

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – 30 OCTOBER 2024

Minutes of the one hundred and seventy-seventh meeting of the Accreditation Committee held on Wednesday 30 October 2024.

Members

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

Observers

Ms. S Rogers
Ms. J Duffy (SG)
Mr. F Quinn (SDS)
*Ms D Miller (SDS)
*Ms E Adesida (SG)

Officers

*Mr G Brown

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[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

* Indicates present

177 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Convenor informed Members of the format of the meeting. He advised that the meeting would be followed by the Committee's annual Strategy Session the Agenda for which focus on Education and Skills Reform and the transition from SQA to Qualifications Scotland and would consider: Future Accreditation Committee Governance; Transition Board Update; Standards and Frameworks; and the future Scope of Accreditation and Regulation.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared.

177 WELCOME

The Convenor welcomed Members to the meeting. The Convenor welcomed Ms D Miller, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), in attendance on behalf of Mr F Quinn, and Ms E Adesida, Scottish Government (SG), in attendance on behalf of Ms J Duffy.

177 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Wilson, Ms Robertson, Ms Newton, Mr Clarke, Ms Hamilton, Ms Rogers, Mr Quinn and Ms Duffy.

177/01 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

177/02 MATTERS ARISING

176/06 EXTRAORDINARY ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – APPEAL

Members were informed that Mr Smith, Ms Hutton and Mr Reed had attended a meeting on Friday 27 September 2024 on lessons learned from the [REDACTED] Appeal Hearing process.

It was noted that recommendations arising from the meeting would be picked up when considering how the Appeals process could be improved.

177/03 AWARDING BODY AUDIT REPORTS (SQA, CMI AND RSL)

[REDACTED] introduced paper AC177/03 and provided an update on the above Audit Reports and Action Plans.

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

[REDACTED] informed Members that RSL had a risk rating of high against an Issue but she had no concern regarding this.

Outcome: Members approved the Audit Report and Action Plans.

177/04 PROVIDER MONITORING VISIT REPORTS (HIGHFIELD QUALIFICATIONS, FAQ, VTCT, BIIAB QUALIFICATIONS AND SMART AWARDS LTD)

[REDACTED] introduced paper AC177/04 and provided an update on the above Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

Members were informed that a total of 29 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.

[REDACTED] informed Members that some of the Awarding Bodies had a risk rating of high against Issues but she did not have any concerns regarding this.

Ms Hutton asked if repeated Issues from Awarding Bodies are recorded. ■■■
■■■■ explained the process and assured Members that these are recorded and picked up with the Awarding Bodies.

Outcome: Members approved the Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

177/05 SQA ACCREDITATION ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC177/05 and provided Members with an overview of the Annual Complaints Handling Report.

Members were informed that in March 2022, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) published the Key Performance Indicators for the Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP).

It was highlighted to Members that one complaint was received about SQA Accreditation in financial year 2023 / 2024. This complaint was dealt with within the appropriate timescale.

Action: ■■■■ will publish the SQA Accreditation Annual Complaints Handling Report on the SQA Accreditation website.

Outcome: Members approved the SQA Accreditation Annual Complaints Handling Report.

177/06 SQA ACCREDITATION'S RISK REGISTER

Mr Brown introduced paper AC177/06 and updated Members on the SQA Accreditation Risk Register.

It was highlighted to Members that one risk had increased, Risk 23 ACC 33 R (Scottish Government has not yet announced any decision on the future scope of the new accreditation and regulation function). This is due to a small number of Awarding Bodies indicating that they may consider surrendering their approval status should the accreditation and regulation function remain voluntary.

Members discussed the reasons for this. It was indicated that some Awarding Bodies considered regulation to be a burden and would only comply if regulation was mandatory. Members asked Mr Brown to continue to raise this matter with the Scottish Government.

Members discussed whether SQA Accreditation should promote the offer of free credit rating for Awarding Bodies that seek approval and the Committee agreed that this be considered alongside other benefits of SQA regulation.

Action: Mr Brown to continue to raise the issue around awarding bodies surrendering awarding body status if the scope of SQA Accreditation stays the same.

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

177/07 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC177/07 and provided Members with an update on the Quarterly Performance Report for the second quarter of 2024 / 2025.

Mr Brown advised that the Report provided had not been updated and indicated that the updated version would be circulated to Members.

Mr Brown noted that all deliverables are now underway and are on track.

██████████ gave an update on the Supplementary information on the Regulatory Principles. Some minor changes have been made and this will be discussed at the next Awarding Bodies Forum in November 2024 before a short survey is undertaken. ██████████ will produce a paper on this for the Accreditation Committee meeting in May 2025.

Members discussed the fast-track approval process. It was highlighted that two Awarding Bodies had been processed through this approach and that the regulation team is considering ways of improving this process as the timeframe is dependent on the information that is received and the availability at that time of the Regulation Manager and Accreditation Manager.

Mr Brown advised that there was a new Awarding Body that may be appropriate for the fast-track process. Members asked to be kept informed of this, particularly the timescale of the process should it occur.

██████████ gave an update on the stakeholder survey advising that once all responses are received an action plan will be produced based on the survey findings. It was noted that this will be shared with Members at the Committee's February 2025 meeting.

Action: Mr Brown will update the Operational Plan and circulate to Members.

Action: ██████████ to produce paper on the Supplementary information on the Regulatory Principles for the Committee's meeting in May 2025.

Action: ██████████ to produce an action plan arising from the findings of the stakeholder survey for the Committee's meeting in February 2025.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Quarterly Performance Report.

177/08 STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS COMMISSIONING

██████████ introduced paper AC177/08 and updated Members on the Standards and Framework projects.

████████ informed Members that three National Occupational Standards (NOS) projects are still outstanding from last year's commissioned work.

████████ informed Members that if the projects are not undertaken this would have implications for the funding received.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Standards and Frameworks Commissioning paper, and the funding risk identified.

177/09 GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE RESEARCH

████████ introduced paper AC177/09 and provided Members with an update on the Generative Artificial Intelligence Research undertaken by SQA Accreditation.

It was highlighted to Members that SQA Accreditation is considering action points raised by a stakeholder survey on AI which it has undertaken, including drafting guidance and generally outlining the legal and regulatory framework.

Members discussed the use of AI by Awarding Bodies with concerns raised around its implication for assessment.

It was noted that AI would be a topic for discussion at the Awarding Body Forums in November 2024. It is intended that the format of a future Forum specifically on AI would be discussed.

It was also noted that SQA Accreditation is seeking collaboration with other regulators in the United Kingdom on this issue.

Members asked that AI be a standing Agenda Item for the Committee in the period ahead.

Members were informed that the full report of the research is available on the SQA Accreditation website.

Action: Artificial Intelligence to be included as a standing item on the Committee's work plan.

Outcome: Members discussed the Generative Artificial Intelligence Research.

177/10 EQUALITY OUTCOMES

Mr Brown introduced paper AC177/10 and provided Members with an update on Equality Outcomes for SQA Accreditation.

Members were informed that public authorities have a statutory equality duty whereby they must give due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

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

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Equality Outcomes covering this statutory duty must be set and published every four years with a progress report published every two years. SQA's next report is due to be published in April 2025.

Members were informed that stakeholder consultation on the draft Equality Outcomes will be undertaken and the outcomes amended in light of the responses received.

The proposed final draft Equality Outcome for SQA Accreditation will be presented to the Committee's meeting in February 2025 with a view to publication in April 2025.

Action: Mr Brown to provide Members with the proposed final draft Equality Outcome at the Committee's meeting in February 2025.

Outcome: Members discussed the Equality Outcomes.

177/11 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2024 - 2025

██████████ introduced paper AC177/11 and invited Members to approve the Committee's work plan for 2024 -2025.

It was agreed to change the standing item 'Update on the Reform' to 'Transition into Qualification Scotland'

It was noted that, arising from discussion during the meeting, the following would be added to the work plan:

- Supplementary information on the Regulatory Principles (May 2025)
- Action plan produced from the stakeholder survey (February 2025)
- Artificial Intelligence as a standing item
- Equality Outcome (February 2025)

Action: ██████████ to update the work plan.

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

177/12 ACCREDITATION DECISION LIST REPORT

██████████ introduced paper AC177/12, drawing Member's attention to those qualifications that had been accredited from 1 July 2024 until 30 September 2024.

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

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

Action: [REDACTED] will update the appendix to include the two Awarding Bodies that have surrendered awarding body status.

Outcome: Members noted the contents of the paper.

177/13 PROPOSED ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DATES FOR 2025

[REDACTED] introduced paper AC177/13, advising Members of the scheduled Accreditation Committee meeting dates for 2025.

Action: [REDACTED] to circulate the final dates to Members.

Outcome: Members noted the Accreditation Committee Dates for 2025.

177/14 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE BOARD

Alongside the contribution of the Committee and SQA Accreditation to the programme of Education and Skills Reform the Committee identified the following issue to be drawn to the attention of the SQA Board:

- the small number of Awarding Bodies warning that they might surrender awarding body status if regulation remains voluntary.

177/15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

177/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of next Accreditation Committee meeting was Wednesday 5 February 2025 at 1000 hours via MS Teams.