

## SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

### ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – 24 JULY 2024

Minutes of the one hundred and seventy-sixth meeting of the Accreditation Committee held on Wednesday 24 July 2024.

#### Members

\*Mr. G Smith (Convenor)  
\*Mr. R Reed  
\*Ms. J Handley  
\*Ms. A Newton  
\*Ms. E Hutton (Vice Convenor)  
Mr. A Clark  
Ms. F Robertson  
\*Ms. K Summers  
Mr I Wilson  
\*Ms. A Hamilton

#### Observers

\*Ms. S Rogers  
Ms. J Duffy (SG)  
\*Mr. F Quinn (SDS)  
\*Mr. S Borley  
\*Ms. J A Bilotti (SG)  
\*Ms. G Penna (SG)

#### Officers

\*Mr G Brown

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

\* Indicates present

### 176 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.

### 176 WELCOME

The Convenor welcomed Members to the meeting. The Convenor also welcomed Ms. Angela Hamilton, BAE Systems and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Convenor also welcomed Julie Ann Bilotti and Glykeria Penna from Scottish Government to the meeting.

### 176 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from [REDACTED], Mr. A Clark, Ms. F Robertson, Mr. I Wilson and Ms. J Duffy.

Ms. J A Bilotti, Ms. G Penna and Mr. S Borley left the meeting at 10:50. Ms. S Rogers left the meeting at 11:50.

## 176 DISCUSSIONS ON REGULATION ROLE OF THE ACCREDITATION FUNCTION IN QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND

Ms. Bilotti gave an update on the current situation on the regulation role of the Accreditation function envisaged for Qualifications Scotland (QA). She advised that the Scottish Government was committed to including responsibility for overseeing all publicly-funded post school qualifications (except degrees) and the underpinning occupational standards and skills frameworks in the role of the new qualifications body, Qualifications Scotland.

Ms. Bilotti drew attention to the summary paper circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting which set out the current position on the regulation of qualifications in Scotland and the view of SQA Accreditation and some stakeholders on the possible extension of scope of regulation under QA. She advised that Scottish Government officials are working with the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) set up to consider the scope of QA Accreditation function to develop an options paper looking at a range of options from 'do nothing' to enhanced non mandatory approaches, to a greater degree of regulation. She advised that officials would welcome further discussion with the Accreditation Committee when these options had been finalised.

Members discussed the paper and reemphasised the importance of fully regulating publicly funded qualifications. Members noted that the views of stakeholders summarised in the paper focused much more on the concerns of providers as opposed to the potential benefits for learners of extending the scope of regulation. Members agreed that more focus needs to be placed on prioritising the needs and interest of the learners when considering the scope of regulation and that the pressures of funding and resources should not take precedence over this.

Members welcomed the offer of further discussion on future options and emphasised that it was important that these were fully informed by those who carry out regulation, which required transparency and involvement of SQA Accreditation staff throughout the process.

The Convenor thanked Ms. Bilotti and Ms. Penna for attending the meeting and for their contribution and advised that the Committee looked forward to further engagement prior to any decisions being taken by Ministers on this matter.

### 176/01 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the one hundred and seventy-fifth meeting of the Accreditation Committee were approved as a correct record. The minutes of the Extraordinary Accreditation Committee meeting were also approved as a correct record with a minor amendment, that [REDACTED] title be correctly recorded as [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Action:** Minutes of Extraordinary Accreditation Committee to be amended to record [REDACTED] title as [REDACTED].

### 176/02 MATTERS ARISING

Mr. Brown advised that the Performance Framework and Operational Plan were approved by members at the end of May by correspondence.

Mr. Brown informed members that AIM Qualifications was approved as a new Awarding Body in June 2024.

### **176/03 AWARDING BODY AUDIT REPORTS (ACCA, NEBOSH, AFS AND ECITB)**

██████████ introduced paper AC176/03 and provided an update on the above Audit Reports and Action Plans.

Members were informed that a total of seven issues were identified, five of which have been closed out. The two remaining issues are not due to be closed out until later in the year.

**Outcome:** Members approved the Audit Report and Action Plans.

### **176/04 PROVIDER MONITORING VISIT REPORTS (THE PRINCE'S TRUST, ITC FIRST, ECTIB AND NEBOSH)**

██████████ introduced paper AC176/04 and provided an update on the above Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

Members were informed that a total of 13 issues were identified, one of which had been closed out. The remaining issues are not due to be closed out until later in the year or in 2025.

**Outcome:** Members approved the Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

### **176/05 SQA ACCREDITATION ANNUAL REVIEW**

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/05 and provided Members with an overview of the Annual Review.

Mr Brown highlighted a key issue regarding the number of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) being reviewed through the Standards and Framework program. This has dropped significantly from 63 projects in 2018/19 to just 17 in the last financial year.

Mr. Brown went on to highlight the work involved in ensuring that SQA Accreditation's website and all externally facing documentation met accessibility needs, thanking ██████████ and ██████████ for their efforts in carrying out this work. He noted that several awarding bodies are now keen to pilot the new accessible accreditation submission forms.

Mr. Brown observed how the number of SVQs and non SVQs are now almost the same, noting that the number of SVQs has decreased due to enforcing the low uptake policy, and how non SVQs are on the rise.

Members discussed at length the ongoing issues of resource allocation and lack of funding. Ms. Rogers and Mr. Brown will arrange to discuss these matters outside of this meeting.

Mr. Brown informed members that once Ms. F Robertson, Chief Executive Officer, signs off on her statement, the Annual Review will be published on the SQA website, promoted via the newsletter, LinkedIn and presented to Scottish Government officials.

**Action:** Mr. Brown to arrange meeting with Ms. Rogers regarding resource allocation and funding.

**Outcome:** Members approved the SQA Accreditation Annual Review.

## **176/06 EXTRAORDINARY ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – APPEAL**

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/06 and provided Members with an update from the Appeal Hearing that took place in May 2024.

Mr. Brown advised members that there is a lesson learned session planned to discuss the way in which the appeal process worked. This session will be chaired by Mr S Borley to ensure impartiality.

Mr. Brown discussed the three recommendations outlined in paper AC176/06 that arose from the appeal. Mr Brown also informed the members of the steps that are being taken to address the recommendations.

The Convenor highlighted the difficulty of this process and commended all involved for the excellent handling of the appeal. He proposed that the members of the Committee who had participated in the appeal be invited to share their experience as part of the lessons learned exercise.

**Action:** The Convenor and Accreditation Committee members who were involved to be invited to a lessons learned session.

**Outcome:** Members noted the outcome from the Appeal Hearing and the action taken on the recommendations for SQA Accreditation and agreed to close this out.

## **176/07 SQA ACCREDITATION'S RISK REGISTER**

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/07 and updated Members on the SQA Accreditation Risk Register.

It was noted that it was proposed to close Risk 14 ACC 07 R (There could be malpractice or maladministration of accredited qualifications, which are used for other regulatory purposes and in high-profile sectors e.g., security, care, etc.). This was initially identified in 2014 and was no longer considered a repetitive risk to SQA Accreditation.

It was highlighted to members that one risk had decreased, Risk 19 ACC 25 R, (The development of new Apprenticeship Standards by Technical Expert Groups without input (quality assurance/approval) from SQA Accreditation staff impacts negatively upon SVQs and our remit) given that all Modern Apprenticeship development going forward must be underpinned by National Occupational Standards and Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

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

## **176/08 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/08 and provided Members with an update on the Quarterly Performance Report for the first quarter of 2024 – 2025.

He noted that there had been a slight delay with approving the overall corporate performance framework, however progress is now being made, and as things progress further updates will be provided.

Members noted that the new plan was easier to follow.

**Outcome:** Members discussed and noted the Quarterly Performance Report.

## **176/09 STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS COMMISSIONING**

██████████ introduced paper AC176/09 and updated Members on the Standards and Framework projects.

██████████ informed members that a number of projects had been approved recently, with only 16% left still to be approve. He informed members that all Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) from 2023-2024 have now been approved. The evaluation of the 2025 National Occupational Standards (NOS) tender bids was returned on 18<sup>th</sup> July, with scores supporting all bids to be contracted.

██████████ also highlighted the challenges faced due to a lack of resources, which has produced capacity pressures.

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

## **176/10 UPDATE ON REFORM**

Mr. Brown gave an update on the Scottish Government's Education and Skills Reform programme.

Mr. Brown informed members of the reform activities since the last Accreditation Committee meeting, including his appointment to the Transition Board. Members discussed issues and concerns around the future functions of Accreditation, and its role within the new organisation.

Mr. Brown informed the members that SQA Accreditation had written to all awarding bodies asking questions about the notice period required and the costs that would be incurred as a result of the transition to Qualifications Scotland. The questions focused on four areas including:

1. changing their certificates to incorporate new logo and branding,
2. updating website,
3. updating policy documents, relevant supporting materials and
4. notifying approved providers and centres.

He stated that the difference in responses was considerable, noting that one awarding body requested an 18 month notice period. Mr Brown informed members that once all awarding bodies have responded, the findings will be presented to Scottish Government to ensure a better understanding of the challenges that the reform will cause, not only to SQA/SQA Accreditation, but to the awarding bodies.

Finally, Mr. Brown advised that the upcoming Strategy Session in October would offer an opportunity for further discussion on the implications of reform for SQA Accreditation and its stakeholders.

**Outcome:** Members noted the update on Educations and Skills reform.

## 176/11 PROPOSALS FOR STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/11 and asked members for feedback on the questions to be included in the Stakeholder Survey.

He informed Members that questions regarding education and skills reform had been included in this year's survey to better understand how reform is affecting Awarding Bodies and Standard Setting Organisations.

Members gave feedback including the option of choosing 'N/A' or 'don't know' as answers and including comment boxes beside more questions. Members also expressed confusion around the use of asterisk in the survey. Mr Brown agreed these suggestions be considered in the final Survey.

Finally, Mr. Brown informed members that the Survey is due to be issued in September, with analysis to be presented to the Committee at either its January or March 2025 meeting.

**Action:** Mr. Brown to discuss with colleagues the suggestions from the Committee.

**Outcome:** Members noted the Proposals for Stakeholder Survey.

## 176/12 AGENDA ITEMS FOR AWARDING BODY AND STANDARDS SETTING ORGANISATION FORUMS

██████████ gave an update on the Awarding Body and Standards Setting Organisation (SSO) Forums that are planned.

██████████ advised that the next Awarding Body Forum will be end of October/Early November and invited Members to advise him of items for agenda.

He also advised that the next Standards Setting Organisation Forum was being held on 17 September 2024, and again invited members to advise him of any suggestions for agenda items.

It was noted that Members would be invited to attend these Forums as observers.

Members suggested that the implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) be considered as an agenda item. Mr. Brown advised that an AI survey had been circulated and a paper will be brought to the Accreditation Committee meeting in October and may be appropriate to include on the agenda for forthcoming Forums.

**Action:** ██████████ to circulate invitations to Awarding Body and SSO Forums to Accreditation Committee members.

**Action:** ██████████ to produce paper on AI for Accreditation Committee meeting in October and the issue to be considered for forthcoming Forums.

**Outcome:** Members discussed the forthcoming Awarding Body and Standards Setting Organisation Forums.

## **176/13 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2024 - 2025**

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/13 and asked Members if they were content with the work plan for 2024 -2025.

**Outcome:** Members discussed and approved the Accreditation Committee Work Plan 2024 – 2025.

## **176/14 ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT**

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/14 and updated Members on the Annual Statistics Report 2023-2024.

**Outcome:** Members noted the Annual Statistics Report 2023-2024.

## **176/15 ANNUAL AUDIT PLANNING SCHEDULE**

██████████ introduced paper AC176/15 giving members an update on the audit planning schedule.

██████████ informed members that a contingency plan for audits has been drafted.

**Outcome:** Members noted the Awarding Body Audit Planning Schedule.

## **176/16 ACCREDITATION DECISION LIST REPORT**

Mr. Brown introduced paper AC176/16, drawing Member's attention to those qualifications that had been accredited from 1 April 2024 until 30 June 2024.

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.

## **176/17 NEBOSH CASE STUDY**

██████████ introduced paper AC176/17 and gave Members an overview of the NEBOSH Case Study.

██████████ updated the members on the extensive efforts NEBOSH has implemented to promote and support good practices.

**Outcome:** Members welcomed and noted the contents of the paper.

## **176/18 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE BOARD**

The Committee agreed that the issues raised during the discussion with Scottish Government officials on the future scope of regulation and the role of the accreditation function in Qualifications Scotland should be drawn to the attention of the SQA Board:

## **177/19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Convenor asked that Members forward any suggestions for items to be discussed at the Strategy Session in October to him or Mr Brown.

The Convenor advised that Ms. J Handley's term on the SQA Board was coming to an end and that this was her last meeting of the Committee. He thanked her for her considerable contribution to the work of the Committee during her time as a member and for the support she had provided to the Accreditation Team.

#### **176/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

it was noted that the next Accreditation Committee meeting would take place in person on Wednesday 30 October 2024 at 1000 hours in SQA Offices, Glasgow and would include the Committee's annual Strategy Session