Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

Lifespan of SQA Qualifications approved by QDMT June 2021

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires SQA to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not SQA has a responsibility to assess the impact of new or modified policies and practices against these needs.

Accordingly, this is an EqIA of the Lifespan of SQA Qualifications.

This EqIA is underpinned by other work SQA takes to meet its PSED. As an awarding body, SQA works with schools, colleges, universities, industry, and government, to ensure that qualifications, are inclusive and accessible to all, recognising the achievements of learners, and providing clear pathways to further learning or employment. The SQA Awarding Body Code of Practice outlines how SQA ensures that its qualifications are of a high quality and fit for purpose, and that the assessment of these qualifications is monitored and maintained to a consistently high standard. By doing so, it sets out the framework by which SQA safeguards the integrity of SQA's qualifications and assessment standards and ensures public confidence.

The Code of Practice is based on a set of 13 governing principles, which govern how SQA meets its statutory duties and self-regulates its activities.

Governing Principle 7 is specifically related to equalities issues and states that: 'SQA will ensure that all qualifications and assessments are as fair and accessible as possible and that the needs of candidates are met in the administration of its assessments.'

The SQA Equality of Access to SQA Qualifications policy outlines the organisation's commitment to promoting and facilitating access to our qualifications. In practice, this means that every reasonable step will be taken to ensure that we:

- Produce qualifications based on national standards, which are as accessible as possible. We will equality review our qualifications to identify any aspects that might adversely impact learners who share particular characteristics. We will aim to remove such adverse impacts, wherever possible, and minimise them where it is not possible to remove them altogether.
- Develop methods of assessment and quality assurance which are sensitive to the needs of all candidates, but which do not compromise our overarching aims of fairness and consistency.

- Provide assessment arrangements to allow disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs to access the assessment without compromising its integrity. For disabled candidates, we will make reasonable adjustments in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

This policy has been reviewed through an internal short life working group where it was determined that for greater clarity and accessibility for policy users two existing policies should be combined into a single policy called Lifespan of SQA Qualifications.

The two policies replaced by this new development are as follows:

- Lifespan and Review of SQA qualifications
- Low Uptake National Courses

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	February 2026	Additional Schedule Review Date	

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]**
Review policy in three years' time to ensure it is fit for purpose	Policy and Research Manager		

Policy Aims

Name of Policy or practice	Lifespan of SQA qualifications
New Policy or Revision	New
Name of Policy Owner	Director PAS
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	June 2022

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?
This policy gives clear criteria for when we should retain qualifications and when we should remove qualifications from SQA's portfolio. This link to the SQA Code of Practice and Governing Principles to ensure that the qualifications remain current and fit for purpose. Governing Principle 7 is specifically related to equalities issues and states that: 'SQA will ensure that all qualifications and assessments are as fair and accessible as possible and that the needs of candidates are met in the administration of its assessments.' This policy applies to all SQA self-regulated qualifications, and SQA qualifications regulated by SQA Accreditation, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales.

What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?
This policy allows SQA to remove qualifications that are no longer in use and retain ones that are in limited use based on certain criteria.

What are the aims of this policy or practice?
All SQA self-regulated qualifications, and SQA qualifications regulated by SQA Accreditation, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales must adhere to the criteria laid out for the lifespan of a qualification.
To ensure SQA continues to maintain a balanced portfolio of qualifications, all existing qualifications must be reviewed periodically for currency and relevance. Qualifications must be inclusive, addresses progression needs and reflect Scotland's economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental needs.
The review of a qualification can be one or more of the following:
♦ Uptake analysis review (UAR) — to establish whether candidate entries are as expected, and whether centres intend to keep delivering the qualification.

- ◆ Qualification review — to consider what activity, if any, is required for a particular qualification and its supporting documentation.
- ◆ Formal review (scoping) — to establish whether the purpose and content of an SQA-developed qualification and its supporting documentation is meeting current and future needs.
- ◆ Sector portfolio review — to carry out a review of all qualifications within an identified sector, to establish that they are meeting current and future needs.

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

The policy applies equally to all learners it is a policy that ensures SQA qualification catalogue remains current.

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

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

On the development of this policy SQA worked across the directorates to get input from Qualifications Directorate, Operations and Business Development.

Uptake analysis review (UAR)

SQA should strive to maintain a balanced portfolio of qualifications that is inclusive, addresses progression needs and reflects Scotland's economic, social, political, and cultural needs.

Retention criteria
- a strong rationale for retaining the course based on educational, cultural, social, economic, or political need, supported by proposals for ways of reducing costs or financial sponsors to maintain the course.
- evidence of specific and justifiable reasons influencing initial low uptake of the course, and of this situation now having changed and increased uptake anticipated.

Withdrawal of qualifications

Withdrawal of qualifications is subject to SQA's Business Case Group. In addition, withdrawal of National Courses (graded and ungraded) is subject to approval from the Qualifications Committee.

Portfolio review

Qualification teams are responsible for the regular review of all qualifications in their portfolio. This involves identifying maintenance, support, or promotional activity requirements to maximise their qualifications' performance.

This policy will be applied consistently to all learners, regardless of protected characteristics or socio-economic status.

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?	
Age	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Disability	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Race	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Religion or Belief	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Sex	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Sexual Orientation	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Marriage/Civil Partnership	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Pregnancy / Maternity	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.
Care experience (where relevant)	SQA do not collect this data on learners in relation to this policy. This policy is about qualifications that are retained in our portfolio.

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
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of age.
	Advance equality of opportunity
Protected Characteristic	**General Equality Duty**
Disability	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of disability.
	Advance equality of opportunity

	Foster good relations
Protected Characteristic	**General Equality Duty**
Race	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of race.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Foster good relations
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
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of religion or belief.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Foster good relations

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of sex.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Foster good relations
Protected Characteristic	**General Equality Duty**
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of sexual orientation.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Foster good relations
Protected Characteristic	**General Equality Duty**
Gender Re-assignment	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

(Gender identity and transgender	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of gender re-assignment.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Foster good relations
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
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of marriage / civil partnership.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Foster good relations
Protected Characteristic	**General Equality Duty**
Pregnancy / Maternity	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of pregnancy / maternity.
	Advance equality of opportunity

	Foster good relations
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
	This policy is designed to ensure SQA qualifications offered remain used and current. No impacts can be identified on the basis of care experience.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Foster good relations

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.
This is an internal policy related to the maintenance and monitoring of qualifications. No equality impacts on staff or learners have been identified through policy review.