

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

PC27/3 i

PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2025

For approval

Minutes of the twenty-sixth meeting of the Performance Committee held on Wednesday 21 May 2025 at 13.30am by Microsoft Teams.

Members

- * Ms A Davis (Convenor)
- * Mr R Erskine
- * Ms M Wailes

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
- * [REDACTED]
- * Mr J Booth, Interim Chief Executive
- * Mr M Campbell
Mr A Dickson
- * Mrs D Mahmoud
- * Mr S McLaren
- * Mr J McMorris
- * Ms Y Raven
Ms D Stewart
Mr M Ware

* indicates present

In attendance

- Mr C Boulter, SQA
- [REDACTED], SQA
- Ms G Hepburn, SQA (PC26/6 only)
- [REDACTED], SQA (PC25/8 only)
- [REDACTED], SQA
- [REDACTED], SQA (PC26/7 only)
- Ms L McGrath, SQA
- [REDACTED], SQA (PC25/8 only)
- Ms S Rogers, SQA Chair
- [REDACTED], SQA (PC26/7 only)

26/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the twenty-sixth meeting, including Mr Booth, Interim Chief Executive and Mr McLaren, Interim Director of Comms to the first meeting in their current roles. A welcome was also extended to Ms McGrath, Head of Qualifications Portfolio Management as depute for Ms Stewart and Mr Boulter, Head of Data Analytics, Policy, Analysis and Standards as depute for Mr Ware.

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Dickson, Ms Stewart and Mr Ware.

26/2 DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

26/3 PREVIOUS MEETING

i Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes of the twenty-fifth meeting held on 3 February 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

ii Action Grid

There were no open actions.

iii Workplan 2025

The Committee agreed to reschedule the annual effectiveness review from November 2025 to the second meeting in 2026, citing a full November agenda. Holding the review after the Financial Year End offered better governance assurance and aligns with the Committee's responsibilities, ensuring a more comprehensive and timely assessment.

26/4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

26/5 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW (QPR) – Q4 2024-25

Ms Raven presented the QPR for the period from January to March 2025 and during the discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that four of five SQA's Corporate Outcomes had changed to Amber RAG from Green RAG.
- Acknowledged that the Streetworks Qualifications Register contract was now operating within the agreed service level, resulting in a change in RAG status from red to green for the related deliverable. The Committee commended the team on resolving the issue.
- Recognised that the RAG status for the deliverable Deliver Best Value in line with the Scottish Public Finance Manual had improved from amber to green. The Committee requested that once the new Finance Director is in post, new KPIs be established to better monitor progress and performance. Progress against the Best Value programme had been slower than planned due to resource constraints. The Committee noted that Audit Scotland had included an action on Best Value in the 2024-25 audit report, which would continue to be monitored.
- Discussed the deliverable Deliver our people strategy by developing our organisational design and culture which had moved from Green to Amber. This was largely due to the lack of completion of performance reviews which was improving, and a high rate of absence. Clarification was provided on My Review metrics, with

objective-setting targets largely met, though mid-year reviews remain slightly below target due to outstanding entries.

- Acknowledged the RAG status for the deliverable Build credibility and trust through high-quality, inclusive and accessible engagement, which had changed to green despite two objectives being rated amber and one red. It was explained that the status reflected forward progress, but the Committee agreed this did not fairly represent current performance. The measures used would be reviewed.
- Ongoing work was noted to improve assessment of the deliverable Ensure SQA is an exemplar public body, including how compliance was effectively measured and reported.
- In response to a query, it was confirmed that Visiting Assessment resource issues had been addressed through temporary support and that the risk was included on the CPG Risk Register. The Committee was reassured that, despite previous disruption from the college dispute, SQA was working closely with colleges to maintain Qualification Verification standards and continues to support schools expanding vocational qualification offerings to ensure full approval.
- Welcomed the 2-year extension of the secure English language test (SELT) contract.
- Noted the update and emphasised the profile of HN NextGen with the BAU set up.
- Noted that cyber resilience metrics would be aligned with the NIST Cyber Security Framework and root cause of recent issue identified and resolved.
- Noted that vacant posts unoccupied for over 24 months were under review to determine ongoing need.
- Noted that budget constraints continued to impact paid marketing activity, limiting campaign reach and stakeholder engagement.
- Noted that we were awaiting the government trademark to implement new branding for Qualifications Scotland. This was a risk but the biggest risk was the decision around accreditation which remains out with our control.

26/6 INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Ms Hepburn, Head of International, was welcomed to the meeting.

The Committee received a presentation highlighting key points from the international paper to prompt discussion around how the organisation could best support the work of the International Team. The teams work aligned with the Scottish Government's international education strategy. The Committee:

- Acknowledged risks and dependencies, including the need for careful handling and flexibility as we transition to Qualifications Scotland. There was also an important opportunity to renew the memorandum of understanding with our Chinese partners.
- Suggested the need for greater clarity on the organisation's international objectives beyond financial outcomes. There was consensus that a clearer roadmap was needed, outlining strategic intent, financial viability, and organisational priorities. The importance of aligning international activity with the future organisational plan and sustainability programme was emphasised.
- Acknowledged concerns were raised around resourcing, particularly the risk of missed opportunities and early pipeline generation due to reductions in marketing budgets, limited resources and lack of digital capability.

The Committee thanked Ms Hepburn for her detailed updated.

Ms Hepburn left the meeting.

26/7 CORPORATE PARENTING REPORT 2022-25

██████████ and ██████████ were welcomed to the meeting.

██████████ invited the Committee to discuss and comment on SQA's Corporate Parenting Report 2022-25 which shared highlights of the corporate parenting work over the last three years and reports progress to meet our responsibilities to Care Experienced people. The Committee:

- Welcomed the rollout of training in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland with further training sessions being arranged for those who were unable to attend, including SQA Board members, reinforcing our shared responsibility.
- Emphasised the need to ensure care experienced voices are heard in a representative way, noting the challenge of accessing these perspectives without relying heavily on partners like Who Cares? Scotland.
- Encouraged clearer communication of impact, including positive outcomes and personal stories, and supported further development of e-learning and evidence-based practices.
- Suggested that the report should better align with the existing plan, particularly in terms of timelines and outcomes, and use the opportunity to improve this before transitioning to Qualifications Scotland.

██████████ and ██████████ both left the meeting.

26/8 STRATEGIC BEST VALUE AND FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

██████████ and ██████████ were welcomed to the meeting.

Following on from the previous update to the Committee, ██████████ provided another comprehensive overview of product costs within SQA from the cost allocation model and the new approach to time recording. The Committee:

- Noted that the finance figures were based on the P11 position as the P12 position was not completed, however, the P11 figures had not changed much since P9 was reported.
- Acknowledged that there was a new approach to timesheet recording and discussed the background of timesheets and how the data had not yet been used substantially for its original purpose. The focus was on collecting data that adds the most value and only required for specific purposes to improve process efficiency.
- Highlighted the implications of our work with the Scottish Government, particularly around the use of cost allocation and the key cost drivers beyond SQA. This analysis directly links into the sustainability agenda and provides a foundation for identifying which areas are contributing effectively and which were not.
- Welcomed the added level of detail, noting its strategic value in shaping strategic conversations with the SQA Board.

██████████ and ██████████ left the meeting.

26/9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business raised.

26/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would take place at 10.30am on Monday 18 August 2025 and would be held on MS Teams.