

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	June 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
Actions taken to monitor the implementation of policy and the impact on equality groups (evidence and consultation)			[ONGOING RECORD]
Investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.	PAS – Equalities Team	Ongoing	
Ongoing monitoring of the number of requests for ICT as an assessment arrangement and non-AA ICT for equality purposes	PAS – Equalities Team	Ongoing	
Consider whether further research is required to support data held on the number of ICT requests made by protected characteristic	PAS – Equalities Team	Ongoing	
Update SQA position on use of ICT, including all associated guidance such as section in SQA Co-ordinator’s Guide, Use of ICT request guidance, security requirements and ICT Security Checklist) for centres	PAS – Equalities Team	13 June 2024	Article submitted and to be issued in 13 June 2024 edition of SQA News

Identified Actions	General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
Review all sources of equality information currently held by SQA	II, III	PAS – Equalities Team	Ongoing	
Establish whether further information available from Scottish Pupil Census can be used to inform ongoing equality monitoring and use of ICT in external assessments	II, III	PAS – Equalities Team	Ongoing	
Ongoing monitoring of the number of requests for ICT as an assessment arrangement and non-AA ICT for equality purposes	II, III	Assessment Arrangements and PAS – Equalities Teams	Ongoing	
Consider whether further research is required to support data held on the number of ICT requests made by protected characteristic	I, II, III	PAS – Equalities Team	Ongoing	

<p>Update SQA position on use of ICT, including all associated guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ SQA Co-ordinator's Guide section on use of ICT ◆ Guidance for submitting requests for ICT in external exams ◆ ICT Security Checklist, and ◆ Any other document containing reference to ICT security requirements 	I, II, III	PAS – Equalities Team		
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Policy Aims

Name of Policy or practice	2024-25 Use of ICT in external exams
New Policy or Revision	Revision to current practice
Name of Policy Owner	Michelle Cuninghame, Policy and Research Manager – Equalities
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	6 June 2024

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?
<p>SQA's current practice and associated guidance for centres regarding the use of ICT in external exams states that devices 'can be used as word processors or to access digital question papers, but cannot be used to access the internet or other networks, except a restricted exam network.'</p>

Scottish Government made a commitment to provide appropriate digital devices to 700,000 school-aged learners and centres have been purchasing Apple and Chromebook devices for their learners.

SQA's practice was devised at a time when Windows devices were the main operating system for ICT devices, however this does not reflect current practice in teaching and learning settings. Enquiries received and data generated from research carried out by SQA indicated that learners have been using Apple and Chromebook devices in learning and teaching environments, but centres were not confident that the security measures in place would meet SQA ICT security requirements for use in external exams. Following extensive research, the proposal to review our security requirements and practice was approved by Standards and Policy Group.

The change to our security requirements ensures that this is up to date with current practice in centres using of a range of ICT devices, demonstrates our commitment to evidence-based decision making in a move towards a progressively digital society, and to ensure learners, particularly those with a disability or additional support needs, are not disadvantaged. This decision also aligns our practice with our assessment arrangement principle that assessment arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, a learner's usual way of working in teaching and learning, and producing work.

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

SQA's Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities (PAS – Equalities) colleagues worked with CALL Scotland to investigate the challenges learners and centres experience with assistive technology, SQA's digital question papers and use of devices in external assessments. CALL Scotland produced two reports in 2021 and 2022 on behalf of SQA to summarise its findings.

SQA's Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities team also issued a survey in 2022 to centres regarding the use of ICT as an assessment arrangement in which 233 responses were received. [Published data](#) on the number of assessment arrangement requests between 2019 and 2023 were also considered alongside the number of ICT requests for learners with no additional support needs submitted to SQA's Assessment Arrangements Team. Further, correspondence from centres regarding SQA's practice and technical queries and/or concerns on the use of specific devices and assistive technology have also been considered and has informed the recommendations made to SQA's National Qualifications Assessment Management Group and Policy & Standards Group.

Further investigative research was undertaken between 2023 and 2024 by, and on behalf of, SQA. PAS – Equalities team conducted interviews with centre staff, and where possible with learners, to understand how (and what) ICT devices are being used in learning and teaching, the benefits of using these and the challenges and barriers centres have also experienced. Centres advised that they retain a bank of Windows devices (and/or purchase new ones) explicitly for exam use, as centre staff are able to easily restrict these to meet SQA ICT security requirements. However, these are not the devices learners have been issued with as part of their teaching and learning (ie Apple and Chromebook devices). Due to SQA's current practice, centres require learners to switch from using the Apple and Chromebook devices that they are familiar with and use as part of their daily

practice to Windows devices, which use a different operating system, for exam purposes. This has a negative impact on all learners who are required to use a different (and oftentimes, unfamiliar) device for external exams.

At the same time, CALL Scotland was contracted by SQA to carry out further research with centres into the feasibility of managing and securing Apple and Chromebook devices for external SQA exams. CALL Scotland recruited a number of centres and/or local authority representatives as part of the research. While the centres and local authorities were supportive and interested in the objective of the trial, participants were hesitant to invest in further resources without assurance from SQA that further exploration into suitable software to support centres and local authorities to manage a variety of devices would be permitted in SQA exams.

In addition, SQA's Assessment Development and Delivery: NQ Assessment Team carry out a survey annually to gather feedback from centres about their experience with the use of assessment materials. The survey results relating to the use of digital question papers with ICT devices were analysed and formed part of the considerations of impacts on learners with the protected characteristic of disability.

Publicly available information published by Scottish Government and that published by JCQ for other UK awarding bodies including AQA, City and Guilds, OCR, Pearson and WJEC were also considered when making submitting the proposal to SQA's Standards and Policy Group for approval.

According to an [FOI request](#) made to Scottish Government in February 2022, over 72,000 pupils had received a device, including iPads and Chromebooks, to support their learning by the end of the academic year in 2020/21. A [number of local authorities](#) have also developed their own approaches to providing devices to learners. Centres have expressed concerns that SQA's current security requirements for use of ICT devices cannot be applied to Apple devices and Chromebooks as they require Internet access to function.

What are the aims of this policy or practice?

SQA's practice on the use of ICT in external exams provides centres with security requirements that they must meet to ensure the integrity and security of SQA's qualifications and assessments are maintained when ICT devices and assistive technology is used. The aim of the revised ICT security requirements is to provide centres with clarification that Apple and Chromebooks devices can be used from 2025 SQA external exams, provided that:

1. The restricted Internet connection is used only to enable the operation of the device,
2. The devices can be managed and secured in line with all other security requirements, and
3. The assessment conditions are adhered to.

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

SQA’s practice and associated guidance on the use of ICT in external assessments applies to all learners entered for National Courses. It is recognised that while the majority of learners who sit National Course assessments will be between the ages of 15 and 17, this Equality Impact Assessment will affect all learners with a range of protected characteristics. It is for this reason that a Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has also been completed to demonstrate our commitment to ensuring the rights of the child are upheld.

SQA does not currently hold data on other protected characteristics learners who use ICT in external assessments may have, however we intend to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

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

SQA have engaged with centres and local authorities who submit requests for use of ICT devices in external exams on behalf of learners, including those with a disability or additional support needs. This has been done directly and indirectly through several methods:

- ◆ SQA Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities (PAS – Equalities) Team survey that was open to centres between March and June 2022 and interviews with centres and some learners between October 2023 and January 2024 (direct),
- ◆ Correspondence between centres and SQA’s Assessment Arrangements Team regarding the use of ICT and/or assistive technology in external assessments (direct), and
- ◆ SQA’s ongoing contractual relationship with CALL Scotland to investigate the accessibility of digital question papers and potential security solutions to restrict Apple and Chromebook devices whilst maintaining the integrity and security of SQA’s assessments and credibility of its qualifications (indirect).

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

Age

	<p>SQA's practice and associated guidance on the use of ICT in external assessments applies to all learners entered for National Courses. It is recognised that the majority of learners who sit National Course assessments will be between the ages of 15, 16 and 17. SQA holds information on learners' dates of birth, however this information is held separately from requests submitted by centres on behalf of their learners who intend to use ICT in external assessments.</p> <p>Over 8500 requests were made in 2023 for learners with no additional support needs to use ICT without spellcheck, an increase of 4500 requests from 2022.</p> <p>SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Disability	<p>In 2023, 26,455 requests were submitted for ICT with and without spellcheck as assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs; this accounted for 12.5% of all assessment arrangement requests. This is an increase of 2670 requests for ICT with and without spellcheck from 2022.</p> <p>233 responses were also received from centres who participated in SQA's 2022 survey on learners who use of ICT as an assessment arrangement in external assessments. Furthermore, CALL Scotland's reports of 2021 and 2022 provide further information on this matter and its impact on centres with disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs. Interviews were also held with a sample of centres in 2023 in which five learners from two different centres also participated.</p>
Race	<p>SQA does not currently hold data on the race/ethnicity of learners who use ICT in external assessments. SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>SQA does not currently hold data on learners' religion or belief who use ICT in external assessments, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Sex	

	<p>SQA holds information about a learner's sex, but this information is not currently used to identify how many of those who use ICT in external assessments are girls/women or boys/men. SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's sexual orientation, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	<p>SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's gender identity, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Marriage/Civil Partnership	<p>SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's marital status, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Pregnancy / Maternity	<p>SQA holds information about a learner's pregnancy or maternity status if arrangements are requested by the centre on behalf of the learner as a temporary disability. However, this information is not held in a central database that can be easily accessed. It is for this reason this information is not currently used to identify how many of those who use ICT in external assessments.</p> <p>SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
Care experience (where relevant)	<p>SQA does not currently hold information about whether a learner has care experience, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of collating information held by SQA and other external sources of learner equality data (such as race, sexual</p>

	orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.
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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 majority of learners who undertake SQA National Courses are between the ages of 15 and 18. There is no evidence from the research carried out as part of this project but learners experience unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation or other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act however it is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT and this may be perceived as indirect or direct discrimination.
		In reviewing our ICT security requirements, the decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.
		Advance equality of opportunity
		Centres can request the use of ICT without spellcheck for learners without a disability or additional support need in external exams. This has a positive impact to ensure all learners, regardless of age, are able to access ICT devices instead of relying on the traditional method of pen and paper to complete exams.
		Over 8500 requests were made in 2023 for learners with no additional support needs to use ICT without spellcheck, an increase of 4500 requests from 2022. Existing SQA ICT security requirements was devised at a time when Windows

	<p>devices were predominantly used. Centres have explained that due to resourcing issues, it is not always possible to allow learners time to practice with Windows devices before the exam. The majority of centres currently have limited availability of Windows devices that learners can access in external assessments.</p> <p>SQA's 2022 survey and in the report by CALL Scotland noted that centres experienced difficulties with restricting functionality in Apple and Chromebook devices to meet current SQA ICT security requirements.</p> <p>The decision to revise these requirements may help to reduce any unintended anxiety or stress learners may have previously experienced by using a device they are familiar with in the 2025 external exams onwards. As more learners are being issued with their own devices, the change to current SQA practice allows learners to access ICT devices they are familiar with from learning and teaching. SQA practice, and the use of ICT devices in external assessments, would thereby advance equality of opportunity for all learners, including those with a range of protected characteristics.</p>
	Foster good relations
	<p>SQA's current practice in relation to the use of ICT applies to all learners undertaking external assessments for National Courses. It is recognised that the majority of learners entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses are between the ages of 15 and 17.</p> <p>The decision to review SQA's ICT security requirements is intended to have a positive impact on all learners entered for National Courses who choose to use ICT to type their exam responses, but also for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs who may need assistive technology to support them in their exams. Through engagement with centres, it is believed that this decision will have a positive impact on all learners.</p>
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Disability	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>In 2023, 26,455 requests were submitted for ICT with and without spellcheck as assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs, and accounted for 12.5% of all assessment arrangement requests. This is an increase of 2670 requests for ICT with and without spellcheck from 2022.</p>

Centres expressed concerns in 2022 and 2023 research that SQA's current security requirements for use of ICT devices cannot be applied to Apple devices and Chromebooks as they require Internet access to function. Of 233 respondents who participated in SQA's 2022 survey regarding the use of ICT as an assessment arrangement for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs, 224 respondents stated that they used Windows devices for external assessments. The remaining respondents stated that they used Chromebooks (36 respondents) or iPads (20 respondents).

Further to considerations mentioned above, learners with a disability or additional support need will also likely require the use of assistive technology to enable them to access the exam. Some software that are purchased may be specific to the device and/or operating system issued to the disabled learner, while others require access to the internet to function. Chromebooks requiring access to the internet to operate and other software or application require access to the internet to function. Learners were prevented from using familiar devices in external exams as centres were not able to restrict these devices to meet SQA's security requirements.

Disabled learners found it difficult to learn to use a completely different operating system and device. SQA's ICT security requirements, prior to being reviewed, could be seen to have a negative impact on all learners who are required to use a Windows device for external assessments.

The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements relating to the use of ICT by disabled learners will enable SQA to introduce positive impacts. Provided that centres are able to manage and secure devices for use in SQA exams, learners are able to use the Apple and Chromebook devices they are familiar with. This has the potential to alleviate some of the stress they may have previously experienced if they were asked to use a different device in assessments. Enabling disabled learners to use their own devices, secured by centres for use in SQA exams, also has the potential to increase learners' confidence by using a device they are familiar with.

Advance equality of opportunity

Disabled learners who require the use of ICT to access assistive technology may experience difficulties with using unfamiliar devices and software or applications. This can create barriers to enabling them to access assessments if they are not familiar with the technology. Disabled learners may also feel that they are seen to be different from learners who are required to complete their exams on pen and paper, and may experience stigma from learners who do not have additional support needs.

	<p>By changing the current security requirements associated with use of ICT in SQA exams, there is an opportunity for more learners, whether disabled or not, to be given the option to use ICT. This can help to reduce the stigma disabled learners may experience by enabling all learners to access devices that they are familiar with. Feedback from centres and a small number of learners interviewed between October 2023 and January 2024 has indicated that learners have felt frustrated that they are not able to use devices they are familiar with in external exams. The decision to remove this barrier will have a positive impact for all learners, including those with a disability.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner’s reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.</p>
	<p>The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.</p>
<p>Protected Characteristic</p>	<p>General Equality Duty</p>
<p>Race</p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>SQA’s current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of race.</p>
	<p>The decision to review SQA’s current ICT security requirements, and the identified positive impacts, identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of race.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>No evidence was presented through this project that suggested that learners experienced an inequality of opportunity in accessing ICT in SQA exams.</p>

	<p>SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's race, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.</p>
	<p>The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.</p>
Protected Characteristic	<p>General Equality Duty</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>SQA's current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of religion or belief.</p>
	<p>The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the positive impacts identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of religion or belief.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's religion or belief, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
	<p>The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the positive impacts identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of religion or belief.</p>

	Foster good relations
	It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.
	The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	SQA's current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of sex.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the identified positive impacts, identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of sex.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	While SQA holds information on a learner's sex, this information is not required to process a request for the use of ICT in external assessments. However, SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the positive impacts identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of sex.
	Foster good relations
	It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to

	access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.
	The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	SQA's current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the identified positive impacts, identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's sexual orientation, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the positive impacts identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.
	Foster good relations
	It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.
	The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.

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
	SQA's current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of gender identity, including gender re-assignment and transgender.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the identified positive impacts, identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of gender identity, including gender re-assignment and transgender.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's religion or belief, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the positive impacts identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of gender identity and transgender status.
	Foster good relations
	It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.
	The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.
	Protected Characteristic

Marriage/Civil Partnership	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	SQA's current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of marriage/civil partnership.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the identified positive impacts, identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of marriage/civil partnership.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's marital status, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.
	The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the positive impacts identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of marriage/civil partnership status.
	Foster good relations
	It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.
	The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Pregnancy / Maternity	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	<p>SQA's current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of pregnancy/maternity.</p>
	<p>The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the identified positive impacts, identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of pregnancy/maternity.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>SQA does not record information on whether a learner has the protected characteristic of maternity/pregnancy. SQA are only informed of this if a request has been made for a learner with this protected characteristic to use ICT in external assessments as a temporary disability.</p> <p>SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
	<p>The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the positive impacts identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of pregnancy/maternity status.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.</p>
	<p>The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.</p>
Considered by SQA	<p>General Equality Duty</p>
Care experience (where relevant)	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>

	<p>SQA's current practice does not present any conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act (2010), however the considerations noted above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of care experience.</p>
	<p>The decision to review SQA's current ICT security requirements, and the identified positive impacts, identified above for the protected characteristic of age would also apply to those with the protected characteristic of care experience.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>There may be stigma associated with a child or young person's care experienced status resulting in the potential lack of access to an ICT device at home and/or at their presenting centre. There is also the potential that teachers and lecturers may have conscious (or unconscious) bias towards care-experienced learners and not provide them with the opportunity to practice and use ICT devices and/or assistive technology, if this is needed to allow them to access teaching and learning.</p> <p>It is acknowledged, however, that this is outwith SQA's remit and it is not possible to mitigate this for care-experienced children and young people. It is hoped that with the Scottish Government's commitment to provide all 700,000 school-aged learners with an appropriate digital device, and where necessary an internet connection, and the approval of recommendations made to National Qualifications Assessment Management Group and Standards and Policy Group, that this will advance the equality of opportunity for care-experienced children and young people to access SQA National Course assessments.</p>
	<p>SQA does not currently hold information about a learner's care experience status, however SQA intends to investigate the possibility of gathering additional information about learners (such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity and care-experienced) to ensure there is an equality of access to use of ICT devices in external assessments.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>It is recognised that learners may not fully understand a centres reason for prioritising certain learners to use ICT (for example, as an assessment arrangement to allow disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs to access the system technology). If learners are not aware of a disabled learner's reason for needing to use technology, this may be perceived as unfair.</p>

	The decision to allow centres to use Apple and Chromebook devices with restricted Internet access provides equity for all learners to use ICT where this can be resourced by centres for all learners. Evidence from some centres has shown that this decision is positive and will reduce the inequality of access to ICT in external exams.
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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.