

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

PC26/3 i

PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2025

For approval

Minutes of the twenty-fifth meeting of the Performance Committee held on Monday
3 February 2025 at 10.30am by Microsoft Teams.

Members

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

Officers

- * Ms J Blair
[REDACTED]
- * Mr J Booth
- * Mr M Campbell
- * Mr A Dickson
- Mrs D Mahmoud
- * Mr J McMorris
- * Ms Y Raven
- Ms F Robertson
- * Ms D Stewart
- * Mr M Ware

In attendance

- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA
- * [REDACTED], SQA (PC25/6 only)
- * Ms S Roger, SQA Chair (until PC25/6)
- * Prof K Thomson, SQA Board

* indicates present

25/1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the twenty-fifth meeting, including Prof Ken Thomson, who as a non-executive member of the SQA Board, would stand-in as a member of the Committee to enable the necessary quorum for the meeting, as per the Standing Orders.

Apologies for absence had been received from the Chief Executive and Ms Wailes. The Committee expressed their sincere condolences to both who had recently suffered family bereavements.

25/2 DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest declared on the agenda.

25/3 PREVIOUS MEETING

i Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes of the twenty-fourth meeting held on 5 December 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

ii Action Grid

There were no open actions.

iii Workplan 2025

The Convenor reminded the Committee that the annual review of performance of the Committee had been postponed from the last meeting as it had been the first meeting for Mr Erskine, however, due to Ms Walies absence this would be postponed until the next meeting.

The Committee noted that following the establishment of a People Committee, the work plan would be reviewed, specifically the items around people, in order to ensure that they would be discussed at the appropriate Committee.

The Committee noted the contents of the workplan.

25/4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

25/5 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REVIEW (QPR) – Q3 2024-25

Ms Raven presented the QPR for the period from October to December 2024 and during the discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that four of five SQA's Corporate Outcomes had returned to a green RAG status after two quarters at amber.
- Was provided with reassurance that the Streetworks Qualifications Register contract was now operating within service level agreement and this had resulted in the overall deliverable, Secure and Deliver contracts in line with service level agreements, to change RAG status from red to green. The Committee congratulated the team on resolving the issue.
- Noted that the RAG status for the deliverable *Deliver Best Value in line with the Scottish Public Finance Manual* had changed from amber to green. Once the new Finance Director was in post it was requested that new KPIs be developed to enable better progress and performance tracking.

Progress had been made against the best value programme but not as fast

intended because of resource constraints. It was highlighted that SQA's external auditors, Audit Scotland, had included an action for SQA around Best Value in the 2024-25 audit report and the Audit Committee monitored the progress.

- Requested rationale around why the deliverable, *Build credibility and trust among those we work with and those we work for, particularly learners and educators, through high-quality, inclusive and accessible communication and engagement*, RAG status had changed from amber to green when two of the objectives had been assessed at amber and one at red.

In response it was advised that good progress had been made, and the RAG status was a reflection of being on track.

While the Committee agreed that progress had been made to enhance credibility and trust, there was much more to be done, and RAG status was not a fair reflection, with potential to be misconstrued. Stakeholders' perception was extremely important and SQA's Outcomes and Deliverables must accurately reflect the status against them.

The Committee agreed that the measures were not assessing the correct status, and that these would be reviewed.

- Noted that work continued around the deliverable, *Ensure SQA is an exemplar public body that is fully compliant with all legislative, statutory and regulatory requirements (including qualifications regulators)*, to ensure how this was effectively measured, and RAG assessed.
- Noted that in response to a query around Visiting Assessment resource issues it was advised that resource from other teams had been secured until the on-going recruitment had been concluded. The Committee was assured that the issue had been included on the CPG Risk Register and would be closely monitored.
- Was reassured that despite an impact from the college dispute on Qualification Verification from last session, SQA was closely working with colleges to address any issues and ensure that the standards were met.
- Noted that we continue to work closely with schools running increasing numbers of vocational qualifications to ensure they are fully approved before doing so.
- Welcomed that there was a 2-year extension to the secure English language test (SELT) contract.
- Noted that it was anticipated that the measures against the deliverable, *Embed SQA's cyber resilience and response capabilities*, would be tracked against the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cyber Security Framework.
- Sought clarification around the My Review metrics, and in response to a query it was clarified that objectives setting had been completed, with most Directorates achieving the target of 85%. The mid-year review was 7% below the target as there remained some outstanding reviews to be recorded on the system.

- Noted that any vacant positions that had been unoccupied for over 24 months were under review to determine if the roles were still required.
- Noted that at the March meeting of the SQA Board the draft Equality Outcomes 2025-2029 would be reviewed and approved for publication in April 2025.
- Recognised that the budget constraints were continuing to impact paid marketing campaigns, limiting reach and engagement for SQA.

25/6 STRATEGIC BEST VALUE AND FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Welcomed to the meeting was [REDACTED].

Following the previous update to the Committee, [REDACTED] provided a comprehensive overview of product costs within SQA from the cost allocation model. This included an overhead analysis, contribution of high-level products and markets and a cost analysis of commercial areas. It was explained that as much direct cost as possible was being allocated to reduce overheads. In the course of discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that the financials were based on the P9 Position.
- Acknowledged that cost-saving initiatives, such as the recruitment freeze was helping to narrow the funding gap, however recognised that this was not without risk and SQA was dependent on additional government funding.
- Welcomed that contribution from commercial areas was helping to cover some of SQA's cost and reducing reliance on additional funding. Noting, that even products providing a small contribution was valuable.
- Confirmed the need for a product analysis to help shape future decisions on products and to provide analysis to advise Scottish Government.

The Committee looked forward to future updates.

The Chair and [REDACTED] left the meeting.

25/7 DIGITAL AWARDING

Mr Cambell provided the Committee with a high-level overview of Digital Awarding explaining that it was a multiyear programme to remove reliance on legacy technologies and deliver a new set of digital capabilities. In the course of discussion, the Committee:

- Welcomed that the programme was supported by SQA's digital transformation partner, BJSS. The partner was contributing to SQA's technical strategy, delivery and upskilling of staff.

- Noted that continued delay resulted in the re-planning and utilising SQA's existing budget to maintain momentum and execute a smaller scale Mobilisation Phase. Further delay in the Business Case Approval resulted in a re-visit of Phase 2 Scope, however the timeline was maintained for completion in March 2026 with a focus on HN Next Generation.
- Noted that no additional funds had been provided in FY 2024-25, with an outstanding request with the Scottish Government.
- Acknowledged the challenge faced by SQA to maintain business as usual, transition to Qualifications Scotland and transform digitally at the same time. There was a need to focus on business transformation not just IT transformation.
- Noted that at this stage there was no impact to end users such as centres and training providers but in due course users would see a new interface and appointees a new QA platform which would work across all qualifications.

In closing the Committee thanks Mr Cambell for the comprehensive and thorough presentation.

25/8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business raised.

25/9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would take place at 1.30pm on Wednesday 21 May 2025 and would be held on MS Teams.