

# SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

## ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

### STANDING ORDERS

The Accreditation Committee is established in accordance with section 3 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1996.

#### 1 Membership and Appointments

- 1.1 SQA Main Board (*hereinafter referred to as the Board*) shall appoint a Convenor of the Accreditation Committee from its members. One other member shall be appointed by the Board from its membership.
- 1.2 The majority of members of the Accreditation Committee shall be individuals who are neither members nor employees of SQA and these members will be appointed by the Board.
- 1.3 The composition of the Accreditation Committee shall be:
  - ◆ 1 Convenor (appointed by the Board from its membership)
  - ◆ 1 member (appointed by the Board from its membership)
  - ◆ 1 member (appointed by the Advisory Council from its membership)
  - ◆ SQA's Chief Executive
  - ◆ At least 7 other members (appointed by the Board from outwith its membership).

These appointments will be in accordance with SQA's co-option policy.

- 1.4 The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland shall have observer status on the Accreditation Committee. Only members of the Accreditation Committee shall have the right to vote.
- 1.5 From time to time, the Convenor may invite other individuals, including Board members who are not members of the Accreditation Committee, to attend an Accreditation Committee meeting.
- 1.6 The Convenor of the Accreditation Committee will report on the proceedings of the Accreditation Committee to subsequent Board meetings.
- 1.7 Accreditation Committee members can appoint a Vice-Convenor from its members, this cannot be a member of the SQA Board. The Vice-Convenor will have powers to act in the absence of the Convenor.
- 1.8 A minute secretary will be provided by SQA Accreditation.

#### 2 Frequency of Meetings

- 2.1 The full Accreditation Committee shall meet a minimum of four times per year to discuss policy and strategy issues. Operational meetings will be conducted by an internal SQA group, the Accreditation Coordination Group, on a weekly basis and decisions will be recorded and reported to Accreditation Committee members at policy meetings.

### **3 Notice of Meetings**

- 3.1 The Head of Accreditation will draft a calendar of meeting dates in advance. These shall be published in the Committee papers for consideration no later than November of each year.
- 3.2 Once these dates are approved, the Head of Accreditation shall send out confirmation of these dates to all members.
- 3.3 Any cancellation or adjournment of a meeting shall only be permissible following agreement of the Convenor.

### **4 Quorum**

- 4.1 The quorum necessary to transact business will be a minimum of three members, the majority of whom must be members (and not observers) of the Accreditation Committee but who are not SQA Board members, nor employees of the SQA.
- 4.2 Meetings may be held without members being physically present in the same place, for example, by telephone or video-conference. When a member attends by telephone or video-conference they are counted as being in attendance for the purpose of a quorum
- 4.3 If a quorum is not present, the Convenor may adjourn the meeting to another time or agree to proceed if agenda items are not deemed contentious and seek homologation of the decision from Members following the meeting.
- 4.4 Questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by a majority of votes and, in the case of an equality of votes, the Convenor shall have a second or casting vote.

### **5 Extraordinary Meetings**

- 5.1 The Convenor or Chief Executive may call an extraordinary meeting at any time, upon appropriate liaison with the Head of Accreditation. The necessary quorum applies.
- 5.2 A request to attend an extraordinary meeting of the Committee shall, except in the case of urgency, be given not less than five clear working days before the meeting and shall specify the agenda for the meeting.
- 5.3 Where possible meetings shall convene at a time and venue suitable to those members who can attend.
- 5.4 All powers and duties set out in this document shall be applicable equally to an extraordinary meeting.

## **6 Emergency Procedures**

- 6.1 Should any policy or other such matter that would normally be submitted to the Accreditation Committee for approval and requires consideration prior to the next meeting of the Accreditation Committee due to reasons of urgency, then the Head of Accreditation shall inform the Convenor.
- 6.2 If the Convenor does not deem it sufficiently urgent, the matter shall be referred to the next scheduled meeting of the Accreditation Committee.
- 6.3 If the Convenor does deem that the matter is sufficiently urgent and requires consideration by the Accreditation Committee prior to the next scheduled meeting, the Convenor shall be entitled to call an extraordinary meeting of the Accreditation Committee as outlined in 5 above.
- 6.4 Alternatively, the Convenor may determine that the matter may be dealt with via e-mail. In such circumstances the Head of Accreditation will liaise with the Convenor to ensure that the necessary papers are e-mailed to members.
- 6.5 The Convenor and the Head of Accreditation will consider the responses submitted by members and the Convenor will determine the decision based upon responses submitted by members.

## **7 Order of Business**

- 7.1 The business of the Accreditation Committee at the four policy meetings held each year, will take place in the following order:
  - ◆ Apologies
  - ◆ Declarations of Interest
  - ◆ Minutes of the Previous Meeting
  - ◆ Matters Arising
  - ◆ Items of Policy/Strategy for approval
  - ◆ Items for Discussion
  - ◆ Items for Noting
  - ◆ Housekeeping

## **8 Conduct of Business**

- 8.1 Members shall conduct business in accordance with the Code of Conduct pursuant to the Ethical Standards of Public Life (etc) (Scotland) Act 2000 and SQA's Code of Practice for Board Members.
- 8.2 Should any member(s) have any interest in any matter of the proceedings, such interest shall be declared, where possible, at the start of the meeting. The committee secretary shall record any such declaration in the minutes of the meeting. Where a member makes a declaration of interest, the Accreditation Committee shall determine whether the member should withdraw from the meeting at that agenda item.

## **9 Failure to Attend Meetings**

- 9.1 Should any member fail to attend for three consecutive meetings then the matter shall be referred to the Board.
- 9.2 The Board shall consider the reason for non-attendance and may withdraw the membership and another member will be re-appointed as appropriate.

## **10 Agenda and Papers**

- 10.1 The agenda for the meeting shall be approved by the Head of Accreditation prior to issue.
- 10.2 The agenda and committee papers will be circulated seven calendar days before the scheduled date of the meeting.
- 10.3 All papers considered by the Accreditation Committee shall be copied to the Scottish Government at the same time they are sent to members of the Committee.

## **11 Minutes**

- 11.1 Decisions of the Accreditation Committee shall be recorded by the minute secretary provided by SQA Accreditation.
- 11.2 Draft minutes will be prepared and presented to the Convenor of the meeting within seven working days following the meeting.
- 11.3 The approved minutes shall be included in the papers for the appropriate scheduled policy meeting.
- 11.4 Following approval of the minutes by the Convenor, no amendment to the minutes shall be permissible without the prior approval of the Convenor.
- 11.5 The Convenor shall report to the SQA Board on its discharge of business. A copy of the approved minutes will also be submitted to the Board for information.

## **12 Duties of the Accreditation Committee and Delegated Authority of the Accreditation Coordination Group**

- 12.1 In accordance with section 3 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1996, the remit of the Accreditation Committee is to:
  - ◆ monitor the implementation, by awarding bodies, of SVQs and other accredited qualifications
  - ◆ monitor developments in the vocational qualifications landscape, take cognisance of the work within the UK-wide framework of national occupational standards, to ensure that accredited vocational qualifications add value to the Scottish economy
  - ◆ ensure that criteria for awarding bodies and accredited qualifications are kept under review, revised as appropriate in the context of national developments, and re-published from time to time

- ◆ monitor and evaluate the implementation, operation and quality assurance of accredited qualifications by awarding bodies
- 12.2 In considering matters of strategic policy and technical issues, the Accreditation Committee has a duty to ensure that it considers such issues in the context of effective business planning and risk assessment; and that, as part of the governance of SQA, it shall:
- provide the Board with advice and guidance to ensure the fulfilment of the vision of SQA and the accreditation function.
- 12.3 To consider and commission research, develop strategy and undertake consultations to ensure that SQA meets current and emerging demands for qualifications as well as anticipating future demand.
- 12.4 To ensure that qualifications and related activities comply with relevant criteria, design rules and policies, including National Policy.
- 12.5 To establish a dialogue with Scottish Government departments, mediated by officers of SQA Accreditation, on the development and implementation of National Policy.
- 12.6 The Accreditation Committee may amend or delegate further functions as it deems appropriate subject to agreement with the Scottish Government.
- 12.7 The Accreditation Committee is authorised by the Scottish Government to delegate authority to the Accreditation Coordination Group to:
- ◆ approve Awarding Bodies to award accredited qualifications
  - ◆ accredit qualifications submitted to the Accreditation Coordination Group which meet SQA's requirements, as published, and to determine the period of accreditation and, where appropriate, specify conditions
  - ◆ extend the period of accreditation, re-accredit, or remove accreditation of existing qualifications taking into account the record of awarding bodies in implementing the qualifications, particularly in their compliance with any specific conditions set by SQA Accreditation
  - ◆ remove the accreditation of any qualifications that have no update where there is no clear, justifiable evidence from the awarding body of candidate demand for the qualification for a period of two consecutive years
  - ◆ remove the approved awarding body status if they fail to meet any of the conditions set out in the 'SQA's Accreditation Regulatory Sanctions Policy'
  - ◆ monitor (1) arrangements for promoting qualifications nationally and (2) the provision of information and guidance to standard setting organisations and awarding bodies, making recommendations as appropriate

- ◆ undertake any additional functions relating to accreditation in the light of national developments
- ◆ the Accreditation Coordination Group shall provide a quarterly report to the Accreditation Committee
- ◆ a minute secretary shall be provided by SQA Accreditation.

### **13 Approval and Amendment to the Standing Order**

- 13.1 The Board only has the power to amend or alter any part of these Standing Orders.
- 13.2 The Accreditation Committee shall review its Standing Orders on a regular basis and submit to the Board for approval any amendments as a result of the review.

### **14 Process for Appeals**

14.1 All awarding bodies and standards setting organisations (hereafter known as 'the appellant') have the right to appeal any decision made by ACG/AC. Please note this is not an exhaustive list of organisations which may appeal to SQA Accreditation. Grounds for appeal vary depending on the individual decision(s) made, therefore, all appeals are considered in their own right. The following are some examples of what may constitute grounds for an appeal:

- ◆ The appellant has evidence to support that a sanction should not have been applied.
- ◆ The appellant has evidence to support that an inappropriate sanction has been applied.
- ◆ The appellant has evidence to support that specific information which may have an impact on the level or allocation of a sanction being applied, has not been considered by ACG.

14.2 Please note that the above is not an exhaustive list of potential grounds for appeal.

All appeals must be made in writing to the Head of Accreditation, SQA Accreditation, The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ. All appeals must be received by SQA Accreditation within 20 working days of the date of ACG meeting at which the decision was made.

- 14.3 On receipt of the appeal, the following process will be implemented:
- ◆ Where possible, every attempt will be made by ACG to resolve the appellant's concerns. ACG will acknowledge the appeal within 5 working days of receipt of the appeal and provide a written response to the appellant within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal.
- 14.4 The appellant will be provided with an opportunity to respond to ACG's comments. Should the actions proposed by ACG not be acceptable to the appellant, then written correspondence to this effect must be received from the appellant within 15 working days of the date of ACG decision. This will be considered as the 'final appeal'.
- 14.5 On receipt of any further correspondence, an Extraordinary Meeting of the Accreditation Committee will be convened to independently review the final appeal. The appellant and ACG Members will be informed of the date of this meeting. This Committee will be independent of ACG. No ACG Members will be involved in the Extraordinary Meeting of the Accreditation Committee unless in an independent advisory capacity.
- 14.6 The Accreditation Committee will review all evidence in relation to the appeal from both ACG and the appellant's perspective. AC will issue their decision in writing to both parties on the date of the Extraordinary Meeting.
- 14.7 The decision of Accreditation Committee is final.