

## National Qualifications 2024 Strategic Group

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**Date:** Friday 24 January 2024

**Time:** 09:30 – 10:30

MS Teams

**Members:** Jean Blair; Anne Campbell; Cheryl Burnett; Olaf Stando; John Booth; Gerald Prescott, Jamie Dunlop; Gill Stewart; Tim Chan; Edward Carroll; Seamus Searson; Emma Sinclair; Stewart Nicolson; Martyn Ware; Olivia Brown; Lorraine Davidson; James Cowans; Ollie Bray; Graham Hutton; Catriona Beverly

**Attending:** [redacted name]; Donna Stewart; [redacted name]; [redacted name]; Richard Pidgeon; [redacted name], Margot McKerrell; [redacted name];

**Apologies:** Fiona Robertson; Gillian Hamilton; Clare Hicks; Justin Walker;

### Notes

Item	Topic
4.1	<b>Welcome</b> The Chair welcomed members to the fourth meeting of the NQ24 Strategic Group.
4.2	<b>Review of previous minutes</b> Members approved the finalised minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2023. Members also approved the minutes of the meeting on 24 November 2023. Donna Stewart noted that actions taken from the meeting on 24 November 2023 had been progressed to completion. Jean Blair noted thanks to the National Qualifications 2024 Working Group (NQWG2024) for their offer of support in shaping the policy on Access to Scripts.
4.3	<b>Contingency Model and Appeals</b> Margot McKerrell provided an update on the finalised model for examination Contingency and Appeals, highlighting that the model would only be invoked where the national examination diet could not proceed. It was highlighted that the NQWG2024 responded positively to the detail of the model but highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Contingency and Appeals model included a collective and collaborative response from across the education community. A key aspect of this collective response was a clear understanding of individual and collective responsibilities within the model and the importance of collaborative working across the educational community as a whole. Communication and engagement will be key to achieving this.  NQWG2024 recommended that the Contingency and Appeals model should form part of business continuity planning, rather than being viewed as a contingency position to encourage consistency of support, with an annual review cycle put in place to ensure it remained robust. It is also recommended that a short life working group be set up to consider system wide issues. Nominations have already been received from across the NQWG2024 to support this.  A number of assumptions underpin the Contingency and Appeals model, that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teaching and learning could continue to take place.</li><li>• Approaches to assessment undertaken within the model were equitable and fair.</li></ul>

	<p>It was intimated that SQA had continued its work to support the model.</p> <p>Members agreed that having a contingency model was a system wide responsibility and educational communities must work together to ensure clarity of responsibility. Gill Stewart noted that this system wide responsibility should include local plans for continuity of learning and teaching, without which there would be no learner evidence. James Cowans intimated that business continuity planning should include support for local issues. Jean Blair confirmed that SQA has procedural processes in place to deal with localised issues but that the Contingency and Appeals model has been put in place specifically to mitigate against a national issue.</p> <p>Members intimated that for a community wide response to be effective timing was important, as the scale of the issue and timing may impact evidence collection.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jean Blair agreed with NQ24WG recommendation to set up a business/continuity short life working group. Stuart Nicolson to arrange membership from ADES on the short life working group.</li> </ul>
4.4	<p><b>Assessment Arrangements</b></p> <p>[redacted name] provided an overview of changing patterns in assessment arrangements over the past three years. There has been an increase in assessment arrangements predominantly for learners with unseen disabilities. It was intimated that this figure was likely to increase over time. Current evaluative work is underway to explore how SQA might continue to support teachers to reduce ongoing workload issues in this space. The evaluation began in August 2023 and is due to conclude at the end of February 2024. Findings to date indicate, despite significant good practice in the system there is still scope for improvement and a need for further communications clarifying how to access/use the service.</p> <p>The outcome of the evaluative activity will be shared with NQ2024 in March 2024.</p> <p>Action: Evaluation of assessment arrangements to be shared with NQ2024 in March 2024.</p>
4.4	<p><b>Awarding 2024</b></p> <p>Martyn Ware introduced the proposed model for Awarding in 2024 for early discussion. Members discussed the importance of ensuring that the language used to describe the finalised approach for Awarding in 2024 was clear and that communication around the approach was timeous. Members agreed that any approach taken should reflect the impact of the removal of modifications, particularly around the re-introduction of coursework. Gill Stewart intimated that this was standard practice when courses changed in any year. John Booth intimated that rapid engagement would take place with user groups to ensure that any language used in communication was clear. No objections were raised by members with respect to the proposed approach to awarding.</p> <p>Action: Further discussion around Awarding 2024 will take place at future NQ2024 meetings, including communication arrangements.</p>
4.5	<p><b>Communications and engagement</b></p> <p>John Booth provided an update on recent and upcoming communications activity.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on dual presentation has now been issued jointly by Scottish Government, SQA and Education Scotland.</li> <li>• Information and Q&amp;A session for parents carried out week beginning 22 January 2024 in partnership with Connect and NPFS which was very well received.</li> <li>• There will be a high-level announcement on Awarding in mid-Feb following engagement on comms/language (as discussed in item 4.4)</li> <li>• Your Exams will be issued to learners in March 2024.</li> <li>• SQA are currently in discussion with SLS regarding an information/Q&amp;A session for members.</li> </ul>
4.6	<p><b>Next Steps/AOB</b></p> <p>No other business was raised.</p>
	Date of the next meeting – Friday 1 March 2024