

Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

Summary

Name of Policy or practice	Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS) – Information for centres		
New Policy or Revision	Revision of information/guidance relating to the 2025 exam timetable.		
Policy Owner (role)	Guidance: Head of QA-NQ – EECCS Information for centres		
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	February 2025		
Agreed Schedule Review Date	October 2025	Additional review date (Action review date)	October 2025

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.

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
Analysis of number, type, trends or patterns of assessment arrangements, assess the number of EECCS requests made under the temporary changes, and monitor feedback on these types of EECCS.		October 2025	Ongoing – to be reviewed post 2025 diet completion.
Continue to monitor requests and feedback from internal and external stakeholders		October 2025	SQA staff will continue to monitor feedback and requests for change from internal and external stakeholders to identify potential areas for improvement to the assessment arrangement request service.

Policy Aims

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?

As part of the Awarding 2025 approach, the EECCS will be available to support learners who are undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Courses.

EECCS

The EECCS supports learners who have been unable to attend an examination or learners 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 SQA's examination timetable.

Exceptional circumstances are circumstances that are unplanned and fundamentally affect the ability of learners to attend or perform on the day in an examination. Examiners are provided with the learner's estimate, any alternative academic evidence, any relevant non-question paper component candidate materials (for example a folio or project), and any attempted question papers related to the request.

Examiners review this evidence and award a grade. Eligibility for the EECCS is determined by the school, college or training provider based on guidance provided by SQA and authorised by the head of centre or their delegate. In other words, centres access the service to help support fairness of access — there is no direct access for learners. Responsibility for determining eligibility to use the service lies with the head of centre or their delegate. This is important as it is the schools, colleges and training providers that are closer to the particular circumstances learners experience and so it is appropriate that they make these decisions in collaboration with their learners, based on this developed understanding of their circumstances and the associated impacts. Also, centres are better placed to understand the specific requirements related to the submission of an EECCS request and as such can better support learners in deciding whether a request should be made.

SQA has trust in the head of centre role to ensure use of the service is as legitimate and consistent as possible. It should be noted that learners are required to give their consent to ensure they agree with a request being submitted on their behalf.

All learners are eligible for the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service where:

- they have experienced a valid exceptional circumstance
- they have completed all the compulsory non-question paper components
- an estimate has been submitted for them

- alternative evidence for the impacted examination components is available.

This is a pre-certification service that covers situations where an exceptional circumstance may have impacted a learner's performance on the day of an examination. Non-question paper components are not covered by the service. Existing arrangements for these non-question paper components allow enough flexibility for learners who are unable to meet submission dates or attend a scheduled visiting assessment.

Changes to the EECCS for 2025 only

Following the development of the 2025 examination timetable, we are aware that there are examination combinations that mean learners with extra time assessment arrangements will be required to sit over six hours of exams which SQA have a working rule to avoid. In order to best support impacted learners, an update will be made to the EECCS information for centres document to allow centres to notify SQA of an exceptional circumstances request in advance of an exam and on the day as required, from the point the service opens in April 2025.

We are also aware that there are some learners who may have booked a holiday to take place over dates which, now the timetable has changed, have exams but did not in an earlier version of the timetable. Because we did not advise learners that the timetable could be subject to change, we will adapt our EECCS information for centres document to allow impacted learners access to the service where they can demonstrate that they booked their holiday prior to the timetable changing on 3 February 2025 and their centre has approved this, where applicable, under the criteria 'Exceptional Absence'. This change will also permit learners, subject to the same evidence requirements as holiday bookings, to access EECCS if they have made overseas travel arrangements for other activities such as attending events outwith Scotland.

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

Based on feedback from parents and centres on behalf of their learners, along with analysis of our assessment arrangements and timetable data, we consider this evidence to demonstrate that these changes are necessary to address learner needs.

What are the aims of this policy or practice?

For the 2025 diet only, we will revise our EECCS information for centres to allow requests to be submitted for AA learners with extra time only where this would exceed six hours of total exams in one day

Through these changes, we will extend the use of the coincident guidance and provide advanced access to EECCS for AA learners with extra time exceeding six hours of exams in one day once the EECCS service is open. With reference to EECCS, this would mean recording these instances as 'exceptional absence: timetable circumstances' and, where necessary, increasing the operational resource required to manage this.

The benefits of these changes are that centres can consider coincident options for impacted extra time learners and if these are not suitable, EECCS requests can be made in advance or on the day where required.

We will also revise for the 2025 diet our EECCS information for centres to allow requests to be submitted for learners who have booked holidays on dates that now have exams where they can provide written proof that their booking was made prior to the timetable changing on 3 February 2025 and they have approval from their centre, where applicable. This change will also permit learners, subject to the same evidence requirements as holiday bookings, to access EECCS if they have made overseas travel arrangements for other activities such as attending events outwith Scotland. These requests will be considered under the criteria 'Exceptional Absence'.

The benefit of this change is that centres can consider EECCS as an option for impacted learners in light of circumstances beyond their control impacting a holiday if they can demonstrate that they booked it prior to 3 February 2025 and where the holiday is due to take place within the revised exam timetable window or that the learner is not eligible for our Alternative Venue service but meets EECCS eligibility requirements.

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

SQA's EECC services are available to all learners undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications. SQA has considered the impact of these services on learners with protected characteristics. Furthermore, we have also considered learners and relevant others who are care experienced. In undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment of these changes to the guidance relating to the EECC services, we aim to establish whether there is a perceived differential impact on these groups of learners and consider what mitigating actions SQA may introduce.

SQA's EECCS is available to all learners undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications. The service meets the needs of a number of learners with the protected characteristic of disability — for example, disabled learners, or those that have additional support needs, or those who have a long-term health condition, as their circumstances mean they are more likely to utilise such a service.

EECCS is a service unique to Scotland in which alternative evidence can be submitted by schools, colleges and training providers on behalf of their learners. This is not a service made available by other UK awarding bodies. In this respect, the changes have a positive impact for learners with a range of protected characteristics, in particular disability and pregnancy or maternity. Allowing alternative evidence to be submitted and reviewed alongside any attempted coursework and exam scripts allows SQA examiners to determine a fair and appropriate grade. This means that where a learner's exam performance may have been affected by a disruption or exceptional circumstance, EECCS ensures an appropriate grade is awarded and shown on the certificate they receive in August, rather than having to wait until after certification for this to be reviewed.

The acknowledgement of the impacts of disruption on all learners creates a set of arrangements with the potential to impact positively on all learners, including those with a range of protected characteristics. The update to the EECCS provides additional support for individual learners with additional challenges in undertaking exams in 2025 and following conclusion of the 2025 diet, the impact of this extra support will be monitored and where there is a demonstrated positive impact, consideration given to instating the changes permanently as part of our EECCS policy. The changes are most likely to offer support to learners with protected characteristics of disability.

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

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

The update to the EECCS information for centres document has been informed following review of information provided by parents and centres. Internal SQA staff across the business have also been consulted on this change, this includes colleagues from Operations and Policy, Analysis and Standards.

The evidence provided under each of the equality groups listed below relate to the provision of the EECCS as a whole. The update to the service following engagement from parents, teachers and learners will mean we are able to better support learners over the 2025 diet with requirements resulting from disability and additional support needs or circumstances relating to the impact of change of timetable dates which was outwith learner control on holidays or travel booked before 3 February 2025.

These changes are temporary and have been implemented specifically to mitigate the adverse impact of the 2025 examination timetable on learners. The impact of these changes will be monitored post delivery of the 2025 diet and the evidence detailed in this EqIA developed following consideration of this.

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

Age

SQA's EECC services are available to all learners undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.

SQA's Equality Monitoring Report 2024 provides the following data for entries for these National Courses in academic year 2023-24:

National 5 entries by age: below 15 — 0.2% 15 to 18 — 99.3% over 18 — 0.5%

Higher entries by age: below 15 — 0.0% 15 to 18 — 99.2% over 18 — 0.8%

Advanced Higher entries by age: below 15 — 0.0% 15 to 18 — 99.6% over 18 — 0.4%

As such, it can be determined that the majority of learners undertaking National Courses are between 15 and 18 years of age. This means that the majority of learners taking National Courses would be regarded as children and young people and as such, this is the demographic that is most affected by policy decisions related to the EECCS.

Disability	<p>SQA's EECCS is available to all learners undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.</p> <p>An exceptional circumstance is a circumstance that is unplanned and fundamentally affects a learner's ability to attend or perform on the day in an examination. Exceptional circumstances are categorised as personal circumstances or examination circumstances. These are called outline reasons. Under each outline reason there are detailed reasons, such as a medical condition or a disruption. Centres are not required to specify the nature of the medical condition when submitting a request.</p> <p>Using 2024 data, out of a cohort of over 145,000, 32,030 learners required an assessment arrangement and of these assessment arrangements, 74% were for extra time. The updates to this service for 2025 will mean we are continuing to meet the needs of learners who have an assessment arrangement and the protected characteristic of disability — for example, learners with a disability, or those that have additional support needs, or those who have a long-term health condition, as their circumstances mean they are more likely to utilise such a service.</p> <p>SQA has maintained open communications through its social media channels and by publishing articles on the SQA website related to EECCS and will continue to do so in relation to the changes for the 2025 diet. EECCS content and the 2025 update is available to all learners and relates to developments with National Qualifications.</p>
Race	<p>Information on the race of individuals who submit EECCS requests is not sought or recorded. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>SQA do not collect learner data on religion or belief. Information regarding the religion or belief of individuals who submit EECCS requests is not sought or recorded. The EECCS policy, information to centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.</p> <p>SQA is aware that there is a gap in the equality data held relating to this protected characteristic. Work is currently underway to explore opportunities for SQA to access available equality data for learners that allow us to better understand how our products and services impact on learners with a range of protected characteristics.</p>
Sex	<p>SQA's EECC services are available to all learners undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher National Qualifications. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners. SQA's Equality Monitoring Report 2024 provides the following data for entries for these National Courses in academic year 2023-24:</p> <p>National 5 entries by sex: Female — 50.2% Male — 49.8%</p>

	Higher entries by sex: Female — 54.1% Male — 45.9% Advanced Higher entries by sex: Female — 54.9% Male — 45.1%
Sexual Orientation	Information regarding sexual orientation is not sought or recorded by the EECCS. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	Information regarding gender re-assignment (gender identity and transgender) is not sought or recorded by the EECCS. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.
Marriage/Civil Partnership	SQA do not collect learner data on marriage or civil partnerships. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.
Pregnancy / Maternity	SQA do not collect learner data on pregnancy and maternity. EECCS policy, information for centres and associated processes apply equally to all learners.
Care experience (where relevant)	SQA has a corporate parenting commitment to ensure its EqIA 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). We have identified no evidence of potential barriers in relation to this category as part of our considerations regarding updating the EECCS options and information for centres.

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
	<p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups. SQA does not hold any evidence to demonstrate that the process has a negative impact on learners with regard to the protected characteristic of age.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p>
	Foster good relations
<p>SQA will continue to seek the views of children and young people on any proposed changes to the future of assessment, qualifications, communications and services.</p> <p>Conclusion: likely no impact)</p>	

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Disability	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The changes outlined are designed to have a positive impact on learners with disability as in situations where they have extra time assessment arrangements, they are likely to have more time and as a result, need additional routes for support which the changes are designed to introduce.</p> <p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups. It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner's behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented, and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners' individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.</p> <p>The EECC service and changes to information for centres guidance for the 2025 exam diet have been developed to support learners who experience disruption at the time of the exam or as a result of the 2025 exam timetable being delivered over fewer days. The temporary changes to the EECCS are designed to ensure that learners impacted by a disruption or exceptional circumstance are still able to receive a grade that reflects their demonstrated attainment, particularly learners with the protected characteristic of disability — for example, disabled learners, or those that have additional support needs, or those who have a long-term health condition, as their circumstances mean they are more likely to utilise such a service.</p>

	<p>EECCS is a service unique to Scotland in which alternative evidence can be submitted by schools, colleges and training providers on behalf of their learners. This is not a service made available by other UK awarding bodies. In this respect, this has a positive impact for learners with the protected characteristic of disability.</p> <p>Examination arrangement related exceptional circumstances include situations where the learner's centre fails to correctly implement a pre-agreed assessment arrangement. Assessment arrangements allow disabled learners or those with additional support needs access to appropriate arrangements to complete the assessment without compromising its integrity.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Foster good relations</p> <p>SQA has maintained open communications through its social media channels and by publishing articles on the SQA website related to EECCS. This content is available to all learners and relates to developments with National Qualifications.</p> <p>Conclusion: likely no impact</p>
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Race	<p style="text-align: center;">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups.</p> <p>It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner's behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used and therefore cannot guarantee that the policy and guidance is applied without bias. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners' individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS.</p>

	<p>There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.</p> <p>Conclusion: likely no impact</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>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 a ‘Your Exams’ guide which is written in age-appropriate plain English. Centre guidance produced for EECCS makes clear that centres are responsible for holding advisory discussions with learners to ensure they clearly understand the purpose of both services, the associated eligibility criteria, and how to submit a request. They are also responsible for helping the learner to determine if it is appropriate to use the services based on their individual circumstances, estimates and grades.</p> <p>As highlighted in the Scottish Qualifications Authority Children’s Rights Report April 2020 to April 2023, anti-racism is a priority within Scottish education. Pupils, parents and educators alike have stressed the importance of widening the curriculum and designing education environments that are free from racism. Understanding how racism shows up in policy, procedures and products is essential to engaging with this work and it is understood that this requires long-term effort. SQA has a dedicated Research and Policy Manager who drives this anti-racist education work and we have recently engaged our director of communications as a sponsor for anti-racist education.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Religion or Belief	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups.</p>

	<p>It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner’s behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners’ individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Foster good relations</p> <p>SQA will continue to seek the views of children and young people on any proposed changes to the future of assessment, qualifications, communications and services.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p>
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	<p style="text-align: center;">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups.</p> <p>It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner’s behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to</p>

	<p>be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners' individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Foster good relations</p> <p>SQA will continue to seek the views of children and young people on any proposed changes to the future of assessment, qualifications, communications and services.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p>
<p>Protected Characteristic</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">General Equality Duty</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups.</p> <p>It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner's behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners' individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p>

	Conclusion: negative impact mitigated
	Advance equality of opportunity
	Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.
	Conclusion: Likely no impact
	Foster good relations
	As highlighted in the Scottish Qualifications Authority Children’s Rights Report April 2020 to April 2023, SQA is a member of the LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation Group which was established to take forward the recommendations of a report developed by the LGBT Inclusive Education Working Group in November 2018. The Scottish Government accepted all 33 recommendations of the report.
	Recommendation 15 is specific to SQA: In recognising the centrality of national qualifications in shaping educational discourse, that SQA and Education Scotland work with the Implementation Group to ensure appropriate inclusion of LGBT matters in the development of new or adapted course specifications, and relevant guidance, across the curriculum.
	SQA is committed to incorporating LGBT matters in new and revised National Courses. This commitment is driven by Recommendation 15 of the LGBT Inclusive Education Working Group report to the Scottish Ministers.
Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups. It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner’s behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners’ individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate

	<p>and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Advance equality of opportunity</p> <p>Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Foster good relations</p> <p>SQA has developed guidance for centres that raises awareness of gender identity and transgender and provides information on updating SQA's transgender learners' personal information</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p>
<p>Protected Characteristic</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">General Equality Duty</p>
<p>Marriage/Civil Partnership</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups.</p> <p>It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner's behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners' individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>

	Advance equality of opportunity
	Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.
	Conclusion: Likely no impact
	Foster good relations
	SQA does not have a Public Sector Equality duty to foster good relations on the basis of marriage and civil partnership
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 EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups.
	It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner’s behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners’ individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.
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	Advance equality of opportunity
	Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.

	<p>The EECC service and changes to information for centres guidance for the 2025 exam diet have been developed to support learners who experience disruption at the time of the exam or as a result of the 2025 exam timetable being delivered over fewer days. The temporary changes to the EECCS are designed to ensure ensure that learners impacted by a disruption or exceptional circumstance are still able to receive a grade that reflects their demonstrated attainment, particularly learners with the protected characteristic of pregnancy or maternity as their circumstances mean they are more likely to utilise such a service.</p> <p>EECCS is a service unique to Scotland in which alternative evidence can be submitted by schools, colleges and training providers on behalf of their learners. This is not a service made available by other UK awarding bodies. In this respect, this has a positive impact for learners with the protected characteristic of pregnancy or maternity.</p> <p>Examination arrangement related exceptional circumstances include situations where the learner's centre fails to correctly implement a pre-agreed assessment arrangement. Assessment arrangements allow disabled learners and or those with additional support needs, access to appropriate arrangements to complete the assessment without compromising its integrity</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
	Foster good relations
	<p>SQA will continue to seek the views of children and young people on any proposed changes to the future of assessment, qualifications, communications and services.</p> <p>Due to the lack of evidence in this area, it is not possible to identify further impacts that might foster good relations between this group and others.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p>
	General Equality Duty
Considered by SQA	
Care experience (where relevant)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>The EECCS policy and information for centres apply equally to all learners and all equality groups.</p> <p>It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to submit a request for EECCS on the learner's behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used. SQA take steps through communication plans to clearly explain to centres situations where EECCS can be implemented and the guidance provides a mechanism for this to</p>

	<p>be done fairly. However, SQA relies on the professional judgement of schools, colleges and training providers and their understanding of the learners' individual circumstances to best support their learners to make an appropriate and informed decision about whether to access EECCS. There is also the option for learners with protected characteristics or their parent or carer to contact SQA if they are not satisfied with the way in which their concerns have been handled by the school, college or training provider.</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>Core principle underpinning the EECC service; Fairness — any service should seek to ensure fairness both to those learners who access the service as well as to those who do not. In other words, it should not confer an unfair advantage. Where an opportunity may exist in the future to advance equality of opportunity for this particular equality group this will be considered.</p> <p>Conclusion: Likely no impact</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>SQA is a proud corporate parent and acutely aware of the unique challenges that care experienced people face. Our approach is, as with all learners, to protect the learner wherever possible and minimise any disadvantage/distress. SQA understands that 'child' means everyone under the age of 18 unless 'under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'. We also understand that our corporate parenting responsibilities under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 not only apply to children who are looked after by local authorities, but also to young people up to the age of 26 who were looked after at age 16 or later. For this reason, SQA has a corporate parenting commitment to ensure its EqIA 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).</p> <p>Conclusion: negative impact mitigated</p>

Rationale

<p>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.</p>
<p>It is recognised that a potential negative impact on learners with protected characteristics is the reliance on centres to apply our updated guidance for 2025 and submit a request for EECCS on the learner's behalf. While appropriate and clear guidance and support can be</p>

published for schools, colleges and training providers to refer to, SQA does not have the ability to effectively mitigate any potential inequity in how this service is being used.

Eligibility for the EECCS in 2025, as in previous years, is determined by the school, college or training provider based on guidance provided by SQA and authorised by the head of centre or their delegate. In other words, centres access the service to help support fairness of access — there is no direct access for learners. Responsibility for determining eligibility to use the service lies with the head of centre or their delegate. This is important as it is the schools, colleges and training providers that are closer to the particular circumstances learners experience and so it is appropriate that they make these decisions in collaboration with their learners based on this developed understanding of their circumstances and the associated impacts. Also, centres are better placed to understand the specific requirements related to the submission of an EECCS request and as such can better support learners in deciding whether a request should be made. SQA has trust in the head of centre role to ensure use of the service is as legitimate, consistent and as fair as possible. It should be noted that learners are required to give their consent to ensure they agree with a request being submitted on their behalf.

This EqIA demonstrates that reasonable steps have been taken by SQA, within a highly complex set of circumstances relating to the 2025 exam timetable, to consider the needs of learners across Scotland with protected characteristics, along with the requirement to ensure the integrity of qualifications.

SQA will continue to carry out monitoring work to understand and evaluate the impacts of different arrangements on learners for determining the approach to assessment in the 2025-26 academic year.