

## Equality Impact Assessment [\(supporting guidance available\)](#)

### Action Plan

This section is completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment. Due to the importance of embedding equality in SQA through our actions the Action Plan will be the focus and record of ongoing actions.

<b>Agreed Schedule Review Date</b>	<b>June 2026</b>	<b>Additional Schedule Review Date</b>	
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Explain how you will monitor and record the actual impact on equality groups, including how the evidence can be revisited to measure the actual impact.

<b>Required Actions</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment &amp; Review</b>
Actions taken to <b>monitor the implementation of policy and the impact on equality groups</b> (evidence and consultation)			<b>[ONGOING RECORD]</b>
Benchmark those aspects of SQA Accreditation's regulatory framework which relate to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion against the requirements set out by the other UK Qualifications Regulators	Head of Accreditation	31 March 2024	

### Policy Aims

<b>Name of Policy or practice</b>	Awarding Body Approval Policy
<b>New Policy or Revision</b>	Revision
<b>Name of Policy Owner</b>	Head of Accreditation
<b>Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion</b>	July 2023

**What is the rationale for this policy or practice?**

The rationale for having this policy is to ensure that SQA Accreditation is consistent in only granting awarding body approval status to organisations which can fully meet the specified regulatory requirements. It ensures that SQA Accreditation is consistent in how it deals with potential applicants.

**What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?**

As a regulator, we aim to be as transparent as we can possibly be. It is therefore important that awarding bodies approved by us understand our quality assurance aims and how we operationalise these.

Within the UK there are five principles of better regulation (proportionate, accountable, transparent, targeted, and consistent). These five principles underpin the work of the accreditation function.

Further, we use the model of principle-based regulation. This was introduced in 2012 and a move away from criteria-based regulation. This decision was made on the basis of a review of various models of regulation used by other UK regulators (not just qualification regulators). Principle based regulation was adopted by the Financial Services Authority and moved away from a prescriptive method of regulation and in doing so they provided a useful summary of the benefits of this approach. Principle-based regulation is described as placing greater reliance on principles and outcome-focused, high-level rules as a means to drive at the regulatory aims we want to achieve, and less reliance on prescriptive rules.

The Awarding Body approval process states that prospective awarding bodies must be able to meet our regulatory requirements. Our regulatory requirements consist of:

- Accreditation Licence
- Regulatory Principles
- Regulatory Directives

**Accreditation Licence**

The Accreditation Licence is an agreement between SQA Accreditation and the approved awarding body. The purpose of the licence is to detail the terms and conditions of the arrangement.

**Regulatory Principles**

Our Regulatory Principles have been designed to encompass the five key principles of better regulation to ensure that we are transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent, and targeted in carrying out our regulatory duties.

The 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. The Regulatory Principles document includes supplementary information exemplifying how you might choose to meet the principles.

You can read SQA Accreditation's regulatory principles on SQA Accreditation's website (<https://accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/home>).

### Regulatory Directives

The Regulatory Directives have been developed to define the mandatory requirements which awarding bodies must meet in order to be compliant.

### **What are the aims of this policy or practice?**

This policy sets out SQA Accreditation's requirements for prospective awarding bodies which seek to apply to SQA Accreditation to be recognised as an Approved Awarding Body. It sets our expectations that prospective awarding bodies should conduct a process of self-appraisal to ensure that it can meet our regulatory requirements.

In undertaking a self-appraisal, potential awarding bodies should consider whether or not they are capable of meeting the general approval requirements below. These are considered key to progressing towards application for approval:

- The organisation has a demonstrable track record effectively delivering qualifications
- The organisation is currently based and operates from within the European Union (EU) and/or the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)
- The organisation is able to provide evidence of financial stability
- There are no grounds for believing that the organisation's owners, Directors, or Senior Managers are unfit to be in charge of the organisation

When a prospective awarding body is satisfied that its self-appraisal indicates that it is likely to meet our requirements, it is asked to complete an Enquiry Form. This is then used to carry out a risk assessment of the prospective awarding body. The risk assessment covers governance, finance / fraud, sectors it operates in and any delivery risk issues. If a potential awarding body scores high on finance / fraud, then the application is not taken forward. Once we are satisfied that the prospective awarding body is of good standing then it is asked to complete an application to become an approved awarding body and also to make an accreditation submission.

### **How is the content of these aims relevant to equality groups?**

Through our quality assurance activities, we seek to ensure that prospective awarding bodies meet our regulatory requirements. Within our regulatory arrangements, there is a need for approved awarding bodies to ensure that they have in place equal opportunity policies. These are reviewed, as appropriate, through our awarding body activities. In addition, it is required that prospective awarding bodies will have arrangements in place for alternative assessment arrangements (referred to as special considerations or reasonable adjustments) for those candidates that require assessment to be adapted to meet any requirements for candidates with e.g., a disability. These alternative assessment arrangements are reviewed via our audit activity and also through provider monitoring activity.

Regulatory Principle 14 states: “The awarding body and its providers must ensure that its qualifications and their delivery and assessment are fair, inclusive and accessible to learners”. More precisely, this means that in order to comply with SQA Accreditation’s Regulatory Principle, , the awarding body and its providers must comply with relevant equalities legislation. In so doing, the awarding body and its providers are responsible for demonstrating:

- how equality and diversity policies comply with relevant legislation
- that there are clear processes for reasonable adjustments and special considerations
- arrangements for providers to manage recognition of prior learning and achievement (if applicable)
- that they can define any barriers, requirements or conditions which could affect qualifications or their delivery
- that they act in a way that safeguards the interests of vulnerable groups

## Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

### What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?

The principle-based approach to regulation began as an internal piece of work and was shared with the other UK qualification regulators. It evolved into a UK project. Unfortunately, due to the legislation that brought Ofqual into being, Ofqual was unable to proceed with the project as this legislation is very prescriptive in terms of how Ofqual is required to regulate. At that time (c2010) Wales and Northern Ireland's qualifications systems were very similar to England's. The qualification regulators in Wales and Northern Ireland decided to follow Ofqual's lead. One option for SQA Accreditation was to follow suit. However, the approach being required of Ofqual was essentially criteria based, SQA Accreditation, with the support of its Accreditation Committee, decided to remain with the Regulatory Principles.

As this policy refers to the Approval of Awarding Bodies, SQA Accreditation is of the view that stakeholder feedback on the policy is not within the spirit of the policy. The ways in which SQA Accreditation ensure adherence to these principles are not open to consultation from stakeholders.

### What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?

#### Overall

#### Learner demographic data

This policy applies equally to all potential awarding bodies seeking approval from SQA Accreditation. At the initial stages of the process, SQA Accreditation has no knowledge or information on the applicant. Our knowledge of the potential awarding body increases as it progresses through the application process. Until the potential awarding body is approved, we do not collect any form of learner data. All applications are scrutinised against all of our Regulatory Principles which includes the following principle:

Regulatory Principle 15 requires that:

"The awarding body must have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners."

In the Supplementary Information, it states that:

"The awarding body is responsible for:

- ensuring that registration and certification systems allow for candidates to be clearly and uniquely identified and contactable in the event of any queries."

It is therefore for each potential awarding body to determine which information it will collect about the candidates undertaking its qualifications. The only occasion when SQA Accreditation collects candidate information is when conducting Provider Monitoring Visits and this is in the relation to any assessments undertaken and the evidence that the Regulation Officer has viewed. SQA Accreditation has no other purpose to collect candidate data.

<b>Age</b>	There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of age. SQA Accreditation do not know the demography of potential awarding bodies' learners broken down by age, and it is impractical to collect, store and analyse this data.
<b>Disability</b>	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010, Education Providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners:  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/education-rights">https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/education-rights</a></p> <p>Specifically, Section 96 of the Equality Act (2010) states that:          "This section makes it unlawful for a qualifications body to discriminate against, harass or victimise a person in the arrangements it makes for deciding on whom to confer qualifications, and the terms on which those qualifications are conferred." Qualifications bodies are defined in section 97.          It also places a duty on qualifications bodies to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people."  <a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/notes/division/3/6/3/2">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/notes/division/3/6/3/2</a></p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of race. SQA Accreditation do not know the demography of potential awarding bodies' learners broken down by race, and it is impractical to collect, store and analyse this data.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<p>There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of religion or belief. SQA Accreditation do not know the demography of awarding bodies' learners broken down by religion or belief, and it is impractical to collect, store and analyse this data.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>
<b>Sex</b>	There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of age. SQA Accreditation do not know the demography of awarding bodies' learners broken down by age, and it is impractical to collect, store and analyse this data.

	<p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<p>There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of age. SQA Accreditation do not know the demography of awarding bodies' learners broken down by age, and it is impractical to collect, store and analyse this data.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>
<b>Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	<p>There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of gender reassignment. SQA Accreditation do not know the demography of awarding bodies' learners broken down by gender reassignment, and it is impractical to collect, store and analyse this data.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	<p>There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of marriage or civil partnership.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	<p>There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of pregnancy or maternity.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	<p>There is no evidence that this policy would have any specific impact on people on the basis of Care Experience. SQA Accreditation do not know the demography of awarding bodies' learners broken down by Care Leaver Status, and it is impractical to collect, store and analyse this data.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation can reasonably expect prospective awarding bodies to collect and manage this information in its own remit as appropriate, as set out in Regulatory Principle 15 above, once approval has been granted.</p>

## Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy or practice has on an equality group may be different and this requires to be recorded. The impact may not always be negative. Actions are taken to address any differential impact, and include actions to mitigate against any negative impact, to advance equality and to foster good relations between groups.

Each section contains questions for each equality group. These questions are here to support consideration; however, you can provide further detail. Focus initially on the equality groups that would be affected by this policy. If you do not consider that certain equality groups would be affected by this policy, you may leave these sections.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<b>All characteristics (impacts against all people)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Within our regulatory principles, we have a principle which states that “The awarding body must ensure that its systems and processes for the identification, design, development, implementation and review of qualifications and assessments are fit for purpose.” When reviewing this principle at awarding body, we want to ensure that the assessments are inclusive, free from bias and do not discriminate. We would also expect that the awarding body has in place a policy and a process for alternative assessment arrangements, when required. Through our provider monitoring visits, we would want to see evidence of the implementation of the assessments and also evidence of any alternative assessment arrangements being in place.</p>
	<p>We also require awarding bodies and their providers to have an Equal Opportunity Policy in place which meets the legislative requirements. With this in mind, we expect to be able to mainstream the equality duties through SQA Accreditation’s approved awarding bodies, including the elimination of unlawful discrimination, the advancement of equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations, with all protected characteristics.</p>
<p>The approval of awarding bodies is largely a desk-based exercise and requires prospective awarding bodies to make an application for approval along with an accreditation submission. All applications are considered by the Accreditation Coordination Group and if approved, then the prospective awarding body is issued with a licence setting out the terms and conditions of its approval. Generally, there is a meeting with the approved awarding body, six months after it has been approved. This is a sense check of how the new approved awarding body is implementing its systems to meet the Regulatory Principles. It will then be considered for audit in the next audit schedule, which is determined on an annual basis.</p>	



	<b>Advance Equality of Opportunity</b>
	<p>Within our regulatory principles, we have a principle which states that “The awarding body must ensure that its systems and processes for the identification, design, development, implementation and review of qualifications and assessments are fit for purpose.” When reviewing this principle at awarding body, we want to ensure that the assessments are inclusive, free from bias and do not discriminate. We would also expect that the awarding body has in place a policy and a process for alternative assessment arrangements, when required. Through our provider monitoring visits, we would want to see evidence of the implementation of the assessments and also evidence of any alternative assessment arrangements being in place.</p> <p>We also require awarding bodies and their providers to have an Equal Opportunity Policy in place which meets the legislative requirements. With this in mind, we expect to be able to mainstream the equality duties through SQA Accreditation’s approved awarding bodies, including the elimination of unlawful discrimination, the advancement of equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations, with all protected characteristics.</p> <p>The approval of awarding bodies is largely a desk-based exercise and requires prospective awarding bodies to make an application for approval along with an accreditation submission. All applications are considered by the Accreditation Coordination Group and if approved, then the prospective awarding body is issued with a licence setting out the terms and conditions of its approval. Generally, there is a meeting with the approved awarding body, six months after it has been approved. This is a sense check of how the new approved awarding body is implementing its systems to meet the Regulatory Principles. It will then be considered for audit in the next audit schedule, which is determined on an annual basis.</p>
	<b>Foster Good Relations</b>
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<b>Age</b>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of age, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>No evidence that this policy could impact on advancing equality of people based on age.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
	<p>No evidence that this policy could impact on fostering good relations between people across age groups.</p>
	<p>General Equality Duty</p>
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	
<b>Disability</b>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of disability, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>Positive impact: Through our provider monitoring visits, we would want to see evidence of the implementation of the assessments and also evidence of any alternative assessment arrangements being in place.</p>
	<p>Alternative assessment arrangements are measures taken by awarding bodies to ensure that learners with disabilities can effectively access the qualification.</p>

	Foster good relations
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Race</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of race, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.
	No actions recorded
	Advance equality of opportunity
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
	Foster good relations
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of religion or belief, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
	Foster good relations
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>

<b>Sex</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of sex, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
	Foster good relations
We have no evidence that there is an impact	
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
	Foster good relations
We have no evidence that there is an impact	
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of gender reassignment, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.

	Advance equality of opportunity
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
	Foster good relations
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Marriage/Civil Partnership</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of marriage or civil partnership, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
	Foster good relations
	We have no evidence that there is an impact.
<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Pregnancy / Maternity</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of pregnancy and maternity, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.
	Advance equality of opportunity
	We have no evidence that there is an impact.
	Foster good relations

	We have no evidence that there is an impact.
<b>Considered by SQA</b>	<b>General Equality Duty</b>
<b>Care experience (where relevant)</b>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	There is no evidence to support any impact towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the basis of care experience, beyond those listed above, as they apply to all characteristics.
	<b>Advance equality of opportunity</b>
	We have no evidence that there is an impact
	<b>Foster good relations</b>
	We have no evidence that there is an impact

### Rationale

If you are proceeding with a decision that may have a negative impact and are not putting in place actions to mitigate against this, please explain how this is objectively justified.
No negative impacts identified.