

Stakeholder Survey 2024

A report on the results from SQA Accreditation's stakeholder survey

Publication date: February 2025

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority SQA Accreditation
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Executive summary

This report details key findings from SQA Accreditation's Stakeholder Survey, which was conducted between August and October 2024.

In total, 25 separate responses were received from a range of awarding bodies (ABs), standards setting organisations (SSOs) and other stakeholders.

The following key conclusions can be drawn from the survey:

- There is a general understanding that SQA Accreditation is distinct and autonomous from SQA's awarding body.
- The accreditation process requires modernisation, but the support offered by staff is very good.
- There is concern and uncertainty regarding the future of SQA Accreditation and how this will impact stakeholders.
- Stakeholders would like to see, at a minimum, that our current functions continue during and after the transition to Qualifications Scotland.

The key strengths of SQA Accreditation, as identified by stakeholders, are:

- Strong relationships with SQA Accreditation staff members.
- The services provided by SQA Accreditation are highly valued.
- Staff offer quality support and guidance.
- Self-assessments are extremely helpful and highly valued in assessing areas of improvement for our stakeholders.

Suggested areas for improvement by SQA Accreditation:

- The distinction between SQA Accreditation and SQA's awarding body could be clearer.
- There should be a cohesive and standardised approach to communication from all staff members.
- Systems should be modernised to reduce reliance on spreadsheets.
- Important changes should be highlighted and newsletters be readily available.

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1 Introduction

SQA Accreditation is dedicated to continually improving its levels of service and ensuring that stakeholders get the opportunity to share their opinions and influence the direction of change, as well as impact the focus and priorities of the unit. SQA Accreditation considers the feedback from stakeholder surveys together with views and comments gathered on an ongoing basis to identify potential areas for improvement and development.

This report details key findings from SQA Accreditation’s stakeholder survey conducted between August and October 2024.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information on stakeholders’ experiences of working with SQA Accreditation, to identify key strengths which should be maintained and enhanced, and areas for improvement.

The survey received responses from 27 August to 31 October 2024. SQA Accreditation’s key stakeholders were invited by email to respond to the survey. Responses were encouraged via reminder emails, as well as a reminder in the newsletter.

Where possible, comparisons are made with previous stakeholder survey results as a means to track improvements or to identify lack of improvement.

There were 25 individual responses in total.

This research was carried out in line with the SQA [Code of Research Practice](#).

The survey was successfully delivered to a total of 156 individual contacts, giving a response rate of 16.03%. Stakeholder organisations submitted one collated response per organisation rather than multiple individual responses. This number appears much lower than the previous percentage response rate as it was sent to a significantly higher number of individuals.

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
2014–15	44	22%
2018	46	32%
2021	28	35%
2024	25	16.03%

2 Interaction with SQA Accreditation

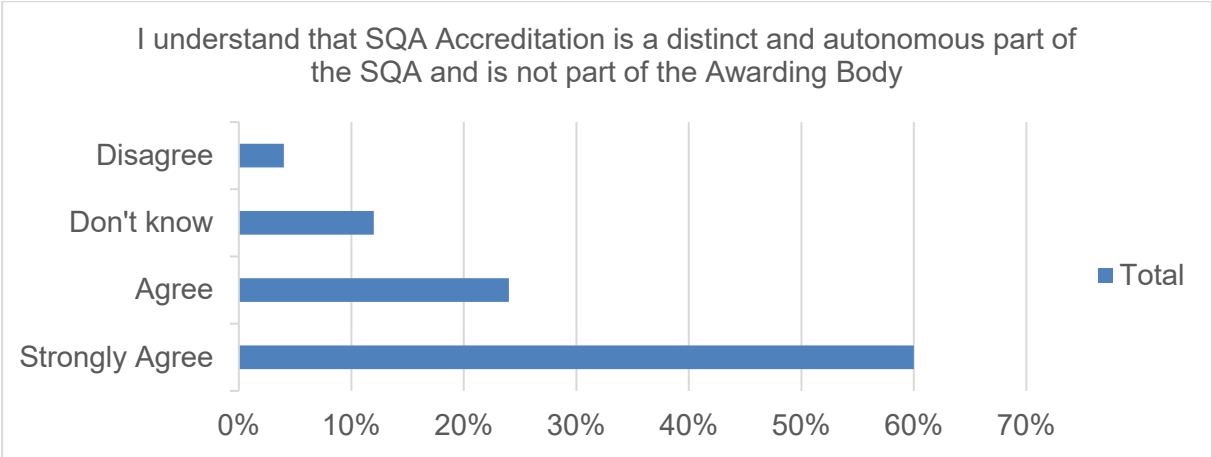
SQA Accreditation engages with stakeholders in a number of ways, often with multiple contacts in the same organisation. Stakeholders are allocated a specific contact by SQA Accreditation: an accreditation manager and a regulation manager in the case of an awarding body (AB), and an accreditation manager for standards setting organisations (SSOs). The head of accreditation is the key contact for some stakeholders, plus there is general contact from other teams, such as Administration and the Information and Research section. This information can be found on the [SQA Accreditation website](#).

Stakeholders were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements about their understanding and opinion of SQA Accreditation’s key roles and functions. Stakeholders were given four options, from ‘Strongly Agree’ through to ‘Strongly Disagree’.

2.1 SQA Accreditation as distinct and autonomous

Previously there has been confusion regarding the distinction between SQA Accreditation and SQA’s awarding body. Various attempts have been made to resolve this issue, such as SQA Accreditation getting its own branding and a dedicated SQA Accreditation website.

Figure 1: Understanding of SQA Accreditation as distinct and autonomous



SQA Accreditation is a distinct and autonomous part of SQA, not a part of the awarding body. Given the imminent reformation of SQA into Qualifications Scotland, SQA Accreditation is keen to ensure stakeholders are aware of this distinction. As seen in figure 1, 84% of respondents either ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Agree’ with this statement, demonstrating that most stakeholders do understand.

However, 4% ‘Disagree’ and 12% ‘Don’t know’, showing that this distinction is not clear to all. These respondents provided further information:

‘Always been very close and blurred lines still perceived, especially from a provider perspective.’

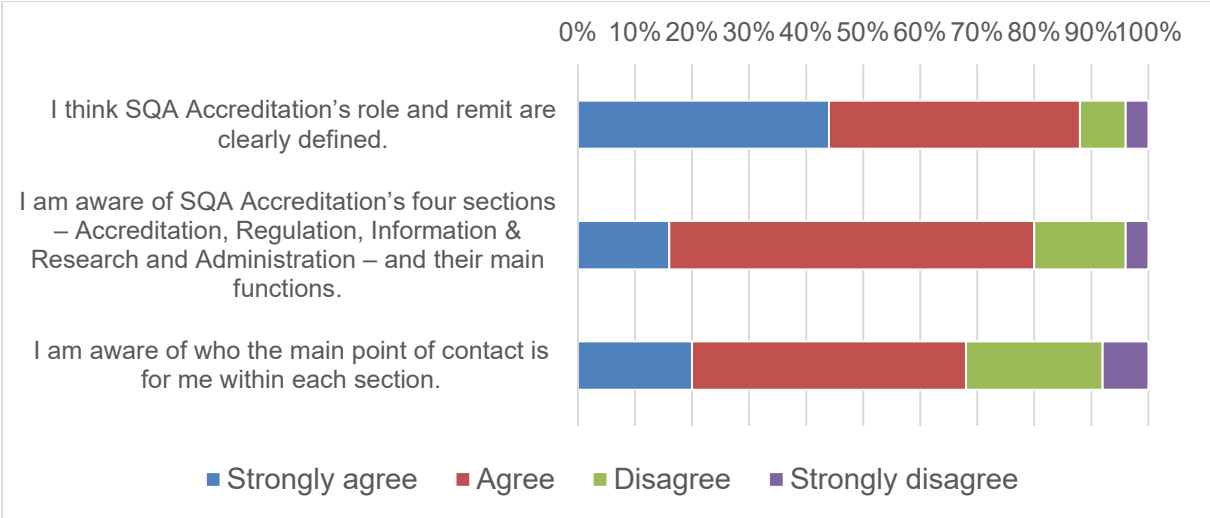
‘Same staff, same policies and same procedures.’

‘The delineation between the two are not clear.’

‘We only work with SQA Accreditation and so although we know it’s not part of the awarding body, we do not know if it is distinct and autonomous.’

2.2 SQA Accreditation’s function and structure

Figure 2: Statements of understanding of role, remit and structure of SQA Accreditation



As shown in Figure 2, 88% of respondents ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ that SQA Accreditation’s role and remit are clearly defined, 8% ‘disagree’ and 4% ‘strongly disagree’, suggesting room for improvement.

Regarding the four sections of SQA Accreditation, again most respondents are aware of these: 80% of respondents ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’. A higher proportion of respondents ‘disagree’ with this statement, 16%, and 4% ‘strongly disagree’. Comparing this to the results from 2021, in which 67.9% understood the four sections, this is an improvement.

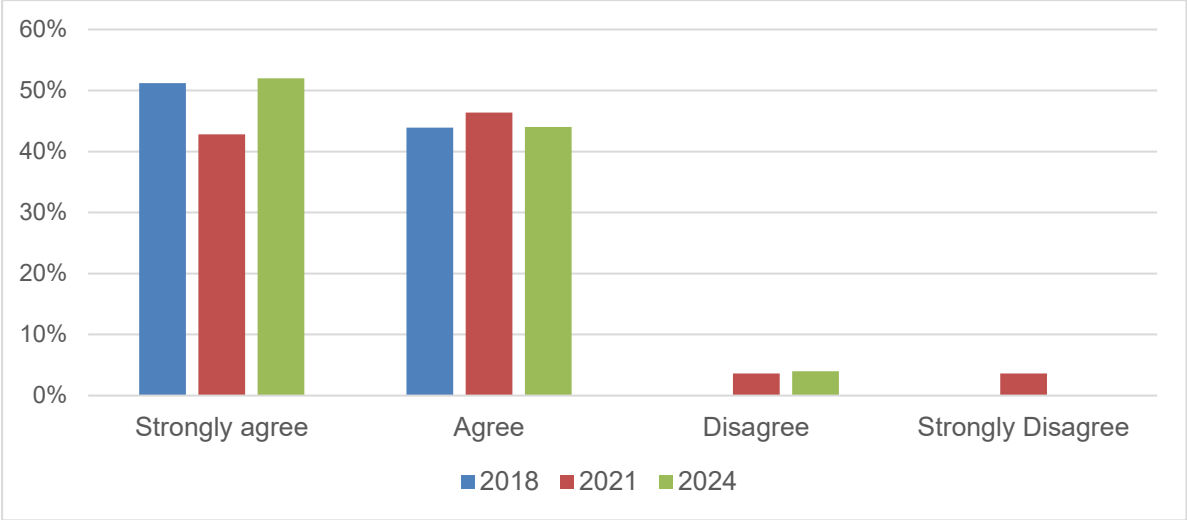
This final statement asks if the respondents know who they should contact in each section; 32% ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ that they know who they should contact. It has previously been found that stakeholders are aware of their contacts within Accreditation and Regulation, but not Administration or Information and Research. It is likely that stakeholders rarely have a need to contact a specific individual within Administration or Information and Research directly; both have a shared mailbox checked regularly by team members.

2.3 I value the services SQA Accreditation delivers

To conclude this section, stakeholders were asked to comment on this statement: ‘I value the services SQA Accreditation delivers’.

We also asked this question in 2018 and 2021, so are able to compare the results. As shown in Figure 3, in 2024, 96% of respondents ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ with the statement, compared with 89.3% in 2021.

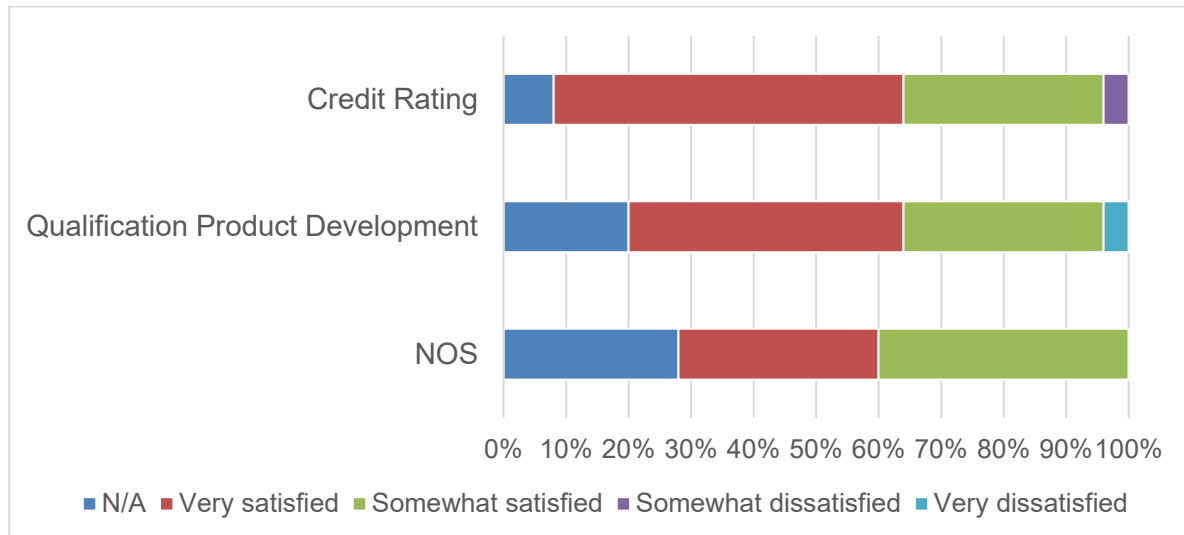
Figure 3: I value the services SQA Accreditation delivers



3 SQA Accreditation’s performance

SQA Accreditation strives for continual improvement and therefore wishes to fully understand stakeholders’ opinions and experiences regarding its various functions.

Figure 4: How satisfied are you with SQA Accreditation’s input in the following areas: NOS, qualification product development, credit rating?



Participants had the option to select N/A if they felt the question was not applicable to them, and, as seen in Figure 4, several selected this option. Of those who answered the question, most were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with all three areas. Only 4% felt they were ‘somewhat dissatisfied’ with SQA Accreditation’s input on credit rating, and 4% were ‘very dissatisfied’ with qualification product development. This represents one respondent, and their dissatisfaction is currently being addressed.

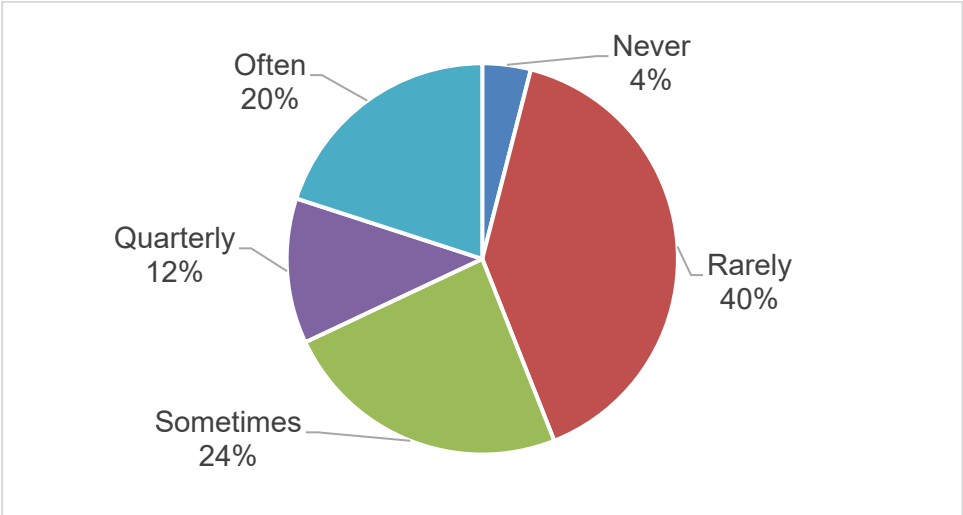
More information on how to become a credit rating body can be found [here](#). However, as the owner of the SVQ brand, SQA Accreditation is the sole credit rating body for SVQs.

4 Statistical reports

To gather the opinions of stakeholders on the regular statistics reports published on SQA Accreditation’s website, we asked the following question:

‘We publish statistical reports on a quarterly and annual basis. How often do you use these reports?’

Figure 5: Stakeholders use of SQA Accreditation statistical reports



These results in Figure 5 show that only a few stakeholders use the statistical reports on a regular basis (‘often’, 20%). Most rarely use them (40%), and 4% never use the reports.

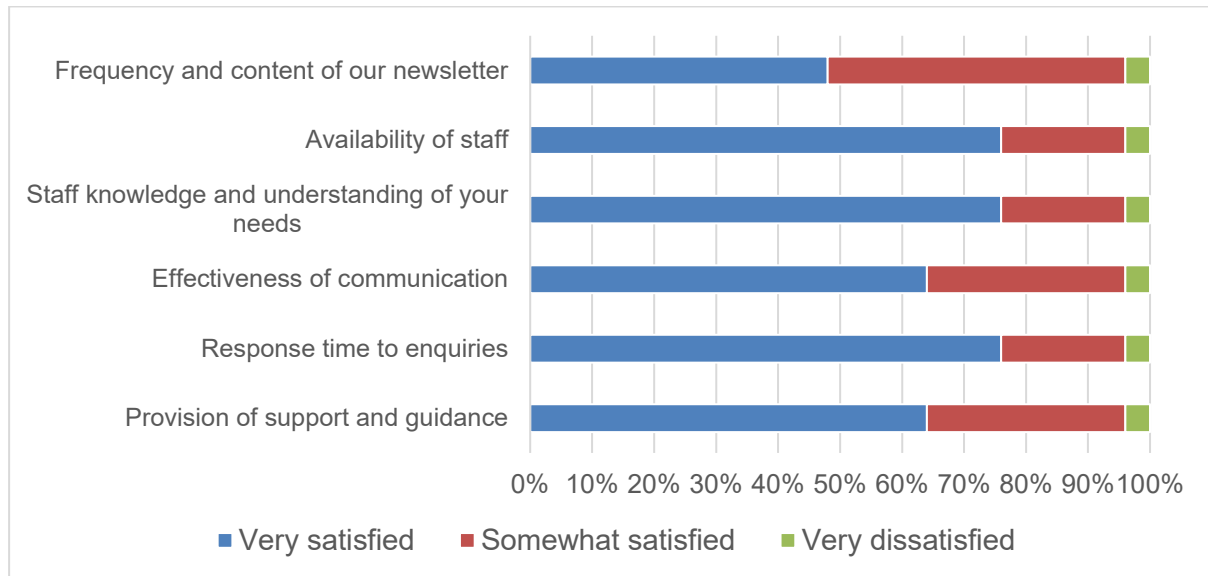
There is a 3% increase in the percentage of those who regularly use the reports compared to the stakeholders’ survey in 2021.

As an official statistics provider, SQA Accreditation strives to adhere to the Code of Practice for Statistics, by considering how we can achieve the three pillars: Trustworthiness, High Quality and Public Values. This stakeholder survey has offered some insight into where improvements can be made, but we welcome further feedback, particularly regarding stakeholders’ needs. You can find further information on official statistics status on the SQA Accreditation website, in About Us, under [Statistics](#).

5 Services provided by SQA Accreditation

SQA Accreditation asked stakeholders to provide feedback on the services it offers. The questions asked about specific aspects of services, so SQA Accreditation can examine which areas may require improvement.

Figure 6: How satisfied respondents are with services provided.



Responses were very positive: 96% were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied'. The availability of staff, staff knowledge and understanding of stakeholders' needs, and response times to enquiries were rated particularly highly, with 76% saying they were 'very satisfied'. Only one respondent answered 'very dissatisfied' for all aspects, and this is being addressed.

A separate survey was recently conducted regarding our newsletter. This found that respondents were happy with the frequency of the newsletter but felt the information provided could be repetitive. Many subscribers were not opening the newsletter, so everyone interested has been asked to subscribe again, which can be done [here](#). This means people will not receive communications that are no longer relevant to them.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide further information:

- 'I have always found SQA Accreditation staff helpful, understanding and informative.'
- 'Some individual staff members are harder to contact and take longer to respond than others.'
- 'Administration is onerous with all the spreadsheets. It would be better if this could all be taken up into the Cloud or on a portal to be completed.'
- 'I find SQA Accreditation very approachable. It feels like being part of a team with the best interests of the learner at the heart.'
- 'There have been issues due to emails going adrift and hence delays in communication.'
- 'SQA Accreditation are customer friendly and it works well to have named contacts. It helps when an AO or SSO needs to discuss ideas and issues. So much better than the approach of being remote.'

- ‘AMs responsive, supportive and helpful, particularly in recent projects that have been extremely challenging at times.’
- ‘It would be helpful to have a list of contacts and roles for SQA Accreditation. Whilst I acknowledge this information is likely to be available on the website, it would be really helpful to have an easily accessible list.’
- ‘I appreciate the friendly approach used by SQA Accreditation.’
- ‘In the recent newsletter, there was a note to highlight a change to the assessor and verifier competencies. However there was no link and it didn't tell you what the change was. This would be useful.’
- ‘While I understand that SQA Accreditation is distinct and separate from SQA awarding body, centres that we support in Scotland are confused by the SQA Accreditation remit and how it aligns with SQA certificates that their learners receive etc.’
- ‘There can be some variation in staff knowledge, support and guidance depending on the sector. The newsletter conveys important information that is then not published on the Accreditation website and is only available online for six months. It also means you have to recall where you read the information and try to estimate in which newsletter it appeared. Related to this, there is no clear publication of policy or position statements eg on AI. The newsletter does highlight specific items of interest, but the rest can be very much ‘padding’ at times. Not always sure that the important info is provided in any other platform, which can cause concern as to where the info might be [...] This was raised at a previous AB forum. Could there be some sort of sidebar on newsletter webpage which extracts the ‘non-routine must-know’ items?’

These comments highlight the skills and knowledge of Accreditation staff and also suggest areas for improvement. Communication, for the most part, is strong, however there have been some issues reported here which we will look at addressing.

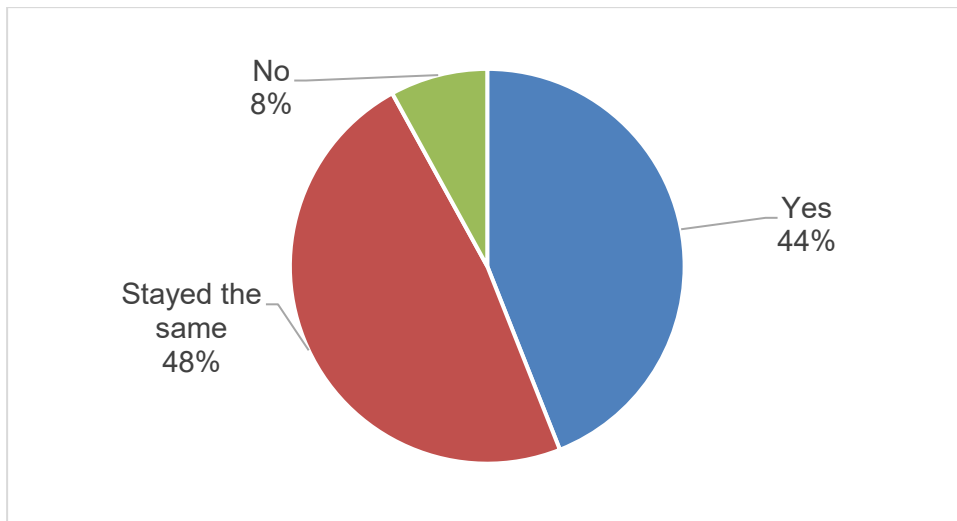
The second-last comment that some centres in Scotland ‘are confused by the SQA Accreditation remit and how it aligns with SQA certificates that their learners receive’ suggests that although they understand the separation between SQA’s awarding body and SQA Accreditation, there is still confusion. It is unclear whether this comment refers to qualifications which have the SQA Accreditation logo or qualifications offered by SQA’s awarding body.

As discussed at an AB forum, the newsletters are only available on the SQA Accreditation website for six months. However, all newsletters are now held on SharePoint and can be referred to at any time. Regarding the comment about the assessor and verifier link, this was previously flagged, and the link was included in the October newsletter.

5.1 Improving services

Respondents were asked if they felt SQA Accreditation services had improved in the time they had been working with us.

Figure 7: Have SQA Accreditation services improved?



As shown in Figure 7, 44% felt that services have improved, 48% felt they have stayed the same, and 8% felt they have not improved.

Respondents provided the following information regarding their responses:

- 'Great to have a good working relationship with SQA Accreditation.'
- 'Just to caveat that in terms of services staying the same over the period of time we have worked with SQA Accreditation, this is more a reflection of consistency over that time. We have always felt SQA Accreditation to be approachable and supportive.'
- 'We have always been able to speak to someone, easily, however we have had occasional niggles with the online systems eg SharePoint. The system for gaining accreditation for qualifications (ie AC2) should probably be modernised.'
- 'It's obviously been a challenging time for SQA Accreditation recently so it was to be expected things would not be as smooth as they usually are.'
- 'Having a monthly catch-up is very beneficial — we value the contact with our regulation manager and the rest of the team there.'
- 'The reason for the answer in 13, is that we consider the service to be supportive and high quality, and this has remained the same.'
- 'The meetings and support with our accreditation manager are invaluable. [Our accreditation manager] is a fantastic support and [their] advice is always excellent. Our regulation manager is fantastic as well.'
- 'I value the regulation manager check-ins.'
- 'Our current regulation manager is very responsive and pragmatic. We feel well supported and understood as a niche AB working with her. Thank you :).'
- 'Difficult to answer the question above as it is hard to gauge whether the service has improved or if it is my knowledge of the service that has improved. As a member of staff who started four years ago the learning has been through the projects and qualification developments I have been engaged with. The support from Accreditation has been excellent and helped myself and team understand the requirements for regulated qualifications but also navigate the changing landscape.'

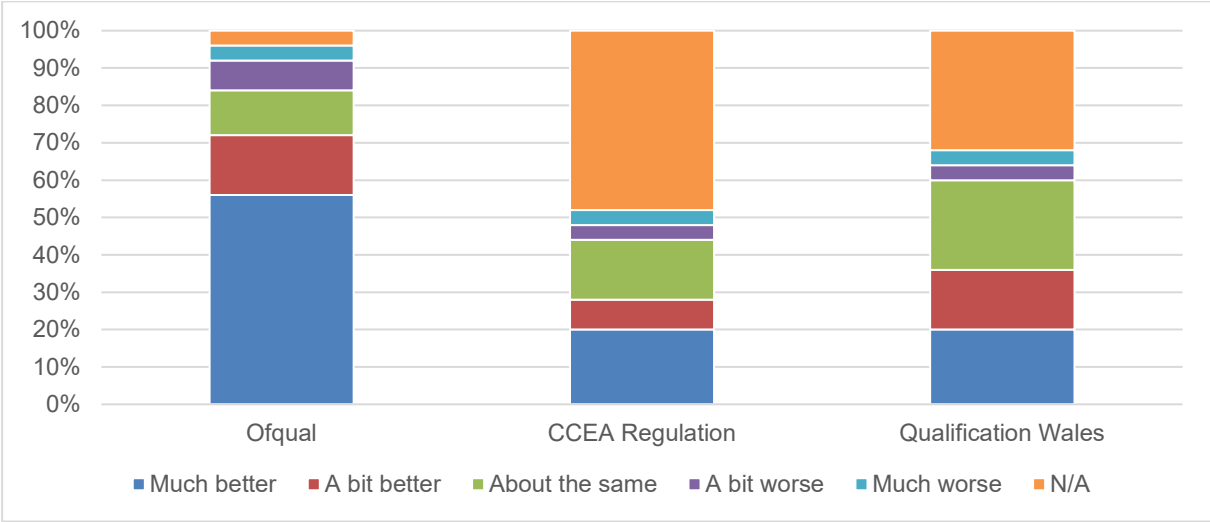
The comments are mostly positive towards SQA Accreditation staff and demonstrate the strong relationships built over time. Several comments specifically highlight the effective relationship and value this personal approach. One comment suggests modernisation is required, and we are seeking a new online application. However resources are an issue and this is currently on hold.

5.2 Comparison to other UK regulators

It is important to consider how SQA Accreditation is perceived in the context of the other regulators and how comparable services are. Not all respondents have had contact with other regulators, so the option of N/A was available:

- 96% of respondents work with Ofqual
- 52% of respondents work with CCEA Regulation
- 68% of respondents work with Qualifications Wales

Figure 8: Comparison of SQA Accreditation to other UK regulators



Of those who do work with the other regulators, the responses show that SQA Accreditation is compared favourably (figures are adjusted to remove N/A responses):

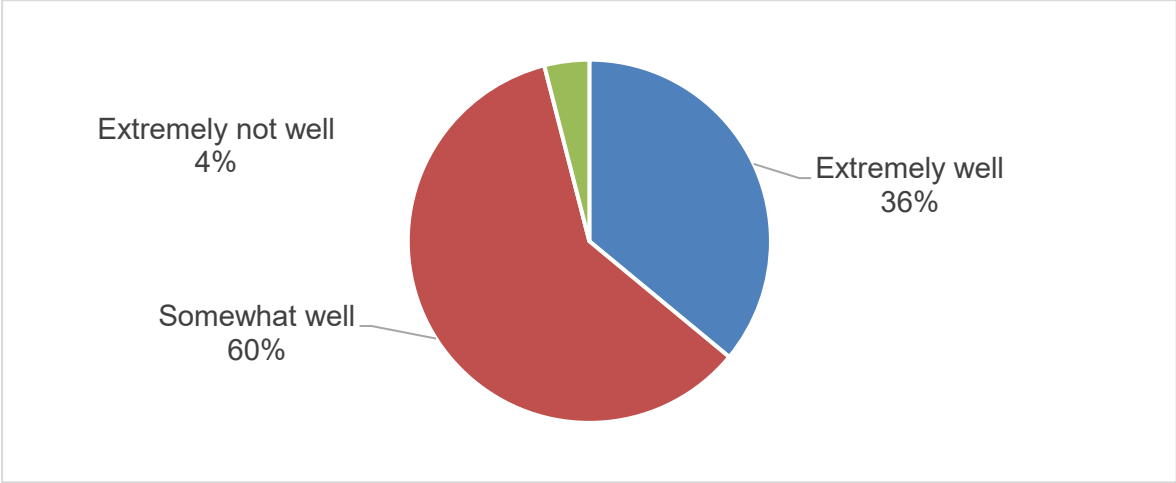
- 58% of respondents felt SQA Accreditation is ‘much better’ than Ofqual, 17% said ‘a bit better’, and 12% ‘about the same’.
- 38% of respondents felt SQA Accreditation is ‘much better’ than CCEA Regulation, 15% ‘a bit better’, and 31% ‘about the same’.
- 29% of respondents felt SQA Accreditation is ‘much better’ than Qualification Wales, 24% ‘a bit better’, and 35% ‘about the same’.

We are always willing to work with our stakeholders to ensure we can provide a service that meets their needs as well as satisfying regulatory requirements, and we encourage feedback.

5.3 Meeting stakeholders needs

To assess whether SQA Accreditation is currently helping stakeholders meet their organisational needs, the following question was asked: How well do our services help meet your organisational goals / needs?

Figure 9: How well SQA Accreditation meets stakeholders' goals / needs

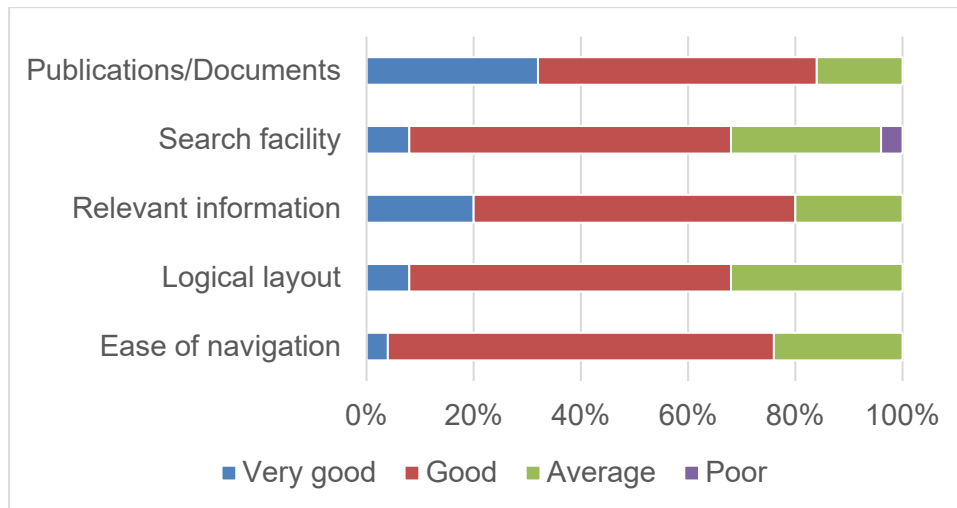


As shown in Figure 9, 96% of stakeholders responded positively, indicating that SQA Accreditation does meet their goals and needs, demonstrating that we do build good relationships and can adapt to work with a large variety of stakeholders. Our regulatory requirements may be inflexible, however, as 60% chose 'somewhat well', so there is room for improvement in addressing specific needs of stakeholders.

6 Website

SQA Accreditation aims to provide on its website up-to-date, accurate information which meets the needs of stakeholders. It is important that the website is accessible and user-friendly, as this is where information and data on SQA Accreditation is held, as well as relevant forms. We work hard to ensure accessibility, and encourage stakeholders to let us know if they have any issues.

Figure 10: How stakeholders find the SQA Accreditation website



Overall the responses were very positive, with only 4% saying the search facility was poor. If there are any issues with our website, we can address these quickly when we are made aware of them.

Figure 10 shows that our stakeholders feel the information provided on our website is relevant and the documents provided are of good quality.

7 Approval process and accreditation

We wanted to understand whether the approval process for new awarding bodies is easy to navigate, so we asked stakeholders if any had been through the process in the last four years; only one respondent had. They selected 'agree' for all the following statements:

- The criteria that must be met to become an awarding body is clearly outlined in the Regulatory Requirements, General Approval Requirements and other guidance documents.
- The amount of information that awarding bodies need to supply for the approval process is appropriate.
- SQA Accreditation provides sufficient support and guidance throughout the approval process.
- The *Awarding Body Approval Enquiry Form* is user friendly.
- I am aware of the *Guidance for Prospective Awarding Bodies*.
- The AC1 form is user friendly.
- I am aware of the *Guidance to submitting organisations on form AC1* document.

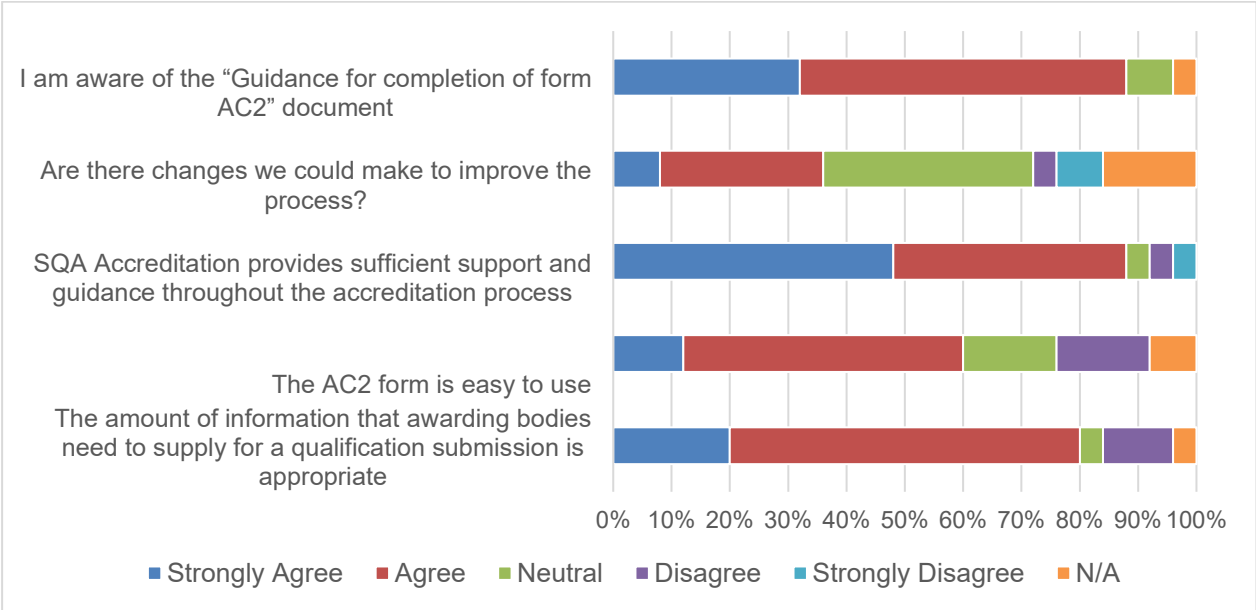
This indicates that our approval process is fit for purpose. However, this is only one response and we are always looking at ways to improve our processes.

7.1 Accreditation process

SQA Accreditation wants to hear from awarding bodies to ensure the accreditation process is as straightforward as possible, and accepts any suggestions to streamline the process.

Awarding bodies were asked: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the accreditation process.

Figure 11: Statements regarding the accreditation process



The AC2 form has recently been updated to ensure accessibility and make it easier and clearer for awarding bodies to complete.

There were no negative responses to 'I am aware of the *Guidance for completion of form AC2* document, indicating that all who require this guidance know where to find it.

There were 36% who felt changes could be made to improve the accreditation process. The following comments were received:

- 'It would make more sense to have an individual sheet for each element (eg Withdrawal, Re-accreditation etc) an AO is submitting as its confusing to work through which tabs should or shouldn't be completed, particularly for committees that are not involved in the day to day creation of the document. Even better if it was just on an online portal!'

SQA Accreditation is seeking to move to an online application. However, the timescale in which this will happen is unclear.

When questioned about SQA Accreditation's support and guidance in relation to the accreditation process, 88% responded positively, 4% neutral, with 8% disagreeing. The following comment was received:

- 'It would be of assistance to have video guidance on what SQA would or would not like to see included eg high-level original scope, but not detailed tasks that supported this; key points but not the full policy etc. This would also mean we do not have to keep bothering the accreditation manager for advice.'

Stakeholders were asked whether they found the AC2 form easy to use, and 16% disagreed.

We received the following comments regarding the AC2 form:

- 'The AC2 form has always been more complex than perhaps necessary and I don't find it particularly intuitive. Perhaps this is just my individual view based on my own filters?'
- 'As the form requires text responses in the majority, the use of an Excel spreadsheet makes this very difficult. Editing for example is particularly long-winded.'

Regarding the amount of information required for a submission, 12% felt that it wasn't appropriate. They were contacted directly to give them the opportunity to provide further information so we can look at improvements.

We received the following comment regarding the amount of information required for a submission:

- 'Submitting assessment documentation at the time of accreditation. We have often wondered why this is required at this time. Could the provision of information not be based on risk of the AO, based on track record, historical performance, etc?'

Awarding bodies must have written methodology on how their qualifications will be assessed. Clarifying and confirming assessment methodology is a vital part of our quality assurance checks. Guidance and our expectations are provided in our document [Developing Qualifications for Accreditation: A guide for Awarding Bodies \(May 2024\)](#).

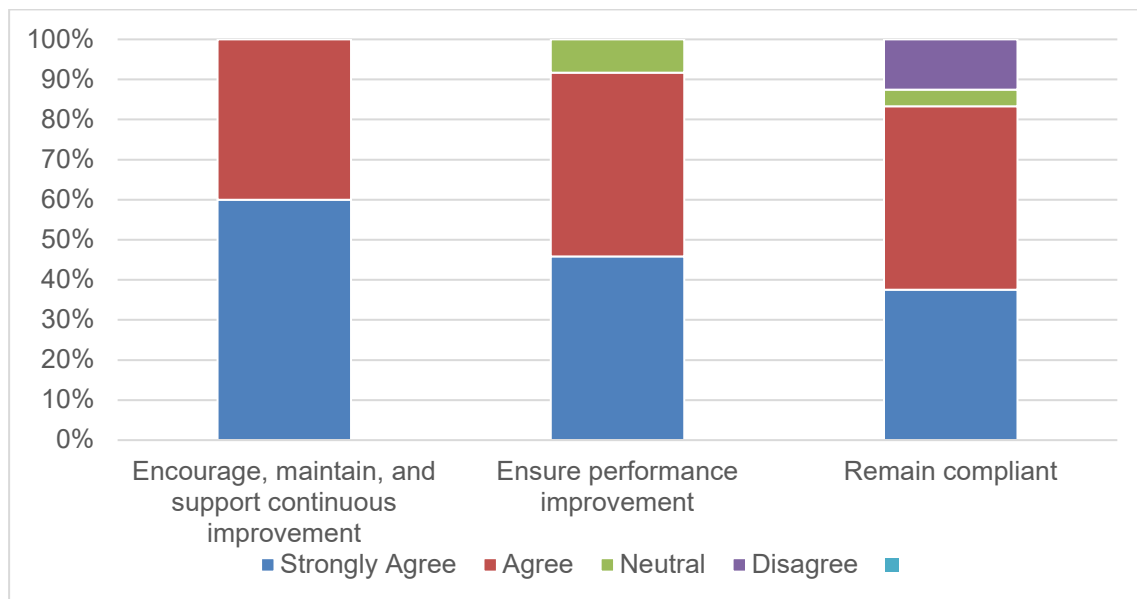
8 Self-assessment

SQA Accreditation requires awarding bodies to demonstrate that they have systems in place that facilitate continual improvement and to show evidence of regular ongoing review and evaluation of their key business activities. An annual self-assessment is therefore carried out.

8.1 Understanding of self-assessment

There is a series of questions that relate to self-assessments. The first is 'My understanding of the primary reason why SQA Accreditation carries out annual self-assessments is to'.

Figure 12: Identify the main purpose of self-assessment



Most respondents agreed that the purpose of annual self-assessments are to meet all of the reasons:

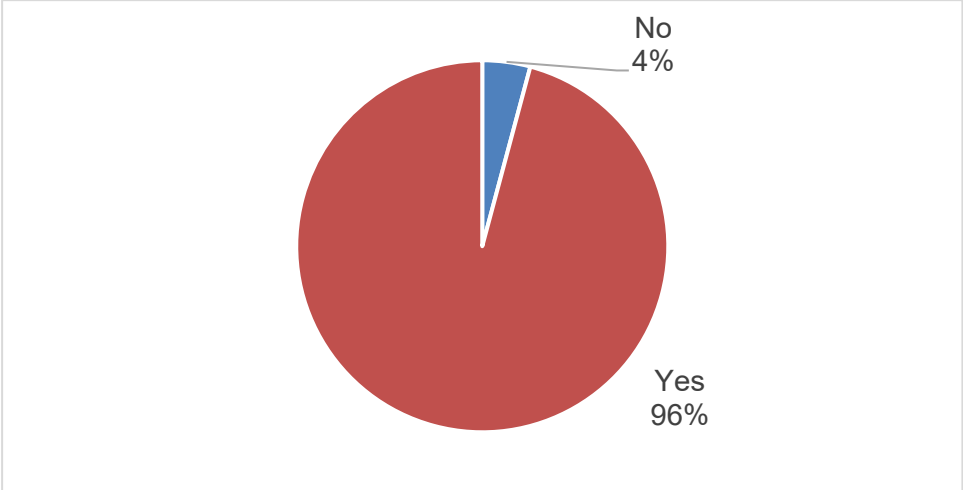
- Encourage, maintain and support continuous improvement
- Ensure performance improvement
- Remain compliant

As explained on the website, the primary reason is not only for awarding bodies to remain compliant but also that they are continuing to improve the way they develop, design and deliver qualifications to help contribute to the Scottish economy.

8.2 Continual improvement

Following on from the above question, SQA Accreditation asked whether respondents agreed with this statement: 'I feel that completing a self-assessment on an annual basis assists us to identify actions or risks internally along with encouraging us to carry out regular self-evaluation and continual improvement internally'; 96% of respondents said yes. This is very positive as it demonstrates that the self-assessment tool is helpful to our stakeholders in assessing risk and identifying areas for improvement.

Figure 13: Are self-assessments helpful in assessing risk and encouraging improvement?

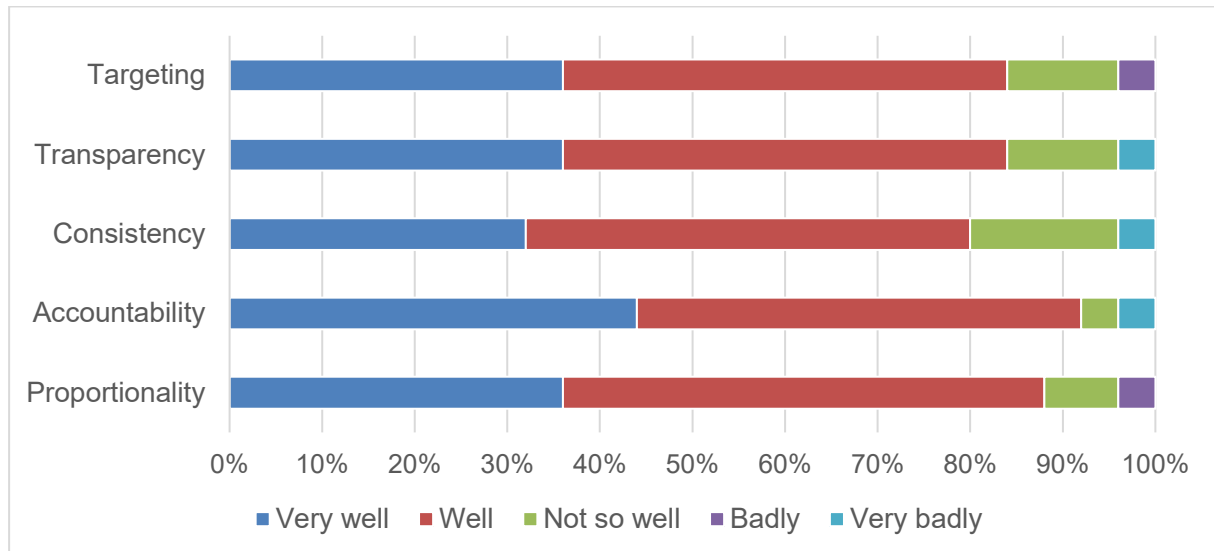


When asked whether they agree with the statement: 'I find the feedback provided from SQA Accreditation self-assessment valuable', all 'strongly agree' or 'agree'.

9 Regulatory activities

SQA Accreditation regulates approved awarding bodies to safeguard the interests of all its stakeholders. SQA Accreditation asked 'How well does SQA Accreditation adhere to the five principles of better regulation?'

Figure 14: How SQA Accreditation meets the five principles of better regulation



Of those who responded to this question, the majority feel that SQA Accreditation is achieving the five principles of better regulation, answering 'very well' or 'well':

- Targeting (84%)
- Transparency (84%)
- Consistency (80%)
- Accountability (92%)
- Proportionality (88%)

One respondent who chose 'not so well' later stated that they would rather have chosen a neutral option for all principles.

Only one respondent chose 'badly' or 'very badly' for each principle, and this is being addressed directly.

We received the following comment regarding consistency:

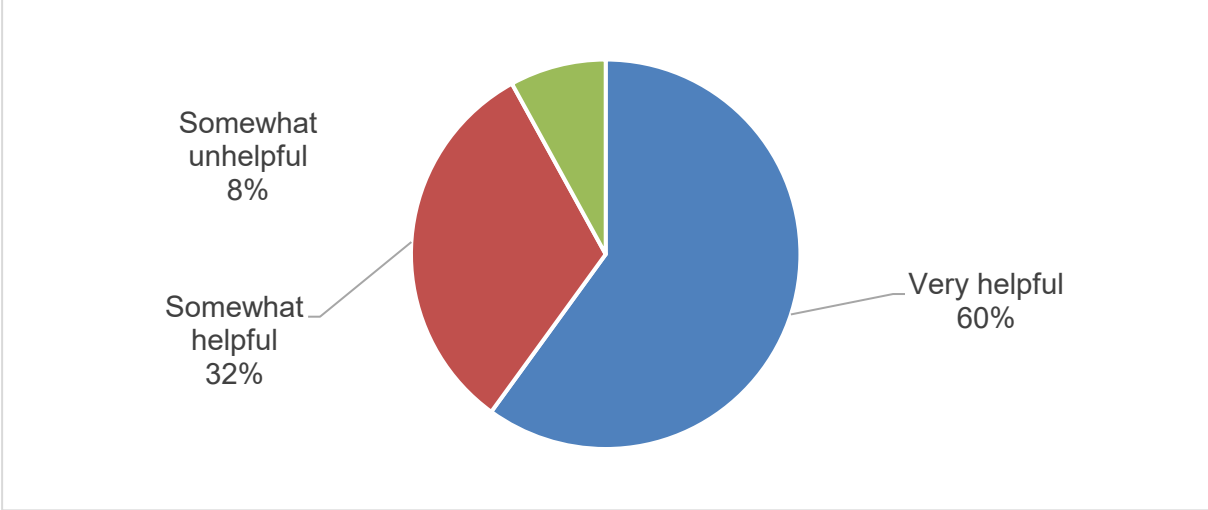
- 'Sometimes there is a lot of information on things, and sometimes very little. Similarly, often there is a lot of information required and sometimes very little. I know from other AOs that have not sought SQA Accreditation that they have chosen not to do this due to the regulatory administrative burden and the lack of clear, consistent guidance.'

From this comment it is unclear whether SQA Accreditation's approach is found specifically burdensome or whether it is regulators generally. SQA Accreditation employs a principles based approach, which means it is less rigid and can be somewhat subjective, though this approach is beneficial to most stakeholders.

9.1 Quality assurance activities

SQA Accreditation carries out provider monitoring activities (PMA), development visits and audits to make sure awarding bodies are adhering to the regulatory principles. Stakeholders were asked: ‘How helpful have you found SQA Accreditation’s quality assurance activities’.

Figure 15: How helpful are SQA Accreditation quality assurance activities?



We carry out awarding body audits and provider monitoring activities to ensure awarding bodies achieve compliance. Of those who responded, 60% feel these activities are ‘very helpful’, 32% felt they were ‘somewhat helpful’, with only 8% responding that they were ‘somewhat unhelpful’.

The comments provided here highlighted very specific issues and therefore have been removed to protect anonymity and are being addressed with the organisations involved.

9.2 Regulatory requirements

SQA Accreditation is interested in stakeholders’ opinions of how they carry out regulation using the regulatory principles. This question asked: ‘Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding SQA Accreditation’s regulatory requirements.’

Figure 16: Statements regarding regulatory requirements

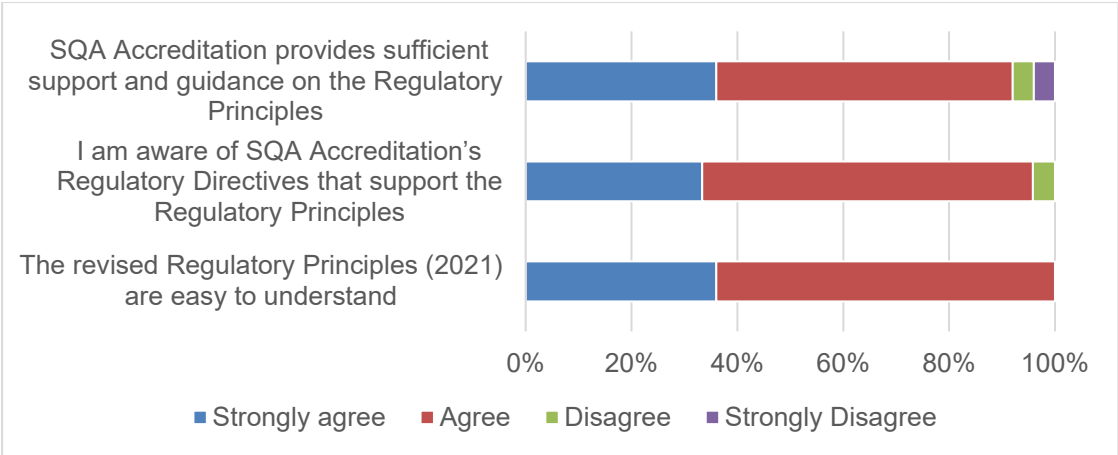


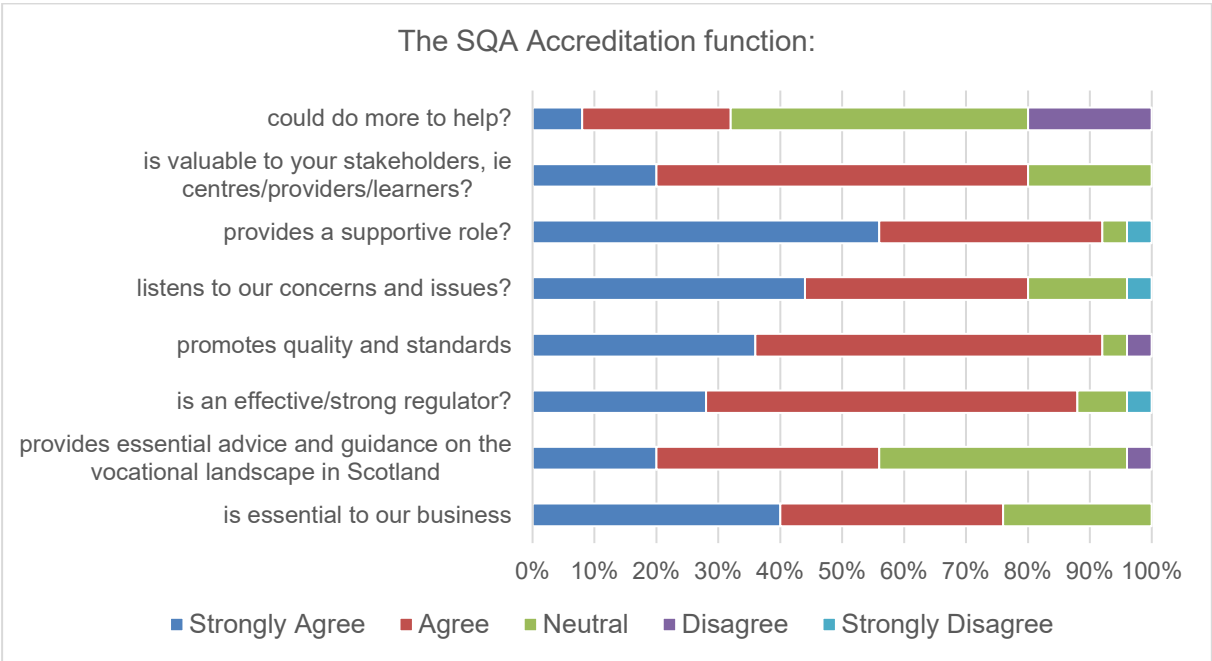
Figure 16 above demonstrates that the vast majority of our stakeholders feel supported and fully understand the regulatory principles. The 4% who disagreed with ‘I am aware of SQA Accreditation’s regulatory directives that support the regulatory principles’ have been contacted directly, so they have been made aware of the directives which can be found [here](#).

There are several different methods of regulation — SQA Accreditation uses regulatory principles rather than a more defined criteria approach. This has benefits such as not being rigid, but can also mean that the principles are open to interpretation. This method has been deemed to be the most beneficial for SQA Accreditation and its stakeholders.

9.3 Functions of SQA Accreditation

Stakeholders were asked whether they agreed with particular statements regarding the functions of SQA Accreditation and whether it meets their expectations.

Figure 17: How SQA Accreditation meets expectations



Some respondents (32%) ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that SQA Accreditation ‘could do more to help’. We received the following comment:

- ‘Our accreditation manager is very helpful but [they have limited availability] so we often have to wait for quite a few days to get a response. It would be easier if more guidance was available on the website.’

Responses received were largely positive. For the statement ‘The SQA Accreditation function is valuable to your stakeholders, ie centres / providers / learners?’ 80% responded ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’.

For the statement ‘The SQA Accreditation function provides a supportive role’ 56% ‘strongly agree’ and 36% ‘agree’. As highlighted in previous comments, stakeholders are generally happy with the support provided by SQA Accreditation staff. This is also reflected in the

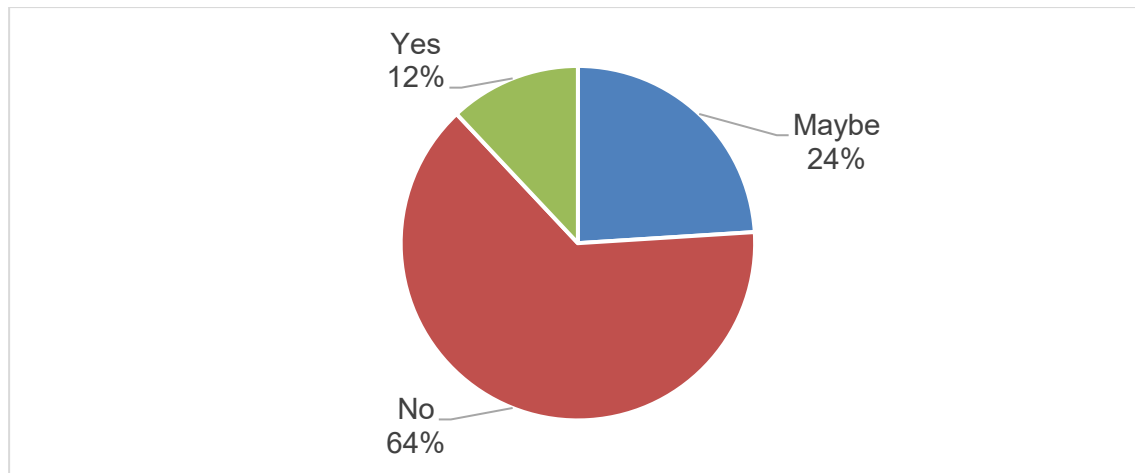
response to the statement 'The SQA Accreditation function listens to our concerns and issues', with 80% responding 'strongly agree' or 'agree'.

Regarding whether SQA Accreditation is an effective strong regulator, 88% of respondents chose 'strongly agree' or 'agree', demonstrating that SQA Accreditation is highly regarded as a regulator. When asked if SQA Accreditation is essential to their business, 76% responded positively and 24% were neutral; there were no negative responses.

10 Scottish education reform

As SQA Accreditation is facing imminent reform, we are very interested in the opinions of our stakeholders on this subject, and how it will impact them and, particularly, their learners.

Figure 18: Has the reform impacted SQA Accreditation services?



The following comments were received from respondents who answered 'yes':

- 'Things seem more fractured and not as cohesive or who does what now'
- 'Uncertainty in terms of regulation, funding, opportunities'

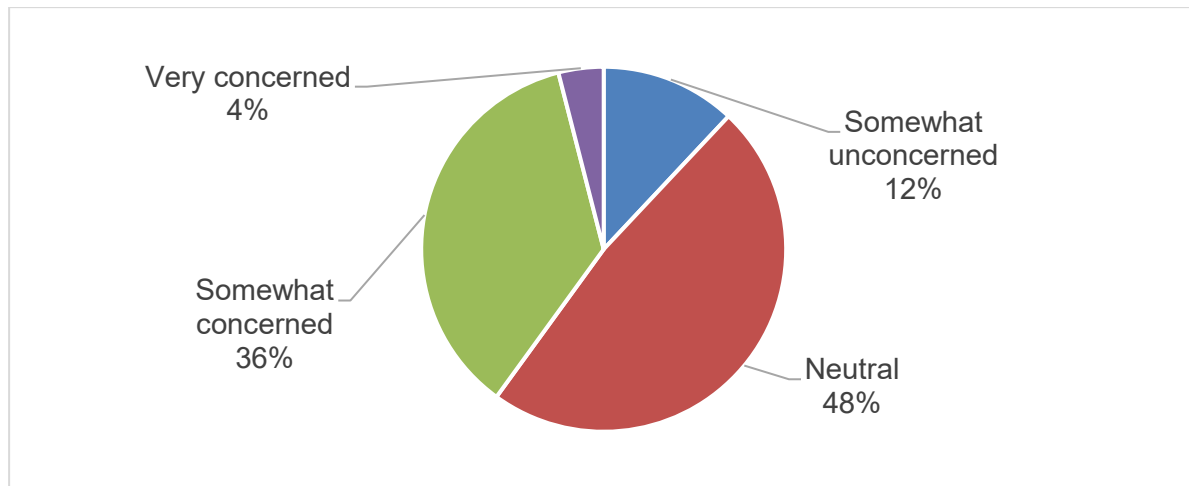
The first comment implies that this person feels the reform has already had a negative impact on SQA Accreditation. This feedback suggests we need to provide clarity around who the main contacts are and ensure more cohesion.

The following comments were made by respondents who answered 'maybe':

- 'It's been the focus of forums, so detracts a bit from other subjects we could be looking at.'
- 'People don't like change and get nervous around regulatory changes'
- 'The honest answer is we don't really know yet.'
- 'We are not sure...'
- 'Hopefully it will make difference between the regulatory function and the awarding body clearer for learners in Scotland who are using qualifications awarded by other awarding bodies clearer'

It is clear from the comments that there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the future of SQA Accreditation — it is unclear exactly what will happen and how this will affect regulation and accreditation processes. It should be noted that this uncertainty is also reflected among staff members. This comment that '[i]t's been the focus of forums, so detracts a bit from other subjects we could be looking at' suggests we are focusing too much on the reform. However, we are keen to ensure strong communication on this subject and inform our awarding bodies as soon as possible regarding any decisions on reform. We are open to suggestions from our awarding bodies for subjects of discussion.

Figure 19: How do you feel about the reform of SQA?



As shown in Figure 19, only 12% responded that they were ‘somewhat unconcerned’ about the reform of SQA, 36% were ‘somewhat concerned’ and only 4% ‘very concerned’.

10.1 Services the reformed body should provide

Stakeholders were asked what services the reformed accreditation and regulation function should provide.

- ‘I would hope that the current accreditation and regulation functions of SQA will persist.’
- ‘As currently’
- ‘continue with the existing services’
- ‘Similar or the same as SQA Accreditation.’
- ‘The same services’
- ‘same as currently, with a focus on informing all stakeholders of how they regulate all ABs and support centres / learners’
- ‘Continue to provide current services, at a minimum’
- ‘The same as now, although I think it should be easier for AB’s to credit rate their own qualifications.’
- ‘The same as always but just need to be more joined up between departments’
- ‘Hopefully very similar to what we currently have — but being able to provide regulation overseas too’

The comments above indicate that stakeholders are happy with the existing services provided and want these to continue unhindered by the reform. There are still suggestions for improvements such as having a more joined up, cohesive approach between departments, as well as providing regulation overseas.

- ‘The reformed accreditation and regulation function in any sector, whether it’s education, or another field, should aim to ensure quality, consistency, accountability, and continuous improvement.’
- ‘Provide accreditation, regulation and advice and guidance on those’
- ‘An oversight of propriety to ensure qualifications are valid, reliable and manageable.’

The comments above also allude to continuing with current functions, in specifying what they think the new reformed accreditation and regulation function should do.

- ‘Greater impartiality from optics perspective in terms of AO relationships. SQA and SQA Accreditation are perceived as one by many stakeholders and thus potentially unfair landscape.’

This comment reflects the idea that SQA Accreditation and SQA awarding body are not perceived as separate. As shown above in section 2.1, 84% of stakeholders are confident that they are distinct and autonomous. However, we are aware that this is not always clear and hope that the reform provides an opportunity to demonstrate this distinction.

10.2 Expectations of reformed accreditation and regulation

Stakeholders were asked ‘What are your expectations of the reformed accreditation and regulation function?’

- ‘To continue to be supportive and helpful.’
- ‘Same level of service, impartiality, supportive and proactive regulation’
- ‘The same as current functions’
- ‘Continue to have a supportive and helpful approach to AOs’
- ‘To continue at the same high level of service that currently exist.’
- ‘The same services’
- ‘to continue with the current high standards’
- ‘Same as the current function. Continue to meet current requirements, at a minimum’
- ‘To hold us to account and offer advice and guidance in a similar way to the current function.’

As with the responses to the previous questions, these responses also demonstrate that stakeholders expect the same functions and level of service from the reformed organisation.

- ‘When considering the reformed accreditation and regulation function, various stakeholders — including regulatory bodies, organizations seeking accreditation, consumers, and the public — have specific expectations. These expectations focus on ensuring that the accreditation and regulation processes are effective, transparent, fair, and conducive to continuous improvement.’

This comment is helpful in highlighting generally what is expected of a regulating body and shows that stakeholders have a high regard for regulators.

- ‘To keep the regulatory principles simple and to focus on proportionality.’
- ‘More collaborative approach and big improvement in digital support and admin’
- ‘It would be useful if there was more oversight rather than detailed / granular analysis of AB products and services.’

The above responses highlight areas for improvement, such as more collaboration and more support. One comment suggests they would prefer a broader regulatory approach as opposed to detailed analysis of particular products. As SQA Accreditation takes a principles

based approach, this can be open to interpretation. This method has been deemed most appropriate for SQA Accreditation stakeholders.

- 'I don't expect it to impact on changes to the existing functions however remit may be broadened to regulate other types of quals'

This comment outlines the expectation that the functions of the reformed SQA Accreditation may be broader. Stakeholders will be informed of any changes to function, once decisions are made.

10.3 Transition to Qualifications Scotland

Stakeholders were asked 'Given the recent announcement that SQA will be transitioning to Qualifications Scotland, do you have any specific concerns about this transition period?'

- 'As with any period of change there is concern, however, there are no specific concerns relating to Qualifications Scotland, however, this is based on the assumption that the accreditation licence will be ported across rather than a need to undergo an application process.'
- 'Just the cost of changing updating materials and certificates.'
- 'The transition from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to the newly formed Qualifications Scotland brings several potential concerns:
 - Disruption to current students and teachers: Changes in the curriculum, assessment methods, or administrative processes could create confusion or stress for students and educators. There may be a period of adjustment where both groups need to adapt to new systems, which could impact teaching and learning quality.
 - Consistency in standards: Ensuring that the standards of qualifications remain consistent during the transition is crucial. There may be concerns about the comparability of qualifications awarded under the SQA with those under the new system, especially for students applying to universities or jobs during the transition.
 - Communication and clarity: Effective communication is essential to ensure that all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, employers) understand the changes and how they will be implemented. Any lack of clarity could lead to anxiety or misinformation.
 - Training and support for educators: Teachers will need adequate training and resources to adapt to new curricula or assessment methods. The effectiveness of this support will be critical in maintaining the quality of education.
 - Impact on equity: Changes in assessment or qualification processes might affect different student groups in various ways. Ensuring that the transition does not exacerbate existing inequalities in education is important.
 - Implementation timelines: The timelines for implementing the changes need to be realistic. Rushing the transition could lead to errors or oversights, while delays might prolong uncertainty.
 - Legacy systems and data management: Managing the transition of data from the SQA to Qualifications Scotland will require careful planning to ensure that student records, certification, and historical data are accurately preserved and accessible.

- Reputation and trust: The transition may affect the perception of Scottish qualifications domestically and internationally. It is important to maintain trust in the qualifications to avoid any negative impact on students' future opportunities.

These concerns highlight the need for careful planning, clear communication, and robust support systems during the transition from SQA to Qualifications Scotland.'

- 'We're still not 100% sure what it means to us [as] an AB. The change in name, logo and branding if not managed properly has the potential to cost AB's changing certificates and qualification documentation.'
- 'No specific concerns at this time'
- 'Yes — we have communicated to SQA Accreditation the potential cost and timescales needed for a change of name. For example, we have asked (and [are] awaiting a response) whether we would be expected to retain the SQA Accreditation logo for reprinted/reissued certificates for learners — if this is the case, it will cost a lot more in terms of time and cost for us.'
- 'Consistency'
- 'We need as much notice as possible and a reasonable window to change the wording of all our documents to reflect the new name, at the same time as managing business as usual'
- 'None, as long as communications are clear and consistent during the transition period.'
- 'Yes same staff and same non transparency and lack of accountability will just transfer over unless staff changes are made.'
- 'mainly timescales and deadlines'
- 'Depending on how the new body is set up there may be a change of focus for the new body and / or additional workload for awarding bodies due to requirements in the bill or other policy requirements. This should be minimised where possible especially in the current fiscal climate. On a more positive note there may be new systems or digital capabilities made available to help SQA and ABs interact in the future.'
- 'Regarding the transition period there may be administrative workload or new documentation for AB and time and support to deal with this should be recognised by SQA.'

These comments highlight the need for clear communication regarding the transition. As previously outlined the reform is a standing item in the AB forums, so they can be informed of any updates. We have asked our awarding bodies specifically about the transition and what it would mean for them in terms of administration and timescales. We will continue to work with our awarding bodies and ensure they are informed of any decisions and how it may impact them, as soon as possible.

The expectations outlined here suggest that the service provided by the reformed organisation will be similar to the current service. The comments also reflect the uncertainty of what will happen during and following the transition period.