

Redacted - section 38(1)(b) personal data

Minutes of the one hundred and seventy-second meeting of the Accreditation Committee held on Wednesday 26 July 2023.

Members

*Mr G Smith (Convenor)
*Ms V Mann
Ms J Handley
*Ms A Newton
Ms E Hutton
Mr A Clark
*Ms F Robertson
*Ms K Summers
*Mr I Wilson
*Mr R Reed

Observers

Mr D Middleton
*Ms J Duffy (SG)
Mr F Quinn (SDS)
* [REDACTED] (SQA Accreditation)
Mr J Keenan (SG)
[REDACTED] SQA Accreditation)

Officers

*Mr G Brown

* [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

* indicates present

172 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Convenor informed Members of the format of the meeting

The Convenor asked Members to declare whether they had any 'conflicts of interest' in relation to any matters covered in the papers.

No conflicts of interest were declared.

172 WELCOME

The Convenor welcomed Members to the meeting.

The Convenor introduced one new member Mr Ryan Reed, NHS Education, observer Ms Jane Duffy, Scottish Government and [REDACTED], SQA Accreditation.

172 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ms J Handley, Ms E Hutton, Mr A Clark, Mr D Middleton, Mr F Quinn and Mr J Keenan.

172/01 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the one hundred and seventy-first meeting of the Accreditation Committee were approved as a correct record.

As the last meeting of the Accreditation Committee was not quorate both Ms Mann and Mr Wilson approved the decisions that were made.

172/02 MATTERS ARISING

171/03 Awarding Body Audit Reports

It was highlighted at the meeting in May that FutureQuals website had an error on its list of qualifications as it produced a message 'this page cannot be found'. Members were informed that this had now been rectified.

172/03 AWARDING BODY AUDIT REPORTS (ASQ, PEARSON, EDUQUAL, EAL, SFEDI AND MP AWARDS)

██████████ introduced paper AC172/03 and provided an update on the above Audit Reports and Action Plans.

Members were informed that Pearson had a high-risk issue with regards to its strategic direction and commitment to SQA Accreditation. Pearson is withdrawing the majority of its accredited qualifications, so the audit focused on that.

Members wanted to understand if Pearson was withdrawing its accredited provision or whether it was withdrawing from Scotland.

Mr Brown advised that, based on data received from the Scottish Funding Council, Pearson has a number of qualifications offered across the college sector with a reasonable number of entries. Ms Robertson informed Members that she would check if it had also withdrawn from SCQF.

Members agreed that this should be raised with Scottish Government as two large awarding organisations are withdrawing accredited qualifications. Mr Brown highlighted that there would be an opportunity to look at this through the Short Life Working Group that the Scottish Government is putting together to look at the scope of the accreditation/regulation function within the new qualification body.

The Convenor asked if any other awarding bodies had shown any signs of withdrawing from SQA Accreditation. It was noted that, at this stage, there are no others.

Ms Duffy advised that Scottish Government colleagues with policy responsibility for SQA Accreditation and would discuss this matter with Mr Brown.

It was noted that this matter would also be considered later in the statistics report.

Ms Robertson reminded Members that the Withers review recommended that the new qualifications body should have an oversight of all qualifications, excluding degrees and if this was accepted by the Scottish Government the regulatory framework in Scotland in the future would not, as it is currently, be voluntary.

Members agreed that this issue should be considered further at the Committee's strategy session in October 2023.

Action: Ms Robertson will check if Pearsons has withdrawn from SCQF.

Action: The withdrawal of Awarding Bodies from the provision of SQA accredited qualifications should be considered at the Committee's strategy session in October.

Outcome: Members approved the Audit Report and Action Plans

172/04 PROVIDER MONITORING VISIT REPORTS (FIREQUAL, PEARSON, SMART AWARDS AND ITC FIRST)

Ms McKay introduced paper AC172/04 and provided an update on the above Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

Attention was drawn to the FireQual provider monitoring visit and the length of time it has taken to close out the Issues that were raised. It was reported that this was due to the member of staff who was responsible for this being on sick leave and that these Issues have now been closed out.

With regard to the Pearson visits, the Issues identified are low risk and are not a cause for concern. It was highlighted to Members that Pearson now has only have one provider offering its qualifications in Scotland.

It was noted that the Smart Awards visit was its first and had identified a few high-risk issues which it was working to resolve as agreed in its action plan.

Outcome: Members approved the Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

172/05 SQA ACCREDITATION ANNUAL REVIEW 2022-23

██████████ introduced paper AC172/05 and provided Members with an overview of the Annual Review.

Members were informed that Phase 2 of the consultation on SVQs was now completed. It was highlighted to Members that compared to the pre pandemic levels the overall registration and certifications for SVQs are now lower whereas non SVQ qualifications have been growing.

Members asked if there was a reason for this ██████████ advised that it was difficult to identify precise reasons at this stage and that the matter would be given further consideration.

The Convenor asked that reference to the future of SQA Accreditation be noted in the introduction to the Report as well as in the conclusion.

Action: The future of SQA Accreditation to be referenced in the introduction to the Report.

Outcome: Members approved the SQA Accreditation Annual Review 2022-23.

172/06 ACCREDITED QUALIFICATION ZERO UPTAKE POLICY

██████████ introduced paper AC172/06 and updated Members on the changes to the Accredited Qualification Zero Update Policy.

██████████ highlighted to Members the changes to the policy:

- Process: The process has changed from every six months to annually as this is judged to be sufficient.
- Details: This section has been revised with additional guidance added in two key paragraphs as follows:

The accreditation end date and certification end date of Withdrawals will usually be the same month unless ACG, for any reason, decide otherwise. In such circumstances the dates will be formally communicated by ACG;

If the awarding body does not respond, confirming their plans, the qualification/s will automatically be withdrawn by ACG three months from the date of SQA Accreditation s inquiry. This potential action will be stipulated in the communication sent to the awarding body.

It was noted that, due to the specifics of this policy, a Screening Review approved by the Equality Management Review Group was considered as more appropriate than an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

Members were informed that three other policies had gone through an EqIA(Awarding Body Approval Policy, SQA Accreditation Quality Assurance for Approved Awarding Policy and SQA Accreditation Regulatory Sanctions Policy) and, as no changes were made to these, it was not necessary to presented to the Accreditation Committee for approval.

Action: ██████████ will upload the Accredited Qualification Zero Uptake Policy onto SQA Accreditation website.

Action: ██████████ will arrange for the Accredited Qualification Zero Uptake Policy to be circulated to approved awarding bodies

Outcome: Members approved the Accredited Qualification Zero Uptake Policy and - noted the three policies that had been through -Equality Impact Assessments.

172/07 SVQ CONSULTATION ANALYSIS

Mr Brown introduced paper AC172/07 and provided Members with an update on the SVQ Consultation Analysis.

Members were informed that from Phase 1, six themes had been identified for further consultation.

It was highlighted to Members that the consultation response indicated a desire for more flexibility but also raised concerns about the consistency of content of the same qualification if offered by two or more awarding bodies.

Mr Brown informed Members that it was intended to resurrect the project group and to analyse the feedback in more detail. A proposal would be presented to the Accreditation Committee in October 2023 about possible options.

██████████ gave a presentation on the six topics:

- Relationship between NOS and SVQ units
- Inclusion of units not based on NOS with an SVQ
- Removal of End-Tests
- Structure of SVQs
- Promotion of Individual SVQ Units
- Inclusion of meta skills with SVQs

██████████ then covered the conclusions:

- Key themes were transferability of the SVQs and consistency of the qualification between and within awarding bodies
- There were no clear major conclusions which can be drawn from the consultation as many opinions came with additional caveats
- The consultation does offer important perspective for the conversation regarding the future of SVQs
- Response can also inform conversations regarding the timing of NOS and qualification reviews.

During discussion Members identified the need for greater clarity on the definition of meta skills and for the simplification of the assessment process while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

Action: The project group to be resurrected to analyse the information received from the SVQ Consultation, with proposals to be submitted to Accreditation Committee in October 2023.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the SVQ Consultation Analysis.

172/08 SQA ACCREDITATION'S RISK REGISTER

Mr Brown introduced paper AC172/08 and updated Members on the SQA Accreditation's Risk Register.

Members were informed that the risk relating to Standards and Frameworks projects not completing on time (14 ACC 13 R) has been increased. No discussion has yet taken place with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to agree the list of SVQs that should be reviewed.

It was noted that, when a list is agreed, projects need- to be put out to tender and, given that they have to be completed by 31 March 2024, there is a high risk that no organisation will submit a bid. It was agreed that this matter required to be raised urgently with SDS. Ms Robertson offered to assist with this.

Mr Brown advised that, as part of the discussion with the accreditation team on an action plan relating to the outcomes of the People Survey, the team would welcome increased engagement with the Committee. Members discussed this and agreed that the Committee's in-person meeting on 25 October 2023, would offer an opportunity for this.

Action: The Standards and Frameworks commissioning issue to be raised urgently with SDS with Ms Robertson to provide assistance if required.

Arrangements to be made for the SQA Accreditation team to meet with the Accreditation Committee around the in-person meeting on 25 October 2023.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the SQA Accreditation's Risk Register.

172/09 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC172/09 and provided Members with an update on the Quarterly Performance Report for the first quarter of 2023 - 2024.

Members were informed that the Awarding Body enquiry form submitted in the first quarter had now been approved and would be noted in the Q2 Report.

██████████ informed Members of an enquiry form submitted by a large awarding body that is being handled through the fast-track approval procedure.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Quarterly Performance Report.

172/10 STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS COMMISSIONING

██████████ introduced paper AC172/10 and updated Members on the projects.

It was reported that there are four qualifications products outstanding which it was hoped would be approved by the end of September 2023. The evaluation period closes on 3 August 2023 and hopefully decisions will be confirmed the following week. There is a placeholder for a moderation meeting on 10 August in case there is any debate amongst the evaluators.

It was noted that, if contracts for NOS are awarded by 14 August 2023, it will still be feasible for them to be completed within the financial year.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Standards and Frameworks Commissioning paper and the risks identified.

172/11 UPDATE ON REFORM

Mr Brown introduced paper AC172/11 and gave Members an update on the Education Reform programme.

Mr Brown updated Members on the Short Life Working Group, the Scottish Government is proposing to establish to consider the scope of the accreditation/regulation function in the new qualifications body. It is understood that advice has been submitted to the Minister on the terms of reference and membership of the group. It was noted that SQA Accreditation had been asked to suggest possible members of the group and Mr Brown advised that he had an external member in mind with considerable experience in relation to regulation.

Members were asked to what extent they would wish to be involved in the working group activity. Members agreed that the Committee has an important role to play and should be fully involved in the work of the working group.

Outcome: Members were updated on the Education Reform Programme.

172/12 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2023 - 2024

██████████ introduced paper AC172/12 and asked Members if they were content with the work plan for 2023 - 2024.

It was noted that, as previously agreed, SVQ Consultation should be added to the agenda for the October 2023 meeting.

Action: ██████████ will include in the work plan the SVQ Consultation proposal (agenda item 172/07) for October 2023 meeting.

Outcome: Members discussed and approved the Accreditation Committee Work Plan 2023 -2024.

172/13 SQA ACCREDITATION STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Mr Brown introduced paper AC172/13 and updated Members on SQA Accreditation Stakeholder Survey Action Plan.

Members were informed that most of the issues in the Stakeholder Survey Action Plan have now been actioned and were asked to consider if they wished this to remain a standing item on the Committee's agenda.

It was noted that the action in relation to guidance on the new Regulatory Principles would not be completed until all awarding bodies have been audited. Mr Brown proposed that Members be updated at the meeting in March 2024 at which time proposals for the next Stakeholder Survey in the autumn of 2024 could be considered.

Members agreed to the proposal and that the Stakeholder Survey Action Plan could now be removed as a standing item on the Committee's agenda.

Action: The content of the survey to be discussed at Accreditation Committee in October 2024. ██████████ will add this to the Accreditation Committee Work Plan.

Action: An update on the action on regulatory guidance and proposals for the next Stakeholder Survey to be considered by the Accreditation Committee in March 2024.

Outcome: Members noted the SQA Accreditation Stakeholders Survey Action Plan and agreed to remove it as a standing item on the Committee's agenda.

172/14 ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT 2022-2023

██████████ introduced paper AC172/14 and updated Members on the Annual Statistics Report 2022-2023.

Outcome: Members noted the Annual Statistics Report 2022-2023.

172/15 ACCREDITATION DECISION LIST REPORT

██████████ introduced paper AC172/15, drawing Member's attention to those qualifications that had been accredited from 1 April 2023 until 30 June 2023.

The paper provided a summary of decisions made by the Accreditation Coordination Group (ACG) between these dates.

Outcome: Members noted the contents of the paper.

172/16 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE BOARD

The Committee identified the following issues to be drawn to the attention of the SQA Board:

- SQA Accreditation's ongoing involvement in the Education Reform Programme; and
- The risk relating to the delay in contracting for Standards and Frameworks projects.

172/17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Convenor informed Members that it was proposed that the meeting in October 2023 would take place in-person and would combine the statutory meeting followed by a strategy session. In line with the earlier discussion, arrangements would be made for the Committee to meet with members of the Accreditation Team perhaps during the lunch break.

As this was [REDACTED] last meeting, the Convenor thanked him for his significant contribution to the work of SQA Accreditation and his support for the Committee and wished him well for the future.

Action: [REDACTED] to invite SQA Accreditation staff to October 2023 meeting to meet the Accreditation Committee Members during the lunch break.

172/18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next Accreditation Committee meeting: Wednesday 25 October 2023 at 1000 hours, to be held in SQA Office, Optima, Glasgow.