SQA Accreditation Glossary: Terms and Definitions

Within the context of SQA Accreditation:	
SQA Accreditation	A distinct, autonomous regulatory function of SQA, separate from SQA Awarding Body.

Term	Abbreviation	Current Definition	Other Information
AC1		This is a form that can be found on our website that should be completed and submitted if an organisation wishes to apply to become an SQA Accreditation approved awarding body.	
AC2		This is a form that can be found on our website that should be completed and submitted when seeking to accredit a qualification.	
Accreditation		The process by which awarding bodies approved by SQA Accreditation submit qualifications for formal recognition (approval) provided that they meet the	

		requirements as specified by SQA Accreditation.	
Accreditation Administrator	AA	The Accreditation Administrators provide support to the Accreditation Officer in achieving unit objectives and provide general administrative support to SQA Accreditation. Accreditation Administrators also provide secretariat support for the Accreditation Co-ordination Groups.	
Accreditation Committee	AC	A statutory committee, the majority of whom must be neither members nor employees of SQA, which meets quarterly to direct and monitor the work of SQA Accreditation.	
Accreditation Co-ordination Group	ACG	An internal committee which meets weekly to discuss and decide on matters relating to the approval and regulation of awarding bodies, the accreditation of qualifications and the approval of qualification products.	

Accreditation End Date (also called 'lapsing date')		In the context of SQA Accreditation, the accreditation end date is the date where we would expect awarding bodies to have reviewed the accredited qualification and determined if it continues to be fit for purpose.	Where a review of a qualification results in a new qualification, a re-accreditation submission should be made via the AC2 for approval by ACG, prior to the accreditation end date. In some circumstances, when a qualification is nearing its accreditation end date and the awarding body has not been able to review the qualification, then they should seek approval to extend the qualification. Any request to extend the qualification will extend the accreditation end date and the certification end date, by a duration (term) approved by ACG; the awarding body must ensure that an appropriate rationale is provided as part of the AC2 submission. Where there is no need or demand for a qualification, the awarding body should seek to withdraw the qualification. The awarding body must ensure that an appropriate rationale is provided as part of the AC2 submission. Where a replacement qualification exists, awarding bodies and providers should register any new learner or provider on the new qualification as soon as possible once the old qualification accreditation end date has elapsed.
Accreditation Licence		The licence that sets out the relationship and obligations between SQA Accreditation and an approved awarding body. The licence is signed by both parties	
Accreditation Manager	AM	The Accreditation Manager is responsible for quality assurance and approval of National Occupational Standards and submitting Qualifications Products. They are also responsible for SCQF credit ratings and qualifications that are to be accredited for approval. They are also jointly responsible, with a Regulation Manager, for managing the approval of new awarding bodies.	

Accreditation Officer	AO (in the context of SQA Accreditation)	The Accreditation Officer is responsible for the Administration section and for ensuring that qualification submissions are brought to committee in a timely manner following the correct procedures. The Accreditation Officer is a core member of ACG and attends and provides the secretariat for Accreditation Committee meetings.	
Accreditation Period		Every qualification is accredited for a finite period. This is known as the accreditation period. This period spans from the start date of the qualification delivery, known as the accreditation, to the end date of qualification delivery, known as the accreditation end date. For example, for an SVQ, this is usually between three and five years. At the end of the accreditation period, qualifications can be re-accredited, extended or withdrawn. Within the accreditation period, a qualification or unit can be amended.	
Accreditation Start Date		The date when accreditation is approved by the Accreditation Co-Ordination Group and when an awarding body can begin to approve providers, register learners and deliver the accredited qualification.	
Accreditation Submission		The documentation and supporting evidence which an SQA-approved awarding body submits to SQA Accreditation in order to get its qualification(s) and/or unit(s) accredited.	
Analysis		The examination of facts and data to provide a basis for effective decisions and actions.	

Apprenticeship Approval Group	AAG	The group which has responsibility for approving foundation, modern and graduate apprenticeships. It reports to the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board: Standards and Framework Group. It comprises educational stakeholders and employers.	The Apprenticeship Approval Group replaced the Modern Apprenticeship Group.
Apprenticeship Framework	AF	A document which details the content and structure of a foundation, modern or graduate apprenticeship.	
Approval		The process by which SQA Accreditation decides if the criteria governing the quality of any of the following activities or products have been successfully met. SQA Accreditation approved awarding bodies, qualification products and Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF) credit ratings for qualifications accredited by SQA Accreditation	
Assessment Methodology		The approach to assessment of a qualification, eg observation, oral questioning, examination or a combination of such methods.	
Assessment Principles		Requirements and recommendations specified by a standard setting body/regulatory body/awarding body in relation to the assessment and quality assurance of units and qualifications.	Could also be referred to as 'Assessment Strategy'.
Assessment Strategy		Requirements and recommendations specified by a standards setting organisation in relation to the assessment and external quality control of one or more Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs).	These are specific to, and mandatory for, SVQs but may also be used with other types of qualifications. Could also be referred to as 'Assessment Principles'.
Audit		A method of quality assurance used by SQA Accreditation to regulate its approved awarding bodies.	

Awarding Body	AB	An organisation which issues certificates for qualifications which formally recognise the achievements of an individual and which quality-assures the delivery and assessment of those qualifications. In this context, it is specifically an organisation approved by SQA Accreditation for the purpose of awarding accredited qualifications.	
Awarding Organisation	AO (in the context of awarding bodies)	A term used outside Scotland for an organisation (awarding body) which issues certificates for qualifications which formally recognise the achievements of an individual and which quality-assures the delivery and assessment of those qualifications. In this context, it is specifically an organisation approved by SQA Accreditation for the purpose of awarding accredited qualifications.	
Awards Processing System	APS	The database used by SQA to record all data related to qualifications. An APS code for qualifications is known as the '4+2', ie four digits plus a further two digits. The last two digits provide information regarding the level of a qualification. For example, xxxx 46 = SCQF level 6.	
Candidate		An individual who has been entered for a given unit or qualification by a provider recognised to deliver that qualification by an SQA-approved awarding body.	
Certification		a) The process by which a provider asks an awarding body for a certificate for a candidate who has successfully completed a given qualification or unit. b) In relation to statistical information, it refers to the number	

		of certificates which have been issued for given qualifications.	
Certification End Date (also called 'finishing date')		This is the last date when a qualification certificate can be issued to learners who have completed the accredited qualification. Any certification beyond this date must be prior approved by SQA Accreditation.	
Competence-Based Qualification	CBQ	A National Occupational Standards derived qualification which is unit-based, flexible and which has been developed to support individuals in achieving occupational competence. A Scottish Vocational Qualification is a specific type of Competence based qualification.	
Compliance		The act of complying with the Regulatory Principles specified by SQA Accreditation for its approved awarding bodies.	
Condition		Imposed by Accreditation Co-Ordination Group when required criteria have not been met by awarding bodies in relation to awarding body approval, and/or accreditation.	
Conflict of Interest		A situation in which the concerns or aims of two different parties are incompatible and/or a situation in which a person is able to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity.	
Consultant/Appointee		A professional hired externally whose expertise is usually provided for a fee and on a temporary basis.	

Continual Improvement Process	CIP (in the context of SQA Accreditation)	An ongoing process through which an awarding body increases its effectiveness and/or efficiency to fulfil its policies and objectives.	
Continuing Professional Development	CPD	An ongoing process through which staff personally and professionally develop themselves either individually and/or with organisational support.	
Core Skills Mapping		Core Skills mapping shows where the assessment evidence generated for the units within a qualification will also be evidence of achievement of Workplace Core Skills.	A mapping is required for Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks where the developing body seeks to demonstrate that some or all of the Workplace Cores Skills are embedded in the mandatory units. The mapping must only be carried out on the mandatory units and must be carried out at performance criteria of the SVQ to task level in the Workplace Core Skills.
Core Skills Signposting		Core Skills signposting indicates where the assessment evidence generated for the units within a qualification might also contribute to the evidence needed for someone to achieve one or more Workplace Core Skills units.	Note: signposting does not guarantee that the evidence will be enough to certificate all or any of the Workplace Core Skills. A signposting is mandatory for SVQs.
Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales	CQFW	An all-inclusive framework designed to provide greater clarity on the qualifications system in Wales. It describes qualifications use level and credit. The CQFW includes three pillars: Higher Education, Regulated Qualifications and Lifelong Learning.	
Credit Rating		The process by which the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework level and credit points are allocated to given units and qualifications.	

Critical Success Factors		Outcomes that an organisation needs to achieve in order to attain its overall aims, purpose or mission. They usually relate to all aspects of the business such as financial, employees, customers, etc and have performance indicators that can be monitored, supporting their achievement.	
Direct Claim Status		The process whereby providers are able to claim certification without External Quality Assurer activity.	
e-learning/e-delivery		E-Learning, or electronic learning, is the delivery of learning and training through digital resources.	Features of e-learning/e-delivery: technology is used to facilitate learning, teaching and delivery in an online environment , opportunities for formative and summative assessment may arise, sessions may be interactive such as lectures, webinars and workshops, commonly used by providers for remote learning and delivery.
Entry (registration)		The process by which an approved provider informs its awarding body that a candidate has begun working towards a given unit or qualification.	
Expired qualifications (also known as finished qualifications)		Qualifications which have gone beyond their certification end date (finish date).	
Extension		The process by which a qualification at the end of its accreditation period is extended for a further period.	
Foundation Apprenticeship	FA	Foundation Apprenticeships at Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework level 6 provide work-based learning opportunities for learners in their senior phase of secondary education.	

Graduate Apprenticeship	GA	Graduate apprenticeships provide work-based learning opportunities up to Master's degree level for new and existing employees.	They have been created in partnership with industry and the further and higher education sector. The apprenticeships combine academic knowledge with skills development to enable participants to become more effective and productive in the workplace.
Head of Accreditation	HoA	The Head of Accreditation has overall responsibility for the work of the unit, including ensuring that the unit's policies and procedures are implemented, and is Chair of the ACG. As Head of Accreditation, the post-holder represents SQA Accreditation on several external groups including the Apprenticeship Approval Group and the SCQF Quality Committee.	
Imported Units		Units used in a qualification which are not owned by the Standards Setting Organisations (SSO) otherwise responsible for the development and maintenance of that qualification and its component products — eg. a management unit within a retail qualification.	
Incremental Review		A review of National Occupational Standards and/or related existing qualification(s) which may result in minor to moderate but not extensive or fundamental changes.	
Information Assistant	IA	The Information Assistant provides support to the Information and Research Manager in achieving their objectives, as well as ensuring that information recorded on the SQA Accreditation's information management system is correct.	Collates data from awarding bodies, tracks changes in qualifications and awarding bodies and updates data with any changes.

Information and Research Manager	IRM	Manages and supports research activities related to the work of the unit and manages the Information Section staffed by the Information Assistant. The Information and Research Manager prepares statistical reports on qualification take-up across all awarding bodies and works with stakeholders to promote the use of SQA Accreditation data.	The Information and Research Manager is a core member of the Accreditation Co-Ordination Group and a good point of contact regarding any research projects SQA Accreditation is undertaking.
Issue		Applied when an awarding body has not acted or met our regulatory requirements.	
Key Performance Indicator	KPI	A measurable value that demonstrates how effectively an organisation is achieving key business objectives. Organisations use key performance indicators at multiple levels to evaluate success at meeting targets.	
Labour Market Information	LMI	Statistical information gathered about the labour market which is then used for labour market-related planning and decision-making.	
Lapsing period		The period between the accreditation end date and the certification end date. During the lapsing period, awarding bodies must not approve any new providers for the specific qualification.	Awarding bodies should discourage their providers from registering any new learners in the lapsing period and encourage them to register on newer versions of accredited qualifications. If candidates are registered in the lapsing period, this should only be done where the candidate has a realistic chance of completing the qualification by the certification end date. Registering learners in the lapsing period should be seen as the exception rather than the rule, and awarding bodies should ensure they have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners to minimise the number of registrations in the lapsing period.

Learner		Candidate, student, or any individual undertaking a qualification accredited by SQA Accreditation.	
Maladministration		Any actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the accreditation of quality assurance processes, including the integrity of accredited qualifications, the validity of any certificates, or the reputation and credibility of SQA Accreditation.	
Malpractice		Any deliberate actions, neglect, default or any other practice that compromises the accreditation or quality assurance process including the integrity of accredited qualifications, the validity of any certificates or the reputation and credibility of SQA Accreditation.	
Management system		The framework of processes, process management, performance indicators and improvement systems that an organisation uses to meet its mission.	
Mission		Mission is the core purpose of an organization or a company. It is a summary of the aims and core values. A mission clearly tells what you as an organisation does for customers or key stakeholders.	
Modern Apprenticeship (including Technical Apprenticeships and Professional Apprenticeships)	MA	A programme based on an Scottish Vocational Qualification or a competence-based qualification, Workplace Core Skills units and possibly other relevant qualifications which allows people to be trained in a job while also achieving nationally recognised vocational qualifications.	

Multiple Choice Question	MCQ	Assessment question consisting of a stem which has three or more possible answers, including correct answers and distractors.	
National Occupational Standards	NOS	National Occupational Standards describe what a person needs to do, know and understand to do a job competently.	
Online Assessment		Online assessment is a digital testing method where students can take exams, quizzes, or assessments through an internet-connected device.	Features of online/e-assessment/computer-based assessment: the assessment may be hosted locally or nationally, the assessment is normally undertaken under controlled or supervised conditions, some assessments may give instant results, the assessment can be blended with other assessment approaches (eg aspects of remote assessment).
Partnership	(in the context of SQA Accreditation)	Where two or more organisations work together to fulfil SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements. In doing so, those bodies involved in the partnership carry out awarding body functions and must have significant, clearly defined roles and responsibilities.	
Procedure		A series of detailed instructions to accomplish an end goal.	
Process		A series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular agreed goal.	
Provider		Organisation(s) or individual(s) responsible for delivery and/or assessment of an SQA accredited qualification. A provider may constitute a centre, tutor, examiner or assessment location.	
Provider Monitoring Visit	PMV	A visit to a given awarding body's approved provider used as a form of quality assurance by SQA Accreditation to regulate its approved awarding bodies.	

Qualification Category		There are 16 qualification categories within the Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) framework. SVQs are categorised by the area to which they most suitably belong. For example, the healthcare, social care and childcare category covers first aid, mental health, housing, etc.	
Qualification Products	QPs	Some or all of the following items which make up the approved qualification 'package': structure, units, assessment strategy and core skills signposting.	
Quality Enhancement Rating	QER	A quality assurance model by which SQA Accreditation determines the level of audit activity needed for an approved awarding body within a three-year cycle.	
Re-accreditation		The process by which a qualification at the end of its accreditation period is replaced with a revised and updated version of the original qualification.	
Reasonable Adjustments		Arrangements which are approved in advance of an examination or assessment process to allow achievement to be demonstrated by the candidates with either a permanent or long-term disability, learning difficulty, or a temporary disability, illness or disposition.	
Recognition of Prior Learning	RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the formal acknowledgement of the knowledge, skills, competence, expertise and capabilities that people possess as a result of prior learning that may have occurred through formal, informal or non-formal means, through self-study, work or other life experiences.	

Recommendation		A recommendation is noted where in an audit or provider monitoring report where SQA Accreditation considers there is potential for an approved awarding body to make an improvement. The awarding body is advised to address any recommendations noted as good practice.	
Regulated Qualifications Framework	RQF	This is used to describe qualifications and learning programmes in terms of their level of difficulty and credit (size), effective from 2015 in England and Northern Ireland.	
Regulation		The process by which SQA Accreditation regulates its approved awarding bodies and their activities using a range of quality assurance methods and techniques.	
Regulation Manager	RM	Responsibility for a portfolio of awarding bodies and ensuring their ongoing compliance with the regulatory principles. Their role is focused on quality assurance and they lead the annual audit activity that SQA Accreditation carries out. They report their audit findings, quality rate awarding bodies and work closely in collaboration with the other UK regulatory authorities. Jointly responsible, with an Accreditation Manager, for managing the approval of new awarding bodies. They are also responsible for dealing with compliance issues and leading investigations.	
Regulation Officer	RO	Support SQA Accreditation's regulatory and quality assurance function by monitoring qualification delivery and assessment at awarding body providers. Like the Regulation Managers, they report their findings, contribute to the quality rating of awarding	

		bodies and work closely in collaboration with the other UK regulatory authorities. They also work alongside Regulation Managers to carry out annual audit activity, deal with compliance issues and conduct investigations.	
Regulatory Principles		Regulatory Principles define the standard which awarding bodies must meet in order to be compliant. Awarding bodies must decide what evidence they want to provide in order to demonstrate how they meet these principles.	
Regulatory Principles Directives		Specific published criteria that defines the mandatory requirements, awarding bodies must adhere to in order to be compliant.	
Regulatory Requirements		Specific set of guidelines, which SQA Accreditation are obligated to comply with with. Incorporates Regulatory Principles, Regulatory Principles Directives and the Accreditation Licence with SQA Accreditation.	
Relevant Legislation		Any law, legislation or standards which has an impact on the awarding body's operating environment.	
Reliability		The extent to which the outcomes of an assessment or test are consistent, dependable and replicable over time.	

Remote Assessment		Remote testing is when students conduct assessments, such as tests and final exams, on their own devices from their own locations. They are often run at a specific start and end time, to mimic the in-class environment.	Features of remote assessment: the learner and assessor/examiner are in different locations to each other, the assessment is facilitated by the use of information technology, assessment can be observed live or recorded, the assessment allows for feedback and questioning, the assessment can be blended with other assessment approaches (eg aspects of online, e- or computer-based assessment).
Remote Invigilation		Remote invigilation essentially recreates the exam hall experience online. Candidates sit the test online at a place of their choosing, such as the home or workplace, using their own hardware.	Features of remote invigilation: live and/or automated supervision of a learner completing the required assessment tasks from a different location to that of the invigilator, ensures that the learner completes the assessment under the required conditions so that the awarding body can assure itself of the validity of the assessment and secure the award of the qualification, assessments are recorded for review and quality assurance purposes, the assessment is facilitated by the use of information technology, software used is often supplied by third parties other than the awarding body, the invigilator is not assessing the learner.
Remote Quality Assurance		Quality Assurance is a system for ensuring a desired level of quality in the development, production, or delivery of products and services. For Remote Quality Assurance, these activites take place online between the relevant parties.	
Reportable Incident		Incidents which SQA Accreditation expects awarding bodies to make them aware of.	
Sanction		A punitive measure applied to an awarding body which has failed to resolve an issue or	

		meet the terms of a condition imposed upon it.	
Scottish Apprenticeships		A Scottish apprenticeship combines qualifications with on-the-job experience, allowing people to work and learn at the same time.	Scottish Apprenticeships consist of foundation apprenticeships, modern apprenticeships and graduate apprenticeships.
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman	SPSO	The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is the final stage for complaints about public service organisations in Scotland. Complaints about SQA Accreditation that have not been satisfactorily resolved by us can be escalated to the SPSO.	
Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework	SCQF	The framework used to describe Scottish qualifications and learning programmes in terms of their level of difficulty and size.	
Scottish Vocational Qualification	SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualifications are work-based qualifications based on standards of competence (ie National Occupational Standards).	
Sector Skills Council	SSC	Employer-led organisations which cover specific economic sectors and which have specific aims relating to skills, training and related standards and qualifications.	
Self-Assessment		A method used by approved awarding bodies to assess their own ability to meet the requirements of the regulatory principles.	

Senior Accreditation Manager	SAM	The Senior Accreditation Manager has line management responsibility for the Accreditation Managers and policy related duties, is a core member of Accreditation Co-ordination Group and attends all Accreditation Committee meetings. The SAM is also a member of the UK Standards and Frameworks Panel which influences the development of National Occupational Standards and vocational qualifications at a national level and a member of the Apprenticeship Approval Group Sub-Group which evaluates Modern Apprenticeship Framework proposals prior to their submission to the Apprenticeship Approval Group.	
Senior Regulation Manager	SRM	The Senior Regulation Manager has line management responsibilities for Regulation Managers and Regulation Officers and policy related duties. The Senior Regulation Manager is a core member of the Accreditation Co-ordination Group and attends all Accreditation Committee meetings. The Senior Regulation Manager is a core member of the 4-nation e-Assessment Research and Design Forum.	
Skills Development Scotland	SDS	Skills Development Scotland is the national skills body supporting the people and businesses of Scotland to develop and apply their skills.	
Special Considerations		A post assessment adjustment to a learner's mark or grade to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or any other indisposition at the time of assessment.	

Stakeholder		A person or organisation with a vested interest in the outcome of the business activities.	
Standard Setting Organisations	SSO	This is a term used to describe a body or organisation which has authority from the three devolved administrations to define National Occupational Standards. These could be Sector Skills Councils or other sector bodies.	
Strategy		A high-level plan outlining the methods by which an organisation intends to achieve its mission and vision.	
Subcontractor		A subcontractor can be a self-employed individual (sole trader) responsible for delivering a contract on behalf of the business; a limited company (including companies with only a sole director and no employees) responsible for delivering a contract on behalf of the business or any other type of business that is contracted to provide service delivery on behalf of the organisation.	
Supplementary Information		Information provided to assist awarding bodies in meeting the Regulatory Principles.	

System		The framework of processes, process management, performance indicators and improvement systems that an organisation uses to achieve its goals.	
Technical Expert Group	TEG	Set up by Skills Development Scotland to develop apprenticeship qualifications, and to develop relationships with employers.	
Third Parties and Service Providers		Any person(s) or organisation(s) with whom an awarding body contracts to deliver services on behalf of the awarding body.	
Validation		The process used by awarding bodies to decide if the content, design and rationale for a qualification or unit within its own portfolio meets the required standards for the awarding body to award and certificate that qualification or unit.	
Validity		The degree to which an assessment/test measures the attributes, competences or performances it is intended to measure.	
Vision		Description of what the organisation is trying to achieve in the long-term future.	
Withdrawal		The process by which a qualification at the end of its accreditation period, which has not been extended or re-accredited, is removed from the list of available qualifications.	
Workplace Core Skills		These are the broad, transferable, generic, fundamental skills needed for people in employment and in the workplace: communication; numeracy; information and communication technology; problem solving; and working with others. Workplace Core Skills are derived from the National Core Skills Framework, owned by the Scottish	

		Government and managed by SQA on its behalf.	