



Procurement Annual Report: Financial Year 2024–25

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The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ

Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, EH22 1FD

www.sqa.org.uk

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1 Introduction

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate and is the national accreditation and awarding body in Scotland. SQA helps people to realise their potential and to achieve their ambitions by providing a wide range of high quality, internationally recognised qualifications, and associated services.

We work with schools, colleges, universities and training organisations to develop and deliver our qualifications and assessments.

2 Summary

The SQA Procurement Annual Report for 2024–25 sets out the work and the contribution made by the Procurement Team over the financial year. This meets our obligations under the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 Part 2 section 18 to publish an annual procurement report in a transparent and proportionate manner.

This annual report demonstrates that the Procurement Team contributed to approximately £1.434m in savings/efficiencies and cost avoidance across all directorates. This is equivalent to almost four times the cost to SQA of the procurement function. This figure includes all collaborative savings made by SQA by utilising public sector frameworks in accordance with best practice.

Savings were achieved by working closely with all areas of SQA and suppliers to understand whole-life cost of the products or services, innovations, and process improvements.

The Procurement Team provides a vital professional service to ensure that SQA achieves the best value for goods and/or services delivered through third-party contracts.

The team works closely with colleagues and stakeholders across all directorates, Procurement Scotland, and Crown Commercial Services to ensure contract delivery, value for money and innovation, while ensuring legal and commercial governance have been adhered to.

The Procurement Team ensures that social value commitments and fair work practices are embedded in the tendering process and contract awarding and works with the business to drive improvements throughout the life of the contracts to maintain the integrity of SQA and uphold its interests.

3 Background

During 2024–25, the Procurement Team worked closely with SQA colleagues to service their requirements. The tender pipeline was developed and shared with each business area to allow for better visibility of the tenders and process to ensure effective planning, and the availability of appropriate resources to meet operational requirements. This approach has improved the engagement between Procurement and each business area and removed risks of missing key dates.

In 2024–25, SQA spent £27,186,570.21 on goods and services, with 314 suppliers. Directorate spend is detailed in table 1.

Table 1: Spend by directorate in 2024–25

Directorate	% Figure	Spend
Business Systems	55.06	£14,969,094.91
Operations	22.81	£6,199,770.64
People	14.82	£4,029,740.27
Finance	3.57	£971,465.71
Communications	0.61	£167,180.18
Policy, Analysis & Standards	0.68	£185,316.17
Corporate Strategy & Business Development	1.26	£341,603.73
Qualifications	1.00	£271,362.19
Corporate Office	0.19	£50,050.35
Accreditation	0.003	£728.01
Education Reform	0.001	£258.05
Total		£27,186,570.21

Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of spend by supplier where the total spend is more than £50,000.

4 Objectives

The key objectives identified and measured for this period included:

- ◆ publication and update of the list of current contracts on SQA's website
- ◆ delivery of procurement savings
- ◆ promotion of delivery of SQA's and Scottish Government's fair work practice
- ◆ support for SQA's income generation opportunities
- ◆ a programme of tendering to support SQA delivery
- ◆ implementing structured stakeholder engagement meetings

All these objectives have been completed or implemented.

5 Achieving the best value for money

5.1 Collaboration

SQA actively collaborates with Scottish Procurement and Crown Commercial Services to ensure best value for SQA and to maximise economies of scale. Some 70% of discretionary spend is accounted for by collaborative contracts. The Procurement Team is actively involved with user intelligence groups and steering groups which help shape the future of procurement within Scotland.

An Example of the benefits SQA receives from using Scottish Government frameworks is the reported £1.16m of savings included in Annex A, which accompanies this report.

5.2 Contract management

SQA recognises the importance of contract management and prioritises individual contracts according to their strategic importance. The end-users manage the day-to-day oversight and operation of the contracts, with Procurement being involved with contracts that are identified as being of high strategic importance.

Dedicated vendor managers are embedded in the Business Systems Directorate and work closely with the purchasing manager in the Procurement Team responsible for the business area, which enhances the engagement between Business Systems and Procurement. The Procurement Team highlights any supplier issues and there is discussion of upcoming contracts and the performance of current contracts. SQA is therefore able to 'work as one' when dealing with supplier and contractual issues, including any disputes.

This approach also supports engagement with technical colleagues in Business Systems as the Business Systems vendor managers can often act as a bridge between Procurement and those technical resources.

A contracts manager sits within the Procurement Team and is responsible for the management of corporate contracts. The contract manager has a close relationship with all directorates regarding travel and accommodation requirements.

The Procurement Team is in the process of implementing an SQA contract management policy, which will be rolled out to contract owners, once contracts are awarded

5.3 Savings

The reported savings for this period are approximately £1.434m, which includes SQA's contributed savings and Procurement Scotland's reported savings.

This equates to 5.46% savings against the procurement-related expenditure for 2024–25.

5.4 Skills and training

The Procurement Team includes two fully qualified and one part-qualified members of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (MCIPS). One member of staff is currently working on their CIPS qualification, and two members of staff have completed their Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Procurement.

6 Responsible business

SQA is committed to working with supported businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and promotes engagement with SMEs and local suppliers. The policy allows SQA to request quick quotes from nominated suppliers up to the value of £50k, and to develop strategies to support local companies.

During the period 2024–25, SQA continued to support the two contracts awarded to supported businesses.

Supported business	Contract	Spend
Scottish Braille Press	Printing of Braille papers	£6,399.56
Tes-Am	Recycling of IT Equipment	£0*

*This is a cost neutral contract for SQA.

7 Contract activity

7.1 Contracts awarded by procedure

During 2024–25, 19 contracts were tendered or awarded.

Procedure	No. of contracts	Estimated contract value
Regulated contracts	11	£5,017,703.00
Unregulated contracts	8	£291,213.60

The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires an annual procurement report to include a summary of the regulated procurements that have been completed during the period covered by the report. All regulated contracts include Fair Work First criteria.

During the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, SQA awarded 11 regulated contracts all of which complied with the SQA Procurement Strategy.

Details of the contracts are provided in table 2:

Table 2: Contracts awarded 2024–25

Date of award	Title	Start date	End date	Contractor	Amount (£)	Extensions available
26/03/25	SQA2514 - 2 x Software Engineers	31/03/25	30/09/25	Harvey Nash Limited (GB) / ASA Recruitment (Quick Quotes) (GB)	119,093.04	Yes
26/03/25	Security Services	01/04/24	31/03/27	MITIE Security Limited (GB)	240,000	Yes
31/01/25	SQA2505 - Senior Project Manager	03/03/25	28/11/25	Venesky Brown Ltd (GB) / Harvey Nash Limited (GB)	209,214.6	Yes
20/01/25	SQA2496 - Senior Project Manager	06/01/25	30/11/25	Lorien Resourcing Ltd (GB)	121,680	Yes
04/11/24	System, Automation & Performance Testing	01/10/24	31/10/25	Edge Testing Solutions (GB)	3,743	Yes
18/10/24	SQA2490 - Automation Professional Services	18/10/24	17/10/26	Walker Myrie Ltd. t/a as W M Promus (GB)	26,250	Yes
11/10/24	Award of Extension of EMarking Contract	01/03/27	28/02/29	RM Education Ltd (GB)	4,200,000	No
06/08/24	SQA2483 - Support Contract for HCL Notes	29/07/24	28/07/27	GROUP Business Software (UK) Ltd (GB)	25,282	Yes
06/08/24	Award of SQA2416 - Microsoft PPM Solution	08/07/24	07/01/25	Wellington Limited (GB)	16,140	Yes
06/08/24	Award of SQA2471 - Address Lookup Tool	24/04/24	31/03/25	Data8 Ltd. (GB)	18,750	Yes
26/06/24	SQA2385 - Marketing Automation Tool	01/08/24	31/07/26	Forfront (GB)	37,550	Yes

8 Compliance

During 2024–25, 100% of the regulated contracts awarded for SQA core activities were compliant with regulations, and no challenges were raised against the awarding of contracts.

The Procurement Team will continue to work with directorates to ensure that tender activity is compliant and in line with the Procurement Policy. Regular meetings will take place with directorate staff to plan future contract activity. The intranet will be used to inform staff of new corporate contracts and any future procurement activity.

8.1 Fraud

There was no reported fraudulent activity linked to the procurement function during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Appendix 1: Spend by supplier over £50k

Supplier name	Paid amount
COMPUTACENTRE UK LTD	£5,037,942.58
R M EDUCATION PLC	£2,637,549.00
VENESKY-BROWN RECRUITMENT LTD	£1,795,491.88
BJSS LTD	£1,782,712.50
CORPORATE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT (NORTH OF ENGLAND) LIMITED	£1,730,727.06
UNIT4 BUSINESS SOFTWARE LIMITED	£973,383.88
MAPP PROPERTY MANAGEMENT	£866,932.51
EXECSPACE LTD	£664,285.72
ROYAL MAIL	£610,484.74
QUORUM NETWORK RESOURCES LTD	£588,097.50
BT PLC (SWAN SERVICES)	£563,963.77
PARCELFORCE	£545,114.01
PAGE BROS	£502,756.93
LORIEN RESOURCING LIMITED	£494,362.59
HARVEY NASH PLC	£488,401.88
IVANTI UK LIMITED	£471,333.59
BAXTERSTOREY SCOTLAND LTD	£459,414.55
RESILLION	£456,486.70
SURPASS ASSESSMENT	£431,280.00
CAPITA BUSINESS SERVICES LTD	£304,911.19
HOBBS THE PRINTERS LTD	£239,267.42
APAM LTD	£202,852.79
MITIE SECURITY LTD	£200,412.19
BRODIES LLP FAO RAMSAY HALL	£182,438.16
EDF ENERGY LIMITED	£172,786.08
ASHBROOK RESEARCH & CONSULTANCY	£146,167.95
EXCHANGE COMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATIONS LTD	£144,595.21
CLYDE PAPER AND PRINT	£143,829.85
CIVIC COMPUTING	£141,797.15
HP INC UK LIMITED	£129,942.67
THE UNION ADVERTISING AGENCY LTD	£128,630.90
EMTEC FACILITIES SERVICES	£127,315.78

Supplier name	Paid amount
AGILISYS LIMITED	£123,931.03
GARTNER UK LIMITED	£119,700.00
PERTEMPS LTD	£119,291.36
XEROX(UK) LTD	£115,812.88
MICROSOFT LIMITED	£106,958.50
GRANT THORNTON UK LLP	£98,950.50
CHINA-BRITAIN BUSINESS COUNCIL	£89,823.41
ID BUREAU SERVICES	£89,508.56
DISCLOSURE SCOTLAND	£84,812.00
PEOPLESCOUT LIMITED	£82,273.75
LOCKTON COMPANIES LLP	£81,859.49
COGENT SKILLS LIMITED	£80,000.00
MARITIME & COASTGUARD AGENCY	£78,270.00
CLOUD SOFTWARE (IRELAND) LIMITED	£74,462.02
SAS SOFTWARE LTD	£74,342.00
BUSINESS STREAM	£70,589.43
CITY SPRINT	£59,201.86
JOINT COUNCIL FOR QUALIFICATIONS	£58,272.50
NCC GROUP SECURITY SERVICES LIMITED	£57,975.00
Total	£25,031,703.00
(All figures exclude VAT)	

Appendix 2: Future regulated procurements summary

This table provides a summary of the regulated procurement anticipated in the next two financial years.

Financial year	Contract	New or retender	Estimated value
2025–26	E-marking Service	Retender	£8,000,000
2025–26	Permanent & Fixed Term Recruitment	Retender	£400,000
2025–26	Secure Base Stock	Retender	£500,000
2025–26	M & E Maintenance	Retender	£440,000
2025–26	Hosted Sap Reference Site	Retender	£150,000
2025–26	Website Maintenance	Retender	£380,000
2025–26	Internal Audit Service	Retender	£400,000
2025–26	Courier Services	Retender	£3,000,000
2025–26	Data Virtualisation	Retender	£600,000
2025–26	Workforce Partnership	Retender	£2,000,000
2025–26	SAS Software Renewal	Direct Award	£300,000
2025–26	Service Desk Renewal	Direct Award	£1,000,000
2026–27	Duplication of Audio & Digital QP CD's	Retender	£60,000
2026–27	Website Support and Maintenance	Retender	£300,000
2026–27	Research Services	Retender	£600,000
		Total	£18,130,000