



Equality Mainstreaming Report 2019–21

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Introduction

SQA is required by the Public Sector Equality Duty to report every two years. This report covers the period from April 2019 to March 2021 and includes updates on our:

- ♦ progress to mainstream equality
- ♦ progress against SQA's equality outcomes 2017–21
- ♦ workforce equality monitoring data
- ♦ pay gap information and statement of equal pay

During the challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, equality, diversity and inclusion have been fundamental to our response. It is more important than ever to ensure this is central to everything we do and embedded in our day-to-day work.

In response to the pandemic, in March 2020, we implemented significant changes to our working practices very quickly. Our offices closed and home-working became the default position. We had to deploy new and innovative ways to continue to deliver our services, including those for assessment and certification. In addition to continuing to carry out a range of 'business as usual' activities, extraordinary measures were required to support the planning and delivery of the 2020 Alternative Certification Model commissioned by Scottish Ministers. It has been critical for SQA to respond with agility and flexibility to the rapidly changing circumstances and evolving evidence.

During 2020–21 colleagues across SQA supported work to revise SQA's equality outcomes and equality action plans, and to ensure publication of the equality information required by the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The past year has been one of extraordinary challenges and, as we look to the months ahead, we will keep under review the commitments we have made in 2021 to ensure that, where we can, we tackle the most pressing inequalities in our society. We will continue to ensure that we actively consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, and that we are aware of and respond to the impact of COVID-19 on people with one or more of the protected characteristics. We aim to ensure our equality outcomes will set the framework for the work we will undertake to make improvements for the communities we serve and the people who work for us.

About SQA

As Scotland's accreditation and awarding body, SQA provides products, services and skills, and training and education — all of which have a positive impact on individuals, organisations, and society. We embed our values — progressive, enabling, and trusted — in all our work.

SQA's functions are set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 as amended by the Scottish Qualifications Act 2002.

The organisation has two main roles: accreditation and awarding qualifications.

SQA Accreditation

- ◆ accredits qualifications other than degrees
- ◆ approves, and quality assures awarding bodies that plan to enter people for these qualifications

[Find out more about SQA Accreditation](#)

SQA (awarding body)

- ◆ devises and develops qualifications
- ◆ validates qualifications (makes sure they are well written and meet the needs of learners and tutors)
- ◆ reviews qualifications to ensure they are up to date
- ◆ arranges for, assists in, and carries out, the assessment of people taking SQA qualifications
- ◆ quality-assures education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications
- ◆ issues certificates to candidates

Within these roles, we offer a range of services for businesses and training providers, ranging from course and centre approval through customised awards, to endorsement, credit rating and licensing services.

SQA's Performance Framework is guided by our mission, vision and purpose statement, supported by our values (trusted, progressive and enabling) and modelled on the National Performance Framework for Scotland. Our strategic priorities for 2020–23 are defined [by five outcomes](#), supported by a set of deliverables which are reviewed each year. In delivering the strategic priorities outlined in our corporate plan, SQA works in partnership with customers and stakeholders, in Scotland and elsewhere.

Our purpose, mission, vision , outcomes and values

SQA'S PURPOSE



We are proud of our unique role in the education and skills system. Our work supports learners at all levels, in many different types of centre, and impacts universities, employers and the wider economy.

In delivering the strategic priorities outlined in this plan, SQA will work in partnership with our customers and stakeholders, in Scotland and elsewhere.

In doing so, we will demonstrate that we truly understand and live up to our purpose to help people fulfil their full potential.

SQA'S MISSION



SQA provides credible recognition of skills and knowledge through qualifications to support choice and progression in life and work

SQA'S VISION



Quality-assured qualifications provide opportunities to people, supporting progression in the labour market and a sustainable and successful economy

OUR OUTCOMES



To help us deliver on our purpose and mission, we have identified the following outcomes. These will be our strategic priorities for the period 2020–23.

- We provide a credible qualifications system
- We are flexible in meeting customer needs
- We have a sustainable business operating model that is appropriately resourced in order to deliver our remit now and in the future
- We are a thriving organisation, with quality jobs and a fair work environment for all our people
- We are trusted, respected and valued by our customers, stakeholders and partners

SQA'S VALUES



We will continue to live up to our purpose, mission and vision by putting our values into practice.



Trusted

We are open and transparent in our communication and decision making



Enabling

We set and uphold high standards of behaviour in line with our values



Progressive

We challenge the status quo and embrace new ideas and ways of working

SQA as an employer

SQA is committed to being a supportive and inclusive employer. We have received recognition from, and are members of and accredited by various organisations, and offer various services to employees, as you can see from this list:

- ◆ Disability Confident Employer
- ◆ Hidden Disability Sunflower Scheme Member
- ◆ Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion Member
- ◆ Happy to Talk Flexible Working Employer
- ◆ Accreditation as a Scottish Living Wage Employer
- ◆ Developing the Young Workforce, 2019 Glasgow Apprenticeship challenge winners
- ◆ Business in the Community Race at Work Charter Signatory
- ◆ Stonewall Diversity Champion
- ◆ Healthy Working Lives Gold Award winner
- ◆ Investor in Young People Silver Award Member
- ◆ Dying to Work Charter Member
- ◆ RoPSA The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents Gold Award winner (Health & Safety Awards)
- ◆ Occupational Health service
- ◆ HELP Employee Assistance Programme

We also support a number of employee-led groups:

- ◆ ACE (Appreciate Culture and Ethnicity) Network
- ◆ Disability Network
- ◆ MAC (Make A Change Group)
- ◆ Mental Health First Aiders Forum
- ◆ Rainbow Network
- ◆ Women's Network
- ◆ Parent & Carers Network



Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The public sector equality duty (created by the Equality Act 2010) requires any public body to consider the needs of people when carrying out its day-to-day work in relation to employment and in delivering services. The PSED, also known as the 'general equality duty', covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The duties require SQA to have due regard to the need to:

- ◆ eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act
- ◆ advance equality of opportunity among all people
- ◆ foster good relations between different people when carrying out its activities

The Scottish Specific Duties require SQA to carry out the following activities:

- ◆ report on mainstreaming the equality duty
- ◆ publish equality outcomes and report progress
- ◆ assess and review policies and practices
- ◆ gather and use employee information
- ◆ publish gender pay gap information
- ◆ publish statements on equal pay
- ◆ consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement

We are required, as part of our Equality Mainstreaming Report, to include:

- ◆ an annual breakdown of employment monitoring information under the duty to gather
- ◆ and use employee information
- ◆ details of the progress made in gathering and using employment monitoring information to perform the general equality duty and
- ◆ information on the gender composition of our Board of Management

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Monitoring the impact and providing support for employees

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SQA implemented significant changes to its working practices very quickly. We established our Business Continuity Co-ordinators Forum to monitor the impact of the pandemic on employees and services. Measures were taken to protect employees whilst building in flexibility to cope with the changing environment.

In line with government guidance and legal obligations, SQA has taken measures to respond to its duty of care for employees' health and safety at work and to support employees working at home, or returning to the office, where necessary.

SQA's Crisis Management Team was supported by a working group which has been in operation throughout the pandemic to deal with overall staff capacity and their working requirements. We have offered ongoing support to employees — providing additional equipment and reasonable adjustments, encouraging and supporting flexible working, and increasing the frequency of internal communications.

We have also continued to make temporary changes to our policies, in consultation with our trade union colleagues, to accommodate the changing circumstances throughout the pandemic. This included the change to leave for caring responsibilities — to ensure employees were not required to take special leave or annual leave to cover their caring responsibilities, and to ensure they were paid as normal. These temporary arrangements remain in place until we are back to some semblance of normality. Messages from SQA's Executive Management Team have stressed 'Do what you can. Ask for what you need. Know you have support'. Ongoing support has been in place for line managers, who have been encouraged to be as supportive and flexible as possible.

We have carried out regular 'pulse' surveys to gather the views of employees on a range of issues, including health and wellbeing, remote working and the effectiveness of internal communications; and have acted on feedback provided by colleagues, our trade union representatives and employee networks. As part of our most recent survey, we invited colleagues to take part in focus groups to provide additional feedback. We have used this feedback to improve provision for colleagues working from home and to shape our future ways of working.

SQA's Executive Management Team has held regular 'Ask EMT' sessions throughout lockdown, to engage in conversation, and hear directly from employees. In 2020, the EMT held 12 sessions, and around 60% of the workforce joined each session (around 570 colleagues). Ask EMT sessions are planned for 2021.

Every directorate has also established regular meetings to ensure people are kept up to date, and as an opportunity to interact with colleagues. Live events were also held during 2020–21 through Microsoft Teams, to connect with colleagues and share regular updates.

Mental health and wellbeing

COVID-19 has affected employees in many ways, and support for SQA's employee health and wellbeing has been paramount. SQA has taken measures to ensure information and activities to support employee welfare have been enhanced, including virtual resources on how to support the wellbeing of line managers and their teams. Access to the HELP [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) and Occupational Health have also been promoted regularly on our COVID-19 intranet page. SQA's Mental Health First Aiders have regularly shared information and resources, and held Resilience Workshops throughout March and April 2021. Our SQA Academy training *Mental Health Matters* course was available to all staff to provide coping strategies, and helpful resources. We have posted regular guidance and advice on our intranet to support colleagues with their physical and mental health.

SQA has given ongoing consideration to the impact of the pandemic, to enable it to respond to the differing and changing personal circumstances of employees and their diverse needs. Our employee networks have supported work to monitor the impact on employees or to support guidance and risk assessments for disabled employees and employees with long-term health conditions.

Smarter working

Remote working has posed various challenges, but it has also provided SQA with an opportunity to rethink how we can work in the future. Through SQA's annual People Survey, bi-monthly Pulse Surveys, and in forums such as directorate events and Ask EMT, we have encouraged employees to think about how we will work in the future.

We are undertaking a large piece of work to do this — SQA's Smarter Working Programme.

The programme will be delivered in three strands:

- ◆ People — led by our People Directorate
- ◆ Workspace — led by our Facilities Team
- ◆ Technology — led by our Business Systems Directorate

Our People strand will inform the work of the Workspace and Technology strands.

SQA's Smarter Working Programme will allow us to deliver our activities more efficiently while providing flexible workstyle options for our people. As an organisation we need to adapt to meet the changing needs of our people and society, and this is critical to successful delivery in the future.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Cancellation of the diet of SQA examinations in 2020

On 19 March 2020, the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP, announced the cancellation of the 2020 examination diet, in line with the latest public health advice.

This is the first time Scotland's annual exam timetable has been cancelled since it began in 1888.

Following the exceptional circumstances in 2020, Professor Mark Priestley was commissioned to conduct a review of events. The Scottish Government's response sets out the nine recommendations contained within Professor Priestley's [report](#): '*Rapid Review of National Qualifications Experience 2020*', published on 7 October 2020.

Work is underway to ensure that SQA responds to each of the recommendations in Professor Priestley's Report.

In particular, Professor Priestley's Review of the National Qualifications 2020 experience includes a specific recommendation relating to equality:

Recommendation 4: A commitment to embedding equalities in all aspects of the development of qualifications systems.

Considerations of principles of equity, ensuring just decisions for all individual students, should inform all processes for the award of qualifications. This means ensuring that Equalities and Children's Rights Impact Assessments are conducted at the outset of developing arrangements for the coming year, and that the principles contained therein should be at the heart of all planning and development. We would strongly endorse the idea of the government and SQA continuing to work closely with CYPSC and EHRC to realise these principles.

SQA's commitment to embedding equalities in all aspects of the development of qualifications systems is reflected in Governing Principle 7 of our Code of Practice, which states: *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.*

SQA's *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 is taken to ensure we:

- ◆ Produce qualifications based on national standards that are as accessible as possible. We 'equality review' our qualifications to identify any aspects that might adversely impact learners who share particular characteristics and we aim to remove any such adverse impacts, wherever possible, and minimise them where it is not possible to remove them altogether.
- ◆ Develop methods of assessment and quality assurance that 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.

The co-creation of the 2021 Alternative Certification Model and Appeals Service has included the development of an associated Equality Impact Assessment and

Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment and consultation with a range of equalities stakeholders, including the EHRC and CYPCs. We will take steps to improve our equality review of qualifications process, training for qualifications development staff and appointees, and guidance on assessment arrangements for practitioners.

Three qualifications-related equality impact assessments and children's rights and wellbeing impact assessments were carried out and published between March 2020 and March 2021, focusing on:

- ◆ the Alternative Certification Model in 2020
- ◆ proposals for course modifications in Autumn 2020
- ◆ the Alternative Certification Model in 2021

You can read more about this work in [Section 2](#).

Section 1: Mainstreaming Equality

SQA's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

As both a regulator and awarding body, SQA is committed to equality of opportunity and to a culture that respects difference. We believe that, as an employer and public body, we can play a leading part in the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion more widely. We recognise that equality of access to education is crucial in unlocking significant opportunities in life, and we are aware of our responsibility to uphold both fairness for learners, and the credibility of Scotland's qualifications system.

As a Non-Departmental Public Body, our corporate commitment to equality is also informed by the Scottish Government's expectations. The Scottish Government is committed to reducing inequality in Scotland, and this commitment underpins many of the Government's priorities and success measures. In meeting our public sector equality duties, we are required to ensure our consideration and contribution to Scottish Government national strategies and policies.

SQA's commitment to equality is set out in SQA's revised equality outcomes, and we continue to strive to make improvements, where needed, in the qualifications and services we offer. Our [equality outcomes](#) will guide our efforts to integrate equality further into our work.

SQA Corporate Plan 2020–23

SQA is committed to the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland to be a world-leading Fair Work Nation by 2025 where everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and can fulfil their potential.

As part of SQA's [Corporate Plan 2020–23](#), to help us deliver on our purpose and mission, we identified the following outcomes:

- ◆ we provide a credible qualifications system
- ◆ we are flexible in meeting customer needs
- ◆ we have a sustainable business operating model that is appropriately resourced in order to deliver our remit now and in the future
- ◆ we are a thriving organisation, with quality jobs and a fair work environment for all our people
- ◆ we are trusted, respected and valued by our customers, stakeholders and partners

These outcomes form our strategic priorities, and we ensure SQA's operational plans are aligned to these commitments.

Governance and responsibilities

SQA's Board of Management exercises its duty to ensure compliance. An important part of the Board's role in governance is ensuring that equality is reflected in our strategic planning and strategy. SQA's Chief Executive is accountable for the fulfilment of SQA's equality duties, and is supported in this by SQA's Equality Steering Group.

SQA Equality Steering Group

Our Equality Steering Group is chaired by SQA's Head of Strategic Planning & Governance. The group comprises representatives from across the organisation and employees with responsibility for implementing SQA's equality action plans.

The group's purpose is to:

- ◆ promote and advocate increased organisational understanding of SQA's obligations in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty
- ◆ support work to develop SQA's equality outcomes and equality action plans
- ◆ approve progress reports and employment monitoring reports
- ◆ ensure consistency across the organisation in SQA's approach to fulfilling its obligations in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty
- ◆ provide a point of escalation and guidance for cross-organisational issues relating to equality
- ◆ share good practice and solutions to common issues across the organisation
- ◆ support equality sub-groups, employee network groups, monitor and record organisational progress in implementing SQA's equality action plans

Our Equality Steering Group and equality sub-groups continue to meet quarterly and report directly to the Equality Steering Group.

SQA Equality and Inclusion Key Partners' Group

SQA's Equality and Inclusion Key Partners' Group provides a strategic forum for stakeholders to provide advice on issues of equality and inclusion in qualifications development. It meets twice a year to advise SQA on issues of access to SQA qualifications for learners from all equality groups.

NDPB Equality Forum

We continue to engage with the Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) Equality Forum — a Scotland-wide group that meets three times a year to discuss equality issues and to share experience and good practice. During 2020–21 virtual meetings of the forum took place more regularly. This has given members the opportunity to discuss and share updates relating to their work to revise equality outcomes and action plans.

How we monitor equality impact

As part of our work to revise SQA's equality outcomes and action plans, we have identified a number of areas for improvement. This work will also provide a good opportunity to further emphasise the importance of embedding equality in policy development, planning and decision-making processes in SQA. You can read more about the planned activity [in our equality outcomes document on the website.](#)

Teams across SQA work to ensure that equality impact considerations are embedded in the work they do. This includes SQA's Editorial Teams ensuring consideration of equality in written content and carrying out continual work to develop and promote guidance on the use of inclusive language and terminology. Project Management Teams ensure that equality impact considerations are embedded at the early stages of SQA's change programme activity. Our Web Team also ensure accessibility considerations are embedded in their design and development work.

We are reviewing our training activities — this includes reviewing SQA Academy training on the Public Sector Equality Duty and online training relating to equality impact assessments. Employees across SQA's Policy Teams will also support development of training and guidance for qualifications developers involved in a large-scale project to develop the next generation of Higher National qualifications, to ensure consideration of equality as these qualifications are developed.

We are committed to making progress with equality impact assessments (EqIAs) to maximise potential positive impacts and reduce potential negative impacts on people who share one or more of the protected characteristics. We aim to ensure all SQA policies and procedures promote equality, and that employees embed equality impact considerations in the work they do. Equality impact assessment of new and revised policies is an ongoing requirement of SQA's policy development cycle and we aim to engage with our union representatives and employee networks as part of this process. To assist us in ensuring that we carry out a robust equality impact assessment on all our people policies, a number of colleagues from our People Directorate attended external equality impact assessment training in January 2021.

Following the Scottish Government's decision on 19 March 2020 to cancel the annual diet of examinations as a result of the COVID-19, extensive work was carried to develop and publish an equality impact assessment of the Alternative Certification Model. https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/2020-sqa-alternative-certification-model-equality-impact-assessment.pdf

The draft equality impact assessment for the Alternative Certification Model for 2021 was also published on 16 February: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/acm-2021-equality-impact-assessment.pdf You can read more about this work in [section 2](#).

Associated children's rights and wellbeing impact assessments were also carried out and published as part of SQA's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ahead of this being incorporated into Scots Law.

Equality impact assessments completed during the reporting period are published on our equality webpage: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/25339.html>

Equality review of qualifications

SQA's equality review of qualifications process is a robust and transparent way of ensuring that:

- ◆ SQA qualifications are reviewed to ensure that they are not discriminatory for any learner on grounds of any of the protected characteristics.
- ◆ Due consideration is given to the reasonable adjustments that SQA can make to provide access to the qualifications for disabled learners.

In February 2021 we published over one hundred equality review summaries on our equality webpage. <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/25339.html>

More information about SQA's equality review of qualifications is provided in [section 2](#).

Procurement processes and award criteria

SQA's procurement strategy includes clauses to support our equality commitments.

We continue to require suppliers to complete probity statements and include equality policies or statements when submitting their tenders. Where a supplier directly impacts on our equality duties, assessment of their equality commitments forms a significant part of our contracting criteria.

SQA's procurement process encourages suppliers to consider how they can contribute to promoting and advancing equality in delivering the contract. We continue to promote the Scottish Living Wage, and the Fair Work Framework in employment as part of awarding contracts or frameworks. We ensure zero hours contracts are not used by suppliers in the delivery of services.

In the conduct of our business, we aim to tackle inequalities, and improve life chances for children and young people and families at risk. SQA adopts a 'zero tolerance' approach to slavery and human trafficking. We are committed to taking all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not present in our operations, in our supply chains, or amongst third-party representatives working on our behalf.

Responsible business

SQA makes a difference to the communities it serves through a shared understanding and a sense of being a responsible business that delivers and sustains a positive impact on its customers and communities.

As a responsible business, our objectives are to create positive changes and make valuable contributions that support our local communities, environment, customers, and employees. Our Responsible Business Team look after the operational delivery of SQA's responsible business strategy and associated Giving Something Back Initiatives. SQA staff get involved throughout the year across a variety of activities to 'Give Something Back' to our local communities.

SQA's Responsible Business Annual Review 2019–20

https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Responsible-Business19–20.pdf explains in detail how SQA looks after its employees, what our staff do for others, and the wellbeing initiatives that take place.

Wider Engagement

Race Equality in Education

Curriculum for Excellence aims to provide the right context to enable children and young people to develop as informed and responsible global citizens with a knowledge of Scotland and its place in the world and an understanding of a wide range of beliefs and cultures.

Ensuring that minority ethnic children and young people are able to realise their potential with equity and equality is a high priority for Scottish Government's Community Ambassadors' Project and Strategic Action Forums. The project highlighted that a renewed focus on supporting learning environments, relationships and curricular content that challenge racial inequality and racism is essential, if minority ethnic students are to have a positive early learning and childcare, school and further and higher education experience, without disadvantage.

SQA is represented on the Race Equality in Education Programme Board (Curriculum Reform Workstream). The programme board aims to scope, develop, and progress an approach within the curriculum (including qualifications), taking account of the wider education landscape, for race equality and anti-racism to be developed, enhanced and progressed to ensure that all teachers and learners experience a curriculum that is inclusive and diverse and underpinned by equity, rights and values.

During 2020–21 meetings have taken place with colleagues in the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate, Equality Unit, Children's Rights and Culture teams, SQA and Education Scotland as part of the scoping phase.

We will ensure the recommendations from the Race Equality in Education Programme Board inform our work to achieve equality outcome 2 and that we agree a detailed action plan to document SQA's activity.

LGBT Inclusive Education

The LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation Group was established to facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the LGBT Inclusive Education Working Group accepted by Scottish Ministers in November 2018. SQA is a member of the working group and continues to work with stakeholders to take forward the following recommendation from the report:

In recognising the centrality of National Qualifications in shaping educational discourse, that SQA and Education Scotland work with the Implementation Group to ensure appropriate inclusion of LGBTI matters in the development of new or adapted course specifications, and relevant guidance, across the curriculum.

Internal engagement has identified that the most appropriate way to ensure SQA meets this recommendation is to explore opportunities to embed and assess LGBT issues within course content and to highlight where there are existing opportunities through personalisation and choice for learners to engage with LGBT issues in their assessments. Desk research was carried out to identify, across National Courses (National 5 to Advanced Higher), opportunities in each approach.

This identified the following three categories of opportunity.

- ◆ embedded content – mandatory assessable content
- ◆ selected content – optional material within a course assessment
- ◆ personalisation and choice in coursework

Discussions with SQA Qualifications Managers, Subject Implementation Managers and National Qualifications Support Teams have identified opportunities to be explored. Work is ongoing to agree next steps.

We will ensure this work informs our commitments and equality action plan as part of equality outcome 2.

Customer engagement

We engage with stakeholders about our work. This also helps us to understand features of qualifications and assessments that have an impact on accessibility for learners who share particular protected characteristics.

Our engagement includes:

Customer feedback

Across all our qualifications and services, we welcome feedback from our customers, and use it to improve the way we do things. We collect and consider views from a wide range of sources, including:

- ◆ Direct contact with centres through our dedicated teams of liaison and regional managers.
- ◆ Events we run, such as our SQA co-ordinator conferences, local authority events, subject-specific Understanding Standards events and webinars, and appointee meetings.
- ◆ Events we attend, nationally and internationally, to engage with current and potential customers, and invite feedback.
- ◆ Face-to-face meetings with stakeholders and partners, such as teaching unions, directors of education, and college principals.
- ◆ Individual high-level meetings with government, and bodies such as Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, National Parent Forum Scotland, and the Scottish Council for Independent Schools. These take place two to three times per year and are attended by members of the Executive Management Team and colleagues representing teacher engagement, communications, operations and qualifications development, as appropriate.
- ◆ Monitoring of performance across all of our platforms, which we use to continually improve our products and services based on data and evidence.

User testing and feedback analysis: SQA website

- ◆ In our most recent website survey undertaken in November and December 2019, of 776 participants, 72% rated the service as 4/5 or better, and 89% of all participants said the website was useful.
- ◆ We have made several changes to the SQA website in response to user feedback. A new homepage and improved site navigation have been introduced.
- ◆ Our user experience programme continues and offers us real insight to customer challenges and ensures our solutions are effective.
- ◆ We have improved the performance of the website to help visitors reach content as quickly as possible. To improve the overall search experience for users, we have refined our content and adjusted the search algorithm based on best practice. We have also introduced chatbot technology and are trialling this to support customer enquiries.
- ◆ Further to our work streamlining the layout of the National Qualifications homepage, additional enhancements have been made to NQ page layouts to clarify what content is available.
- ◆ We are also working to ensure that our websites and apps are accessible to all customers regardless of the technology they use to access our resources.

Complaints handling

As a leading public body, SQA works hard to provide qualifications and services at a standard that satisfies customers on every occasion. It is important that, if there are complaints, SQA manages them in a fair and efficient way that complies with the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman's (SPSO) complaints handling procedure.

During 2020–21 SQA carried out extensive work to develop its new Complaints Handling Procedure and guidance. All members of the community have the right to equal access to our complaints procedure, and we recognise some customers may face barriers making a complaint. These may be physical, sensory, communication or language barriers, and can include their anxieties and concerns. SQA has a responsibility to ensure that customers receive support to overcome these barriers.

SQA's new Complaints Handling Procedure outlines examples how we will meet our responsibilities and how we will ensure vulnerable groups can access our complaints procedure. SQA's Complaints Manager also carried out virtual organisation-wide training in January 2021.

Section 2: SQA's Equality Outcomes 2017–21: progress update

Fair Work Convention

The Fair Work Convention is aspirational and is about fair work becoming a hallmark of Scotland's workplaces and economy. The five dimensions of the Fair Work Framework aim to balance the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers, and generate benefits for individuals, organisations and society. SQA is committed to the Fair Work Framework and has mapped all dimensions of the Framework to ensure they are considered in all our people initiatives and policies.

SQA recognises two trade unions: Unite and Unison. In December 2020, SQA signed a new recognition agreement with both. Our Joint Engagement Forum (JEF) is the main forum for union and management collaboration on all matters affecting our employees, and replaces the previous forum (Joint Negotiation & Consultative Committee).

The Joint Engagement Forum meets monthly, with opportunities for more frequent interactions whenever required.

People Survey

SQA's People Survey ran throughout October 2020. The survey is carried out every year to measure engagement and progress against our people action plans. Our engagement score from the recent survey was 80%, an increase of 6% since the 2019 survey.

The survey showed that:

- ◆ 95% of colleagues indicated they felt they have the skills to do their job effectively and 91% indicated they have had a development conversation with their line manager in the past 12 months.
- ◆ 88% of respondents feel confident suggesting ideas to improve our way of doing things (an increase of 10% since the previous survey).
- ◆ 80% of respondents agreed with the statement 'SQA is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace' (an increase of 4% since the previous survey).
- ◆ 88% of respondents agreed with the statement 'I am treated fairly at work' (an increase of 7% since the previous survey).
- ◆ 88% of respondents agreed with the statement 'I am treated with respect by the people I work with' (an increase of 6% since the previous survey).
- ◆ 83% of respondents agreed with the statement 'I think that SQA respects individual differences (eg cultures, working styles, backgrounds and ideas).'

Our Business Partners and senior managers meet with teams across the organisation to discuss the results of the People Survey at local levels within focus group conversations, looking at how we celebrate the strengths and share ideas on how we can make improvements.

Employee information

Effective monitoring is not only a legal requirement for SQA, to ensure a truly inclusive workplace, but also an important foundation for achieving SQA's equality outcomes. We continue to take measures to improve the quality and quantity of the information we hold on the composition of SQA's workforce. During 2020–21, we launched our all-staff campaign to raise awareness of SQA's data-gathering responsibilities and to explain the benefits of capturing equality information. This has resulted in an increase in our data-gathering response rate from 25.45% to 85.34%. Colleagues across SQA can update their equality data on our Business World employee self-service portal at any time.



We use this equality monitoring data in a number of ways. It helps us to:

- ◆ Understand our colleagues' needs. With an accurate overview of our workforce profile, we can take targeted action to respond to any identified needs and provide support.
- ◆ Promote awareness of the workforce diversity and its benefits.
- ◆ Explore any trends and whether patterns of any potential disadvantage or discrimination exist.
- ◆ Inform policy and decision-making and make improvements.
- ◆ Provide targeted information, support and positive action initiatives to address any identified under-representation.
- ◆ Comply with the law. All employers are responsible under the Equality Act 2010 for protecting employees from discrimination and harassment at work.
- ◆ Measure and report progress against our equality outcomes and inform our equality impact assessments.

You can read SQA's detailed employment report in [our workforce equality monitoring report](#).

Summary of employee information

Employment monitoring data is critical to understanding SQA's workforce composition and identifying any potential barriers to attracting, recruiting, developing, and retaining people from a diverse range of backgrounds. It provides evidence to help inform and progress our work to fully embrace equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do. During this two-year reporting period, there have been two key areas of progress in relation to employment monitoring data:

- ◆ In April 2019, we moved to a new Human Resource Information System (HRIS).
- ◆ At the end of July 2020, we launched our equality monitoring campaign (outlined on page 19) to encourage colleagues to complete their equality and diversity data.

As detailed in SQA's previous Equality Mainstreaming Report 2017–19, we adopted updated equality and diversity categorisations for protected characteristics in preparation for the move to our new HRIS. Because of this, we cannot draw direct comparisons between the data in the previous report and between some of our 2019 and 2020 data.

SQA's revised categorisations include a new section on caring responsibilities. Although this is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, SQA is committed to ensuring that employment policies do not discriminate against people with caring responsibilities. In the case of employees who are carers for disabled people, the Equality Act protects them from discrimination by association. We gather this data to ensure we consider the impact of our policies and practices on carers, to help identify any barriers, and to inform our action plans.

The revised data categorisations will serve as the basis for future reporting and analysis, and will enable us to compare information over both a short- and longer-term period to identify trends more accurately.

Following the move to the new HRIS, completion of equality and diversity data remained low throughout 2019 and early 2020. The equality campaign started in July 2020 to encourage colleagues to complete their equality and diversity data, and through this we have seen our response rate increase from 25.45% prior to the campaign to 85.34%. This has provided a significant improvement in the level and quality of data, providing greater opportunity for more detailed analysis across all protected characteristics.

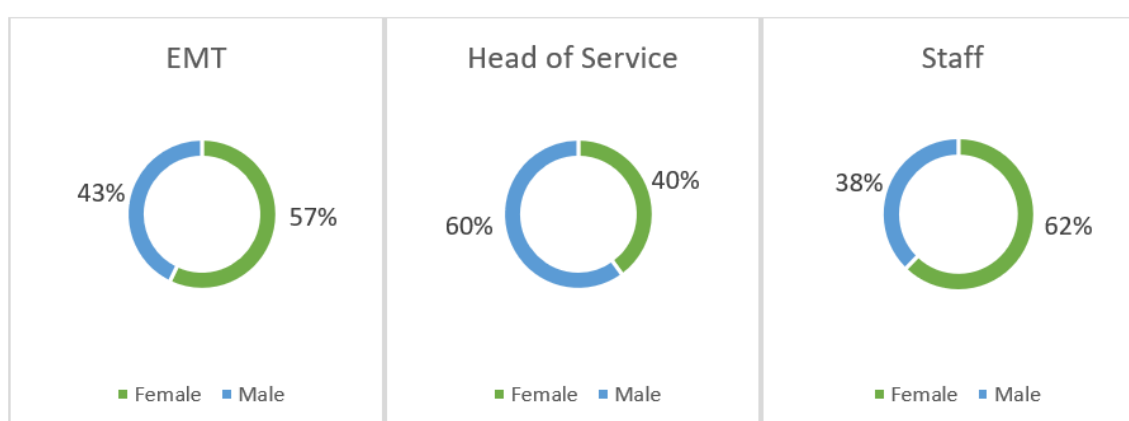
Because part of our aim is to improve our data-gathering and analysis and to reduce the number of employees selecting 'prefer not to say', we continue to encourage colleagues to update their equality data using system-generated prompts, and intend to run additional campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of providing this data and of its use in the development of policy and developing our equality action plans.

Although we have seen an increase in the data provided by colleagues, there has not been a significant change to our overall colleague demographic over the two-year reporting period. This is mainly due to the following reasons:

- ◆ There has been a 7.42% reduction in rolling 12-month turnover in 2020 (4.81%) from 2019 (12.23%), most likely due to an overarching concern about economic uncertainty as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- ◆ The backgrounds and origins of colleagues joining and leaving the organisation has been broadly similar across protected characteristic groups. Where there are more significant changes, this is primarily due to having additional data from colleagues in line with our equality campaign.

The figures below provide a high-level summary of information as at 31 January 2021 (SQA had 956 colleagues, which equates to 912.17 full time equivalents (FTE) at this date). The detailed analysis of our workforce composition can be found in SQA's Workforce Equality Monitoring Report in our [workforce equality monitoring report](#).

Gender



51% of Scotland's population are women and 49% men.¹

In SQA:

- ◆ 62% of colleagues are women and 38% are men.
- ◆ Head of Service group has 12 women (40%) and 18 men (60%).
- ◆ Executive Management Team (EMT) has 4 females (57%) and 3 men (43%).

Age

The table below shows the comparison between SQA colleagues in different age groups and the Scottish working population (those aged 16 to 74).

¹ Scottish population figures on all protected characteristics are from Scottish Government Equality data: <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-equality-evidence-finder/>
data: Mid-2018 Population Estimates Scotland (Last updated: April 2019, NRS).



Age	SQA	Population of Scotland ²
16-24	5.27%	14.08%
25-29	6.32%	9.38%
30-39	26.77%	17.71%
40-49	25.29%	16.70%
50-59	27.19%	19.48%
60-64	7.59%	8.46%
65+	1.58%	14.19%

The percentage of colleagues in the 16–24 age group is lower than in the Scottish working population, where a significant proportion of this age group will be in education or training. SQA is working to attract younger workers through initiatives such as our Modern Apprenticeship scheme.

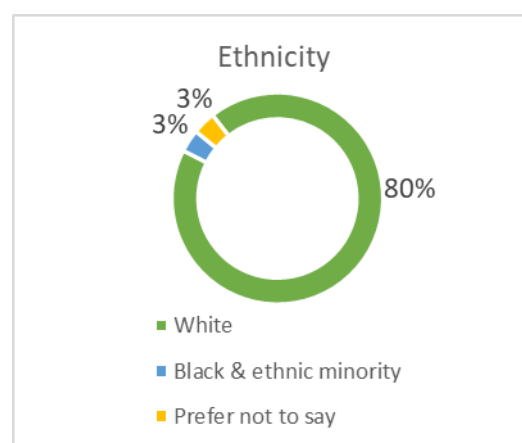
Ethnic origin

5% of the adult population in Scotland were minority ethnicity².

The majority of SQA colleagues (87.04%) have provided data regarding their ethnicity.

Colleague data shows that SQA has a slightly lower level of diversity across its workforce when compared to the Scottish population more generally.

There has been a 1.34% increase in the number of ethnic minority colleagues from 1.82% in 2019 to 3.16% in 2020. The increase is mainly due to increased self-identification rates as the result of our recent equality monitoring campaign in July 2020. The largest Black & Ethnic Minority group in SQA is Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British.



² Scottish population figures on age from Scottish Government Equality data: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2019/data:Mid-2019PopulationEstimatesScotland> (Last updated: April 2020, NRS).

Disability

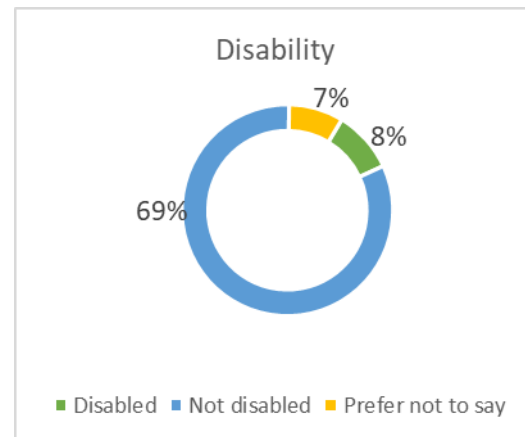
32% of the adult population in Scotland are disabled.

Disclosing disability information is voluntary and, as at 31 January 2021, 83.99% of colleagues had completed information in relation to this protected characteristic.

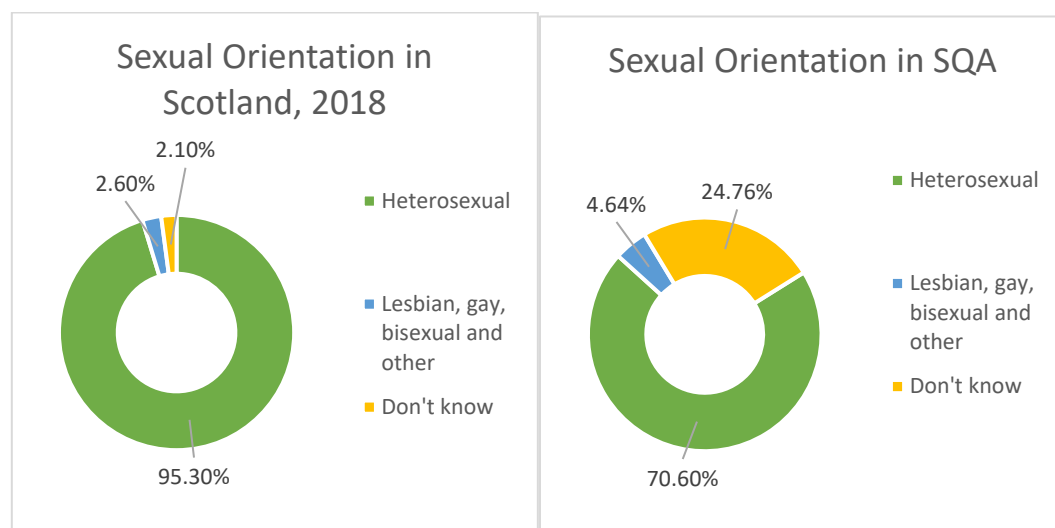
The percentage of colleagues who have identified as having a disability has increased by 2.75% between 2019 and 2020. We understand the increase in those declaring their disability is due to increased self-identification rates as the result of our equality campaign. SQA's Employee Networks have also supported our campaigns and awareness-raising activities.

SQA is also Disability Confident Employer, and all candidates who apply under the Disability Confident scheme, and meet the essential requirements for the position, will be invited to interview.

Colleagues can easily update information about their disability, and SQA works with its occupational health provider to ensure risk assessments and/or reasonable adjustments are considered and where necessary put in place for any colleague at any point during their employment.



Sexual orientation

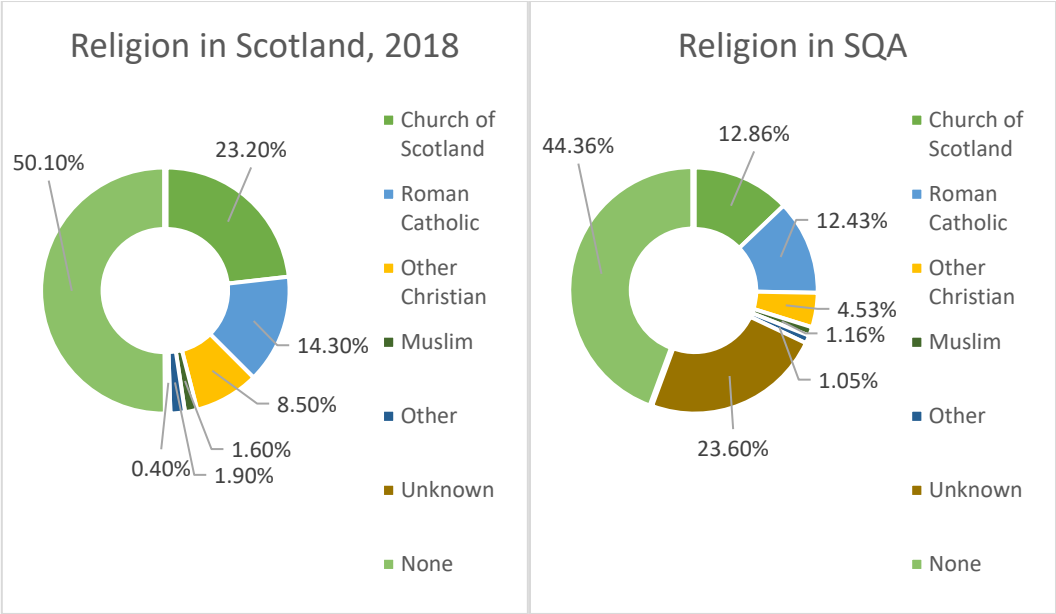


83.35% of colleagues at SQA have chosen to disclose their sexual orientation.

Our workforce has almost double the representation of the overall Scottish population self-identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or in another way. The proportion of colleagues identifying as heterosexual is below national indicators and the proportion

of our workforce whose sexual orientation is unknown is ten times the national indicator. This is due to 8.01% of colleagues who have declared they would prefer not to share their sexual orientation and 16.65% of colleagues who have not provided sexual orientation information.

Religion or belief



The majority of colleagues (86.73%) have provided data regarding their religion or belief. The diversity of religion and belief broadly mirrors that of the population of Scotland. However, we have a higher unknown rate due to 10.33% of colleagues who have declared they would prefer not to share their religion or belief and 13.28% of colleagues who have not provided information on their religion or belief.

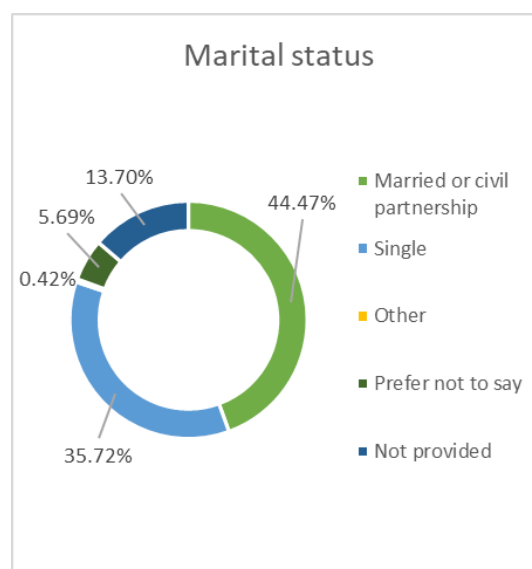
We encourage managers to be flexible in the approval of annual leave requests to support colleagues to observe notable date in their religious calendar and engage in such events and occasions. We also provide support for colleagues to use rooms in both our Glasgow and Dalkeith office for praying during their working day.

Marital and civil partnership

86.24% of colleagues have provided marital status information. Just under half of all colleagues (44.47%) are married and 35.72% are single. The last marital status population estimates for Scotland have not been updated by National Records of Scotland since 2009, so we have chosen not to make any comparison for this protected characteristic.

Conclusion

We have an increased level of employee diversity data due to a robust equality campaign in 2020 that encouraged colleagues to update their data. Our campaign also provided reassurance and explained the benefits to SQA and employees in gathering and using data.



This has helped us to carry out more meaningful and accurate analysis to help identify areas of under-representation, and to inform our action plans to address these areas. We will continue to encourage colleagues to update their equality information to improve our data gathering and analysis. Our aim is to provide more detailed year-on-year analysis as a basis for comparison in future reports. In addition, we intend to utilise the 2021 census data when it becomes available to compare our workforce composition to the overall demographic of Scotland and the local communities we serve and to inform our Equality Outcomes.

Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018

The intention of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 is to help address the historic and persistent underrepresentation of women in public life. SQA is required to publish details of

- a) the gender composition of its board and
- b) how the information has been and will be used to facilitate succession planning to increase their board's diversity.

SQA's Board of Management gender representation is reported as part of our [workforce equality monitoring report](#). Plans will be put place to ensure the information is used to facilitate succession planning and to meet these responsibilities as we enter the next round of public appointments in 2021–22.

Action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace

SQA conducts an annual equal pay audit, and analysis to identify any action required. This includes analysis of occupational segregation data. In 2020, our gender pay gap was 7% (based on the average hourly male and female salary). On 31 January 2021, the gender pay gap was 6.17%, a reduction of 0.8% since 2020.

As part of SQA's 2019–20 pay remit, we have made improvements to maternity/adoption/shared parental pay. Any changes to pay and terms and conditions of employment are subject to Public Sector Pay Policy, affordability and Scottish Government and trade union agreement. SQA's Equal Pay Statement and Equal Pay Audit are set out in Appendix A and Appendix B.

Payment of the real living wage

SQA ensures payment of the real living wage to all employees, appointees and any temporary agency workers. SQA is subject to Public Sector Pay Policy and as such, ensures timely implementation of any increase to the real living wage. As part of our procurement and tendering process, we ensure that all contractors who employ staff directly pay the real living wage.

In line with guidance from Scottish Government, we implemented the basic elements of the 2020–21 Public Sector Pay Policy in May 2020, backdated to 1 April. This provided colleagues with a timely pay increase during the pandemic.

HR policy review

We commenced a review of all HR policies and procedures in 2020 in consultation with our trade union colleagues to ensure they incorporate best practice in terms of policy, language and fair work principles to support the progression of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation. This includes equality, dignity at work and recruitment and selection policies. Employees from our People Directorate attended external equality impact assessment training in January 2021 in order to ensure robust equality impact assessments will be completed as part of this review in 2021–22. We will also engage SQA's employee network groups as part of the consultation process.

Race at Work Charter

In August 2020, SQA became a signatory of the Business in the Community (BITC) Race at Work Charter. The charter commits us to five calls to action:

- 1 Appoint an Executive Sponsor for race
- 2 Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress
- 3 Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying
- 4 Make clear that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers

5 Take action that supports ethnic minority career progression

Work is underway to develop SQA's detailed race equality action plan to support and increase the diversity of our workforce. This includes plans to educate and train colleagues to improve knowledge and confidence to talk about race and a review of our recruitment and selection process to identify and remove any potential barriers to a diverse workforce. We are also aligning our talent management and succession planning strategies with the principles of diversity and inclusion. [You can read more about this in our equality outcomes document on the website.](#)

Employee Network Groups

SQA's employee network groups provide colleagues with an opportunity to come together to share their experiences and ideas, offer peer support and guidance, provide a forum for consultation and inform policy development. We are pleased to have five employee networks in SQA: our newly formed ACE (Appreciate Culture and Ethnicity) Network, Disability Network, Rainbow Network, and Women's Network. In addition to offering support during the pandemic, we have taken steps to engage and connect SQA's parents and carers to form our Parents and Carers Network. Our Networks are critical to building a sense of belonging and offering constructive challenge as we strive to do more.

Our Corporate Planning Team and Responsible Business Team provide ongoing support to SQA's Networks.

ACE (Appreciate Culture and Ethnicity)

Gill Stewart, our Director of Qualifications, is delighted to take on the role of SQA's Executive Sponsor for race and to provide visible leadership.

Gill said, 'I am delighted to take on role of exec sponsor for racial equality as I passionately believe we need to do more as a society and within SQA to make racial equality a reality. I am looking forward to working with the ACE Network and to hearing from people within SQA about the steps you think we should be taking to move forward.'

We are also delighted that Sabira Akram, Scrum Master, volunteered to take a leading role as Chair of SQA's ACE Network.

'I consider it an enormous privilege,' Sabs said, 'to serve as Chair of SQA's ACE network and would love for SQA to be a leader in diversity and inclusion. I will strive to push values and beliefs that enable us to embrace our individuality and find strength in the fact that we are all unique.'

In November 2020, in collaboration with Business in the Community (BITC), our ACE Network held its first 'Let's talk about race session' to bring together colleagues across the organisation, discuss race in the workplace, and explore the key issues for SQA.



Our newly established ACE Network has been very active – they launched a competition to design their Network logo and have shared cultural background interviews with colleagues. The Group celebrated Race Equality Week 2021 with members and colleagues across SQA taking part in the Big Promise and making a public commitment to create positive change.



Dr Gill Stewart, our Director of Qualifications, Executive Sponsor

Disability Network

SQA's Disability Network continues to provide a welcoming, confidential and safe environment for colleagues to share ideas and information on disability equality in the workplace.

In response to the feedback received to the group's disability survey, members worked in collaboration with HR and other groups across the organisation to collate a compendium of information relating to policies, workplace reasonable adjustments

and sources of advice and support in SQA and externally to support disabled employees and line managers.

Members supported UK Disability History Month 2019 and 2020 — an annual event that provides a platform to raise awareness and promote awareness of disability. Members organised and supported Disability & Health Awareness Sessions in Glasgow and Lowden, delivered by Remploy, and launched the Network's Compendium in 2019. The group also created a special edition Disability History Month Newsletter for employees.

In November 2020, we were supported by the Department for Work and Pensions to deliver a Disability Confidence awareness session as part of Disability History Month.

In 2020 SQA joined the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme, and our Network supported SQA's Organisational Development & Change Team to develop and launch online Disability Confidence and Awareness training for line managers.

Rainbow Network

Our Rainbow Network's goal is to ensure that SQA is a workplace that promotes, embraces and welcomes LGBTI+ diversity, dignity, inclusion and talents. In practice, the Rainbow Network discusses LGBT+ issues, shares resources, and organises events such as awareness-raising campaigns and charity fundraising days.

Highlights during 2019–21 include:

- ◆ Celebrating LGBT History Month 2019 and launch of the Network's first Honesty Library.
- ◆ Ally Week 2019 — members encouraged colleagues across SQA to join their Network. Information stalls were held in Lowden and Glasgow. Interviews with LGBT Allies were shared during the week and members delivered a session on 'How to be an LGBT Ally'. Members were delighted SQA's Chief Executive Fiona Robertson joined as an ally.



- ◆ Attendance at Dundee Pride 2019. SQA was an 'Official Sponsor' of Dundee Pride in September 2019. A number of members attended Dundee Pride to fly their flag.
- ◆ Representation at the Stonewall Workplace Conference 2019. Members attended Stonewall Scotland's Workplace Conference in November with colleagues from SQA's HR team.
- ◆ Stonewall Scotland 'lunch and learn' sessions. LGBT awareness sessions were delivered in Glasgow and Lowden.
- ◆ Members promoted Bi-Visibility Day in September — sharing information with colleagues via our intranet.
- ◆ Acknowledgement of Trans Remembrance Day on 20 November.
- ◆ Celebration of LGBT History Month 2020 and 2021— in 2021 our Rainbow Network shone a light the use of pronouns and enjoyed an interesting awareness session with Stonewall on 'Being a better ally to LGBT People of Colour'. Members also shared LGBT Icon Posters throughout February themed around intersectionality.

In 2020, our Rainbow Network was delighted to present their Liam Priest Award to Alison Barclay. It would have been great to have presented the award to Alison in person, though members were pleased they managed to do this virtually during lockdown. A truly deserving recipient — Alison has supported our Rainbow Network since the very beginning, from 2017. Alison led on plans to organise events and raising awareness campaigns in SQA's office in Dalkeith. Our Rainbow Network are truly grateful for Alison's passion and dedication to equality, hard work and continued support.



Alison Barclay, Rainbow Network Ally Rep and Liam Priest Award winner 2020

Women's Network

We were delighted to celebrate International Women's Day in 2020. The event was a huge success and was an opportunity to celebrate the journey and achievements of SQA's Women's Network.

Members were truly grateful to our speakers, Anna Davis (SQA board member), Jordan Daly (co-founder of Time for Inclusive Education) and Ann McKechin (former Glasgow North MP and trustee of UN Women UK) who all gave personal accounts of what equality means to them and the work they continue to do to champion change around the world, within schools, workplaces and abroad.

Our Women's Network created an award for Woman of the Year, and invited colleagues to vote, the award was presented by our SQA board member Anna Davis who announced the winner at the event on International Women's day.

The award was presented to Yazmin Raven, Women's Network chair 2019–20. Yazmin's passion and hard work were instrumental to the group's success in its first year.

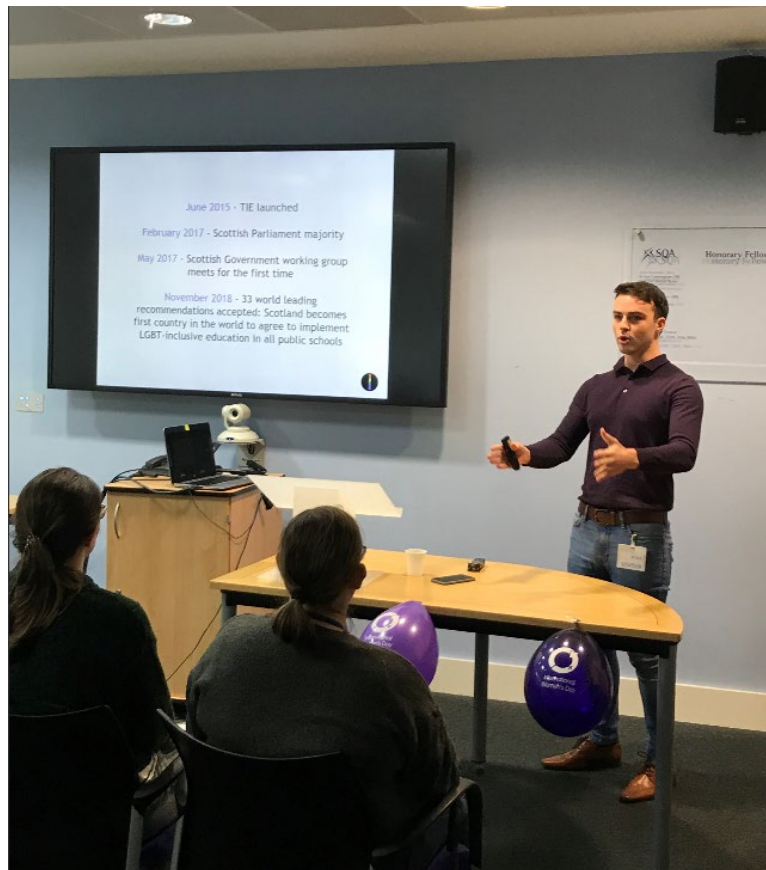


Anna Davis, SQA Board Member and Yazmin Raven, Women's Network Chair 2020

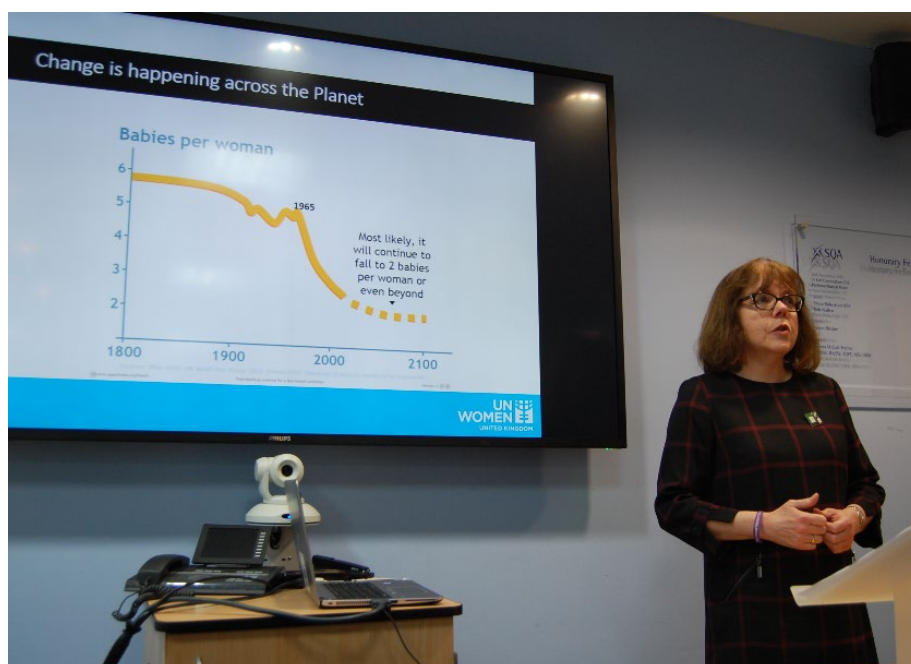




Women's Network members and SQA Board member Hamish McKay



Jordan Daly (co-founder of Time for Inclusive Education)



Ann McKechin (former Glasgow North MP and trustee of UN Women UK)



SQA colleagues

First Minister's National Advisory Council for Women and Girls

Women's Network members have participated as part of the First Minister's National Advisory Committee for Women & Girls Spotlight Circle events to support the national agenda for gender equality. Members continued to attend virtual Circle events during 2020–21.

Menopause in the workplace

Members supported our corporate HR team in the development of Menopause Guidance for Line Managers. They also facilitated discussions with colleagues across SQA through Menopause Cafes, with an aim to offer support and raise awareness of the impact menopause can have on women in the workplace.

Financial Independence

Following feedback from members, another theme for the network was financial independence. Members organised input from the Strathclyde Pension Fund to provide support and advice to female employees on topics such as the impact of maternity leave and reduced hours on pension accumulation.

On 20 January 2020, on the theme of Financial Independence and Retiring Early (FIRE), our members arranged their second financial independence talk. SQA welcomed author David Sawyer, who delivered a very engaging presentation about his bestselling book titled 'RESET'.

Our Women's Network continue to provide a welcoming space for women across the organisation.

Parent and Carers Network

To support colleagues, we launched our Parents and Carers Network in July 2020. A group was established on Microsoft Teams to offer a virtual space to connect.

This informal virtual Network, supported by SQA, aims to:

- ◆ Provide a safe and confidential space to allow parents and carers to support each other, share ideas, challenges, knowledge and experiences.
- ◆ Explore how we can raise awareness of the needs of working parents and carers.
- ◆ Provide a way for others in SQA to consult and engage with our parents and carers.

During 2020, leadership has been clear in its commitment to supporting employees who have caring responsibilities. We encouraged colleagues to work as flexibly as they could. SQA acknowledged regularly that the safety of dependants was of paramount importance.

Employees were not required to take special leave, annual or flexi-leave for caring responsibilities and were paid as normal and could record time for caring responsibilities on their timesheets.

Access to training and development

SQA employees can access development opportunities relating to their current role through our Performance Management process 'My Review'. The development opportunities available include self-directed learning, formal learning sessions delivered both internally and externally, and access to accredited qualifications.

We work to ensure that development opportunities are accessible to all. During COVID-19, we have offered virtual learning for our development programmes, working with training providers who can deliver digitally. We provide ICT training to support flexible working — all colleagues have access to online or face-to-face training to enable them to effectively use collaboration tools such as MS Teams to support working remotely.

In addition, we ensure part-time and home workers have access to development by scheduling multiple workshops on different days and times of the week. Programmes are blended with online modules, virtual classroom, and guided learning to cover learning styles, accessibility and learning need. [There is more information in SQA's employment monitoring report.](#)

Our organisational values of Trusted, Progressive and Enabling form the central core of SQA's leadership development programme 'Values Led Leadership' (VLL), which launched in May 2019. This programme was on hold during the initial stages of the pandemic, but then restarted remotely in Autumn 2020 and will continue through to early 2022. Grounded in our values, the VLL programme focuses on leading self as well as others in line with our leadership statement:

As leaders of SQA we are responsible for setting the vision and creating the environment where our people can perform to their potential and deliver for learners, communities, our economy and society.

Plans are in place to extend the Values Led leadership opportunities to the wider organisation. The new 'Values for All' Programme will be rolled out across the organisation for all staff without line management responsibility, and the pilot will run in March.

SQA's line manager development programme promotes SQA's values and aims to equip line managers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours to help them manage their teams effectively and consistently. Examples of the content of this programme include mental health for line managers, recognition and diversity and inclusion modules.

We launched a new induction programme in January 2019 after a successful pilot in 2018. The programme offers an introduction to the culture, values, and activities of SQA, providing new colleagues with the knowledge and tools to fulfil their role and contribute to our corporate goals. The programme is designed to welcome, support and communicate our remit, culture, values, ways of working consistently across the organisation and ways we support our colleagues.

Modern Apprenticeships

As an employer, we invest in apprenticeships with our own modern apprentice programme — we call it 'Pathways'. In our normal office environment, the two-year modern apprentice programme offers the opportunity to gain a qualification and blends academic and practical skills with job rotation in up to four different business areas. We also ensure our apprentices have a voice in shaping the programme with focus groups, team days and feedback sessions.

We achieved the Investors in Young People silver award in May 2018 and are currently working towards the gold award in May 2021.

In a year when young people have been significantly impacted by the response to COVID-19, we wanted to provide an additional opportunity for young talent to join our organisation and experience the world of work, albeit virtually. As a result, we have created a new modern apprenticeship programme. Unlike our traditional apprentice programme, it has no academic or work experience requirements, ensuring a fully inclusive and accessible opportunity for all 16–19-year-olds. The programme includes a one-year contract and an SVQ. We were delighted to have six new modern apprentices join us remotely on 11 January 2021 as part of this programme.

We have qualified career development mentors for our modern apprentices to help them plan for their future and secure sustainable employment.

We are also working towards the launch of a new internship programme in April 2021. This programme will support our Young Talent pipeline with opportunities to join SQA for placements ranging from six weeks to 12 months in a directorate or specific business area. Placements will be suitable for university and college students in a sandwich year or as a summer placement; graduates looking to gain

work experience in their subject areas; young people looking to gain work experience who are outwith the funding age requirements for apprenticeships; and young people with additional needs looking to gain work experience.

We will be working with Partners to support the programme including the Robertson Trust, Enable Scotland, Inclusion Scotland, Developing the Young Workforce and further education institutions.

The equality review of SQA qualifications

Monitoring the implementation of revised National Qualifications

In light of the removal of unit assessments in session 2019–20, SQA carried out a further equality review and considered the potential impact on candidates who share protected characteristics, and how potential negative impacts could be mitigated.

The planned monitoring of the implementation of these changes at Advanced Higher in session 2019–20, along with the continued monitoring of revised course assessment at National 5 and Higher, was limited by the cancellation of the exam diet and related closure of the Assessment Arrangements (AA) system and Exceptional Circumstances service. Over the course of any year, dialogue with centres in relation to these services normally allows us to add to our understanding of the many and varied issues that some of our candidates have.

However, for the period from August 2019 to March 2020, it was possible to monitor Assessment Arrangements correspondence and requests already received, and carry out planned and responsive engagement with centres, stakeholder groups and education partners. No particular trends or issues for candidates or assessment arrangements were identified through monitoring or engagement, either with new implementation of revised Advanced Higher courses or continued implementation of revised National 5 and Higher courses.

Monitoring will be required over a number of years to provide more data that will allow for comparisons in Assessment Arrangements request trends to be made over a longer period of time.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA)

We carried out and published impact assessments on equality and children's rights between March 2020 and March 2021. These covered:

- ◆ the Alternative Certification Model in 2020
- ◆ proposed course modifications in Autumn 2020
- ◆ the Alternative Certification Model in 2021

Alternative Certification Model (ACM) 2020

Following national lockdown in March 2020 and the subsequent cancellation of 2020 exams, work began to gather equality evidence to inform the development of the ACM and continued until finalisation of the model.

The potential impact of each stage of the ACM on candidates who share protected characteristics was considered, along with how any potential negative impacts identified could be mitigated. Other groups of candidates, such as those who are socio-economically disadvantaged or who experience other contexts and factors that might present barriers to accessing qualifications were also considered wherever possible. Although such groups are not covered specifically by the Equality Act, we recognised that a wide range of factors can have an impact on a candidate's ability to achieve our qualifications.

Research, consultation and the development of the ACM iteratively informed each other until completion of the work. Full details are available in the published reports. Alongside this, a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment was produced, focusing on how the ACM might impact on children and young people, in relation to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) articles such as: non-discrimination; best interests of the child; right to be listened to and taken seriously; right to information; and right to education.

Proposed modifications to course assessment at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher 2020–21

The Scottish Government's *Coronavirus (COVID-19): strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision*³ made it clear that a full timetable of SQA exams and coursework was planned at all levels in 2021.

However, recognising the continued impact of COVID-19 on learning and teaching, a decision was taken to modify existing course assessments at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher for session 2020–21. This was in line with the strategic framework, with the intention to support delivery and assessment within the contexts presented by COVID-19 restrictions, whilst maintaining the original rationale, purpose and aims of courses.

At this point, and across all subjects, course content remained unchanged to maintain the integrity of qualifications. Planned course assessment modifications would continue to sample across the mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding of each course whilst introducing modifications designed to support centres to work within constraints represented by existing and potential COVID-19 restrictions, including:

- ◆ less time for teaching and learning
- ◆ potential for local or national lockdown
- ◆ increased use of blended learning
- ◆ restrictions for practical subjects which require interaction with others, group work, use and sharing of specialist equipment and/or instruments, fieldwork and other requirements

Activity and decision-making reflected established processes for the development and revision of National Qualifications. In this respect the work undertaken to modify

³ Scottish Government (2020) Coronavirus (COVID-19): strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision [online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/excellent-equity-during-covid-19-pandemic-strategic-framework-reopening-schools-early-learning-childcare-provision-scotland/pages/6/> [accessed 30 June 2020]

the balance and scope of assessment types used to generate evidence for awarding in Diet 2021 represented an extension of existing, well-established practice.

An EqIA and a CRWIA were completed as part of this work. Evidence informing these was gathered from equality reviews carried out by each qualification team and senior appointees, our equality monitoring processes, and SQA's technical consultation on the proposed modification, which included equality questions.

Alternative Certification Model 2021

On 7 October 2020, following consideration of the significant and ongoing education disruption experienced by learners as a result of COVID-19, it was determined that there were too many risks to the planned implementation of a full exam diet for SQA graded National Courses in 2021 and that it would therefore be unfair to learners to proceed as intended. Consequently, the Deputy First Minister asked SQA to take an alternative approach to National 5 awarding in 2021.

The subsequent decision on 8 November to cancel the 2021 Higher and Advanced Higher examination diet, as disruption to learning and teaching continued to worsen, meant that the alternative certification model was extended to Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

The 2021 ACM represents a significant adjustment to SQA's longstanding policy and practice for awarding graded National Courses, as well as a significant change to the ACM developed for use in 2020. This includes the absence of any estimates or results based on statistical analysis. The 2021 ACM is based on teacher and lecturer judgement, with quality assurance approaches to support them in generating provisional results. The principal adjustments from previous approaches and models relate to:

- ◆ the use of teacher and lecturer judgement to determine results
- ◆ required candidate evidence
- ◆ the quality assurance processes for supporting and verifying valid and reliable evidence and assessment decisions

An EqIA and CRWIA were completed as part of this work, developed by a process of gathering, considering and acting upon key equalities evidence throughout the finalisation of the 2021 ACM. Qualifications teams also revisited equality review forms when appropriate to inform subject-specific work to adjust course assessment requirements.

Support, effective guidance and training on inclusive design for those involved in the development of assessment

SQA recognises the very clear links between equality, accessibility and validity. Assessments that are well designed and accessible will differentiate between those candidates who have the required knowledge, skills and understanding of the qualification and those who do not. They will not differentiate on other factors, and will provide all candidates with the fairest possible opportunities to show what they know, understand and can do.

As part of its ongoing programme of supporting professional development and practice, all SQA staff and appointees (Principal Assessors, Principal Verifiers, Item Writers and Item Checkers) involved in the design of SQA assessments are trained in the principles of assessment and assessment development. This includes training on the principles of validity, reliability, and equality and inclusion. The programme of professional development was curtailed by COVID-19 during 2019–20, but did include a general unit-writing workshop for HN, which took place in December 2019, and targeted unit-writing training for subject development teams in March 2021. This training included equality and inclusion content. We aim to re-establish our programme of regular training opportunities on inclusive design in assessment.

Staff and appointees are also encouraged to complete the SQA Academy Course on *Designing Inclusive Assessments*. This course provides guidance, with exemplars, on how to design assessments to be as accessible as possible. A related Assessment Arrangements course on SQA Academy was finalised in November 2020.

A guidance document on designing inclusive assessment is available for staff, and a series of design principle handbooks to inform review and development of National Courses has been completed. These include content and guidance on key principles and responsibilities related to equality, inclusion and access.

Provision of Assessment Arrangements for disabled candidates

SQA continues to promote and provide the appropriate use of Assessment Arrangements, including the use of assistive technologies for disabled candidates, to increase access to SQA qualifications. SQA works in close partnership with centres, and disability stakeholder groups, to identify and deliver appropriate Assessment Arrangements for the candidates who need them.

The 2019 annual review of policy, guidance, processes and procedures related to the provision of Assessment Arrangements led to agreed actions to be implemented for Diet 2020. These included:

- ◆ Statistical analysis of the Assessment Arrangements data to identify any particular trends in provision.
- ◆ Issuing guidance and samples to every centre to confirm the suite of six standard colours available for relevant AA requests, and advising the Scottish Sensory of this for dissemination to their network of visual impairment teachers and centres.
- ◆ Enhancing our adapted paper artwork guidance to include a list of subjects with optionality. This will avoid producing excessively large papers for candidates who require adapted artwork in only those options they will have prepared for (for example, in History).
- ◆ Making Open Dyslexic one of the standard font options available on the Assessment Arrangements system.
- ◆ Providing white copy versions of papers along with requested coloured papers, where coloured images are included, so that candidates can refer to the original for accurate colour reproduction. Updates to our Invigilator Handbook, guidance and operations will be made in accordance with this.

These measures were in place for the 2020 diet before its cancellation, and will be implemented once the annual diet of exams is re-established. In session 2020–21, where results are based on teacher and lecturer judgement and internal assessment, centres have been advised that they must ensure that candidates are provided with the assessment arrangements they would normally have in exams.

Engagement and support for assessment arrangements over the reporting period has included: two webinars (one on the policy and system, and another on the requirements for audit); presentations to the Cross-Party Group on Dyslexia and to Dyslexia Scotland; and engagement with centres and other stakeholders in relation to specific candidates or general issues.

We continue to work with CALL Scotland to understand developments in the range of available assistive technologies that can be used to support learners, and which may be incorporated into assessment arrangements. CALL's work on the compatibility of Chromebooks and iPads (increasingly used in centres) with SQA's digital question papers informs the technical guidance available for centres and requires ongoing monitoring, especially as the number of candidates requesting digital question papers grows:

Digital question papers	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*	2019*
Number of requests	3,694	4,291	3,540	3,652	4,802	5,888	5,715	6,014
Number of candidates	1,327	1,677	1,487	1,599	2,057	2,398	2431	2593

* Pre-2018 figures include requests from candidates that were subsequently withdrawn. New methods for collating data from 2018 onwards mean these are not included.

Assessment Arrangements Data

Assessment Arrangement requests data is normally analysed annually. Although there are limitations in the information produced because the system was not designed for the extraction of statistical data, it is nevertheless useful for identifying trends and drawing inferences. It allows us to monitor the number of requests being submitted, the most frequently requested assessment arrangements, the reasons for them (in terms of broad categories of difficulty), and the patterns of use of different types of arrangements.

The Assessment Arrangements system for session 2019–20 closed shortly after the decision was taken to cancel exams, so there was therefore no complete data to analyse. What is clear from the information available is that, until the system closed, the most common types of assessment arrangement requested were extra time and separate accommodation, and the most common types of difficulty recorded were additional support needs, dyslexia and mental health. This is in common with previous years.

As previously reported, there has been a rise in the number of assessment arrangements requests over the last few years:

Year	Number of candidates requesting Assessment Arrangements and as a % of total number of candidates		Number of Assessment Arrangement requests and as a % of all entries	
2014	14,214	10.7%	43,344	8.0%
2015	14,489	11.2%	43,997	8.4%
2016	15,345	12.1%	47,874	9.3%
2017	16,758	13.4%	52,747	10.3%
2018	18,273	14.9%	57,198	11.5%
2019	20,059	16.5%	62,506	12.6%
Note: Up to and including 2017, data includes all requests made in the AAR system. From 2018 onwards, it does not include requests or candidates subsequently withdrawn or classed as invalid.				

While it is difficult to identify the specific reason for the year-on-year increase in requests for assessment arrangements, it is seen by the majority of practitioners as being positive in that candidates who need Assessment Arrangements are being better identified, at least in some centres. Social and legislative changes have led to a significant growth in the number of disabled learners in mainstream education and training, and in the number of learners identified as having dyslexia/specific learning difficulties. As a result, SQA and its centres have seen a significant year-on-year growth in the use of Assessment Arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those identified as having additional support needs. Whilst this improvement in access to assessment for disabled learners can only be welcomed, it has to be noted that this increase in supported assessment for both internal and external assessment does make considerable demands on centres and on SQA.

Further exploration of the 2019 data revealed that, although the trend is for increasing number of requests nationally, practice between centres varies considerably. Some centres made requests for high proportions of candidates when compared with the average, and others for low proportions. Work to understand the reasons for this continues, alongside use of process improvement methodologies and a review of documentation and support activities to monitor practice across the system and ensure that it is consistent.

Quality assurance of centres' systems for the provision of Assessment Arrangements in assessments

SQA has a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is rigorous and fair for all candidates, and for this reason we must ensure that Assessment Arrangements are appropriate and only provided to those candidates who are eligible. We require that all centres have an effective internal quality assurance system for identifying and verifying candidates' eligibility for Assessment Arrangements in assessments, and the focus of our quality assurance is on assisting centres with this.

Audit visits were carried out from December 2019 to February 2020 in the usual manner, but as no unnecessary visits to centres are currently permitted, this has not been possible for session 2020–21. We developed a ‘Professional Dialogue’ alternative to audit visits. This included advice and guidance on the requirements for assessment arrangements and auditing, and a discussion of the system in place in the centre. It has been successfully implemented and well received, and helps to ensure that the devolved responsibility to make provisions for Assessment Arrangements continues to benefit those candidates who need them.

SQA Accreditation

SQA Accreditation has a statutory remit to accredit and quality assure qualifications in Scotland, thereby safeguarding the interests of learners, employers, parents, funding bodies, providers, and the Scottish Government. It does this by independently approving and regulating awarding bodies operating in Scotland and accrediting their qualifications, which include Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), Regulatory and Licensing Qualifications, and other competence-based qualifications.

SQA Accreditation has a statutory remit to accredit any type of qualification other than university degrees. It is accountable to an Accreditation Committee, which is a statutory committee established by the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 and reports directly to Ministers.

SQA Accreditation is committed to reviewing the work of awarding bodies and their approved providers in relation to the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to ensure that the policy and processes do not discriminate against any of the protected characteristics. All awarding bodies have an appropriate RPL policy in place. In our visits to samples of each awarding bodies approved providers, we found no evidence to suggest discrimination occurred.

SQA Accreditation also undertook to review the special considerations and adjustments to assessment policies of awarding bodies and to review the implementation of these at provider level to ensure that there was no discrimination. Through our auditing and provider monitoring activities, we found no evidence that the way special considerations and adjustments to assessment were applied involved any discrimination.

We did find that, in some cases, providers had incorrectly followed the processes. However, this did not have an impact on learners.

Appendix A: Equal Pay Statement

SQA is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated equally regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, marital/civil partner status, religion or belief, disability, pregnancy or maternity. We support the principles that all employees should receive equal pay for the same or like work or work of equal value and will operate a pay and reward system which is fair, transparent and free from bias.

Pay Policy

SQA's objective is to ensure that it implements fair, just and lawful practices with regards to pay.

To meet this objective SQA has made these commitments. To:

- ◆ Carry out an annual equal pay review to identify any differences in pay between men and women including occupational segregation. In 2016, SQA extended this review to cover race and disability
- ◆ Review the current pay system in conjunction with SQA's recognised trade unions to ensure it meets Equal Pay obligations and is consistent with our Corporate Objectives and Values. This includes the maintenance and application of Job Evaluation, in line with SQA's Job Evaluation Guidance underpinning SQA's grading structure
- ◆ Carry out Performance Management in line with SQA's published Performance Management Handbook providing a tool by which an individual's performance can be measured by their line manager against the achievement of operational objectives
- ◆ Provide advice and guidance to those involved in determining staff salaries in line with SQA's Pay Procedures
- ◆ Inform staff as to how the pay system operates and how their own pay is calculated in line with SQA's Pay Procedures
- ◆ Ensure that staff are aware that they can enquire about their pay and grading (including salary progression). Provide prompt response to enquiries and inform staff that, if not satisfied, they can use the procedure set out in SQA's Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedure.

Appendix B: Summary of equal pay audit (January 2021)

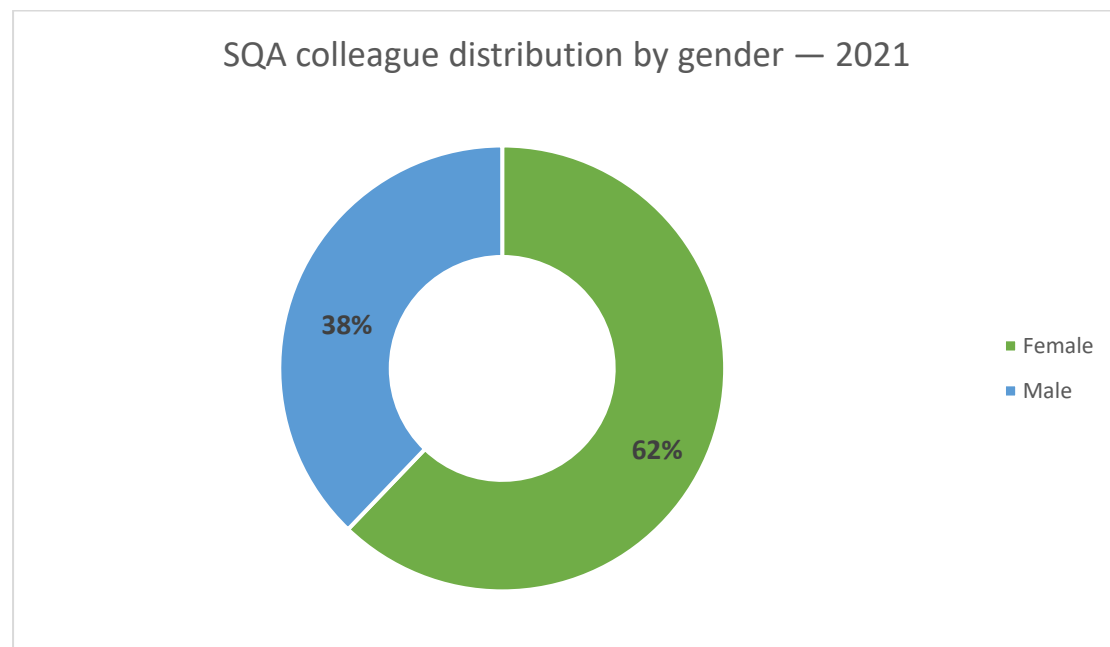
SQA is required to publish its gender pay gap information every two years as part of the Public Sector Equality Duties to identify any pay gaps between male and female colleagues. The Equality and Human Rights Commission recommends that differences of 5% or more, or any recurring differences of 3% or more, merit further investigation.

In line with previous reporting and based on current practice, SQA's equal pay audit is based on colleagues' hourly salary rather than their annual salary. This is a summary of the equal pay audit as at 31 January 2021. SQA also publishes its disability and ethnicity pay gap information as part of its equal pay audit to promote best practice and support our equal pay statement.

Gender pay gap

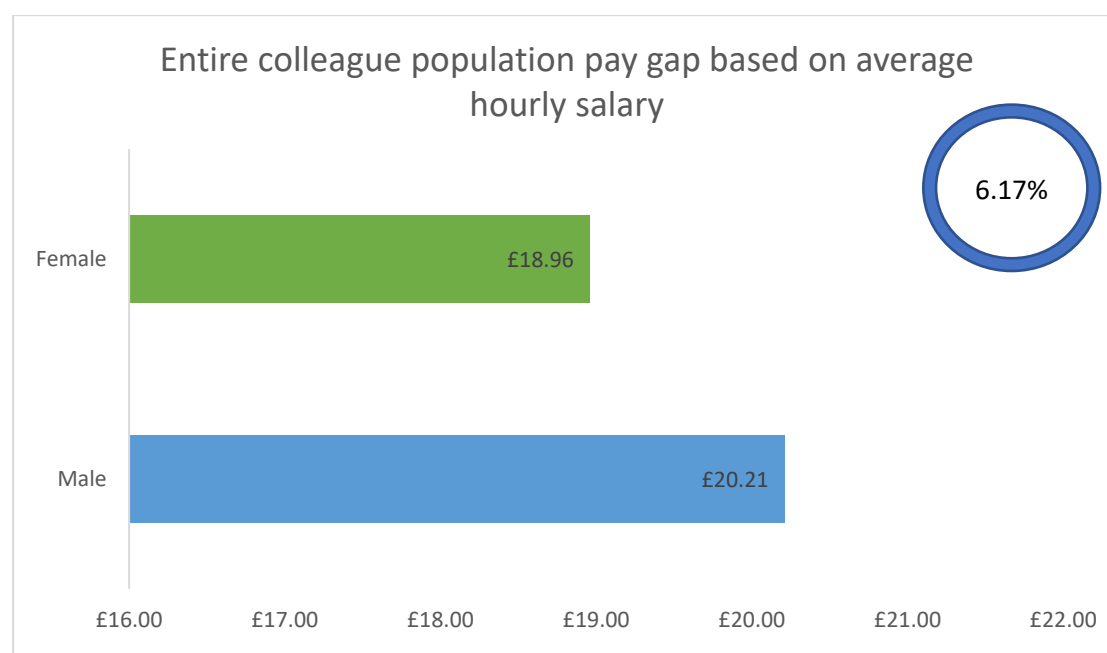
This report uses gender as recorded by HMRC for reporting purposes, except for where an individual has declared a gender identity of either 'In another way' or 'Prefer not to say.' SQA has carried out gender pay gap calculations based on a colleague population of 912 individuals. Of these colleagues, 568 are female (62.3%) and 344 are male (37.7%). The gender distribution for the organisation remains in line with last years' equal pay audit and the 2017–19 Equality Mainstreaming Report.

Figure 1: Distribution by gender



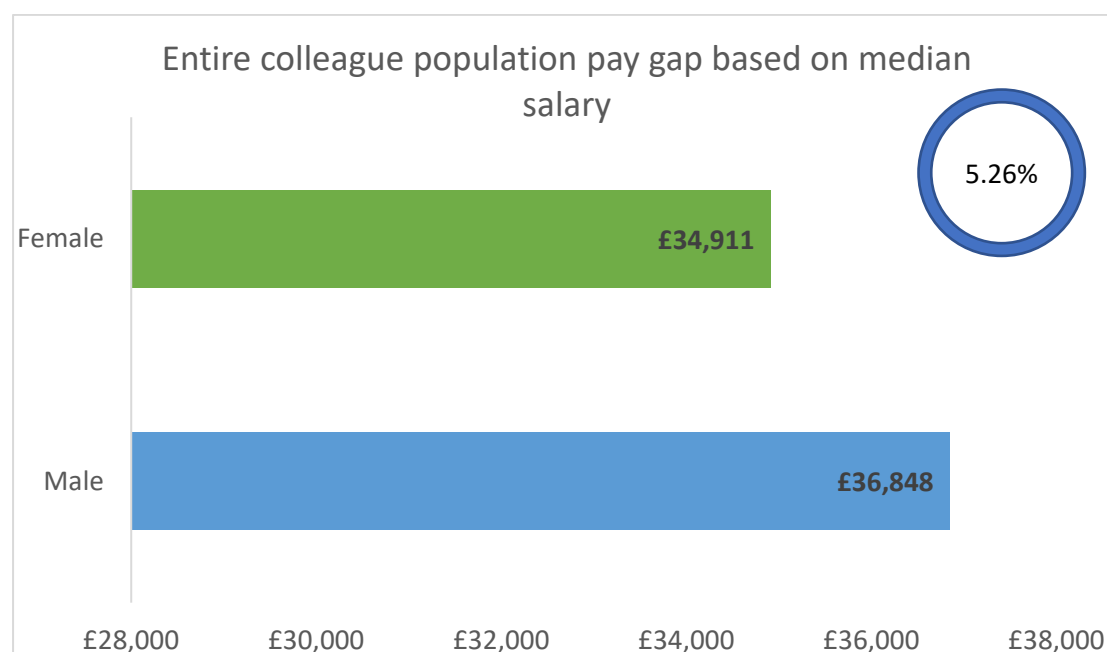
The pay gap calculations use the average hourly salary and median annual salaries of female colleagues expressed as a percentage of the average hourly salary and median annual salaries of male colleagues. The salary used for all calculations is the full-time equivalent hourly salary, plus any allowances such as market pay supplements.

Figure 2: Entire colleague pay gap (average hourly salary)



The average hourly female salary (including that of the Chief Executive) is 93.83% of the average hourly male salary. The overall gender pay gap has increased by 2.47% since the previous Equality Mainstreaming Report published in 2019. However, there has been a 0.80% decrease in the overall gender pay gap from the 2020 internally published equal pay audit. The average female hourly salary is £18.96, and the average male hourly salary is £20.21.

Figure 3: Entire colleague pay gap (median salary)



The median female salary (including that of the Chief Executive) is 94.74% of the median male salary. The median pay gap has decreased by 0.34% since the previous Equality Mainstreaming report and by 3.15% since the last equal pay audit. The median female salary is £34,911 and the median male salary is £36,848.

It is useful to compare these figures with those outside of SQA to provide context. The Office for National Statistics' Gender pay gap in the UK: 2020 statistical bulletin (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2020#:~:text=The%20gender%20pay%20gap%20among,10%25%20for%20older%20age%20groups>) notes that the average gender pay gap among all UK colleagues is 15.5%. In addition, a Close the Gap briefing for Scottish Government Debate published in March 2020 (<https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Close-the-Gap-briefing-for-Scottish-Government-Debate---International-Womens-Day-.pdf>) shows that the average gender pay gap for Scotland in 2019 for both part-time and full-time work patterns was 14.3%.

Some of the pay gap between male and female salaries can be explained by the fact that there are proportionately more female colleagues at the lower grades within SQA. However, as the gender pay gap has widened since the last Equality Mainstreaming Report was published, we have explored the reasons for the increase. Last year, we began including additional salary components to provide a more accurate reflection of colleagues' annual earnings based on the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and the UK Government Equalities Office guidance on [gender pay gap reporting](#), ie allowances including market supplement payments. Most market supplement payments are within the Business Systems (IT) area of SQA, which has a higher male population (68.2%). However, we still have a higher percentage of females, 31.8%, working in technology roles than the proportion of technology roles held by women in Scotland overall, which stands at 23% according to Scotland's Digital Technologies: Summary Report 2019 published by Skills Development Scotland.

Our colleague demographic has changed since the 2017–19 Equality Mainstreaming Report. This is due to the gender split of those leaving and joining the organisation. SQA's headcount decreased following a voluntary early release programme in 2019 and through normal attrition. Overall, more women (68.9%) than men (31.1%) left the organisation, and almost half (46.1%) of the women no longer in the 2020 data set were at the top of their respective pay scale. Additionally, 46.8% of the females who left the organisation were grade seven or higher.

To identify any pay gaps of 5% or more, or any recurring differences of 3% or more between colleagues performing work of equal value, a breakdown of grades has been analysed across the organisation (based on average hourly salary). The breakdown has been split into full-time and part-time colleagues by grade, as shown in the tables below. Data on our Executive Management Team (EMT) which includes the Chief Executive and Director level colleagues has not been disclosed in the gender pay gap grade split due to the size of this population and to ensure compliance with GDPR legislation protecting individuals' personal information.

Table 1: Gender pay gap for full-time colleagues by SQA grade

Percentage of male and female full-time colleagues, average hourly salary by SQA grade/gender and respective average gender pay gap										
Grade	Date	Number of Colleagues	%age Female	%age Male	Average Hourly Salary (£)	Average Hourly Salary Female (£)	Average Hourly Salary Male (£)	Female Hourly Salary as a %age of Male Salary	FT Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report
1	31-Jan-21	10	50.00%	50.00%	£10.06	£10.06	£10.06	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3	31-Jan-21	48	62.50%	37.50%	£10.90	£10.83	£11.02	98.3%	1.7%	0.5%
4	31-Jan-21	137	61.31%	38.69%	£12.27	£12.23	£12.32	99.3%	0.7%	1.0%
5	31-Jan-21	77	58.44%	41.56%	£14.49	£14.42	£14.57	99.0%	1.0%	-0.5%
6	31-Jan-21	163	65.64%	34.36%	£18.19	£18.26	£18.04	101.2%	-1.2%	0.2%
7	31-Jan-21	146	56.16%	43.84%	£22.33	£22.40	£22.24	100.7%	-0.7%	0.0%
8	31-Jan-21	173	53.18%	46.82%	£25.89	£25.69	£26.12	98.3%	1.7%	0.2%
HoS	31-Jan-21	29	41.38%	58.62%	£34.71	£34.66	£34.74	99.8%	0.2%	-0.6%
Total	31-Jan-21	783	58.37%	41.63%	£19.32	£18.86	£19.96	94.5%	5.5%	-0.9%

There are currently no pay gaps of 5% or more or any recurring differences of 3% or more among full-time colleagues by grade. However, there is an overall 5.5% pay gap for full-time colleagues, which is slightly below the overall gender pay gap.

The SQA workforce is predominantly female at all grades apart from head of service (HoS), where the split is predominantly male. However, the female salary at this grade is 99.8% of the male salary.

Table 2: Gender pay gap for part-time colleagues by SQA grade

Percentage of male and female part-time colleagues and average hourly salary by SQA grade/gender and respective average gender pay gap										
Grade	Date	Number of Colleagues	%age Female	%age Male	Average Hourly Salary (£)	Average Hourly Salary Female (£)	Average Hourly Salary Male (£)	Female Hourly Salary as a %age of Male Salary	PT Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report
1	31-Jan-21	7	85.71%	14.29%	£10.06	£10.06	£10.06	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3	31-Jan-21	8	87.50%	12.50%	£11.25	£11.25	£11.31	99.4%	0.6%	1.6%
4	31-Jan-21	25	92.00%	8.00%	£12.54	£12.53	£12.69	98.7%	1.3%	-0.7%
5	31-Jan-21	11	100.00%	0.00%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	31-Jan-21	25	96.00%	4.00%	£18.63	£18.65	£18.10	103.0%	-3.0%	-3.5%
7	31-Jan-21	17	82.35%	17.65%	£22.51	£22.50	£22.54	99.8%	0.2%	-0.5%
8	31-Jan-21	30	73.33%	26.67%	£25.60	£25.67	£25.43	100.9%	-0.9%	2.4%
HoS	31-Jan-21	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	31-Jan-21	123	86.99%	13.01%	£18.31	£17.90	£20.99	85.3%	14.7%	10.2%

For part-time colleagues by grade, the grade six female salary is 103.0% of the male salary. This is due to a change in the composition of the male to female ratio at this grade. There has been a 50% reduction (one male colleague) in the number of males working part-time at this grade since last years' internal Equal Pay Audit and an 8.7% increase or three additional females working part-time at this grade.

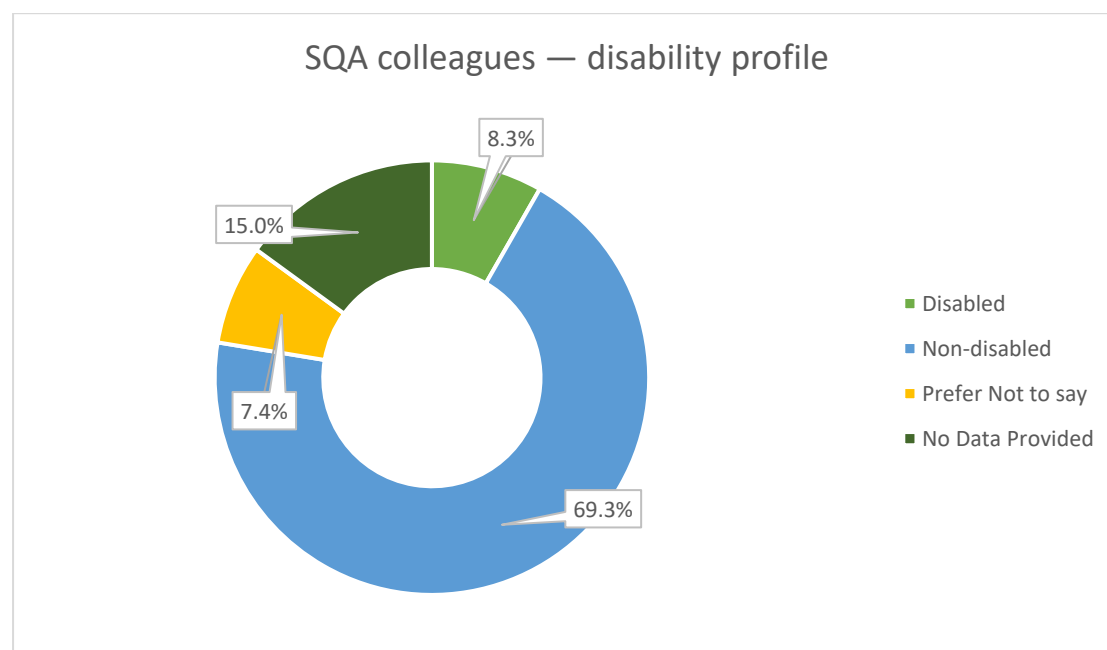
There has been an overall increase of 18.3% or 19 additional colleagues who have started working part-time since January 2019. While the number of female colleagues currently working part-time has increased by 16, the number of male colleagues working part-time has only increased by three. 87.0% of part-time colleagues are female. The highest numbers of part-time colleagues are at grades 8, 6 and 4. The overall part-time pay gap is 14.7%. On further investigation, this is due to a combination of factors, including the following:

- ◆ 51.4% of female part-time colleagues work in roles that are grade 6 or below.
- ◆ 68.75% of male colleagues working part-time are in grade 7 and 8 posts, versus only 33.64% of female part-time colleagues working at these grades.

Disability pay gap

As part of the equal pay audit, we have also looked at the salary of those colleagues in the organisation who have declared they have a disability. The chart below illustrates the ratio of disabled to non-disabled colleagues across SQA in all grades. However, our disability completion rate is not 100% (currently it stands at 76.82%); so any individuals with an undisclosed disability are excluded from our calculations.

Figure 4: Disability profile



The percentage of colleagues who have declared a disability has increased by 6.8% since the last Equality Mainstreaming Report and 5.6% since the 2020 Equal Pay Audit. This is as a result of colleagues' response to an equality data awareness and collection campaign during the second half of 2020. This increase in data has provided us with a more accurate reflection of the disability profile across SQA. However, as 7.4% of colleagues "prefer not to say" and 15% of colleagues did not provide disability data, it may not reflect the actual composition of disabled colleagues within SQA.

The overall pay gap between those colleagues who have declared a disability and those who have declared no disability is detailed in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Disability pay gap (average hourly salary)



The average hourly salary of those declaring a disability is 98.0% of the average non-disabled colleagues' hourly salary. The average hourly salary of those declaring a disability is £19.23, and the average hourly salary of non-disabled colleagues' is £19.63. The median salary of those declaring a disability is 100.0% of the median non-disabled colleague's salary. The median salary for both those declaring and those not declaring a disability is £34,911.

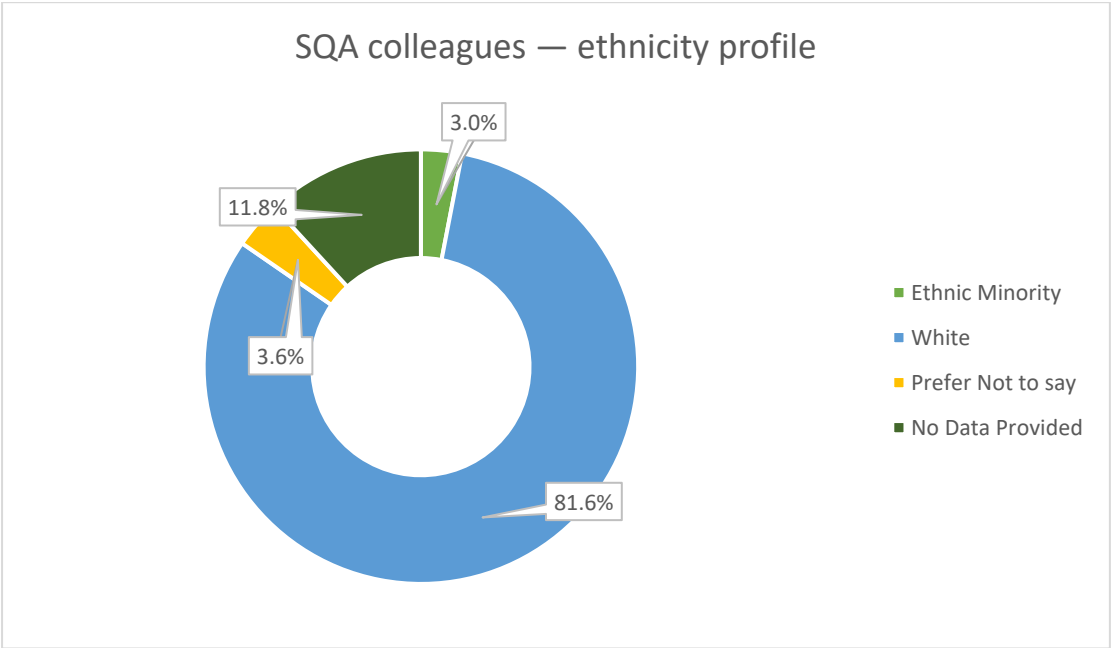
There has been an 8.1% decrease in the disability pay gap from last years' Equal Pay Audit. As previously mentioned, this can be explained by the increase in colleague data available for analysis due to the equality campaign run in the second half of 2020.

Our disability pay gap is 2.0%. This is positive considering that in 2018, average pay for disabled employees in Scotland was 8.3% lower than non-disabled employees based on data from the [Office for National Statistics](#).

Ethnicity pay gap

As part of the equal pay audit, we have also looked at the split between white and ethnic minority colleagues. Figure 6 shows the ratio of ethnic minority to those of white ethnicity across SQA in all grades. However, our ethnicity completion rate is not 100% (currently it stands at 83.56%); so, any individuals with undisclosed ethnicities are excluded from our calculations.

Figure 6: Ethnicity profile



The percentage of colleagues who have declared themselves as ethnic minority has increased by 2.5% since the previous Equality Mainstreaming Report and 2.18% since the 2020 Equal Pay Audit. In line with the disability data, this is due to colleagues’ response to an equality data awareness and collection campaign during the second half of 2020. This increase in data has provided us with a more accurate reflection of the ethnicity profile across SQA. However, as 3.48% of colleagues ‘prefer not to say’ and 12.96% of colleagues did not provide ethnicity data, it may not reflect the actual proportion of ethnic minority colleagues within SQA.

The detail of the overall pay gap for those colleagues who have declared their ethnicity is detailed in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Ethnicity pay gap (average hourly salary)



For colleagues who have declared as ethnic minority, the average individual's hourly salary is £18.14; and for colleagues who have declared their ethnicity as white, the average individual's hourly salary is £19.34. The average hourly salary of ethnic minority colleagues is therefore 93.8% of the average hourly salary of those of white ethnicity.

The ethnicity pay gap has decreased compared to the previous Equality Mainstreaming Report (↓6.99%) and last year's internal equal pay audit (↓18.03%) to 6.21%. The ethnicity pay gap is comparable to our gender pay gap of 6.17%. It is also useful to compare the ethnicity pay gap figures with those outside of SQA to provide context. The Office for National Statistics' Ethnicity pay gaps: 2019 statistical bulletin notes that the ethnicity pay gap in Scotland is 10.3%.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinhours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2019#pay-gaps-by-region>

The decrease in the ethnicity pay gap can be explained by the increase in colleague data for this category within our HRIS system, which has allowed us to produce more meaningful analysis of the data.

The median annual salary for ethnic minority colleagues is 100.0% of the median salary for colleagues of white ethnicity. The median annual salary for both ethnic minority and white ethnicity colleagues is £34,911. The median pay gap for ethnicity is a new reporting measure for this year.

The area of ethnicity pay gap information is a complex one. We would like to acknowledge that different ethnicities mean that there is more than one pay gap and the experience of one group can often be different to that of another. We are unable to publish ethnicity pay gaps by individual ethnicity due to the small sample size of these individual groups.

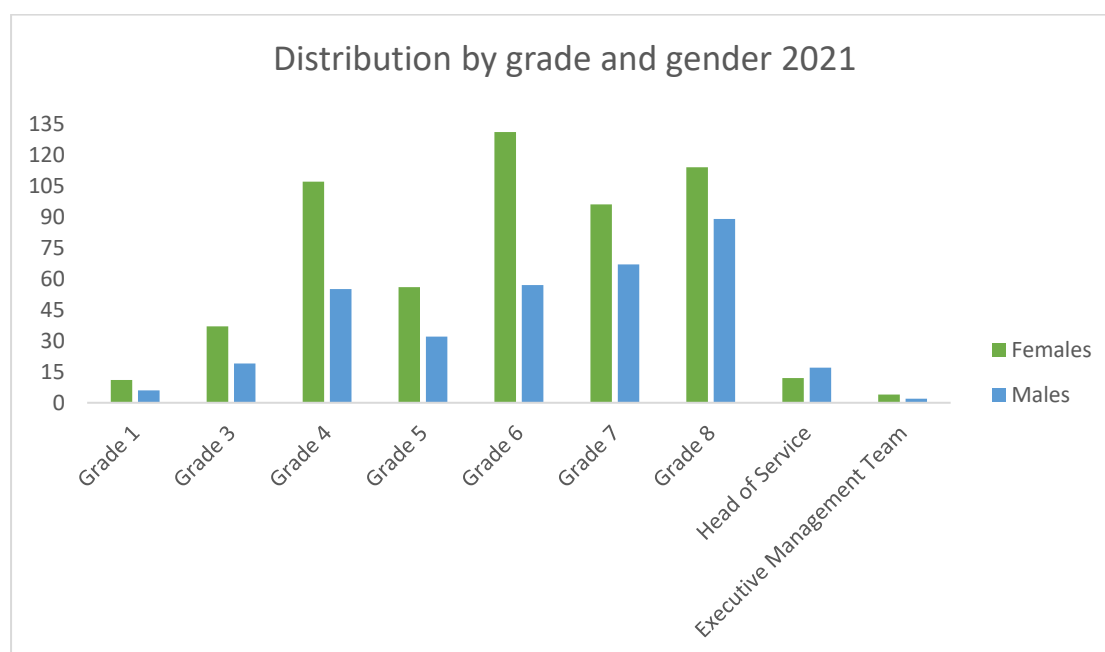
Occupational segregation

For the purposes of this report, occupational segregation is the distribution of people based on gender in different types of jobs and grades across the organisation.

‘Horizontal segregation’ refers to the numbers of men and women in different types of jobs across the same grade, for example in a public authority this might mean that there are more women working as cleaners and more men working as maintenance workers. ‘Vertical segregation’ refers to the clustering of men and women in different grades, ie where more men than women may be working as senior managers and more women than men may be working in administrative roles.

Many different factors underlie occupational segregation, including stereotyping about men and women’s capabilities and skills, the culture associated with different types of work, and access to training and development opportunities.

Figure 8: Distribution by grade and gender of SQA grades 1 – EMT



- ◆ As can be seen from [Appendix 1](#) 64.71% of SQA’s grade one colleagues are female (grade 1 includes modern apprentices).
- ◆ 66.1% of administration colleagues (grades 3 and 4) are female.

In addition:

- ◆ 67.7% of colleagues in grades 5 and 6 and 57.4% of colleagues in grades 7 and 8 are female.
- ◆ This trend reverses when we look at heads of service — 41.4% of colleagues at this level are female and 58.6% are male.
- ◆ At EMT level, however, 66.7% are female and 33.3% are male.

On examining the gender split by business area:

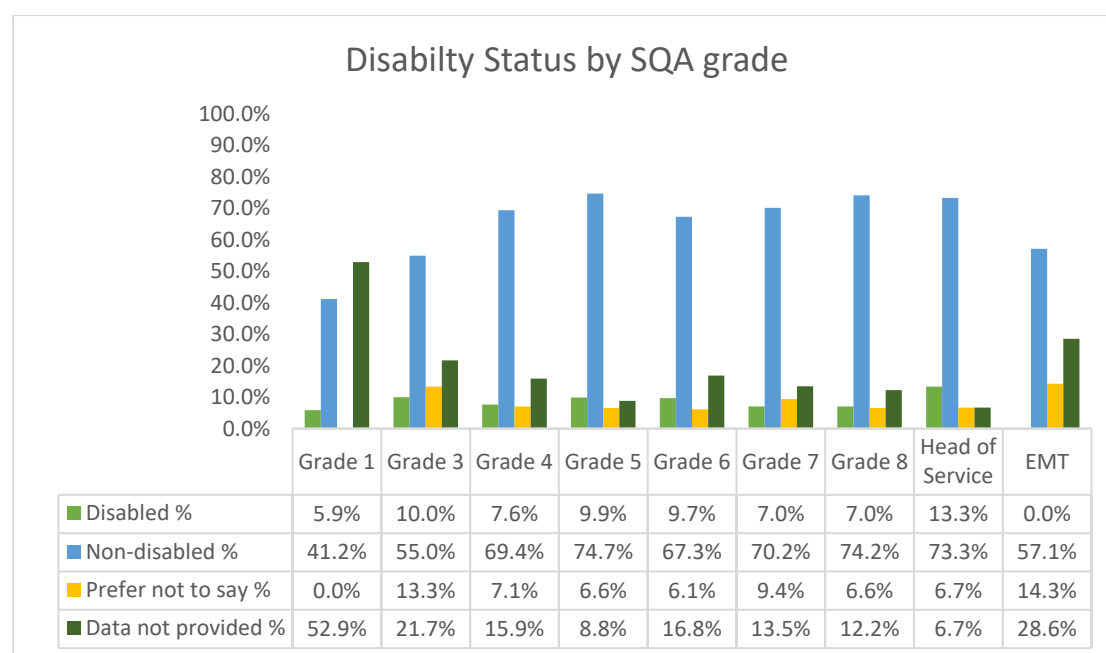
- ◆ There are more females than males in all business but seven out of the 38 business areas: Applications Solutions; Assessment Development and Delivery: Digital Assessment Services; Data Solutions; International; Planning, Governance and Compliance; Service Delivery; and Strategic Design.
- ◆ The highest percentage of males can be found in Application Solutions (73.3%), Service Delivery (72.9%) and Strategic Design (71.4%).
- ◆ The highest percentage of females can be found in Organisational Development and Change Management (85.7%); English, Languages and Business (80.0%); Strategic Planning and Governance (78.9%); Operations: Planning (77.8%); Humanities, Care and Services (76.9%); Assessment Development and Delivery: Assessment Materials (75.4%); Corporate Office (73.3%); Operations - Logistics and Customer Engagement (72.9%); Qualifications Portfolio Management (72.7%); Human Resources (71.4%); Operations - HN & Vocational Qualifications (71.1%) and Marketing & Communications (70.3%).

The grade split by gender and business area shows the following:

- ◆ There are more female than male administrator colleagues (grades 3 and 4) in all business areas except for Procurement (100% male); Research, Policy Standards and Statistics (100% male); and Technology, Engineering & Construction (66.7% male).
- ◆ There are also more females at grades 5 and 6 in most business areas apart from four out of 34 areas: International (100% male); Service Delivery (85.0% male); Quality Assurance — National Qualifications (80.0% male); Applications Solutions (77.8% male); and Assessment Development and Delivery: Digital Assessment Services (71.4% male).
- ◆ At grades 7 and 8 there are more females in all but 10 of 36 areas: Technology, Engineering and Construction (72.7% male); National Qualifications Delivery: Assessment and Data Services (71.4%); Planning, Governance and Compliance (71.4% male); Service Delivery (70.8% male); Applications Solutions (70.0% male); Strategic Design (66.7% male); International (60.0% male); Science, Mathematics and Core Skills (58.3% male); Corporate Office (57.1% male); and Data Solutions (55.6% male).
- ◆ As has already been indicated, there are more male heads of service than female — 100.0% are male in Accreditation (one out of one), 83.3% are male in Business Development, 75.0% are male in Business Systems, 66.7% are male in Finance & Corporate Services, 57.1% are male in Qualifications Development, whereas 100.0% are female in People and 60.0% are female in Operations.

The gender by grade split for all business areas is outlined in the [Occupational segregation tables](#).

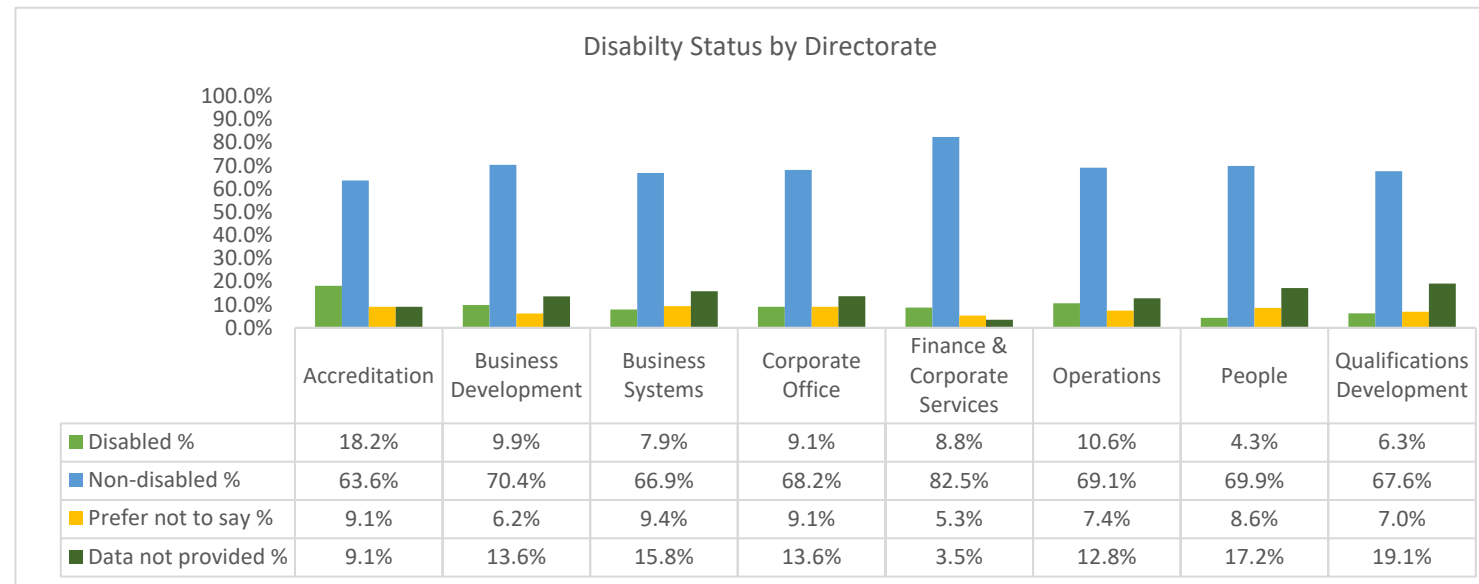
Figure 9: Disability by grade — all colleagues, grade one – EMT



The grade split by disability shows the following:

- ◆ 8.3% of the workforce have declared a disability; 69.4% are non-disabled; 7.4% 'prefer not to say'; and 14.9% have not yet provided data.
- ◆ Heads of Service have the highest overall concentration of colleagues declaring a disability at 13.3%, followed by grades three and five both with 10.0% and 9.9% colleagues respectively.
- ◆ The percentage of colleagues at grades one to three who have declared a disability is 9.1%.
- ◆ The percentage of colleagues at grades four to six who have declared a disability is 9.0%.
- ◆ The percentage of colleagues at grades seven and eight who have declared a disability is 7.5%.

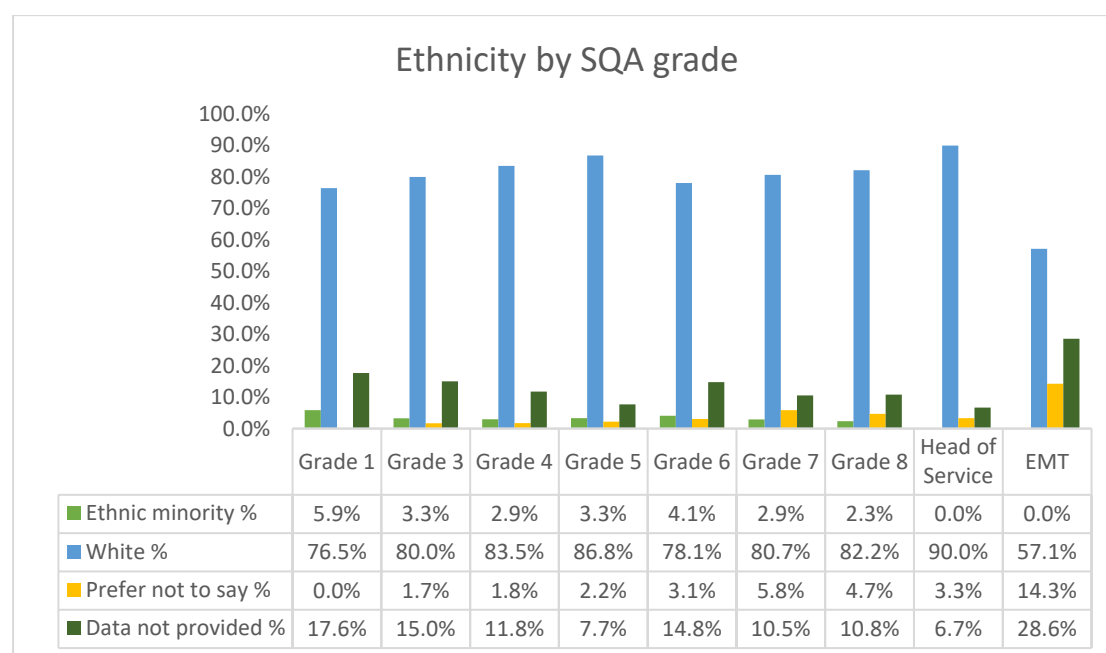
Figure 10: Disability by directorate: all colleagues, grade 1 – EMT



The directorate breakdown of disability shows the following:

- ◆ The largest concentration of colleagues declaring a disability are in Accreditation (18.2%) followed by Operations (10.6%), Business Development (9.9%) and Corporate office (9.1%).

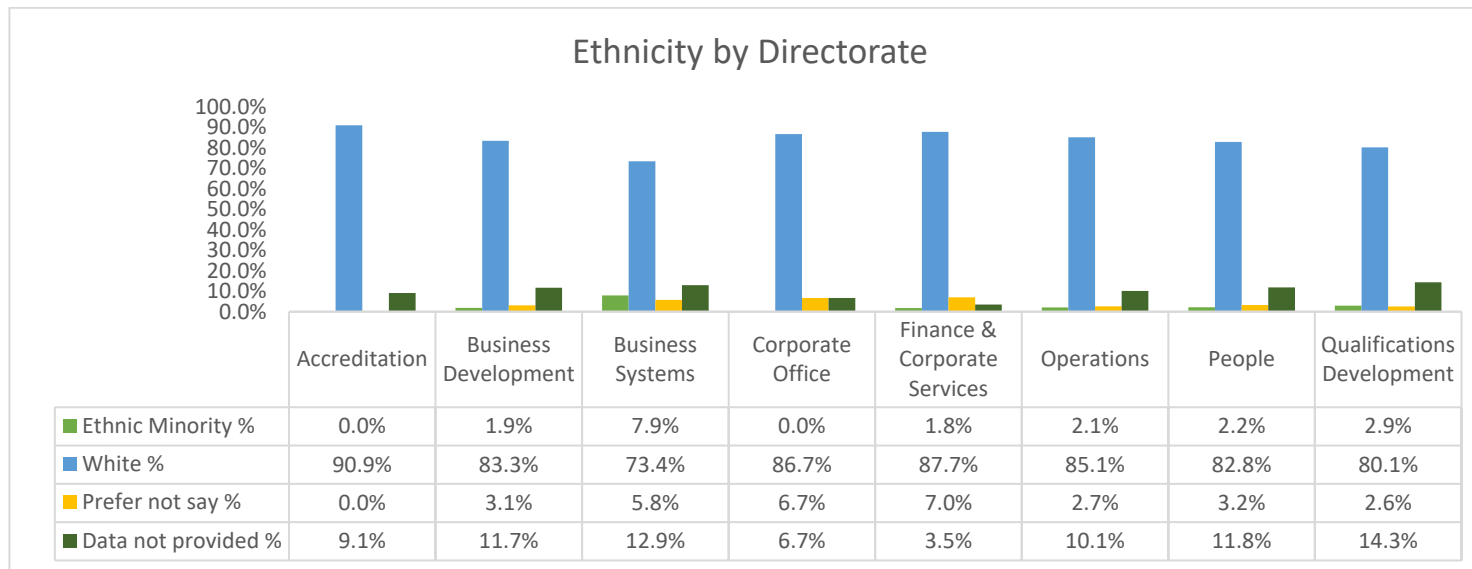
Figure 11: Ethnicity by grade — all colleagues, grade one – EMT



The grade split by ethnicity shows the following:

- ◆ 81.6% of the workforce are white; 3.0% are of ethnic minority; 3.6% 'prefer not to say'; and 11.8% have not yet provided data.
- ◆ 37.9% of ethnic minority colleagues are at grades 1 to 5, and 62.1% of ethnic minority colleagues are at grades 6 to 8.
- ◆ Grade 1 has the highest overall concentration of ethnic minority colleagues at 5.9%, followed by grade 6 at 4.1%.
- ◆ The percentage of colleagues at grades 1 to 3 who are of ethnic minority is 3.9%.
- ◆ The percentage of colleagues at grade 4 to 6 who are of ethnic minority is 3.5%.
- ◆ The percentage of colleagues at grades 7 and 8 who are of ethnic minority is 2.6%.
- ◆ There are no ethnic minority colleagues at Head of Service or EMT level.

Figure 12: Ethnicity by directorate — all colleagues, grade one – EMT



The directorate breakdown of ethnicity shows the following:

- ♦ The business areas with the largest concentration of ethnic minority colleagues are: Business Systems (7.9% ethnic minority); Qualifications Development (2.9% ethnic minority) and People (2.2% ethnic minority).

Next steps

The data in this report will enable us to better consider the impact of policy and practice on pay equality across the organisation. With the improvement in the quality of disability and ethnicity data within our Human Resources Information System, we can produce more accurate and meaningful analysis to help inform action plans to support these groups of colleagues. The improved data will form the baseline to better measure progress going forward. We recognise there is still more work to be done in this area and will continue to run ad hoc equality campaigns with the aim of increasing the quality of data for all protected characteristics.

This report also helps to inform SQA's revised 2021–25 Equality Outcomes, and detailed action plan which include commitments relating to race equality to drive progress in this area. Equality and diversity will continue to be an overarching goal on current and future HR operational plans linked to SQA's overall people strategy with governance arrangements in place to drive progress.

The next equal pay audit publication date is April 2022.

Pay gap information tables

SQA equal pay audit — breakdown of average salaries as at 31 January 2021

Gender: all colleagues (FTE)															
	Date	%age Female	%age Male	Average Hourly Salary (£)	Average Hourly Salary Female (£)	Average Hourly Salary Male (£)	Female Hourly Salary as a %age of Male Salary	Mean Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report	Median (£)	Median Salary Female (£)	Median Salary Male (£)	Median Female Salary as a %age of Male Salary	Median Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report
All colleagues incl CE	31-Jan-21	62.28%	37.72%	£19.43	£18.96	£20.21	93.83%	6.17%	-0.80%	£34,911.00	£34,911.00	£36,848.00	94.74%	5.26%	-3.15%
All colleagues excl CE	31-Jan-21	62.24%	37.76%	£19.37	£18.87	£20.21	93.37%	6.63%	-0.80%	£34,911.00	£34,911.00	£36,848.00	94.74%	5.26%	-3.15%

Gender: by quartile			
Quartile	Date	%age female	%age male
Lower Quartile	31-Jan-21	66.23%	33.77%
Lower Middle Quartile	31-Jan-21	65.35%	34.65%
Upper Middle Quartile	31-Jan-21	65.35%	34.65%
Upper Quartile	31-Jan-21	52.19%	47.81%
<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>31-Jan-21</u>	<u>62.28%</u>	<u>37.72%</u>

Gender: all colleagues by grade (FTE) up to head of service

Grade	Date	Number of colleagues	%age female	%age male	Average hourly salary (£)	Average hourly salary — female (£)	Average hourly salary — male (£)	Female hourly salary as a %age of male salary	Pay Band minimum	Pay Band maximum
1	31-Jan-21	17	64.71%	35.29%	£10.06	£10.06	£10.06	100.00%	£10.06	£10.06
3	31-Jan-21	56	66.07%	33.93%	£10.95	£10.91	£11.03	98.84%	£10.33	£11.51
4	31-Jan-21	162	66.05%	33.95%	£12.31	£12.30	£12.34	99.69%	£11.65	£13.02
5	31-Jan-21	88	63.64%	36.36%	£14.51	£14.47	£14.57	99.29%	£13.62	£16.31
6	31-Jan-21	188	69.68%	30.32%	£18.24	£18.33	£18.04	101.59%	£16.60	£22.50
7	31-Jan-21	163	58.90%	41.10%	£22.34	£22.41	£22.25	100.72%	£20.25	£24.90
8	31-Jan-21	203	56.16%	43.84%	£25.85	£25.68	£26.06	98.56%	£23.75	£28.96
HoS	31-Jan-21	29	41.38%	58.62%	£34.71	£34.66	£34.74	99.78%	£31.61	£37.22

Disability: all colleagues (FTE)

	Date	%age Disabled Individual	%age Non-Disabled Individual	% Prefer Not to Say	% Not Disclosed	Average Disabled Individual's Hourly Salary (£)	Average Non-Disabled Individual's Hourly Salary (£)	Disabled Individual's Salary as a %age of Non-Disabled Individual's Hourly Salary	Disability Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report	Median Disabled Individual's Salary (£)	Median Non-Disabled Individual's Salary (£)	Median Disabled Individual's salary as a %age of Non-Disabled salary	Median Disability Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report
All colleagues incl CE	31-Jan-21	8.27%	69.32%	7.43%	14.97%	£19.23	£19.63	98.0%	2.0%	-8.1%	£34,911.00	£34,911.00	100.0%	0.0%	-8.3%
All colleagues excl CE	31-Jan-21	8.28%	69.39%	7.44%	14.88%	£19.23	£19.63	98.0%	2.0%	-8.1%	£34,911.00	£34,911.00	100.0%	0.0%	-8.3%

Ethnicity: all colleagues (FTE)

	Date	%age Black or Ethnic Minority	%age White Ethnicity	% Prefer Not to Say	% Not disclosed	Average Hourly Salary Black or Ethnic Minority (£)	Average Hourly Salary White Ethnicity (£)	Black or Ethnic Minority as a %age of White Ethnicity Hourly Salary	Ethnicity Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report	Median Salary Black or Ethnic Minority (£)	Median Salary White Ethnicity (£)	Median Black or Ethnic Minority as a %age of White Ethnicity salary	Median Ethnicity Pay Gap	Change from Previous Report
All colleagues incl CE	31-Jan-21	3.04%	81.57%	3.56%	11.83%	£18.14	£19.34	93.8%	6.21%	-18.03%	£34,911.00	£34,911.00	100.0%	0.00%	-27.74%
All colleagues excl CE	31-Jan-21	3.04%	81.66%	3.56%	11.74%	£18.14	£19.34	93.8%	6.21%	-18.03%	£34,911.00	£34,911.00	100.0%	0.00%	-27.74%

Occupational segregation tables

Gender split by business area: Grades 3 and 4		
Business Area	Percentage of Female Colleagues	Percentage of Male Colleagues
Accreditation	100.00%	0.00%
Appointee Management	61.90%	38.10%
Assessment Development & Delivery: Assessment Materials	61.29%	38.71%
Business Development & Customer Support	58.33%	41.67%
Contract Operations	75.00%	25.00%
Corporate Office	100.00%	0.00%
English, Languages & Business	75.00%	25.00%
Finance Systems	60.00%	40.00%
Human Resources	100.00%	0.00%
Humanities, Care & Services	100.00%	0.00%
Marketing & Communications	100.00%	0.00%
NQ Delivery: Assessment & Data Services	61.76%	38.24%
Operations - HN & Vocational Qualifications	61.54%	38.46%
Operations - Logistics & Customer Engagement	81.82%	18.18%
Operations – Planning	100.00%	0.00%
Planning, Governance & Compliance	60.00%	40.00%
Procurement	0.00%	100.00%
QA – NQ	55.56%	44.44%
Qualifications Portfolio Management	66.67%	33.33%
Research, Policy Standards & Statistics	0.00%	100.00%
Service Delivery	66.67%	33.33%
Strategic Planning & Governance	100.00%	0.00%
Technology, Engineering & Construction	33.33%	66.67%
Test Operation Services	50.00%	50.00%
Grand Total	66.06%	33.94%

Gender split by business area: Grades 5 and 6		
Business Area	Percentage of Female Colleagues	Percentage of Male Colleagues
Accreditation	75.00%	25.00%
Application Solutions	22.22%	77.78%
Appointee Management	60.00%	40.00%
Assessment Development & Delivery: Assessment Materials	92.86%	7.14%
Assessment Development & Delivery: Digital Assessment Services	28.57%	71.43%
Business Development & Customer Support	90.00%	10.00%
Business Development Support Team	50.00%	50.00%
Contract Operations	57.14%	42.86%
Corporate Office	100.00%	0.00%
Creative, Hospitality & Sport	66.67%	33.33%
Data Solutions	50.00%	50.00%
English, Languages & Business	86.67%	13.33%
Finance	100.00%	0.00%
Finance Systems	66.67%	33.33%
Human Resources	66.67%	33.33%
Humanities, Care & Services	83.33%	16.67%
International	0.00%	100.00%
Marketing & Communications	70.00%	30.00%
NQ Delivery: Assessment & Data Services	75.00%	25.00%
OD & Change Management	100.00%	0.00%
Operations - HN & Vocational Qualifications	80.00%	20.00%
Operations - Logistics & Customer Engagement	90.91%	9.09%
Operations – Planning	75.00%	25.00%
Operations - Process Improvement	50.00%	50.00%
Opportunity Appraisal & Bid Management	50.00%	50.00%
Planning, Governance & Compliance	55.56%	44.44%
Procurement	100.00%	0.00%
QA – NQ	20.00%	80.00%
Qualifications Portfolio Management	100.00%	0.00%
Research, Policy Standards & Statistics	50.00%	50.00%
Science, Mathematics & Core Skills	83.33%	16.67%
Service Delivery	15.00%	85.00%
Strategic Planning & Governance	66.67%	33.33%
Technology, Engineering & Construction	75.00%	25.00%
Test Operation Services	100.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	67.75%	32.25%

Gender split by business area: Grades 7 and 8		
Business Area	Percentage of Female Colleagues	Percentage of Male Colleagues
Accreditation	61.54%	38.46%
Application Solutions	30.00%	70.00%
Appointee Management	50.00%	50.00%
Assessment Development & Delivery: Assessment Materials	87.50%	12.50%
Assessment Development & Delivery: Digital Assessment Services	83.33%	16.67%
Business Development & Customer Support	58.82%	41.18%
Contract Operations	50.00%	50.00%
Corporate Office	42.86%	57.14%
Creative, Hospitality & Sport	64.29%	35.71%
Data Solutions	44.44%	55.56%
English, Languages & Business	80.00%	20.00%
Finance	55.56%	44.44%
Finance Systems	75.00%	25.00%
Human Resources	50.00%	50.00%
Humanities, Care & Services	66.67%	33.33%
International	40.00%	60.00%
Marketing & Communications	69.23%	30.77%
NQ Delivery: Assessment & Data Services	28.57%	71.43%
OD & Change Management	81.82%	18.18%
Operations - HN & Vocational Qualifications	69.23%	30.77%
Operations - Logistics & Customer Engagement	53.85%	46.15%
Operations - Planning	75.00%	25.00%
Operations - Process Improvement	100.00%	0.00%
Opportunity Appraisal & Bid Management	66.67%	33.33%
Planning, Governance & Compliance	28.57%	71.43%
Procurement	75.00%	25.00%
QA - NQ	75.00%	25.00%
Qualifications Portfolio Management	54.55%	45.45%
Research, Policy Standards & Statistics	77.78%	22.22%
Science, Mathematics & Core Skills	41.67%	58.33%
Service Delivery	29.17%	70.83%
SQA - Change Programme	100.00%	0.00%
Strategic Design	33.33%	66.67%
Strategic Planning & Governance	83.33%	16.67%
Technology, Engineering & Construction	27.27%	72.73%
Test Operation Services	63.64%	36.36%
Grand Total	57.38%	42.62%

Gender splits by directorate: Head of Service		
Business Area	Percentage of Female Colleagues	Percentage of Male Colleagues
Accreditation	0.00%	100.00%
Business Development	16.67%	83.33%
Business Systems	25.00%	75.00%
Finance & Corporate Services	33.33%	66.67%
Operations	60.00%	40.00%
People	100.00%	0.00%
Qualifications Development	42.86%	57.14%
<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>41.38%</u>	<u>58.62%</u>