Language of Assessment and Certification in Units and Qualifications Validated by SQA (Delivered in the United Kingdom)

Version number	V 3.0
Policy author	Policy and Research Manager
Policy owner	Head of Service for Higher National and Vocational Qualifications team
Business area	Policy, Analysis and Standards directorate
Policy effective from	01 October 2024
Policy review date	01 October 2027
Policy approved by	Standards and Policy Group
Policy approval date	25 April 2024
Equality impact assessment (EqIA) date	08 May 2024

Why do we need the policy?

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles and criteria in relation to the language of assessment and certification of units and qualifications validated by SQA and delivered by centres in the United Kingdom.

Scotland's main language by custom and usage is English, with Gaelic, Scots, and British Sign Language making up the country's other main language groups. English and Gaelic are the principal languages of learning and teaching in Scotland, and this is reflected in the languages that SQA certificates and assesses in.

The policy supports SQA corporate goals to:

♦ provide a credible qualifications system.
♦ be flexible in meeting customer needs.
♦ be trusted, respected, and valued by our customers, stakeholders and partners.

Gaelic medium qualifications

SQA currently makes a number of qualifications available through the medium of Gaelic. SQA is committed to Gaelic-medium education, and in line with our Gaelic Language Plan we aim to maintain and build on current provision by providing support materials and expanding our range of Gaelic-medium subjects available at Senior Phase in secondary schools and colleges.

There is an added commitment to extend the range of Gaelic-medium assessments available across a range of qualification product types. This will be determined in consultation with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and reflects our commitment to the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

What does it apply to?

This policy applies to:

♦ National Qualifications (including National Courses including Skills for Work, and Scottish Baccalaureates)
♦ Higher National Qualifications
♦ Advanced Certificates / Diplomas *(where delivered in the United Kingdom)*
♦ Professional Development Awards
♦ National Certificates
♦ National Progression Awards
♦ Awards (AWDs)
♦ Awards / Certificates/ Diplomas (workplace)
♦ Component Units of the above
♦ Freestanding units

There is one category of exclusion to this policy — please see section 4.1 *Exclusions* for detail.

SQA's Language of Assessment and Certification in Regulated Qualifications offered by SQA (delivered in the United Kingdom) provides detail on our limited provision for both Regulated qualifications and Foundation Apprenticeships (please see section 6).

Who is it for?

This policy is for SQA centres, Learners and all SQA staff.

What support is available?

The Policy, Analysis and Standards directorate and colleagues with HNVQ Policy and Equalities team can provide support on implementing this policy.

For more information about SQA's Gaelic Medium provision, please visit the SQA website.

For more information about Equality of Access to SQA's qualifications, you can find the following documents on SQA's website.

♦ Equality of Access to Quals policy
♦ English as an Additional Language (EAL) guidance: Use of bilingual dictionary for candidates who have English as an additional language
♦ Using Sign in Assessments

1   Policy statement

Units and qualifications validated by SQA and delivered in the United Kingdom are assessed in English, and, in a range of subjects, Gaelic. Units and qualifications are all certificated in English unless they are delivered and assessed in the medium of Gaelic.

It should be noted that 'language of assessment' refers to the language used by a learner **in** their assessment. It does not refer to the assessment **of** languages, for example, modern languages.

SQA is committed to equality of opportunity and to a culture that respects difference. We believe that, as an employer and public body, we can play a leading part in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion by making them an integral part of our decision making. This policy has an Equality Impact Assessment completed on it at the development stage to assess how this policy may impact on equality groups and the findings from this are reflected in this policy.

2   Policy relationship to SQA's governing principles

SQA's Governing Principles govern how SQA meets its statutory duties and self-regulates its activities. The Language of Assessment and Certification in Units and Qualifications Validated by SQA (Delivered in the United Kingdom) policy supports the following Governing Principles:

Governing Principle 1:   Openness to the needs of individuals, educational and vocational institutions and the needs of society is an essential aim of SQA, and therefore SQA will endeavour to ensure that processes for the development of qualifications, assessment and the maintenance of national standards are as open and transparent as possible; and informed through a research and evidence-based approach to self-regulation.

Governing Principle 7:   SQA will ensure that all qualifications and assessments are as fair and accessible as possible and that the needs of candidates are met in the administration of its assessments.

3   Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the awarding body

♦ SQA must ensure that the assessment of our qualifications is valued and credible with users, partner organisations and the wider community.

♦ Where SQA makes a qualification available in more than one language (eg both English and Gaelic), SQA must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the assessment of those

qualifications is at the same level of demand for all learners. SQA may employ the services of an experienced translator to provide interpretation to support this for quality assurance purposes.

♦ SQA may employ the services of an external verifier with experience in the target language for quality assurance purposes when required. The activity of external quality assurance and associated reporting will be conducted in English.

♦ When a qualification has been coded by SQA for Gaelic-medium delivery and assessment, the title of the qualification will be in Gaelic and the certificate will also include a recognition statement to indicate that the course was attained through the medium of Gaelic.

♦ Quality assurance activity will be conducted as per our published process.

Responsibilities of the centre

♦ Centres are required to advise SQA of any learner requests for assessment in the medium of Gaelic or British Sign Language (where this is allowed as a reasonable adjustment) before entering learners for a qualification on SQA Connect.

♦ Where British Sign Language is allowed as a reasonable adjustment, and a learner is having the contents of any external assessment of National Courses, signed to them by a sign communicator and / or will be signing their responses, the centre must submit a request to use sign language through the SQA Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system, by the published deadline. There is more information in our guide, *Using Sign in SQA Assessments*, which is available on our website.

♦ The centre must produce a video recording of the learner's signed responses for the assessment and submit this along with an English translation or transcription of the learner's assessment responses for submission to SQA.

♦ Centres do not need to seek approval from SQA to sign internal assessment material to a candidate or for the candidate to use sign to respond, unless by doing so the assessment criteria will be changed.

4 Policy requirements

Scotland's main language by custom and usage is English, with Gaelic, Scots, and British Sign Language making up the country's other main language groups. English and Gaelic are the principal languages of learning and teaching in Scotland, and this is reflected in the languages used in the assessment and certification of our Units and qualifications. Units and qualifications validated by SQA and delivered in the United Kingdom are assessed in English, and, in a range of subjects, Gaelic.

Language of assessment refers to the language used by a learner **in** their assessment. It does not refer to the assessment **of** languages, for example, modern languages.

All SQA units and qualifications within the scope of this policy are certificated in English. Where candidates are externally assessed in Gaelic medium the qualification title will appear in Gaelic and the certificate will include a recognition statement. Where candidates are internally assessed in Gaelic medium the certificate will **not** include a recognition statement. Recognition statements may be included on both paper certificates and electronic statements of certification for National Courses assessed through the medium of Gaelic.

Assessment in Languages other than English and Gaelic

The scope of this policy does not extend to requests for SQA units or qualifications to be assessed in a language other than English or Gaelic. This means that the translation of SQA assessment materials into a learner's first language, or the translation of a learner's assessment responses from their first language into English, is not allowed.

SQA provides detailed guidance around arrangements which are available to support such learners can be found on SQA's website: Use of a bilingual dictionary for learners who have English as an additional language.

SQA is committed to exploring the delivery and assessment of our qualifications, should demand be at such a level that it would be proportionate, practical, and viable to do so, in terms of both resources and funding. SQA will continue to monitor requests for assessment in languages other than English in an ongoing basis.

4.1   Exclusions

There is one category of exclusion to this policy where SQA will allow assessment in languages other than English for units and qualifications validated by SQA: **Assessment Arrangements — British Sign Language**.

The scope of this policy does not extend to requests for assessment in British Sign Language (BSL). SQA considers requests for assessment in British Sign Language as a reasonable adjustment. Reflecting our commitment to the Equality Act (2010), SQA considers removing unnecessary barriers to access for candidates and making reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates consistent with maintaining the integrity of the qualification. SQA allows the use of British Sign Language for deaf learners' internal assessments and external assessments (excluding modern languages, English and Gaelic).

Further information on Reasonable Adjustments can be found on SQA's website: Section 96(7) Equality Act 2010: Specifications on Reasonable Adjustments in National Qualifications in Scotland.

For information about SQA qualifications assessed in British Sign Language, you should read *Using Sign in SQA Assessments* on the SQA website.

5   Definitions

Centre: An organisation (such as a school, college, training company/provider or place of employment) that is approved by and accountable to an awarding body for the examination and assessment arrangements leading to a qualification award.

Disabled: As defined by the Equality Act (2010).

Language of assessment: The language used by a Learner in their assessment. It does **not** refer to the assessment of languages, for example, modern languages.

Learner: A individual who pursues a course of study independently but makes an entry and takes an assessment at an approved SQA centre. May also be referred to as a 'candidate'.

Gaelic: (as used throughout this policy) refers to Scottish Gaelic.

Gaelic medium: Qualifications delivered and assessed through the medium of Gaelic.

Scots: Scots is widely spoken across Scotland. It is a sister language to English, with Germanic roots, and close affinities with Scandinavian languages. Along with Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Cornish, it is one of the distinct regional languages of the United Kingdom and recognised officially as such by the Scottish and UK Governments and the Council of Europe.

6   SQA policies and legislation

Related SQA policies include:

♦ Language of Assessment and Certification in Regulated Qualifications offered by SQA (Delivered in the United Kingdom)
♦ Language of Assessment in Customised Products Validated by SQA
♦ Language of Assessment and Certification in Units and Qualifications offered Internationally and Validated by SQA
♦ Equality of Access to SQA qualifications