity	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Care experience (where relevant)	Providing our messaging in a clear, concise, and relevant way allows audiences who are care experienced to access information.

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 that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	The aims of the Plain English policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic. By writing simply, in a way that a 9-year-old could understand, SQA can remove barriers that stop young people interacting with our guides and resources.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	The aims of this policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic which advance equality of opportunity for the characteristic, by making information more accessible to those with a low reading age.
	Foster good relations
	The aims of this policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic which promote or foster good relations between the characteristic and those who do not share it. More people will understand your message and there is less chance that your document will be understood, and this can foster ununderstanding between younger people and older people - https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/benefits/
	General Equality Duty
	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	The aims of the Plain English policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic.
Protected Characteristic	Advance equality of opportunity
Disability	The aims of this policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic which advance equality of opportunity for the characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	The aims of this policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic which promote or foster good relations between the characteristic and those who do not share it.
	General Equality Duty
	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to suggest that this policy will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination on the basis of race.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	The aims of this policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic which advance equality of opportunity for the characteristic. Providing our messaging in a clear, concise, and relevant way allows audiences of all races to access information. This includes recognising that for some, English is a second language.
	Foster good relations
Protected Characteristic	The aims of this policy have a positive impact on this protected characteristic which promote or foster good relations between the characteristic and those who do not share it. More people will understand your message and there is less chance that your document will be misunderstood, and this can foster understanding - https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/benefits/
Race	General Equality Duty
	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Religion or Belief	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.

	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Pregnancy / Maternity	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Advance equality of opportunity

	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
Considered by SQA	General Equality Duty
Care experience (where relevant)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.
	Foster good relations
	There is no evidence of an impact for this characteristic.

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