Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

Name of Policy, Strategy or Service

Equality of Access to SQA Qualifications

New or Revision of Policy, Strategy or Service? (If revision, what version number?)

Revision

Approving governance group for Policy, Strategy or Service?

Standards and Policy Group and Qualifications Committee

Policy, Strategy or Service Owner (job title)

Director, Policy, Analysis and Standards

EqIA Author (job title(s))

Policy and Research Manager – Equalities

Date of EqIA Completion

September 2024

Next Scheduled Review Date

September 2027

Action Plan

This section is completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment. It is in two parts: monitoring actions and mitigating actions.

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.

Monitoring Actions	Owner	Target Date	Comment & Review
Further analysis of number, type, trends or patterns of assessment arrangements	Policy, Analysis and Standards – Data & Analytics and Equalities Teams	Ongoing	Work ongoing – additional equality data requested from Scottish Government Pupil Census data to inform equality monitoring as Scotland's national awarding body. Further consideration is also being made to potentially request access to similar information for college learners in the form of a data sharing agreement with Scottish Funding Council, if appropriate.
Publish policy on SQA's website and invite feedback from stakeholders	Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities Team	To be confirmed	Updated policy to be shared with Standards and Policy Group and Qualifications Committee for approval for external publication. Once published, feedback from internal and external stakeholders to be monitored, including from our Equality and Inclusion Key Partners Group. PAS colleagues have been liaising with Marketing and Communications colleagues to agree where published SQA policies will be shared on the website and how this will be communicated to our internal and external customers.

What actions have you identified through the EqIA to address negative impacts, or to further promote positive impacts?

Mitigating Actions	Owner	Target Date	Comment & Review
Continue to monitor requests and feedback from internal and external stakeholders	Policy, Analysis and Standards and Qualifications Development Directorates	Ongoing	SQA staff across Policy, Analysis and Standards and Qualifications Development Directorates will continue to monitor feedback and requests for change from internal and external stakeholders to identify potential areas for improvement to equality of access to SQA's qualifications.

Part 1: About the policy, strategy, or service

Why does SQA need this policy, strategy, or service?

The policy explains SQA's approach to enable access to assessment and qualifications. SQA supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment, education and training, and opposes all forms of discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation).

Other factors affecting learners, such as socio-economic disadvantage, or circumstances that present barriers to accessing qualifications, are also considered wherever possible. Although such factors are not covered under the Equality Act 2010, SQA recognises that a wide range of factors can have an impact on a learner's ability to achieve qualifications. Furthermore, SQA has a corporate parenting commitment to ensure its equality impact assessment process considers the needs of care experienced young people, by treating care experience as if it were a protected characteristic covered by the Equality Act 2010.

The policy demonstrates SQA's commitment to promoting and facilitating access to our qualifications while also meeting its legal responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

What are the aims of this policy, strategy, or service?

The aim of the policy is to explain SQA's approach to enable equality of access to assessment and qualifications. SQA supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment, education and training, and opposes all forms of discrimination of protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation).

As this policy relates to how SQA enables access to qualifications, a positive impact on equality groups (particularly those with the protected characteristic of disability) is explicitly intended and very likely.

How will you measure how effectively the policy, strategy or service meets its aims?

Current practice involves gathering a range of information and data from various sources to attempt to evaluate how well SQA integrates equality and inclusion in qualification development policies and activities. These activities, along with the provision of assessment arrangements and guidance and training on inclusive assessment design, are directly linked to the policy:

♦ External stakeholders on our Equality & Inclusion Key Partners Group provide engagement and advice on a range of equality issues. Organisations represented included Dyslexia Scotland, CALL Scotland, EIS and Education Scotland as well as teaching practitioners.
♦ The original policy did not make it clear whether the policy covered all SQA qualifications. In practice, some of the mechanisms which are linked to this policy (for example, SQA's Equality Review of Qualifications process) only apply in practice to National Qualifications, but not Higher National and Vocational Qualifications.
♦ Robust assessment arrangement data from 2020 and 2021 is not available, as alternate awarding models were in place due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team are collating assessment arrangements data to attempt to identify any trends.
♦ SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team is considering how to effectively engage with learners who share a range of protected characteristics who may require assessment arrangements. The team are also considering effective engagement with learners to ensure there is an equality of access to our qualifications, including those under the age of 18 and would be considered a 'child' under the United Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). For this reason, a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has also been completed.

The activities noted above will continue to be used to allow us to monitor the impact (positive or negative) of the policy on learners with protected characteristics.

It has been identified that there is a lack of robust equality data within SQA about learners who are entered and certificated for SQA qualifications and how they access the qualifications and assessment. SQA is currently considering actions that can be taken to improve this to ensure decision making processes are based on robust evidence. Within the Policy, Analysis and Standards Directorate, efforts in this area have started by requesting additional equality data of learners who attend local authority secondary schools from Scottish Government's Pupil Census data. Further considerations will also be made to submit an application for similar equality data for college learners held by the Scottish Funding Council.

Who will this policy, strategy or service affect? Consider which equality groups might be affected?

This policy relates to all individuals involved in the production, delivery and participation in SQA qualifications with protected characteristics. This includes:

♦ SQA staff

- SQA appointees
- SQA-approved centres
- Learners entered for SQA qualifications
- Parents and carers

Consultation and Engagement

Impact assessments must have a basis in evidence. This can include consultation, stakeholder engagement, or reviews of existing engagements. Not all IAs must include engagement, however, it is a rich source of information if used correctly.

Which groups of stakeholders have fed into your work? (This can include staff groups, governance groups, learner groups or groups of the public), and what did they say about potential equality impacts of the policy, strategy or service?

	Group(s) engaged. Describe the engagement	Conclusion/Outcome (as relevant to equality groups)
Internal engagement or consultation (if relevant)	All SQA colleagues involved in ensuring we meet SQA's Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) have been involved in reviewing the policy to ensure this is clear and is appropriate for the range of qualifications SQA offers, including vocational and regulated qualifications. This includes colleagues in Policy, Research and Standards – HNVQ Policy to ensure the policy applies to SQA's range of qualifications. Feedback from SQA's Operations colleagues were also taken into account following the national evaluation project with teaching practitioners, learners, and parents and carers on assessment arrangements in 2023	♦ Updates to the 2022 policy have been made to ensure this policy also applies to consideration of requests for reasonable adjustments and special arrangements in vocational and regulated qualifications. ♦ Additional information has also been included to clarify the roles and responsibilities of not only SQA staff and appointees, but the important roles our centres, learners, parents and carers also play in ensuring there is an equality of access to SQA's qualifications.
External engagement or consultation (if relevant)	♦ SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team has discussed how to consult with centres and learners. SQA recognises that centres use SQA's guidance documents on assessment arrangements, however as the Equality of Access to SQA Qualifications has been held internally within SQA, centres are not aware of this. Gaining approval from SQA's	♦ The information for learners and parents and carers were introduced in 2022 and have been reviewed annually since then to incorporate feedback from learners, parents and carers to ensure these are accessible, easy to understand and engaging. SQA will continue to work with groups who are (or

	Standards and Policy Group and Qualifications Committee to externally publish the policy will help provide centres, learners, parents and carers with transparency and clarity on SQA's policy position in relation to assessment arrangements, from which directly links to the guidance documents provided to centres.	represent) learners, parents and carers, to ensure the information SQA provides meet their needs and empower them with the information they need to discuss the learner's needs with their centre.
	♦ SQA's Policy, Research and Standards – Equalities Team has been working with SQA's Learner & Parent Engagement and Marketing & Communications Teams to update guides for learners, parents and carers about assessment arrangements.	♦ The assessment arrangements evaluation report also highlights the experiences disabled learners or those with additional support needs and their parents or carers with receiving assessment arrangements and identifies areas for improvement that SQA can make to support a more streamlined approach for all participant groups.
	♦ SQA carried out a national evaluation project with teaching practitioners, learners, and parents and carers on assessment arrangements in 2023.	

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

This can be internal SQA reports, external reports relevant to the work, census data, or original research, as necessary. What is the source of the evidence (please provide links) and what does it say about equality impacts?

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
Age	In relation to those entered for National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, SQA's 2024 Equality Monitoring Report provides the following information in relation to learners' age: **National 5** Below 15 – 0.2% Aged between 15 and 18 – 99.3% Over 18 – 0.5% **Higher** Below 15 – 0.0% Aged between 15 and 18 – 99.2% Over 18 – 0.8%	Age is not a criterion for learners to access to any SQA qualifications. As this policy covers all SQA qualification types, the policy applies to learners of all ages.

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
	Advanced Higher Below 15 – 0.0% Aged between 15 and 18 – 99.6% Over 18 – 0.4% From this information, it is evident that the majority of learners who are entered for National 5, Higher or Advanced Higher courses are aged between 15 and 18. For this reason, the majority of learners are defined as a 'child' under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, an associated Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has also been completed to reflect the impacts of this policy on the rights of children and young people. SQA currently do not hold equality data of college learners that allow us to monitor the impact of this policy on those entered for vocational and regulated qualifications. SQA's Policy, Analysis and Standards colleagues are currently in the process of establishing what equality data is available from the Scottish Funding Council for learners attending Scottish colleges, and a data sharing request will be made if appropriate to allow SQA to have as comprehensive an equality dataset as possible of all our learner groups.	
Disability **(including Neurodiversity, Digital Accessibility, Caring Responsibilities)**	In relation to those entered for National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher SQA's 2024 Equality Monitoring Report states that 2.2% of National 5, 1.9% of Higher and 1.7% of Advanced Higher learners are declared or assessed disabled. Furthermore, published assessment arrangement data in 2024 shows that 104, 695 assessment arrangement requests were submitted by centres for National 5, Higher	This policy enables disabled learners access to qualifications through the centre's provision of assessment arrangements and SQA's role in considering requests for reasonable adjustments. It is intended to support the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
	and Advanced Higher external assessments on behalf of 32,030 disabled learners or those with additional support needs. SQA currently does not hold equality data of college learners that allow us to monitor the impact of this policy on those entered for vocational and regulated qualifications. SQA's Policy, Analysis and Standards colleagues are currently in the process of establishing what equality data is available from the Scottish Funding Council for learners attending Scottish colleges, and a data sharing request will be made if appropriate to allow SQA to have as comprehensive an equality dataset as possible of all our learner groups.	
Race **(Including nation of origin)**	In relation to those entered for National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, SQA's 2024 Equality Monitoring Report provides the following information in relation to learners' race: **National 5** White (including Scottish and non-Scottish) – 87.5% Mixed or multiple ethnic groups – 1.6% Asian – Indian – 1.2% Asian – Pakistani – 2.4% Asian – Chinese – 0.9% Asian – Other – 1.0% African/Black/Caribbean – 2.5% All other categories – 1.4% Not disclosed/Not known – 1.5% **Higher** White (including Scottish and non-Scottish) – 86.2%	This policy outlines our commitment to inclusive design within assessment and qualifications and supporting SQA's Qualifications Development staff to do this to embed anti-racism within our qualifications. This includes challenging racist terminology and changing this to reflect the impact of colonialism and enslavement in Black history. We recognise that ensuring our qualifications and assessments are anti-racist will take time and that this is an ongoing journey. This will be done by monitoring: ♦ the number of SQA staff and appointees who complete anti-racist education training offered, ♦ the number of SQA staff and appointees who complete the Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy, and ♦ the amendments made to our qualifications through SQA's Equality Review of Qualifications process.

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups – 1.7%	
	Asian – Indian – 1.5%	
	Asian – Pakistani – 3.0%	
	Asian – Chinese – 1.1%	
	Asian – Other – 1.2%	
	African/Black/Caribbean – 2.5%	
	All other categories – 1.5%	
	Not disclosed/Not known – 1.4%	
	Advanced Higher	
	White (including Scottish and non-Scottish) – 84.5%	
	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups – 2.1%	
	Asian – Indian – 2.0%	
	Asian – Pakistani – 2.9%	
	Asian – Chinese – 1.7%	
	Asian – Other – 1.6%	
	African/Black/Caribbean – 2.3%	
	All other categories – 1.7%	
	Not disclosed/Not known – 1.3%	
	SQA currently does not hold equality data of college learners that allow us to monitor the impact of this policy on those entered for vocational and regulated qualifications. SQA's Policy, Analysis and Standards colleagues are currently in the process of establishing what equality data is available from the Scottish Funding Council for learners attending Scottish colleges, and a data sharing request will be made if appropriate to allow SQA to have as comprehensive an equality dataset as possible of all our learner groups.	

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
Religion or Belief	SQA does not currently hold any data on a learner's religion or belief. This information is also not available as part of Scottish Government's Pupil Census data. SQA will be investigating whether there are opportunities to capture or access this information to allow us to better how our policy impacts on individuals on the basis of their religion or belief. In SQA's range of qualifications, a learner's religion or belief has been identified as being a potential barrier for learners undertaking National Courses in Health and Food Technology, Practical Cookery and Practical Cake Craft. In Practical Cookery, for example, learners are assessed on their competences with cooking specified dishes. For learners who are unable to handle specific ingredients due to their religion or belief, for example vegetarians or vegans who do not handle meat, as a reasonable adjustment these learners have the option to use meat alternatives.	SQA has reviewed its assessment requirements through course and unit specifications, and associated assessment materials, through our Equality Review of Qualifications process. Where belief could be a barrier to accessing the qualification (for example where meat dishes are part of the menu in hospitality qualifications and this may present a barrier for vegetarians or vegans, or where handling of specific types of meat are against a learner's religion), SQA appointees and Qualifications Development staff consider whether the barrier can be removed, or mitigations put in place to remove any barriers that could be considered unintended discrimination. This allows learners to still be assessed against the same key skills required as part of the national standard. SQA carried out work to remove content that contains anti-semitic or Islamophobic ideologies from our qualifications. However, we acknowledge that there may still be content in our qualifications that need reviewed to ensure they do not promote these views. These instances will be addressed as soon as they are identified and we will continue to monitor the impact of our qualifications and assessments on learners on the basis of religion or belief through: ♦ the number of SQA staff and appointees who complete anti-racist education training offered, ♦ the number of SQA staff and appointees who complete the Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy, and ♦ the amendments made to our qualifications through SQA's Equality Review of Qualifications process.

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
Sex	In relation to those entered for National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, SQA's 2024 Equality Monitoring Report provides the following information in relation to learners' sex: **National 5** Female – 50.2% Male – 49.8% **Higher** Female – 54.1% Male – 45.9% **Advanced Higher** Female – 54.9% Male – 45.1%	Sex is not a criterion for learners to access to any SQA qualifications. As this policy covers all SQA qualification types, the policy applies to all learners regardless of their sex.
Sexual Orientation	SQA does not currently hold any data on a learner's sexual orientation. This information is also not available as part of Scottish Government's Pupil Census data. According to the Office for 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. No updated data beyond 2022 has yet been published. In LGBT Youth Scotland's Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education Report 2023 in which 1279 LGBTQI young people aged 13 to 25 participated, 70% of participants felt that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia had a negative effect on their educational experience. The report also states that just only 21% participants saw LGBT+ representation within the curriculum outside of sexual health or mental health-	Sexual orientation is not a criterion for learners to access to any SQA qualifications. As this policy covers all SQA qualification types, the policy applies to all learners regardless of their sexual orientation.

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
	focused lessons, demonstrating a need for further work to ensure this representation is achieved throughout educational settings in Scotland. The report makes a recommendation that inclusive education should be embedded throughout the curriculum, and that LGBTI young people should see themselves represented in the materials they are using. SQA will be investigating whether there are opportunities to capture or access this information to allow us to better how our policy impacts on individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation.	
Gender Re-assignment **(Gender identity and trans status)**	SQA does not currently hold any data on a learner's gender identity or trans status. This information is also not available as part of Scottish Government's Pupil Census data. Scotland's Census published data from the 2022 Scottish Census that of all people aged 16 and over who completed the census, 0.44% are trans or has a trans history. It is not possible to determine however how many of these individuals are learners access SQA's national, vocational or occupational qualifications. SQA will be investigating whether there are opportunities to capture or access this information to allow us to better how our policy impacts on individuals on the basis of their gender identity or trans status.	SQA has reviews its assessment requirements through course and unit specifications, and associated assessment materials, through our Equality Review of Qualifications process. Where gender identity or trans status could be a barrier to accessing the qualification, SQA appointees and Qualifications Development staff consider whether the barrier can be removed, or mitigations put in place to remove any barriers that could be considered unintended discrimination.
Marriage/Civil Partnership **(Only relevant to employment-related**	SQA does not currently hold any data on a learner's marital or civil partnership status. This information is also not available as part of Scottish Government's Pupil Census data. National Records of Scotland's 2023 report shows that there was a 24% increase in marriages in 2022 compared to 2021. 630 civil partnerships were also	Marital or civil partnership status, as a protected characteristic, is only relevant to employment-related policies and procedures. As this policy covers all SQA qualification types, the policy applies to learners, regardless of their marital or civil partnership status.

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
policy, strategy or service)	registered in 2022, the highest number since 2007 and the majority of which are mixed sex (84% in 2022). It is not possible to determine however how many of these individuals are learners who access SQA's national, vocational or occupational qualifications. SQA will be investigating whether there are opportunities to capture or access this information to allow us to better understand how our policy impacts on individuals on the basis of their marital or civil partnership status.	
Pregnancy/Maternity	SQA does not currently hold any data on a learner's pregnancy or maternity status. This information is also not available as part of Scottish Government's Pupil Census data. However National Records of Scotland's 2023 report shows that there has been a slight decrease in Scotland's fertility rate and that births in 2022 was 2% lower than in 2021. It is not possible to determine however how many of these individuals are learners who access SQA's national, vocational or occupational qualifications. SQA will be investigating whether there are opportunities to capture or access this information to allow us to better how our policy impacts on individuals on the basis of their pregnancy or maternity status.	SQA has reviewed its assessment requirements through course and unit specifications, and associated assessment materials, through our Equality Review of Qualifications process. Where a learner's pregnancy or maternity status could be a barrier to accessing the qualification, SQA appointees and Qualifications Development staff consider whether the barrier can be removed, or mitigations put in place to remove any barriers that could be considered unintended discrimination.
Care experience (Looked after children, Corporate Parenting responsibilities)	SQA does not currently hold any data on a learner's care experience status. Learners' looked after status has been provided by Scottish Government's from the Pupil Census data as part of the data sharing agreement application. Further work will need to be undertaken internally by SQA on how this information can be used ethically and sensitively while allowing us to monitor the impact of this policy on learners with care experience.	SQA has reviews its assessment requirements through course and unit specifications, and associated assessment materials, through our Equality Review of Qualifications process. Where care experience status could be a barrier to accessing the qualification, SQA appointees and Qualifications Development staff consider whether the barrier can be removed, or mitigations put in place to remove any barriers that could be considered unintended discrimination.

Protected Characteristic	Source, and description of evidence	Conclusion about probable impact (positive and/or negative)
	According to Scottish Government's Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2021–22: ♦ 68.3% of looked after school leavers stayed on in S5 or later compared to 87.6% of all leavers. 31.7% of looked after school leavers left in S4 or earlier ♦ 78.3% of looked after school leavers achieved one or more qualification at SCQF Level 4 or better, compared to 96.4% of all leavers ♦ 84.8% of looked after leavers were in a positive destination compared to 95.7% of all leavers ♦ 70.4% of looked after leavers were in a positive follow-up destination compared to 93.5% of all leavers ♦ a lower proportion of looked after pupils achieve Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level relevant to their stage compared with all pupils It is important to note that the above data relates to learners looked after at any point between August 2021 and July 2022. Who Cares? Scotland cautions 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.	Further work will be done by SQA to review learners' looked after status obtained from Scottish Government's Pupil Census data to help inform monitoring of the impact of this policy on learners with care experience.

Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy, strategy or service can vary between people, and this can sometimes be based on protected characteristic. This is called differential impact. Where this is the case, the differential impact must be recorded. The differential impact might be positive, or negative – in both cases, it should be noted. Mitigating actions should be taken to address any negative impacts, and actions can also be taken to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between groups.

Most differential impacts on an equality group can be considered either a positive or negative impact against the **three needs of the general equality duty**. These are the columns of the table below. When considering impacts, consider which need of the general equality duty they align with. Detail the impact in the table and note whether the impact is positive or negative.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
Age	As this policy covers all SQA qualification types, the policy applies equally to learners of all ages. For this reason, it is anticipated that this policy would not discriminate, victimise or result in harassment of our learners, regardless of age. SQA acknowledges that there may be adult learners who may be entered for our higher, vocational and occupational qualifications who may experience cognitive decline associated with their age. SQA has a duty to assist centres with considerations of requests for reasonable adjustments, however we must also maintain the integrity of our qualifications. If a learner experiences cognitive decline and is unable to meet the competence standards set out for our vocational and occupational qualifications, we may refuse any requests for reasonable adjustments. Lowering the competence standard for the qualification compromises	As this policy covers all SQA qualification types, the policy applies to equally to learners of all ages. For this reason, it is anticipated that this policy has the potential to advance equality of opportunity for all learners, regardless of age.	As this policy covers all SQA qualification types, the policy applies to equally to learners of all ages. For this reason, it is anticipated that this policy has the potential to foster good relations between all learners, regardless of age.	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on the majority of learners entered for National Courses who are between the ages of 15 and 18.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	the integrity of our higher, vocational and occupational qualifications and this also has the potential to disadvantage the learner in their ability to demonstrate the competence required for roles in the relevant industry or sector.			
Disability **(including Digital Accessibility, Caring Responsibilities)**	The purpose of publishing this policy is for SQA to be transparent about our role, as well as those of external stakeholders, to enable learners to access to SQA qualifications. While SQA has the power to make reasonable adjustments and agree to assessment arrangements for disabled learners who require them, including those of learners with caring responsibilities for disabled family members, centres also have the responsibility to provide this on behalf of SQA, as an approved centre to deliver SQA qualifications. The annual increase in the number of assessment arrangements submitted for learners sitting exams for National Courses demonstrates how this policy is	The policy directly addresses disabled learners need for support to access SQA qualifications. It explains the processes SQA uses to ensure assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments are rigorous and fair. The assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments agreed by SQA allow disabled leaners or those with additional support needs to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding while maintaining the standard and integrity of SQA's assessments.	This policy, while enabling disabled learners to access our qualifications through making reasonable adjustments and a centre's provision of assessment arrangements, it also ensures that SQA does not negatively impact on the integrity of the qualification. SQA has a duty to ensure a learner's disability is not a barrier to accessing our qualifications, by making reasonable adjustments for those who require them, while maintaining public confidence in the certification of our qualifications. This has the potential to foster good relations between persons with a disability and those without, by ensuring the integrity of our	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on learners as a result of their disability or care responsibilities. SQA's established process of providing assessment arrangements and consideration of reasonable adjustments support learners to access our assessments.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	being implemented. It is recognised, however, that some learners, parents and carers who participated in SQA's national evaluation of assessment arrangements research expressed that they needed to continually advocate for disabled learners' needs to be met by centres. As this is the first time SQA has carried out this evaluation, it is anticipated that further evaluations will be carried out on a regular basis by Qualifications Scotland to ensure that the improvements implemented by SQA support learners, parents and carers and centres to access SQA qualifications. All documents published on SQA's website are required to meet the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities colleagues are on hand to support any SQA staff that need support with this, as are editors from the Marketing and Communications business area and SQA's Digital Accessibility Co-ordinator.	SQA has already started making improvements in this area, including removing Specification 3 under which SQA is not required to make reasonable adjustments for learners who need support from a human reader or scribe in the Literacy unit for English at all levels. This was following extensive consultation with internal as well as external stakeholders. Another change we introduced was around the use of devices (such as Apple and Chromebook devices) in our exams. A change to our security requirements ensures that we are consistent with our principle that any assessment arrangement a disabled learner needs in an external exam mirrors what they are used to in learning and teaching settings. Separate EqIAs have been completed for the removal of Specification 3 and the	qualifications is maintained for all learners, regardless of whether they have a disability. The change we introduced for the 2025 exam in relation to the use of devices (such as Apple and Chromebook devices) in our exams also has a positive impact on fostering relations between those with a disability and those who do not. A change to our security requirements ensures that we are consistent with our principle that any assessment arrangement a disabled learner needs in an external exam mirrors what they are used to in learning and teaching settings. As the change to our ICT security requirements apply to all learners, this removes any potential bias or comments against disabled learners who may be given access to ICT devices that their peers are unable to access. A separate EqIA has been completed for the change to SQA's stance on	

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
		change to SQA's stance on the use of ICT devices in our exams.	the use of ICT devices in our exams.	
Race **(Including nation of origin)**	The Equality of Access to Qualifications policy outlines our commitment to inclusive design within assessment and qualifications. Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities will continue to provide Qualifications Development staff with the support, training and guidance they need to enable them to be anti-racist and to fulfil the objectives of this policy. The purpose of this policy, supporting guidance documents to SQA staff and the Equality Review of Qualifications process is to remove or minimise any disadvantage, and to meet the needs of individuals with the protected characteristic of race. The above data shows that while the majority of learners entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses are White, the needs of 11% of Black, Asian and minority ethnic learners entered for our National Courses in 2024 must be considered to ensure we meet the objectives of Scottish	The Equality of Access to Qualifications policy outlines our commitment to inclusive design within assessment and qualifications. Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities will continue to provide Qualifications Development staff with the support, training and guidance they need to enable them to be anti-racist and to fulfil the objectives of this policy. The purpose of this policy, supporting guidance documents to SQA staff and the Equality Review of Qualifications process is to remove or minimise any disadvantage, and to meet the needs of individuals with the protected characteristic of race. This is an important aspect of SQA's role as the national awarding body of	Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities will continue to provide Qualifications Development staff with the support, training and guidance they need to enable them to be more anti-racist and to fulfil the objectives of this policy. The purpose of this policy, supporting guidance documents to SQA staff and the Equality Review of Qualifications process is to remove or minimise any disadvantage, and to meet the needs of individuals with the protected characteristic of race. This is an important aspect of SQA's role as the national awarding body of Scotland, to ensure that our qualifications continue to meet the needs of our Black, Asian and minority ethnic learner population and that the courses reflect a diverse cultural heritage to build on the aim of global	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on learners based on their race.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	Government's Anti-Racism in Education Programme. SQA's 2024 Equality Monitoring Report also highlights that of those whose race have been disclosed in the Pupil Census data held by Scottish Government that was provided to SQA through a data sharing agreement, the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic learners entered for National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher has increased from 7% in 2019 to 11% in 2024. The data shows there is a steady increase annually in the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic learners and a decrease in the proportion of White learners entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. It is important that SQA recognises this trend to ensure that our qualifications continue to meet the needs of our learner population and that the courses reflect a diverse cultural heritage to build on the aim of global citizenship that was identified during the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. A plan to develop an anti-racist approach within SQA qualifications	Scotland, to ensure that our qualifications continue to meet to the needs of our Black, Asian and minority ethnic learner population and that the courses reflect a diverse cultural heritage to build on the aim of global citizenship that was identified during the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.	citizenship that was identified during the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.	

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	has been created and SQA's Policy and Research Manager for Anti-Racist Education has been working with colleagues across the organisation to embed anti-racism within social science courses and in the documentation used by SQA appointees when developing and reviewing course and unit specifications. The work aims to broaden the awareness and understanding of SQA staff to enable them to the full range of qualifications offered to ensure these are more racially just and inclusive. The actions and work which will be completed will contribute to the aims and requirements outlined in this policy.			
Religion or Belief	The Equality of Access to Qualifications policy outlines our commitment to inclusive design within assessment and qualifications and the support and guidance Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities continue to provide to Qualifications Development staff to do this. The purpose of this policy, supporting guidance documents to SQA staff and the Equality Review of	The Equality of Access to Qualifications policy outlines our commitment to inclusive design within assessment and qualifications and the support and guidance Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities continue to provide to Qualifications Development staff to do this. The purpose	The Equality of Access to Qualifications policy outlines our commitment to inclusive design within assessment and qualifications and the support and guidance Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities continue to provide to Qualifications Development staff to do this. The purpose of this policy, supporting guidance documents to SQA	In SQA's range of qualifications, learners undertaking National Courses in Health and Food Technology, Practical Cookery and Practical Cake Craft have been identified as experiencing a barrier to accessing our courses. In Practical Cookery, for example, learners are assessed on their

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	Qualifications process is to remove or minimise any disadvantage, and to meet the needs of individuals with the protected characteristic of religion or belief. As part of our Equality Review of Qualifications process, SQA's Qualifications Development staff review our suite of qualifications to identify positive and negative impacts of assessment requirements; where any negative impacts are identified, justifications are provided where barriers can be removed or mitigations put in place to remove the negative impact for learners on the basis of their religion or belief.	of this policy, supporting guidance documents to SQA staff and the Equality Review of Qualifications process is to remove or minimise any disadvantage, and to meet the needs of individuals with the protected characteristic of religion or belief. In SQA's range of qualifications, learners undertaking National Courses in Health and Food Technology, Practical Cookery and Practical Cake Craft have been identified as experiencing a barrier to accessing our courses. In Practical Cookery, for example, learners are assessed on their competences with cooking specified dishes. For learners who are unable to handle specific ingredients due to their religion or belief, for example vegetarians or vegans who do not handle meat, as a reasonable adjustment these learners have the	staff and the Equality Review of Qualifications process is to remove or minimise any disadvantage, and to meet the needs of individuals with the protected characteristic of religion or belief. This is an important aspect of SQA's role as the national awarding body of Scotland, to ensure that our qualifications continue to meet to the needs of learners with different religions or beliefs, and that the courses reflect this diversity to build on the aim of global citizenship that was identified during the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.	competences with cooking specified dishes. For learners who are unable to handle specific ingredients due to their religion or belief, for example vegetarians or vegans who do not handle meat, as a reasonable adjustment these learners have the option to use meat alternatives. Furthermore, a common enquiry SQA receives is in relation to the scheduled annual exam diet and the impact this has on learners who are fasting, for example for Ramadan. Due to the period in which schools and local authorities schedule their April holidays, this leaves SQA with a small window in which to deliver our annual exam diet, have learners' responses assessed and quality assured to ensure learners receive their certificates in August. For this reason, SQA advises centres to ensure appropriate support is in place for learners who are impacted during the exams when

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
		option to use meat alternatives. Furthermore, a common enquiry SQA receives is in relation to the scheduled annual exam diet and the impact this has on learners who are fasting, for example for Ramadan. Due to the period in which schools and local authorities schedule their April holidays, this leaves SQA with a small window in which to deliver our annual exam diet, have learners' responses assessed and quality assured to ensure learners receive their certificates in August. For this reason, SQA advises centres to ensure appropriate support is in place for learners who are impacted during the exams when following religious traditions as a temporary arrangement (such as breaks), and to submit a request through our Exam Exceptional Circumstance Consideration Service where required. This allows		following religious traditions as a temporary arrangement (such as breaks), and to submit a request through our Exam Exceptional Circumstance Consideration Service where required. It is also recognised that a learner's ability to perform at their best where an assessment requires physical activity (for example Physical Education or Practical Woodwork) may be impacted as a result of fasting. As any assessments that require learners to carry out physical activity are internally assessed, centres have the option to determine the appropriate assessment window to minimise any impact of fasting on the learner's demonstrated attainment. These measures put in place allows learners to still demonstrate their competences and be assessed against the same

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
		academic assessment evidence produced by the learner in the course of the academic session before the exam diet started to be considered alongside any exam evidence produced to ensure the learner is not disadvantaged. It is also recognised that a learner's ability to perform at their best where an assessment requires physical activity (for example Physical Education or Practical Woodwork) may be impacted as a result of fasting. As any assessments that require learners to carry out physical activity are internally assessed, centres have the option to determine the appropriate assessment window to minimise any impact of fasting on the learner's demonstrated attainment. These measures put in place allows learners to still demonstrate their		key skills required as part of the national standard.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
		competences and be assessed against the same key skills required as part of the national standard.		
Sex	A learner's sex is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sex. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects language appropriate to learners of all sexes. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made to learners where their sex has been identified as a barrier to accessing our qualifications.	A learner's sex is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sex. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects language appropriate to learners of all sexes. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made to learners where their sex has been identified as a barrier to accessing our qualifications.	A learner's sex is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sex. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects language appropriate to learners of all sexes. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made to learners where their sex has been identified as a barrier to accessing our qualifications.	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on learners based on their sex.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
Sexual Orientation	A learner's sexual orientation is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sexual orientation. According to the LGBT Youth Scotland's Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education Report 2023, only 21% participants saw LGBT+ representation within the curriculum outside of sexual health or mental health-focused lessons, and that inclusive education should be embedded throughout the curriculum, and that LGBTI young people should see themselves represented in the materials they are using. This is an important aspect and objective of this policy in designing new and reviewing existing SQA's range of qualifications. We aim to achieve this by continuing to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us from our equality partners such as Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) and address any improvements that can be made.	A learner's sexual orientation is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sexual orientation. According to the LGBT Youth Scotland's Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education Report 2023, only 21% participants saw LGBT+ representation within the curriculum outside of sexual health or mental health-focused lessons, and that inclusive education should be embedded throughout the curriculum, and that LGBTI young people should see themselves represented in the materials they are using. This is an important aspect and objective of this policy in designing new and reviewing existing SQA's range of qualifications.	A learner's sexual orientation is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sexual orientation. According to the LGBT Youth Scotland's Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education Report 2023, only 21% participants saw LGBT+ representation within the curriculum outside of sexual health or mental health-focused lessons, and that inclusive education should be embedded throughout the curriculum, and that LGBTI young people should see themselves represented in the materials they are using. This is an important aspect and objective of this policy in designing new and reviewing existing SQA's range of qualifications. We aim to achieve this by continuing to monitor any	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on learners based on their sexual orientation.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
		We aim to achieve this by continuing to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us from our equality partners such as Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) and address any improvements that can be made.	enquiries or feedback made to us from our equality partners such as Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) and address any improvements that can be made.	
Gender Re-assignment **(Gender identity and trans status)**	A learner's gender identity or trans status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their gender identity or trans status. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects language appropriate to learners of all genders. SQA equality colleagues have also been working closely with our Marketing and Communications colleagues to develop an inclusive language guide to be used by all SQA staff to	A learner's gender identity or trans status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their gender identity or trans status. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects language appropriate to learners of all genders. SQA equality colleagues	A learner's gender identity or trans status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their gender identity or trans status. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects language appropriate to learners of all genders. SQA equality colleagues have also been working closely with our Marketing and	As part of our Equality Review of Qualifications process, SQA's Qualifications Development staff review our suite of qualifications to identify positive and negative impacts of assessment requirements; where any negative impacts are identified, justifications are provided where barriers can be removed or mitigations put in place to remove the negative impact for learners on the basis of their gender identity or trans status. It has been identified in our Drama National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, for example, that gendered roles in the Performance

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	ensure that all colleagues are consistent in the language and terminology used, to be as inclusive as possible. As part of our Equality Review of Qualifications process, SQA's Qualifications Development staff review our suite of qualifications to identify positive and negative impacts of assessment requirements; where any negative impacts are identified, justifications are provided where barriers can be removed or mitigations put in place to remove the negative impact for learners on the basis of their gender. It has been identified in our Drama National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, for example, that gendered roles in the Performance component could pose a potential barrier for learners. Guidance has been provided to centres to advise that learners who take on an acting role can choose a character that is opposite to the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent.	have also been working closely with our Marketing and Communications colleagues to develop an inclusive language guide to be used by all SQA staff to ensure that all colleagues are consistent in the language and terminology used, to be as inclusive as possible. As part of our Equality Review of Qualifications process, it has been identified that gendered roles in the Performance component of our Drama National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher could pose a potential barrier for learners. Guidance has been provided to centres to advise that learners who take on an acting role can choose a character that is opposite to the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent.	Communications colleagues to develop an inclusive language guide to be used by all SQA staff to ensure that all colleagues are consistent in the language and terminology used, to be as inclusive as possible. As part of our Equality Review of Qualifications process, it has been identified that gendered roles in the Performance component of our Drama National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher could pose a potential barrier for learners. Guidance has been provided to centres to advise that learners who take on an acting role can choose a character that is different from the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made to learners where their gender or trans status has	component could pose a potential barrier for learners. Guidance has been provided to centres to advise that learners who take on an acting role can choose a character that is opposite to the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made to learners where their gender or trans status has been identified as a barrier to accessing our qualifications.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made to learners where their gender or trans status has been identified as a barrier to accessing our qualifications.	We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made to learners where their gender or trans status has been identified as a barrier to accessing our qualifications.	been identified as a barrier to accessing our qualifications.	
Marriage/Civil Partnership (Only relevant to employment-related policy, strategy or service)	A learner's marital or civil partnership status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their marital or civil partnership status. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made.	A learner's marital or civil partnership status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sexual orientation. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made.	A learner's marital or civil partnership status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their sexual orientation. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made.	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on learners based on their marital or civil partnership status.
Pregnancy / Maternity	A learner's pregnancy or maternity status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners	A learner's pregnancy or maternity status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on	A learner's pregnancy or maternity status is not used as a criterion for access to any of SQA's qualifications. It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on learners based on their pregnancy or maternity status.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	regardless of their pregnancy or maternity status. SQA has a longstanding process to support learners who are pregnant or have recently given birth to allow them to access our external assessments of National Courses. Support can be provided as a temporary disability (for example breaks or separate accommodation) to allow learners who are pregnant, have recently given birth or breastfeeding to access the assessment while looking after their own wellbeing and that of their child. SQA-approved centres are also required to take into account such considerations to allow learners to access our other qualifications while also considering the health and safety of the learner. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made.	all learners regardless of their pregnancy or maternity status. SQA has a longstanding process to support learners who are pregnant or have recently given birth to allow them to access our external assessments of National Courses. Support can be provided as a temporary disability (for example breaks or separate accommodation) to allow learners who are pregnant, have recently given birth or breastfeeding to access the assessment while looking after their own wellbeing and that of their child. SQA-approved centres are also required to take into account such considerations to allow learners to access our other qualifications while also considering the health and safety of the learner. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address	regardless of their pregnancy or maternity status. SQA has a longstanding process to support learners who are pregnant or have recently given birth to allow them to access our external assessments of National Courses. Support can be provided as a temporary disability (for example breaks or separate accommodation) to allow learners who are pregnant, have recently given birth or breastfeeding to access the assessment while looking after their own wellbeing and that of their child. SQA-approved centres are also required to take into account such considerations to allow learners to access our other qualifications while also considering the health and safety of the learner. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made.	

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
		any improvements that can be made.		
Care experience **(Looked after children, Corporate Parenting responsibilities)**	While not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, as a Corporate Parent, SQA has the duty to ensure that care experienced learners' needs are met, to remove any barriers preventing them from accessing our assessments and qualifications. Centres are asked to consider the needs of care experienced learners and to determine the most appropriate assessment arrangements, where required, if they experience difficulties with accessing SQA qualifications. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address any improvements that can be made. Furthermore, learners' looked after status has been provided by Scottish Government's from the Pupil Census data as part of the data sharing agreement application. Further work will need to be undertaken internally by SQA on how this information can be used ethically and sensitively while	While not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, as a Corporate Parent, SQA has the duty to ensure that care experienced learners' needs are met, to remove any barriers preventing them from accessing our assessments and qualifications. Centres are asked to consider the needs of care experienced learners and to determine the most appropriate assessment arrangements, where required, if they experience difficulties with accessing SQA qualifications. We continue to engage with our equality partners that represent care experienced learners to ensure that there are no barriers to them accessing our qualifications. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us and address	While not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, as a Corporate Parent, SQA has the duty to ensure that care experienced learners' needs are met, to remove any barriers preventing them from accessing our assessments and qualifications. Centres are asked to consider the needs of care experienced learners and to determine the most appropriate assessment arrangements, where required, if they experience difficulties with accessing SQA qualifications. We continue to engage with our equality partners that represent care experienced learners to ensure that there are no barriers to them accessing our qualifications. We will continue to monitor any enquiries or feedback made to us, including those from Who Cares? Scotland and our other equality key partners, to	No negative impacts have been identified from this policy on learners as a result of their care experience status. SQA's established process of providing assessment arrangements and consideration of reasonable adjustments support care experienced learners to access our assessments.

Protected Characteristic	Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment	Advance Equality of Opportunity	Foster Good Relations	Mitigating actions or opportunities (if relevant)
	allowing us to monitor the impact of this policy on learners with care experience.	any improvements that can be made.	address any improvements that can be made to foster good relations between care experienced learners and their peers.	

Conclusion, monitoring, and rationale

Briefly summarise the positive impacts of your work for people who share protected characteristics

It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their protected characteristics. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects inclusive language used by all equality groups.

SQA's established process of providing assessment arrangements and consideration of reasonable adjustments supports disabled learners (and care experienced learners, where appropriate, and those with a temporary need for such support such as those who are pregnant, have just given birth or are breastfeeding) to access our assessments. Steps have been taken by SQA's Policy and Research Manager for Anti-Racist Education to work with embedding anti-racism in SQA's range of qualifications.

Furthermore, SQA's equality colleagues have been working closely with our Marketing and Communications colleagues to develop a guide to inclusive language to be used by all SQA colleagues. This is to ensure we are consistent in our use of inclusive language and terminology across all of our materials. It is intended that this document will supplement our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy for SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees when designing new (and reviewing existing) assessments for our range of qualifications.

Briefly describe how your work might eliminate discrimination

It is anticipated that this policy has the potential to have a positive impact on all learners regardless of their protected characteristics. Our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy is produced to support SQA's Qualifications Development staff and appointees to ensure that our assessment materials are as inclusive as possible and reflects inclusive language used by all equality groups.

Furthermore, SQA's equality colleagues have been working closely with our Marketing and Communications colleagues to develop a guide to inclusive language to be used by all SQA colleagues. This is to ensure we are consistent in our use of inclusive language and terminology across all of our materials. It is intended that this document will supplement our Designing Inclusive Assessment course on SQA Academy.

SQA's established process of providing assessment arrangements and consideration of reasonable adjustments support disabled learners (and care experienced learners, where appropriate, and those with a temporary need for such support such as those who are pregnant, have just given birth or are breastfeeding) to access our assessments.

As part of our Equality Review of Qualifications process, SQA's Qualifications Development staff review our suite of qualifications to identify positive and negative impacts of assessment requirements; where any negative impacts are identified, justifications are provided where barriers can be removed or mitigations put in place to remove the negative impact for learners on the basis of their protected characteristics. For example, learners who take on an acting role in the Performance component of our National Course in Drama can choose a character opposite to their identified gender. In addition, learners undertaking our Health and Food Technology, Practical Cookery and Practical Cake Craft courses can use ingredient alternatives where this is a barrier due to their religion or belief to allow them to be assessed against the same competences as all other learners.

Reasonable adjustments that have been made in the past for individual neurodivergent learners include bringing fidget toys, having a familiar face who is a member of centre staff on campus or in the exam room with the learner, or anxiety aid devices that meet our ICT security requirements.

Briefly describe how your work might advance equality of opportunity

SQA's established process of providing assessment arrangements and consideration of reasonable adjustments support disabled learners (and care experienced learners, where appropriate, and those with a temporary need for such support such as those who are pregnant, have just given birth or breastfeeding) to access our assessments. This is important in ensuring that all learners have the right support to enable them to access the assessment to demonstrate their competence against national standards.

Embedding anti-racist principles in the design and review of qualifications is an important aspect of SQA's role as the national awarding body of Scotland, to ensure that our qualifications continue to meet to the needs of our Black, Asian and minority ethnic learner population and that the courses reflect a diverse cultural heritage to build on the aim of global citizenship that was identified during the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

The principles of this policy underpin the considerations taken by SQA staff within the Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities Team when supporting other colleagues across SQA business areas and directorates. This includes:

♦ consideration of complex assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustment requests
♦ review of SQA's ICT security requirements that enable more learners to use ICT devices in exams for National Courses that they are familiar with in learning and teaching settings

- review of qualifications relating to social subjects to embed anti-racism
- removal of Specification 3 under which SQA is not required to make reasonable adjustments under section 96(7) of the Equality Act 2010 for English Literacy Units
- implementation of gender-neutral language within the Speaking and Writing assessments of Modern Languages
- production of an internal guide for SQA staff on the use of inclusive language

Briefly describe how your work might foster good relations

This policy is important in setting out SQA's role and responsibility in the development and review of our range of qualifications. However, centres, learners, parents and carers also have an important role. We rely on strong dialogue and communication with our internal and external customers to ensure the needs of learners from all equality groups are met. While it may be difficult for this policy to foster good relations, for example, for care experienced learners with their peers and wider society where their care experience status is not known, this policy reinforces SQA's commitments as a Corporate Parent to ensure there are no barriers preventing them from accessing our qualifications. Where barriers are identified, steps will be taken using established processes within SQA to address and remove these, or put mitigations in place where the barrier cannot be removed.

In line with other PSEDs, embedding anti-racist principles in the design and review of qualifications is an important aspect of SQA's role as the national awarding body of Scotland, to ensure that our qualifications continue to meet to the needs of our Black, Asian and minority ethnic learner population and that the courses reflect a diverse cultural heritage to build on the aim of global citizenship that was identified during the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

The implementation of a change to SQA's security requirements for ICT devices used in exams for National Courses is also intended to have a positive impact to foster good relations between all learners with protected characteristics and those who do not. This decision was undertaken based on feedback from centres and how this impacted on disabled learners who used ICT as an assessment arrangement and those who use ICT devices as part of their way of working learning and teaching. A separate EqIA was produced in relation to this decision.

How will you monitor the real impacts?

SQA currently monitors the number of assessment arrangement requests submitted to us by centres on behalf of disabled learners and those with additional support needs. SQA has requested further equality data from Scottish Government's Pupil Census data to allow us to match this against our learner dataset. While still incomplete, it provides SQA access to additional equality data that we previously did not have access to.

SQA will also continue to consider publicly available equality data that might be helpful evidence to inform decision making relating to improving equality of access to SQA qualifications for groups of learners from the same equality group. Where appropriate, SQA will also consider submitting an application to access equality data for college learners through the Scottish Funding Council. This will enable us to monitor the uptake of SQA's range of qualifications across local authority schools as well as colleges.

In addition to this, feedback from our internal and external stakeholders will continue to be monitored by all SQA staff to ensure that any suggestions for improvement to ensure there is an equality of access to SQA qualifications for learners of all equality groups are considered, and where possible, actioned.

Have you identified negative impacts against equality groups?

Guidance has been provided to centres to advise that learners who take on an acting role for the Performance component of our National Courses in Drama can choose a character that is opposite to the gender they identify with, however there may be restrictions to this depending on the playwright's intent.

In addition to this, there are qualifications which may be perceived as discriminating against particular groups of learners, for example wheelchair users who are unable to access dance and performing arts qualifications.

If yes, have you identified mitigating actions?

Consideration is given to each request on a case-by-case basis. However, SQA's established Equality Review of Qualifications process is used by Qualifications Development staff and appointees to record their considerations to any positive and negative impacts (and barriers) a qualification may present to learners from an equality group. It is important to recognise learners with the same protected characteristic are not a homogenous group and that each learner may have a different perspective of what it means for our qualifications to be inclusive. Due to the nature of each individual disabled learner's difficulty or their lived experience, it is not possible to ensure that are qualifications meet the needs of all learners.

SQA will continue to work with our internal and external stakeholders, including our Equality and Inclusion Key Partners Group, to ensure that any feedback is considered when reviewing our range of qualifications. It is, however, important to note that it is not always possible to make changes to our qualifications where there is a competence being assessed that is a requirement of the industry or sector. If SQA considered making a change to our qualifications that did not mirror the approach taken by further and higher education institutions, employers and training providers, this could result in the learner being disadvantaged by not having the relevant competences they require to progress in this field of study or employment. It is for this reason that SQA considers each request carefully to ensure that learners are certificated for our qualifications with the relevant competences they need to progress on to further and higher education and employment opportunities.

How will you monitor the effectiveness of mitigating actions?

SQA will continue to monitor each request with support from our Policy, Analysis and Standards – Equalities colleagues as they are received to ensure that the integrity of our qualifications are maintained, while also ensuring that, as far as possible, learners are not disadvantaged when accessing our qualifications because of their protected characteristic.

If you have identified negative impacts, without an avenue to mitigate, how can you justify the rationale to continue with this policy, strategy or service?

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