

Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

Action Plan

This section is completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment. Due to the importance of embedding equality in SQA through our actions the Action Plan will be the focus and record of ongoing actions.

Agreed Schedule Review Date	2027	Additional Schedule Review Date	
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Explain how you will monitor and record the actual impact on equality groups, including how the evidence can be revisited to measure the actual impact.

Required Actions	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
Actions taken to monitor the implementation of policy and the impact on equality groups (evidence and consultation)			[ONGOING RECORD]
[LIST]			

Identified Actions	General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
[LIST]	[CROSS REFERENCE]			
Accessible version		Communications Directorate	November 2024 - Completed	Feedback received from different stakeholders has highlighted the importance of ensuring the content of the plan is accessible and uses inclusive language.
Translation to Gaelic		Communications Directorate	November 2024 - Completed	It is important to consider the translation of the plan into Gaelic, to align with one of the high-level aims of SQA's Gaelic Language Plan to make corporate documents available in Gaelic and English.
Reporting requirements for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Deliverable		People Directorate Policy, Analysis, and Standards Directorate	October 2025	Performance reporting for SQA's EDI deliverable still needs to be confirmed. This will be developed over the course of the reporting period.

Policy Aims

Name of Policy or practice	A Prospectus for Change: Corporate Plan 2024-2027
New Policy or Revision	New
Name of Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	April 2024

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?

The planned establishment of a new qualifications body in late 2025 provides transformational opportunities: the opportunity to change the way Scotland's qualifications body works, particularly by grasping the potential of technology; the opportunity to reset and build stronger relationships with teachers, lecturers, pupils and students; and the opportunity to deliver assessments that keep pace with rapid changes in our society and the economy.

A Prospectus for Change: Corporate Plan 24-27 covers the work that SQA will do until the new body comes into existence. There is a great deal to continue delivering during that period to ensure that learners in Scotland, the rest of the UK and overseas continue to:

- have access to high-quality assessments which enable them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- receive credible qualifications that recognise their achievements and allow them to take the next steps in their learning, training or employment.

However, while continuing to deliver now, SQA also needs to build for the future. By highlighting how we aim to do our work, SQA can prepare the ground for the new qualifications body; helping the body to succeed from day one and to be ready to deliver in a way that will feel significantly different for learners, educators and the wider education community.

The functions and responsibilities of the new body will be broadly the same as those of SQA. It is therefore *how* these functions and responsibilities are carried out that is where the biggest opportunities for change exist.

SQA is ambitious for the future. It will deliver against that ambition by being passionately customer-focussed, by being data-driven and evidence-led, and by being more comfortable with change and with risk so that it continually improves and innovates. It will be more open to feedback and will work hard to shift perceptions. The culture and values of the organisation – brought to life through its people – will reflect this ambition.

What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?

- Directive from Scottish Government
- Statutory obligation to publish a corporate plan which is approved by Ministers (cabinet secretary)
- Sets the strategic direction and intent for the organisation
- Provides clarity of purpose to the people we work with and for
- Provides staff members clear direction when setting their own annual objectives

What are the aims of this policy or practice?

Establish SQA's strategic outcomes for the next 3 years and reaffirm our commitment to developing and delivering qualifications and assessment. The plan includes commitments to:

- Alignment to National Performance Framework
- Five Corporate Outcomes
- Purpose, Mission, Vision and Values
- Sustainability and Learning for Sustainability
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/Human Rights national framework
- Our place in the education community
- Education Reform

SQA has considered the alignment to the National Performance Framework throughout all work associated with developing this plan. In doing so we have recognised that aligning to a fifth national outcome of Human Rights was a crucial step in helping to drive the organisation's aspiration and commitment over the three-year planning period.

Through development of SQA's *Prospectus for Change: Corporate Plan 2024-27*, the below SQA deliverables have been identified as key to support of the organisation's strategic direction. These deliverables comprise of pre-existing deliverables that have been reviewed, to ensure they are still fit for purpose, and new deliverables to provide focus on key areas.

- Qualifications, assessments and quality assurance delivered to plan.
- Maintain, develop, and improve our portfolio of qualifications.
- Ensure that SQA is a place where difference is embraced and learning and development is relevant for people to be most effective in their jobs.
- Develop our organisation design and culture to meet our ambition; improve our performance; improve our health, wellbeing, and environment; be a responsible business.
- Secure and deliver contracts in line with service level agreements.
- Ensure SQA is an exemplar public body that is fully compliant with all legislative, statutory, and regulatory requirements (including qualifications regulators)

- Build credibility and trust among those we work with and those we work for, particularly learners and educators, through high-quality, inclusive and accessible communication and engagement.
- Promote a culture of openness and evidence-based decision making within SQA and across the education community.
- Support the development and delivery of the New Qualifications Body.
- Transform our business model to deliver digital services that support learners and educators in the future.
- Deliver SQA's Equality Outcomes and mainstream equality throughout SQA.
- Embed SQA's cyber resilience and response capabilities.
- Deliver Best Value in line with the Scottish Public Finance Manual

New SQA Deliverables:

Included within the above, these two deliverables can be classified as new within SQA's Performance Framework.

- Transform our business model to deliver digital services that support learners and educators in the future.
- Deliver SQA's Equality Outcomes and mainstream equality throughout SQA.

How is the content of these aims relevant to equality groups?

- Affects the goals of SQA and Qualifications Scotland (QS) over the next three years
- Affects all SQA staff, in setting out goals to deliver against
- Affects Learners, in setting out way we will deliver services
- Affects Educators, in setting out the way we will deliver services
- The corporate plan explicitly calls out SQA's commitment to the Scottish Government National Performance Framework and highlights Human Rights and Fair Work and Business national outcomes (as well as others). With this tone setting, and the stakeholder groups identified above, the clear intention is that this Corporate Plan will aim to have positive impacts against equality groups among our key stakeholders

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?

Plan consists of professionals across SQA including:

Corporate Planning Team
Corporate Equality Team
Reform Team
Organisational Development Team
Qualification policy Team
Communications colleagues
Internal Engagement SIPs with staff (circa 150 attendees)

Early in the development process, the plan was shaped at a Horizon Scanning session with the Board of Management, which identified key themes to be included in the plan, including:

Accessibility
Sustainability – SQA’s commitment to this has been embedded into the new plan
Engagement and collaboration
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Staff wellbeing
Product demand
Education Reform
Artificial Intelligence
Digital technologies
Learners

The resulting plan has had sight at governance groups, including:

Senior Leadership Team
Executive Management Team
Board of Management

External Engagement Exercises:

SQA Staff

Universities Scotland

Colleges Scotland

Scottish Training Federation (STF)

Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA)

CoSLA

Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS)

Connect

Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)

NASUWT

School Leaders Scotland (SLS)

Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)

Association of Directors of Education (ADES)

Learner Advisory Group

In early 2024, SQA engaged with a number of external stakeholder groups on the draft A Prospectus for Change: Corporate Plan 2024-2027:

Colleges Scotland:

Colleges Scotland fed back that in the colleges sector, the learners supported tend to be older. This means that supporting learners looks different – responding to employer's interests, to support learners into employment.

Scottish Training Federation:

The Scottish Training Federation highlighted a concern that apprenticeships for older learners may not be as robust as apprenticeships for younger learners. They highlighted that these older learners are still undertaking apprenticeships for a broad range of reasons, and still need as much support as younger learners.

They also raised the importance of parity of esteem – both between academic and vocational learning, but also between work-based learning and vocational learning.

SYP:

SYP highlighted that much of the language used in the Corporate Plan is not learner-focussed and relies on an amount of technical corporate language. They highlighted that a Plain English approach to the document would help to better engage with all audiences.

They also flagged a lack of explicit mention of the upcoming United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) duties, and a rights-based approach. These will naturally fit in with the EDI deliverable.

National Parents Forum Scotland:

National Parents Forum Scotland raised several points relating to the ways in which SQA communicates, both in terms of tone and content. They raised that SQA should focus on young people and provide visibility and transparency. They also highlighted SQA's relationships with centres, noting that centres themselves have the strongest relationships to young learners. They noted that this particular comes into play for young learners with additional support needs, which NPFS cites at 1 in 3 young learners.

Connect:

Connect highlighted the themes of digital transformation, and the role of parents, carers and families in education. Digital transformation aligns well with the need for digital accessibility.

Internal Engagement Staff Information Programme's (SIPs):

Staff members were given the opportunity to attend two SIPs to give their thoughts and feedback on AProspectus for Change: Corporate Plan 2024-27. During these SIPs feedback provided included:

The health and wellbeing of staff is important, but it was felt the message could be stronger and the corporate plan was amended to reflect this and demonstrate the positive work we do in this area.

There was feedback given around some of the language being used, which resonated with that obtained during the external engagement as well. Words such as 'differently' could suggest it was not being done correctly before, and so the deliverables have been updated to be more inclusive.

Feedback received from all groups involved has been collated and thematically summarised to ensure key points have been highlighted where required. SQA's Research & Evaluation Team have also reviewed the approach in analysing the feedback to ensure it was sound.

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?

Age

Learner data:

National Qualifications (NQ):

Source: 2023 Equalities Monitoring Report: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/equalities-monitoring-report-2023.pdf

"Date of birth was used to calculate a candidate's age in years on 31 May (typically the completion date for NQs) in the given year. The age categories were set as: 'below 15', '15–18' and 'above 18' years, with approximately 99% of candidates falling in the age bracket of 15–18."

The table below, from the same report, shows that this age of learners is

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

Below 15	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
15 to 18	98.8%	98.9%	99.1%	99.3%	99.3%
Over 18	1.0%	0.9%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%

The table below shows the age of learners for Higher entries:

The vast majority of entries for Higher are from candidates in the 15 to 18 age bracket.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Below 15	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
15 to 18	97.7%	98.1%	98.5%	98.8%	99.0%
Over 18	2.3%	1.8%	1.5%	1.2%	1.0%

The table below shows the age of learners for Advanced Higher entries:

Nearly all Advanced Higher entries are from candidates in the 15 to 18 age bracket.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Below 15	0.0%	NA	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
15 to 18	99.6%	99.6%	99.6%	99.6%	99.5%
Over 18	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%

We can expect the vast majority of learners undertaking NQ to be in the 15-18 age bracket going forward. Specific impacts for this group of learners can be determined at the level of individual policy or practice.

All other qualification entries (2023):

Source: SQA data

Types of qualifications included are:

- Advanced Certificates & Diplomas
- Awards
- Customised
- Higher National
- National Certificates
- National Progression Awards
- National - Workplace
- Professional Development Awards
- Vocationally Related Awards
- Specialist Groupings
- SVQs

Scotland

	Under 16	16-17	18-20	21-24	25-34	35-45	50-64	65+	Totals
All other qualifications	24.98%	33.01%	13.38%	5.87%	8.80%	9.09%	4.56%	0.32%	213,813

Rest of UK & International

	Under 16	16-17	18-20	21-24	25-34	35-45	50-64	65+	Totals
All other qualifications	1.44%	2.03%	20.72%	10.03%	25.94%	26.91%	12.40%	0.54%	29,358

Staff data:

From the [SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23](#), the image below shows a table of staff by age group between 2019 to 2022. The majority of SQA staff are over the age of 45. SQA, like many other workforces across the UK have an ageing workforce. To tackle this, SQA has an ongoing Young Talent Strategy, aimed at attracting and developing younger staff in SQA.

Table 1.1: Age

Age bracket	2019 no	2019 %	2020 no	2020 %	2021 no	2021 %	2022 no	2022 %	Variance no	Variance %
16–24	59	6.32%	50	5.27%	49	4.93%	36	3.47%	-23	-2.85%
25–29	65	6.97%	60	6.32%	73	7.35%	105	10.14%	40	3.17%
30–34	123	13.18%	109	11.49%	96	9.67%	95	9.17%	-28	-4.01%
35–39	131	14.04%	145	15.28%	146	14.70%	144	13.90%	13	-0.14%
40–44	129	13.83%	135	14.23%	146	14.70%	150	14.48%	21	0.65%
45–49	116	12.43%	105	11.06%	113	11.38%	124	11.97%	8	-0.46%
50–54	125	13.40%	141	14.86%	131	13.19%	126	12.16%	1	-1.24%
55–59	119	12.75%	117	12.33%	122	12.29%	122	11.78%	3	-0.98%
60–64	53	5.68%	72	7.59%	81	8.16%	102	9.85%	49	4.16%
65+	13	1.39%	15	1.58%	36	3.63%	32	3.09%	19	1.70%
Total	933	100.00%	949	100.00%	993	100.00%	1036	100.00%	103	11.04%

Disability

Learner data:

3437 learners were surveyed as part of SQA’s Diet 2023 Evaluation work. Results show that disabled learners and/or learners with additional support needs (ASN) scored significantly higher on the teaching and learning disruption score than other learners. survey results also showed that disabled learners and/or learners with ASN had statistically significant lower communication satisfaction scores than other learners. SQA has maintained open communications through its social media channels and by publishing articles on the SQA website.

The Examination Exceptional Circumstances Considerations Service (EECCS) is a service SQA provides that supports learners who have been unable to attend an examination or learner’s whose performance in the examination may have

been affected by personal circumstances, or an unplanned incident on the day. There is no charge for this service, and it is available for all examinations that appear in the examination timetable. In the period 2022-23, a majority of learners who submitted a request through the EECCS noted a medical condition in their reasons to use the service.

Reason	Frequency
Disruption	267
Examination Arrangements	247
Medical Condition (Absence)	1,523
Medical Condition (Sat the exam)	1,069
Bereavement (Sat the exam)	593
Domestic Circumstances (Sat the exam)	568
Bereavement (Absence)	269
Domestic Circumstances (Absence)	160
Exceptional Absence	50
Total	4,746

The service meets the needs of a number of learners with the protected characteristic of disability — for example, learners with a disability and/ or those that have additional support needs and / or those who have a long-term health condition, as their circumstances mean they are more likely to utilise such a service.

Examination arrangement related exceptional circumstances include situations where the learner’s centre fails to correctly implement a pre-agreed assessment arrangement. Assessment arrangements allow candidates who are disabled, and/or have been identified as having additional support needs, access to appropriate arrangements to complete the assessment without compromising its integrity. In 2023, 28,345 learners submitted a total of 91,880 requests for assessment arrangements. This represents an increase of 2640 learners from the previous year.

Staff Data:

The table below from the SQA Workforce Monitoring Report 2023 outlines the proportion of SQA staff with a declared disability. The table shows that the number of staff who did not respond has decreased between 2021 and 2021, which the number of staff with declared disabilities increased by roughly 60% over the same period.

Table 3.1: Disability

Disability	2019 number	2019 %	2020 number	2020 %	2021 number	2021 %	2022 number	2022 %	Variance number	Variance %
No	417	44.69%	651	68.60%	683	68.78%	697	67.28%	280	22.59%
Not Specified	444	47.59%	152	16.02%	152	15.31%	184	17.76%	-260	-29.83%
Prefer not to say	21	2.25%	68	7.17%	76	7.65%	72	6.95%	51	4.70%
Yes	51	5.47%	78	8.22%	82	8.26%	83	8.01%	32	2.54%
Total	933	100.00%	949	100.00%	993	100.00%	1036	100.00%	103	0.00%

SQA is a [Disability Confident Leader](#), and has an active Staff Disability Network, driving change at the organisation. The increase in disability declaration rates is likely due to shifting attitudes towards disability, both as SQA works to foster understanding towards disabled staff, and as part of a broader cultural shift around disability following COVID-19.

Race

Learner data:

As previously established, over 99% of learners undertaking National Courses are between the ages of 15 and 18. As such, information provided in Scottish Government’s 2022 Pupil Census is relevant. With regard to ethnicity, the 2022 census indicated that 89% of learners were from the aggregated white ethnic group, 5% were from the aggregated Asian ethnic group and 4% were from the aggregated African, aggregated Arab, aggregated Caribbean or Black, and Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups. It should be noted that the figures above only include publicly funded and grant aided schools. 3437 learners were surveyed as part of SQA’s Diet 2023 Evaluation work. Results show that 86% of survey respondents were from the aggregated white ethnic group, 7% were from the aggregated Asian ethnic group and 5% were from the aggregated African, aggregated Arab, aggregated Caribbean or Black, and Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups.

Data in this area is limited as the studies we identified with regard to the Scottish education system focussed on the school experiences of Black, Asian and Ethnical Minority (BAME) young people as opposed to their experience of the Scottish assessment system for National Courses. In addition, many studies have such small participant numbers that it is not possible to generalise these to the wider population.

While language is not a characteristic protected in the Equality Act, there can be a relationship through nation of origin between language and the protected characteristic of race. People with English as a second or alternative language may experience difficulties in understanding our communications and guidance. SQA produces communications to learners about their diet, which are written in age-appropriate Plain English. Additionally, guidance and communications are shared with centres. SQA acknowledges that centres will understand the needs of individual learners better and can more reflexively fill communication gaps with individual learners where necessary.

Staff data:

Source: [SQA Equality Mainstreaming Report 2021-23](#)

Table 7.1: Race

Ethnicity	2019 number	2019%	2020 number	2020%	2021 number	2021%	2022 number	2022%
African, Scottish African or British African	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	<5	<0.48%
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	13	1.39%	20	2.11%	24	2.42%	25	2.41%
Caribbean or Black	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Not specified	383	41.05%	123	12.96%	101	10.17%	122	11.78%
Other ethnic group	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Prefer not to say	10	1.07%	33	3.48%	34	3.42%	30	2.90%
White	523	56.06%	763	80.40%	825	83.08%	849	81.95%

Just under 3.50% staff declared they were from an ethnic minority background in both 2021 (3.32%) and 2022 (3.38%). However, it is encouraging to note that the percentage of staff declaring they are from an ethnic minority background has increased overall by 3.97% between 2019 and 2022. The percentage of staff within each ethnic minority category has remained relatively stable over the last three years.

The proportion of ethnic minority staff working full time is greater than the proportion of white staff working full time in both 2021 and 2022. In 2021 and 2022 there is a higher proportion of staff from an ethnic minority background on fixed term contracts compared to the proportion of white staff on fixed term contracts. This requires further analysis to understand the reasons behind this

Religion or Belief

Learner data:

SQA do not collect learner data on religion or belief. Information regarding the religion or belief of learners.

Source: [SQA Equality Mainstreaming Report 2021-23](#)

Table 8.1: Religion or belief

Religion or belief	2019 number	2019%	2020 number	2020%	2021 number	2021%	2022 number	2022%
Another religion or body	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	6	0.60%	6	0.58%
Buddhist	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Church of Scotland	91	9.75%	122	12.86%	127	12.79%	125	12.07%
Hindu	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	7	0.70%	8	0.77%
Jewish	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Muslim	7	0.75%	11	1.16%	10	1.01%	11	1.06%
None	286	30.65%	421	44.36%	462	46.53%	489	47.20%
Not specified	405	43.41%	126	13.28%	102	10.27%	123	11.87%
Other Christian	26	2.79%	43	4.53%	44	4.43%	44	4.25%
Prefer not to say	35	3.75%	98	10.33%	103	10.37%	103	9.94%
Roman Catholic	76	8.15%	118	12.43%	129	12.99%	123	11.87%
Sikh	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%

The majority of colleagues (88.13%) 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 9.94% of

	<p>colleagues who have declared they would prefer not to share their religion or belief and 11.87% of colleagues who have not provided information on their religion or belief. We will continue to encourage employees to disclose information about their religion or belief through future equality data awareness and collection campaigns. 23.20% 14.30% 8.50% 1.60% 0.40% 1.90% 50.10% Religion in Scotland, 2018 Church of Scotland Roman Catholic Other Christian Muslim Other Unknown None 12.07% 11.87% 4.25% 1.06% 1.74% 21.81% 47.20% Religion in SQA Church of Scotland Roman Catholic Other Christian Muslim Other Unknown None 42 We encourage managers to be flexible in the approval of annual leave requests to support colleagues to observe key dates in their religious calendar and engage in such events and occasions. We have also made allowances for colleagues to use rooms for praying during working days in our offices.</p>									
<p>Sex</p>	<p>Learner data:</p> <p>SQA's Equality Monitoring Report 2023 provides the following data for entries for these National Courses in academic year 2022-23:</p> <table data-bbox="439 751 1435 858"> <tr> <td>National 5 entries by sex:</td> <td>Female – 50.2%</td> <td>Male – 49.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Higher entries by sex:</td> <td>Female – 53.7%</td> <td>Male – 46.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advanced Higher entries by sex:</td> <td>Female – 55.3%</td> <td>Male – 44.7%</td> </tr> </table> <p>With regard to attainment, the report also confirms the following:</p> <p>National 5 - Female candidates had higher A to C and A attainment rates than male candidates at National 5 for each year in the period 2019 to 2022. This remains the case in 2023. The difference in A to C attainment between female candidates and male candidates in 2023 was 3.7 percentage points (in favour of females). This is similar to the 2022 value of 3.3 percentage points, also in favour of females. In 2019, the difference in A to C attainment between female candidates and male candidates was 4.2 percentage points.</p> <p>Higher - Female candidates had higher A to C and A attainment rates than male candidates at Higher for each year in the period 2019 to 2022. This remains the case in 2023. The difference in A to C attainment between female candidates and male candidates in 2023 was 5.2 percentage points. This is similar to the 2022 value of 4.7 percentage points (both in favour of female candidates). In 2019, the difference in A to C attainment between female candidates and male candidates was 4.6 percentage points.</p>	National 5 entries by sex:	Female – 50.2%	Male – 49.8%	Higher entries by sex:	Female – 53.7%	Male – 46.3%	Advanced Higher entries by sex:	Female – 55.3%	Male – 44.7%
National 5 entries by sex:	Female – 50.2%	Male – 49.8%								
Higher entries by sex:	Female – 53.7%	Male – 46.3%								
Advanced Higher entries by sex:	Female – 55.3%	Male – 44.7%								

Advanced Higher - Female candidates had higher A to C and A attainment rates than male candidates at Advanced Higher for each year in the period 2019 to 2022. This remains the case in 2023. The difference in A to C attainment between female candidates and male candidates in 2023 was 5.4 percentage points. This is similar to the 2022 value of 5.8 percentage points (both in favour of female candidates). In 2019, the difference in A to C attainment between female candidates and male candidates was 4.6 percentage points.

What can be gathered from the data is that despite changes to the Appeals Service and EECCS models from 2019 to 2023, differences in attainment between females and males have remained consistent. Both services are designed all learners fairly and equally.

All other qualification entries (2023):

The source of this data is taken from the Education Bill Equality Impact Assessment (include link), which includes Non-disclosed and Unknown, and covers both Scotland and Rest of UK & International figures. Types of qualifications included are:

- Advanced Certificates & Diplomas
- Awards
- Customised
- Higher National
- National Certificates
- National Progression Awards
- National - Workplace
- Professional Development Awards
- Vocationally Related Awards
- Specialist Groupings
- SVQs

Scotland

	Female	Male	Non-disclosed	Unknown	Totals
All other qualifications	46.57%	52.99%	0.14%	0.30%	213,813

Rest of UK & International

	Female	Male	Not disclosed	Unknown	Totals
All other qualifications	18.94%	80.21%	0.82%	0.03%	29,358

Staff data:

Source: [SQA Equality Mainstreaming Report 2021-23](#)

Table 9.1: Sex

Sex	2019 number	2019 %	2020 number	2020 %	2021 number	2021%	2022 number	2022 %	Variance number	Variance %
Female	571	61.20%	585	61.64%	618	62.24%	644	62.16%	73	0.96%
Male	362	38.80%	364	38.36%	375	37.76%	392	37.84%	30	-0.96%
SQA	933	100.00%	949	100.00%	993	100.00%	1036	100.00%	103	0.00%

Staff at SQA- leans female, with 62% of staff being female in 2022, with female staff being in the majority in all grades, excepting at Head of Service level, which are roughly 59% male.

The following is taken from SQA's [Equal pay audit 2023](https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/sqa-equalities-2023-equal-pay-audit-summary.pdf): https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/sqa-equalities-2023-equal-pay-audit-summary.pdf

The average hourly female salary is 94.7% of the average hourly male salary. The average female hourly salary is £20.52, and the average male hourly salary is £21.67. This is the third year in a row there has been a decrease in the mean gender pay gap — it is down by 0.3% from 5.6% last year, and there is a 1.7% decrease over the three-year period since 2020.

	<p>The median female salary is 95.2% of the median male salary. The median female hourly salary is £20.65, and the median male salary is £21.68. There has been a 0.5% decrease in the median pay gap since publishing the 2019-2021 Equality Mainstreaming report.</p> <p>The analysis of our gender pay gap figures tell us that our gender pay gap as of November 2022 is due to a combination of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lower proportion of female colleagues within the head of service population (a grade which attracts a higher level of remuneration) • a higher proportion of male colleagues within the Business Systems Directorate, where some of the posts attract a market supplement due to difficulty in recruitment <p>Some of the overall mean pay gap between male and female salaries can be explained by the fact that there are proportionately more female colleagues in lower grades. The majority of posts that attract market supplement payments are in the Business Systems (IT) area of SQA, which has a higher male population (68.0%).</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p>Learner data:</p> <p>3437 learners were surveyed as part of SQA’s Evaluation of Diet 2023 work. Learners were asked if they identified as part of the LGBTQIA community. 17% of learners responded that they did. Although not directly comparable to the survey question, according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), 3% of the UK population aged 16 years and over identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) in 2022. For those aged 16 to 24 years, 9% or identified as LGB.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff data:</p> <p>Source: SQA Equality Mainstreaming Report 2021-23</p> <p>81.76% of colleagues at SQA have chosen to disclose their sexual orientation.</p>

Table 10.1: Sexual orientation

Sexual Orientation	2019 number	2019%	2020 number	2020%	2021 number	2021%	2022 number	2022%
Bisexual	9	0.96%	12	1.26%	15	1.51%	16	1.54%
Gay man	13	1.39%	20	2.11%	21	2.11%	23	2.22%
Gay woman / lesbian	9	0.96%	10	1.05%	12	1.21%	12	1.16%
Heterosexual / straight	431	46.20%	670	70.60%	700	70.49%	702	67.76%
In another way	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Not specified	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	156	15.71%	189	18.24%
Not sure	26	2.79%	76	8.01%	< 5	< 0.50%	< 5	< 0.48%
Prefer not to say	443	47.48%	158	16.65%	84	8.46%	88	8.49%

Our workforce has 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 just over ten times the national indicator. This is due to 8.49% of colleagues declaring they would prefer not to share their sexual orientation, 0.19% of colleagues who are unsure of their sexual orientation, and 18.24% of colleagues who have not provided sexual orientation information. We will continue to encourage employees to disclose information about their sexual orientation through future equality data awareness and collection campaigns.

Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)

Learner data:

437 learners were surveyed as part of SQA's Evaluation of Diet 2023 work, 59% of survey respondents described their gender as woman/girl, 35% described their gender as man/boy and 2% described their gender as non-binary.

Staff data:

Due to the small number of staff reporting as transgender or describing their gender identity 'in another way', we are unable to publish further data in relation to gender re-assignment or gender identity. This data is, however, monitored internally.

	<p>SQA supports its trans staff through a number of established mechanisms, including the Transitioning and Gender Identity policy, and the SQA Rainbow Network.</p>
<p>Marriage/Civil Partnership</p>	<p>Learner Data:</p> <p>SQA do not collect learner data on marriage / civil partnerships.</p> <p>A core function of SQA is to deliver Scotland’s NQ. As over 99% of learners undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Courses are between the ages of 15 and 18, it is highly unlikely that many learners with this protected characteristic would be undertaking these qualifications.</p> <p>It has not been possible to source any data relating to the number of individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 in Scotland who are married. The National Records for Scotland report that the average age of marriage has risen for both men and women: “The average age at marriage has risen for both males and females. For first marriages, the average age of males has risen from 24.3 in the mid-1970s to 34.5 in 2019; the comparable figures for females are 22.4 in the mid-1970s and 32.9 in 2019.”. The ONS give marital status by age but the groups are under 20 and 20-24 which does not provide useful data for this assessment – it also does not include Scotland in the data.</p> <hr/> <p>Staff data: Source: SQA Equality Mainstreaming Report 2021-23</p>

Table 5.1: Relationship status

Relationship status	2019 number	2019 %	2020 number	2020 %	2021 number	2021 %	2022 number	2022 %
Civil Partnership	7	0.75%	7	0.74%	8	0.81%	9	0.87%
Co-habiting/in a relationship	80	8.57%	112	11.80%	122	12.29%	122	11.78%
Divorced/Dissolved Civil Partnership	14	1.50%	16	1.69%	17	1.71%	19	1.83%
Married	265	28.40%	370	38.99%	425	42.80%	416	40.15%
Married/Civil Partnership	8	0.86%	12	1.26%	14	1.41%	16	1.54%
Not Specified	407	43.62%	179	18.86%	102	10.27%	127	12.26%
Other	< 5	< 0.54%	< 5	< 0.53%	7	0.70%	9	0.87%
Prefer not to say	18	1.93%	49	5.16%	55	5.54%	59	5.69%
Separated	6	0.64%	12	1.26%	12	1.21%	13	1.25%
Single	122	13.08%	183	19.28%	224	22.56%	239	23.07%
Widowed/surviving partner from Civil Partnership	< 5	< 0.54%	6	0.63%	7	0.70%	7	0.68%

Table 5.1 shows the marriage and civil partnership status of staff within the organisation for the period from 2019 to 2022

Pregnancy / Maternity

Learner data:

Learners were not asked for this information for the purposes of developing this policy. As noted above, this policy and associated process applies equally to all learners as the awarding and grade boundaries processes are applied at cohort level and not to individual learners. The National Records for Scotland report that the fertility rate for women aged 15-19 is at a historic low, showing the lowest rate (under 20 per 1000) since 1951. Due to this, and the data that more than 99% of learners undertaking National Courses are aged between 15 and 18, it is unlikely that many learners will be covered by this protected characteristic.

Staff Data:

Source: [Equalities: SQA workforce monitoring report 2021-23](#)

Table 6.1: Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy and maternity	2019 number	2019 %	2020 number	2020 %	2021 number	2021 %	2022 number	2022 %
Contract ended as planned					1	3.33%		0.00%
Due to return to work					0	0.00%	11	40.00%
Resigned					0	0.00%	1	4.00%
Returned to work	20	100.00%	10	100.00%	29	96.67%	14	56.00%
Total	20	100.00%	10	100.00%	30	100.00%	26	100.00%

The table from the Workforce Monitoring Report shows that the vast majority of pregnant staff choose to return to work with SQA following maternity leave, with only one person out of 76 choosing to resign during maternity. This evidence points that SQA's support for pregnant staff is well regarded by its staff.

Care experience (where relevant)

Learner data:

3437 learners were surveyed as part of SQA's Evaluation of Diet 2023 work. 5% of survey respondents said that they were care experienced.

According to the Scottish Government's Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland: 2021 to 2022 report (published April 2023), on 31 July 2022, 14,627 children in Scotland were looked after or on the Child Protection Register — 1.5% of Scotland's under 18 population. There were 12,596 looked after children in Scotland, a decrease of 5% from 31 July 2021. However, according to [Who Cares? Scotland](#), these statistics do not take into consideration circumstances such as informal kinship care. Moreover, some learners may have historic care experience even if they are not currently in care. In August 2023, the Scottish Government [published information](#) on attainment and leaver destinations, for school leavers in Scotland who were looked after during the 2021–22 school year. Headline figures show that more care experienced children are staying in school for longer and achieving higher qualifications than the previous year. However, there are still large gaps compared with all learners. The latest figures show that:

- Care experienced school leavers continue to have lower attainment than other school leavers.
- Care experienced children and young people leave school earlier than their non-care experienced peers.
- Care experienced children are less likely to be in positive destinations nine months after leaving school.
- The rate of exclusions among care experienced children is much higher than among the general school population.
- The more disruption a child faces — for example placement moves — the higher their likelihood of exclusion.

- Figures show that at all levels, care experienced students have lower rates of course completion at university and college than other students.
- Care experienced children are automatically deemed to have additional support needs, unless otherwise assessed.

The [SQA Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-26](#) provides the following data:

31.7% looked after school leavers left in S4 or earlier (down from 37.3% in 2020/21) compared with 12.4% of all leavers in 2021/22.

78.3% looked after school leavers with one or more qualification at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better (up from 70.9% in 2020/21), compared with 96.4% of all leavers in 2021/22

SQA Staff data:

SQA do not collect information about staff's Care Experience.

Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy or practice has on an equality group may be different and this requires to be recorded. The impact may not always be negative. Actions are taken to address any differential impact, and include actions to mitigate against any negative impact, to advance equality and to foster good relations between groups.

Each section contains questions for each equality group. These questions are here to support consideration; however, you can provide further detail. Focus initially on the equality groups that would be affected by this policy. If you do not consider that certain equality groups would be affected by this policy, you may leave these sections.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Age	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners and staff of all different age groups across all of its work. This is a positive impact . The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices
	Actions
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA's commitment to Human Rights, Fair Work and Business and the new EDI deliverable all underpin SQA's approach to equality of opportunity, providing equitable services, business and employment to learners, staff and stakeholders of all ages. The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices
	Actions
	Foster good relations
	A <i>Prospectus for Change: Corporate Plan 2024-27</i> provides learners (including those who take NQ, who are predominantly aged 15-18) the opportunity to learn about SQA's strategic priorities and deliverables, that

	<p>underpin how the organisation will deliver its remit and responsibilities. This will help foster understanding and good relations with this younger age group.</p> <p>It is SQA's policy to publish in Plain English, which is generally more accessible to all groups, including younger readers. This will ensure that the Corporate Plan and associated documents are accessible to SQA's young stakeholders.</p>
	<p>Actions The SYP fed back that the corporate plan as written is not accessible to younger readers and suggested producing a Plain English version of the plan.</p>
<p>Protected Characteristic</p>	<p>General Equality Duty</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The uptake of the new EDI deliverable confers that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of disabled learners and staff across all of its work. As this is an overarching document, this Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) cannot explore these individual impacts, but SQA remains committed to publishing EqIAs for all of its policy and practice, ensuring that these positive impacts are recorded, as these works are undertaken. This is a positive impact</p> <p>Actions</p> <p>Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>The uptake of the new EDI deliverable confers that SQA will consider equality needs in all of its work. Importantly, this can be taken to mean the facilitation of Reasonable Adjustments, accessible assessment arrangements and provision of the Examination Extenuating Circumstances Consideration Service. These provisions are accessible for all learners with a disability. This is a positive impact.</p>

	<p>Actions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Foster good relations</p> <p>An accessible version of <i>A Prospectus for Change: Corporate Plan 2024-27</i> will be made available for those with disabilities. In addition, it is SQA's policy to publish in Plain English, which is generally more accessible to all groups, including younger readers. This will ensure that the Corporate Plan and associated documents are accessible to SQA's disabled learners, including those with learning disabilities.</p>
	<p>Actions</p>
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Race	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners and staff regardless of their race. This is a positive impact</p>
	<p>Actions</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>SQA's commitment to Human Rights, Fair Work and Business and the new EDI deliverable all underpin SQA's approach to equality of opportunity, providing equitable services, business and employment to learners, staff and stakeholders, regardless of race. The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices</p>
	<p>Actions</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>Although language is not a protected characteristic, the characteristic of race can also include a person's country of origin, and SQA understands that many countries do not natively speak English as a first language. It is SQA's policy to publish in Plain English, which is generally more accessible to those who do not speak English as a first language. This will ensure that the Corporate Plan and associated documents are</p>

	accessible to SQA's diverse learners and will aid in helping these communities to understand SQA's Corporate Plan over the period.
	Actions
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Religion or Belief	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners and staff from a range of religious backgrounds, and for those who hold a broad range of beliefs across all of its work. This is a positive impact
	Actions
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA's commitment to Human Rights, Fair Work and Business and the new EDI deliverable all underpin SQA's approach to equality of opportunity, providing equitable services, business and employment to learners, staff and stakeholders regardless of their religions and beliefs. The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices
	Actions
	Foster good relations
	SQA have not identified an avenue to foster good relations between people who share a religion or belief and those who do not. More evidence may be required to understand current relations.
	Actions The Corporate Plan identifies that stakeholder engagement will form a core piece of work in the coming years. SQA will continue to undertake stakeholder engagement to better understand how to foster good relations in this group.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>No negative impacts against this need of the general equality duty were identified against the protected characteristic of sex. However, SQA will continue to monitor how learners, staff and stakeholders of different sexes engage with SQA, in order to identify and mitigate any negative impacts, should they arise.</p> <p>The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners and staff, regardless of sex, across all of its work. This is a positive impact</p>
	Actions
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA's commitment to Human Rights, Fair Work and Business and the new EDI deliverable all underpin SQA's approach to equality of opportunity, providing equitable services, business and employment to learners, staff and stakeholders regardless of their sex. The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices
	Actions
	Foster good relations
	SQA did not identify any positive or negative impacts towards fostering good relations within this protected characteristic.
	Actions
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

	<p>No negative impacts against this need of the general equality duty were identified against the protected characteristic of sexual orientation. However, SQA will continue to monitor how learners, staff and stakeholders of different sexes engage with SQA, in order to identify and mitigate any negative impacts, should they arise.</p> <p>The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners and staff, irrespective of their sexual orientation, across all of its work. This is a positive impact</p>
	Actions
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>SQA's commitment to Human Rights, Fair Work and Business and the new EDI deliverable all underpin SQA's approach to equality of opportunity, providing equitable services, business and employment to learners, staff and stakeholders regardless of their sexual orientation. The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices</p>
	Actions
	Foster good relations
	<p>SQA did not identify any positive or negative impacts towards fostering good relations towards people with this protected characteristic.</p>
Actions	
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Gender Re-assignment	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

(Gender identity and transgender)	The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners, staff and other stakeholders, including trans stakeholders. This work will continue across all of SQA's work. This is a positive impact .
	Actions
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA's commitment to Human Rights, Fair Work and Business and the new EDI deliverable all underpin SQA's approach to equality of opportunity, providing equitable services, business and employment to learners, staff and stakeholders regardless of their trans status. The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices
	Actions
	Foster good relations
	SQA did not identify any positive or negative impacts towards fostering good relations towards trans people, partly due to the lack of relevant data.
	Actions The Corporate Plan identifies that stakeholder engagement will form a core piece of work in the coming years. SQA will continue to undertake stakeholder engagement to better understand how to foster good relations in this group.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence that suggests people who are married or are in a civil partnership will be impacted negatively by SQA's corporate plan. SQA will continue to monitor for potential impacts.
	The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners and staff, including those who are married or in a civil partnership, across all of its work. This is a positive impact

	Actions
	Advance equality of opportunity
	This duty is not applicable to this characteristic.
	Actions
	Foster good relations
	This duty is not applicable to this characteristic.
	Actions
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Pregnancy / Maternity	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	The uptake of the new EDI deliverable conveys that SQA will consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment of learners and staff, including those who are pregnant or who are new parents, across all of its work. This is a positive impact
	Actions
	Advance equality of opportunity
	SQA's commitment to Human Rights, Fair Work and Business and the new EDI deliverable all underpin SQA's approach to equality of opportunity, providing equitable services, business and employment to learners, staff and stakeholders, including pregnant learners, staff and stakeholders. The EDI deliverable will allow a mechanism for SQA to monitor its success on this ambition across all of its business practices
	Actions

	Foster good relations
	SQA did not identify any positive or negative impacts to foster good relations between people who are pregnant and those who are not.
	<u>Actions</u> The Corporate Plan identifies that stakeholder engagement will form a core piece of work in the coming years. SQA will continue to undertake stakeholder engagement to better understand how to foster good relations in this group.
Considered by SQA	General Equality Duty
Care experience (where relevant)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	New Corporate Parenting Plan set for 2023-26 that renews SQA's commitments as a Corporate Parent. This is a definitive positive impact to protect learners and SQA staff who have Care Experience from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
	<u>Actions</u>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	New Corporate Parenting Plan set for 2023-26 that renews SQA's commitments as a Corporate Parent. This is a definitive positive impact, advancing equality of opportunity for learners and SQA staff who have Care Experience to engage with SQA's work.
	<u>Actions</u>
	Foster good relations
	SQA prioritises Care Experience, treating it as a protected characteristic. SQA works closely with Who Cares? Scotland to inform its agenda to support Care Experienced Young People. <i>A Prospectus for Change: Corporate Plan 24-27</i> explicitly centres Care Experienced Young People amongst its Equality goals. A recent consultation on SQA's revised Corporate Parenting Plan provided invaluable feedback which will allow us to focus on improving our commitments for the future and a steering group supports the wide range of activities

	that enable us to achieve those — including an annual exam results day celebration for Care Experienced Young People.
	<u>Actions</u>

Rationale

If you are proceeding with a decision that may have a negative impact and are not putting in place actions to mitigate against this, please explain how this is objectively justified.
No negative impacts have been identified within this Equality Impact Assessment.