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QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND ACCREDITATION

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – 29 APRIL 2026

Minutes of the second meeting of the Accreditation Committee held on Wednesday 29 April 2026.

Members

* Ken Thomson (Convener)
*Ryan Reed
*Angela Hamilton
*Laura Lamb
*Elaine Hutton
*Kirsty Summers
Caroline McFarlane
*Sarah Higgins-Rollo
*Ian Hughes
*Jeniffer Davies

Observers

Shirley Rogers
* [REDACTED]
* [REDACTED]
Nick Page
*John Booth
*Declan Walsh

Officers

*Liz Barron-Majerik

* [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

* Indicates present

02 WELCOME

The Convener welcomed Members to the meeting:

Liz Barron-Majerik, Chief Accreditation Officer, Qualifications Scotland Accreditation to her first meeting of the Accreditation Committee.

Jeniffer Davies, Strategic Workforce Renewals Manager, SP Energy Networks.

Kristoffer McKeown and Elisha Fisher from Scottish Government. Members were informed that Jane Duffy would be replacing Eni Adesida, Scottish Government

Michelle Gibson from Skills Development Scotland.

██████████, Regulation Manager, Qualifications Scotland Accreditation joined the meeting as an observer.

02 APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies had been received from Nick Page, Shirley Rogers and Caroline McFarlane.

02 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Convener asked Members to declare whether they had any 'conflicts of interest' in relation to any matters on the agenda. No conflicts of interest were declared.

02/01 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the first meeting of the Accreditation Committee were approved as a correct record.

Kirsty Summers and Angela Hamilton approved the decisions made at the meeting held on 4 February 2026.

The Convener raised the following under matters arising:

Matters Arising

The Convener asked Declan Walsh if he could give members an update on funding. Declan informed members that funding for Accreditation is separate from Qualifications Scotland, being allocated through the Scottish Government's Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate. The funding levels have remained static in recent years, with a modest uplift received in the previous year.

Ongoing cost pressures were highlighted, particularly in relation to staffing costs and pension adjustments, affecting both Qualifications Scotland Accreditation and Qualifications Scotland. A detailed business case has been submitted to the Scottish Government outlining the anticipated funding requirements for the 2026–27 financial year. It was reported that, due to wider public finance constraints, funding approval is likely to proceed via the Accountable Officer template process, the formal mechanism for agreeing funding. While funding streams are managed through separate directorates, it was indicated they may align at later stages within Scottish Government processes.

02/02 CHIEF ACCREDITATION OFFICER REPORT

Liz Barron-Majerik gave an update.

Liz would like to thank [REDACTED], who was acting in the role, for the amount of work that she had carried out, enabling Liz to look at early advancement of priorities.

It was confirmed that the business case has been submitted, as previously outlined, with further discussions planned with relevant Scottish Government officials. Liz informed members that work is underway to develop a logic model or work plan based on the corporate plan, which will guide activity over the next 18 months, leading up to the scheduled review. The final format is yet to be agreed.

The following areas were highlighted:

- The risk register is being aligned with wider Qualifications Scotland systems and will be discussed later in the meeting.
- Standing orders for the Accreditation Committee (AC) have been developed and were noted to be of a high standard.
- Committee training has been delivered and was considered beneficial; this approach is now being explored for wider rollout across other committees and the Board.
- In April, Qualifications Scotland Accreditation sessions were held to develop a long-term vision for accreditation to 2030, alongside a current state / future state model, helping to clarify our priorities.
- A stakeholder mapping exercise has also been undertaken to identify key relationships and inform future engagement activity, including input to the corporate plan.
- Members noted updates on recent and upcoming sector engagement events, including awarding body forums and a forthcoming standard setting organisation forum, with artificial intelligence emerging as a key theme.
- It was reported that further work is underway to develop a dashboard approach to track progress, pending finalisation of the logic model/work plan.
- In addition to formal onboarding requirements, there has been a strong focus on horizon scanning and engagement with teams to inform early priorities.

A member suggested that it would be good to engage informally to discuss collaboration opportunities further. It was highlighted that significant work is underway in relation to competency pathways, including the development of modular and vocational training, with integration of artificial intelligence.

Strong industry feedback was reported, indicating that such developments are long overdue and that a consistent, cross-sector approach in Scotland would represent a significant improvement on current models.

Members showed a willingness to collaborate across organisations, including facilitating engagement between respective teams and stakeholders.

A member raised a query regarding the treatment of equality impacts within the cover paper, specifically whether these are sufficiently captured within the general impact section or should be presented as a distinct section. Liz thought that it was acknowledged that equality considerations had been intended to be embedded, but it was agreed that making them more explicit may be beneficial.

Members agreed to implement the suggested improvements within the cover paper and to keep the format under review over the coming year to identify any gaps or unnecessary elements.

Members raised a query regarding the use of the term “stakeholders”, with a request for greater clarity and specificity in future reports about which groups are being referenced (e.g. learners, providers, Scottish Government).

Action: Liz will arrange discussions to explore collaboration opportunities in more detail.

Action: Liz to review the cover paper and consider whether equality impact should be highlighted separately.

Outcome: Members consider the report.

02/03 QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND ACCREDITATION CORPORATE PLAN

Liz Barron-Majerik gave an update on Qualifications Scotland's Accreditation Corporate Plan

Members were informed that the development of the corporate plan reinforces the operational independence of Qualifications Scotland Accreditation from the Scottish Government, in line with legislative requirements. It was noted that alignment work has been undertaken alongside the wider Qualifications Scotland Corporate Plan, which is at a more advanced stage and already informing internal processes such as staff objectives and work planning. It was highlighted to members that an additional section has been included to clarify “what this means” for different audiences, improving accessibility and relevance for stakeholders.

It was confirmed that the next step will involve consultation with stakeholders, informed by prior stakeholder mapping, to gather feedback on the plan's direction and ensure alignment with stakeholder needs. This engagement will focus on validating priorities, rather than detailed drafting. Feedback will be used to sense-check the proposed outcomes and work plan, identifying any potential gaps.

Members raised a query regarding the use of different mission, vision and purpose statements for internal and external audiences. It was explained that

this approach reflects varying levels of understanding among stakeholders, with more detailed wording for informed audiences and simplified messaging for broader groups. Members acknowledged the rationale but requested further consideration of whether a single, consistent version may be preferable to avoid confusion.

Action: Liz to review whether separate mission, vision and purpose statements are required, or if a one would be more appropriate.

Outcome: Members approved the Qualifications Scotland Accreditation Corporate Plan.

02/04 AWARDING BODY AUDIT REPORT

██████████ introduced paper AC02/04 and provided an update on the Audit Report and Action Plans.

Members were informed that two Awarding Bodies were included in the current reporting period. A total of nine issues identified across both with no concerns identified.

The Convener reiterated that the Committee's role is to gain assurance that these processes are functioning effectively, rather than to review operational detail.

Outcome: Members approved the Audit Report and Action Plan.

02/05 PROVIDER MONITORING ACTIVITY REPORTS

██████████ introduced paper AC02/05 and provided an update on above Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

Members were informed that four Awarding Body provider monitoring visits had been completed, with a total of 11 issues raised across the providers.

One high-risk issue in relation to an awarding body was highlighted to members. The issue was in relation to the unauthorised inclusion of provider logos on certificates issued without prior approval from Qualifications Scotland Accreditation. The Committee was assured that the matter was identified through audit activity and that the awarding body has since ceased the practice, recalled affected certificates where possible, and is reissuing corrected versions without provider logos.

Members raised a query regarding the link between awarding body branding and certificate quality and reputational risk, and how this relates to regulatory oversight. ██████████ explained that while provider branding may appear minor, there are reputational and quality implications, particularly where certificates may be perceived as informal or non-authentic. It was noted that provider logos are only permitted in limited circumstances and only with prior approval.

Outcome: Members approved the Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

02/06 STANDING ORDERS FOR THE ACCREDITATION COORDINATION GROUP

Liz Barron-Majerik introduced paper AC02/06 and provided an update on the Standing Orders for the Accreditation Coordination Group (ACG).

Liz highlighted to members that the Standing Orders set out the framework and process for how meetings will be conducted going forward.

Liz provided clarification regarding governance arrangements and roles. The Chief Accreditation Officer (CAO) acts as the formal route for appeals and therefore does not routinely attend ACG meetings, in order to maintain independent oversight and objectivity in the appeals process. The CAO may attend selectively where appropriate, such as for review of papers or specific agenda items.

It was highlighted that from Section 5 onwards, references to “the Committee” should instead refer to the Accreditation Coordination Group (ACG) to ensure consistency of terminology.

Action: Liz to update Standing Orders to replace references to “the Committee” with ACG from Section 5 onwards to ensure consistency of terminology.

Outcome: Members approved the Standing Orders for the Accreditation Coordination Group.

02/07 QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

Ken Thomson introduced paper AC02/07 and provided an update on the Qualifications Scotland Framework Document.

Members were informed that Scottish Government had approved the Framework Document, which sets out the relationship between Qualifications Scotland and the Scottish Government, including key roles, responsibilities, and governance arrangements. It was confirmed that the document was presented for information only, as it has already been approved by Ministers.

Members were advised that the Framework Document makes specific reference to the Accreditation Committee, including its position within the Qualifications Scotland committee structure, as underpinned by the relevant legislation. It outlines the functions of accreditation, including ensuring compliance with specified requirements and making appropriate arrangements to assure the suitability of providers of accredited qualifications. It also confirms that degrees are excluded from the scope of accreditation functions.

The Framework Document further sets out the role of the Accreditation Committee in preparing and publishing a corporate plan every three years and

an annual report, working with the Chief Accreditation Officer, Scottish Government officials and others in relation to statutory review and governance arrangements, maintaining effective working relationships with Scottish Government

It was highlighted that the Chief Accreditation Officer has a role in providing strategic leadership, ensuring a clear separation of functions from Qualifications Scotland, supporting the financial sustainability of accreditation, and maintaining engagement across UK counterparts.

Members were informed that the Framework Document is primarily a governance and accountability agreement between Scottish Government and Qualifications Scotland, rather than an external communication tool. The Board agreed that the Corporate Plan should serve as the primary external-facing document, supported by engagement activity and communications materials.

Outcome: Members discussed the Qualifications Scotland Framework Document.

02/08 QUALIFICATIONS SCOTLAND ACCREDITATION'S RISK REGISTER

██████ introduced paper AC02/08 and presented the Qualifications Scotland Accreditation Risk Register for the Committee's consideration.

██████ provided an update on the Q4 risk register. It was noted that one new risk (42R), relating to administrative recruitment, had been added.

This risk initially reflected a higher risk score due to proposed reliance on corporate support for administrative functions. However, this approach was not progressed due to limitations in resourcing and concerns regarding short-term cover arrangements placing additional pressure on existing staff.

Members were advised that recruitment for an administrator is now underway, which is expected to significantly reduce pressure on the current team, although some residual workload will continue to be carried by existing staff.

Members were assured that no other significant concerns were identified within the register, and that the risks presented were broadly in line with expectations.

Liz introduced the new format of the risk register incorporating quarterly tracking (Q1–Q4), residual risk scores, and risk appetite statements. It was noted that this approach is intended to support improved monitoring of risk trends over time and provide greater clarity on changes in risk exposure.

Members discussed the inclusion of risk appetite, with recognition that this will require further development as the organisation's work evolves, particularly in the context of stakeholder engagement and the emerging corporate plan. It

was noted that a more structured discussion on risk appetite will be brought forward for future consideration.

Liz suggested that future iterations of the risk register could include a summarised “top risks” overview within the papers, with the full register provided in an appendix format to support more focused scrutiny of key risks.

A discussion was also held on systems and technology alignment with Qualifications Scotland. It was confirmed that while shared systems may be possible through separate “tenancies” within cloud-based platforms, it is essential that Qualifications Scotland Accreditation data remains appropriately segregated.

Action: Liz to consider more development around risk appetite.

Action: Liz to identify similar topics that could be merged together by themes to reduce number of risks.

Action: Liz to identify priority risks and ensure these are visible at the top of the register.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Qualifications Scotland Accreditation’s Risk Register.

02/09 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

██████████ introduced paper AC02/09 and presented the Quarterly Performance Report for the fourth quarter of 2025/26.

It was reported that delivery is progressing well overall, with one exception relating to work comparing accreditation submissions processes across the four responsible UK organisations due to the impact of substantial staff absence.

It was noted that, in discussion with the Chief Accreditation Officer, this delay has presented an opportunity to explore the potential use to pilot artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support the collation and analysis of the data, with a view to improving efficiency and insight. It was confirmed that this work remains an internal deliverable with no external reporting requirement or adverse external impact at this stage.

It was highlighted that Section 6 shows an increased average turnaround time for submissions due to a higher number of late cases. It was noted that this has not resulted in adverse impact for stakeholders, with work prioritised according to capacity.

A discussion took place regarding the value of further support to enhance understanding of key performance indicators. It was suggested that a briefing session or webinar could be arranged to provide further explanation of the

data, how it is used, and its implications for decision-making and workforce planning.

In response, it was noted that work is already being considered to develop seminars or webinars to explain Qualifications Scotland Accreditation processes in more accessible terms, including topics such as provider monitoring and regulatory activity.

It was further proposed that members could be offered potential topics in advance, allowing them to indicate areas of priority for future briefing sessions. Members welcomed this approach as a way of supporting targeted learning and engagement.

Action: Liz to explore opportunities to pilot the use of AI tools to support data analysis.

Action: Liz to develop a proposal for briefing sessions or webinars on Qualifications Scotland Accreditation processes.

Action: Liz to circulate a list of potential topics to members for prioritisation.

Outcome: Members discussed the Quarterly Performance Report.

02/10 STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS COMMISSIONING

██████████ introduced paper AC02/10 and updated Members on the Standards and Framework projects.

It was reported that six outstanding SVQs from 2024–25 remain under review, but progress is being made in addressing these.

In relation to last year's projects, it was noted that approval rates have continued to improve over the reporting period. As of 14 March (end of the operational year), approximately 30% of projects had been approved. By the end of March, this had increased to 45.5%, and most recently to 54.5% of projects approved. It was noted that these figures are comparable with the same point in the previous year.

Members were advised that pressures within the commissioning timetable and operational cycle continue to present challenges. However, progress is being made in increasing approval throughput over time.

Members noted the inclusion of additional appendix material providing an overview of the Standards and Frameworks panel. It was acknowledged that the associated timeframes continue to present challenges, and that ongoing efforts are focused on improving efficiency within these constraints.

A discussion took place regarding the complexity of the wider standards-setting and accreditation landscape, including the relationship between standards setting, qualification development, accreditation functions, and

external frameworks across the UK nations. Members highlighted that this complexity could make it difficult to fully understand upstream processes and their impact on accreditation performance measures.

It was noted that performance is influenced by a range of upstream factors, including commissioning cycles, funding arrangements, governance structures, and wider public sector reform activity. Members agreed that a greater shared understanding of these interdependencies would support more effective oversight and scrutiny.

It was suggested that further introductory or explanatory sessions could be developed to support members in understanding the end-to-end system, including how Qualifications Scotland Accreditation fits within the broader qualifications landscape.

Members discussed the benefits of bringing in perspectives from individuals less familiar with the system, in order to challenge assumptions and support clearer processes and potential improvements.

Action: [REDACTED] to develop introductory sessions to support understanding of standards setting, accreditation, and commissioning processes.

Outcome: Members discussed the Standards and Frameworks Commissioning paper.

02/11 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2026 / 2027

[REDACTED] introduced paper AC02/11 and invited Members to discuss the Committee's work plan for 2026 / 2027.

It was highlighted to members that the current work plan remains broadly consistent with previous years, although it is expected to change over time.

Members agreed that a number of themes arising from the meeting would be reflected through the action log and may inform future updates to the work plan.

A suggestion was made that future work plans should focus on the Corporate Plan and future state vision, with regular opportunity for the members to consider progress towards longer-term strategic objectives. It was proposed that this could be reviewed on a quarterly basis, supported by existing strategic sessions.

The Committee noted that further development of dashboards and reporting tools across the organisation, including for Accreditation, would support this approach.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Accreditation Committee Work Plan 2026.

02/12 DELEGATION OF AMENDMENT, EXTENSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF SUBMISSIONS

██████████ introduced paper AC02/12 and updated Members on the Delegation of Amendment, Extension and Withdrawal of Submissions.

Members received an update on the review of a planned deliverable relating to the potential delegation of authority for certain submissions from ACG to Accreditation Managers, with the aim of improving efficiency in handling straightforward cases.

Analysis indicated that a proportion of submissions benefited from review at Committee level, providing added value through oversight and consistency.

Consideration was given to whether delegation would reduce administrative burden for Accreditation Managers; however, it was concluded that the time required to establish and implement an alternative approval route would not result in a material efficiency gain. It was also noted that transferring responsibility from a Committee structure to named individuals raised governance considerations.

Members noted that future opportunities to streamline processes may arise through the development of a future accreditation database, which could support more efficient handling of simpler submissions. It was agreed that this should be revisited at a later date.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Delegation of Amendment, Extension and Withdrawal of Submissions.

02/13 ANNUAL AUDIT PLANNING SCHEDULE

██████████ introduced paper AC02/13 and updated Members on the Annual Audit Planning Schedule which commenced at the beginning of April.

It was highlighted that a number of awarding bodies are assessed as low risk and are therefore included within the standard three-year audit cycle. In contrast, higher-risk audits primarily relate to new awarding bodies, which are subject to closer scrutiny where there is evidence of activity.

It was explained that, in line with a proportionate and efficient approach, new awarding bodies with no or minimal learner activity may remain within the “new entrant” audit category for an extended period, until meaningful delivery commences.

Members discussed the implications of cases where qualifications fall outside the regulatory framework, noting that responsibility for health and safety oversight remains with relevant statutory bodies, while accreditation oversight

relates specifically to qualification quality and assurance. It was acknowledged that this distinction may carry wider risks where qualifications relate to higher-risk sectors.

The Committee noted that future audit activity will continue to follow a themed audit approach, focusing on areas including malpractice and maladministration, external quality assurance arrangements, and cyber resilience. It was highlighted that cyber security and data loss risks have increased and therefore form an important part of the current audit focus.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Delegation of Amendment, Extension and Withdrawal of Submissions.

02/14 FORMAT OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Convener invited reflections on the format and structure of future meetings, noting that this was an early opportunity to consider whether the current approach continued to provide value to members in supporting their role within the accreditation process.

A member noted that, as the group develops, there is a need to guard against becoming operational within this group. It was suggested that future agendas could place greater emphasis on drawing on the expertise within the Committee, including structured opportunities for members to share insights from their respective sectors.

The Chair acknowledged the value of this suggestion and agreed that the Committee provides an important mechanism for two-way insight between accreditation activity and the wider system.

Another member commented positively on the current direction, noting that the introductory paper helped to set context effectively for subsequent discussions. They also supported the idea of more in-depth thematic sessions to build understanding of the wider system and strengthen the Committee's ability to interpret issues as they arise.

It was suggested that, at a future strategic session, members could be invited to provide brief reflections on their organisational context and how accreditation interfaces with their work.

02/15 ACCREDITATION DECISION LIST REPORT

██████████ introduced paper AC02/15, drawing Member's attention to those qualifications that had been accredited from 1 January 2026 until 31 March 2026.

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

It was highlighted to members the additional appendix and discussed its future format and purpose. Members were invited to consider whether they wished to continue receiving the full list of qualifications or instead a summarised breakdown of numbers within the quarterly performance reporting.

The Convener suggested that, if a numerical summary would better support oversight, this could be incorporated into the performance report, with the detailed list discontinued as a standing paper and made available via other channels if required.

Members indicated agreement with this approach, while recognising that the list can be of value in prompting wider reflection on emerging trends and sector developments.

After discussion, members highlighted the broader value of the information in understanding the evolving skills and qualifications landscape in Scotland, including progression pathways, labour market trends, and future workforce needs. It was noted that such insight supports curriculum planning and wider strategic thinking across the system. Members acknowledged that qualifications data can be useful in illustrating shifts in demand and informing consideration of how accreditation interfaces with broader skills policy and delivery.

It was agreed that the full details of the qualifications should continue as is.

Outcome: Members noted the contents of the paper.

02/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next Accreditation Committee meeting was Wednesday 29 July 2026 at 1000 hours via MS Teams.