CONSULTATION

Qualifications Scotland
Survey on Learner and Teacher and Practitioner Charters
18 November 2026

1. A trusted partnership:

- **How much do you agree or disagree that these commitments describe what teachers and practitioners should be able to expect from Qualifications Scotland?**
  Agree

- **How easy or difficult is this section to understand?**
  Quite Easy

- **Do you think anything is missing from this section, or that anything should be changed or removed?**
  Yes, I think something is missing, needs changing or should be removed.

There is no mention of raising concerns or dealing with issues or complaints. Consistently, and across several national inquiries over the last decade, the Union called in evidence for the SQA's actions to be placed under greater scrutiny.

Indeed, the Education and Skills Committee shared the NASUWT's frustration that in the aftermath of the 2020 exam results there was a lack of transparency around decision-making, a reluctance to release data, and a significant disconnect between the evidence received from these bodies and what parents, pupils and teachers were saying.

The Education and Skills committee's legacy report stated:

'We also continue to hold particular concerns about the communication from the SQA and Education Scotland, including both the quality of information shared with the Committee (for example in oral evidence sessions) as well as the way in which decisions and discussions were held with key stakeholders, including pupils and teaching staff… We remain unconvinced that these bodies in their current form are fit for purpose. Confidence among practitioners in these organisations also appears low and it is clear that structural reform is now required.'

It is inescapably true that some of the decisions made by the SQA led to an erosion of trust and confidence in the organisation amongst teachers and a significant appetite for reform. These concerns were also well reflected in both the OECD review and Ken Muir's report.

Professor Muir's recommendation that the new body's governance structures *'should be revised to include more representation from, and accountability to all learners, teachers, practitioners and the stakeholders with whom it engages'* should be taken as meaning more teachers involved in the governance structure as well as greater accountability to teachers. This accountability is missing from the current draft Charter.

NASUWT has also strongly advocated that classroom teachers, plural, must be represented on the Board and, given our democratic structures, have suggested that NASUWT supplies one of these. As our original submission to the Muir Review stated: *'NASUWT is clear that there needs to be a very*

strong focus on the practitioner voice in any new agency and that this must explicitly include the voice and perspectives of practising classroom teachers'.

2. Fair and Consistent Standards

- **How much do you agree or disagree that these commitments describe what teachers and practitioners should be able to expect from Qualifications Scotland?**
  Agree

- **How easy or difficult is this section to understand?**
  Very easy

- **Do you think anything is missing from this section, or that anything should be changed or removed?**
  No, I think this section covers what's needed.

3. Supporting Your role

- **How much do you agree or disagree that these commitments describe what teachers and practitioners should be able to expect from Qualifications Scotland?**
  Strongly Agree

- **How easy or difficult is this section to understand?**
  Very easy

- **Do you think anything is missing from this section, or that anything should be changed or removed?**
  No, I think this section covers what's needed.

4. Listening to You

- **How much do you agree or disagree that these commitments describe what teachers and practitioners should be able to expect from Qualifications Scotland?**

Agree

How easy or difficult is this section to understand?

Quite easy

- **Do you think anything is missing from this section, or that anything should be changed or removed?**

  Yes, I think something is missing, needs changing or should be removed.

There is no reference to resolving disagreements or to the mechanisms to be utilised where a concern is raised which is not shared by QS staff. The National Discussion agreed *'there needs to be a genuine move to let the education profession lead the way forward'* - larger quote below:

"There was a general view that while national direction, strategy and resources are necessary, top-down change being driven onto the education profession is inappropriate and there needs to be a genuine move to let the education profession lead the way forward, in collaboration with all staff, learners, parents, and families… The new national agencies require careful consideration and design within this context – there are structural considerations of not centralising control and resources but rather working collaboratively with professionals throughout the education system who have responsibility and expertise for leading educational improvement. However, these are not simply structural issues, this requires unleashing deep cultural change and leadership for human-centred educational improvement placing learners at the heart, valuing professional expertise and judgement, and engaging parents/carers, families, communities, employers, and all relevant partners and stakeholders".

5. Qualifications that serve Scotland

- **How much do you agree or disagree that these commitments describe what teachers and practitioners should be able to expect from Qualifications Scotland?**
  Disagree

- **How easy or difficult is this section to understand?**
  Quite difficult

- **Do you think anything is missing from this section, or that anything should be changed or removed?**
  Yes, I think something is missing, needs changing or should be removed.

- **What would you like to see added, changed or removed from the Qualifications that Serve Scotland section?**

There is no mention of socio-economic duties or the public sector equality duty (PSED) and that fairness should ensure no one is discriminated against. The PSED also requires public bodies to take proactive action - this is not referenced nor visible anywhere.

Moving forward from a turbulent number of years and ensuring the system learns from those experiences, will also mean that it is important that equalities and routine impact assessments form part of any revised assessment and modification process and approach under a new qualifications body. The SQA did not routinely collect equality data, which meant, for example, it could not truly examine the 2020 approach to National Qualifications to identify the possible impact on protected characteristics. This approach to data-gathering around equalities must change under any new qualifications body, which must pay more than lip service to its Public Sector Equalities Duty, and make monitoring and data collection a core part of supporting curriculum and assessment issues.

Also the new qualifications agency should also be willing to robustly challenge local authorities or individual schools which do not follow agreed national guidance on qualifications and assessment. There are numerous examples of some local authorities and schools indulging in variations in practice which ignore national guidance and are difficult to explain or justify.

It will be important that more effective steps are taken by QS to intervene in such circumstances.

While supporting the intention behind creating an additional accountability tool to assess the performance of Qualifications Scotland, it remains unclear to what extent the charters will support the hopes and aims of the profession.