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Press release

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Scottish Qualifications Authority continuing to improve

An Audit Scotland report today highlights the progress made by the Scottish Qualifications Authority since 2000, when problems in processing exam results led to incomplete and inaccurate results for 17,000 candidates.

The study, *Performance Management in the Scottish Qualifications Authority*, provides a positive assessment of the progress made by the organisation, which in 2005 received 2.5 million entries from 500,000 candidates.

Robert Black, Auditor General for Scotland, said: "The SQA has successfully re-established confidence in its work and is demonstrating an ongoing commitment to making improvements."

Findings in the report show that:

- since 2000 the SQA has been successful in re-establishing customer and stakeholder confidence;
- the Board and executive team have shown commitment and leadership in driving forward improvements;
- the SQA's corporate planning process has established clear objectives, although performance management information is not clearly linked to these objectives at present;
- the SQA is developing a deeper understanding of the link between its costs and activities, and is beginning to benchmark its activities against other organisations.

Robert Black said: "Our report makes a number of recommendations to aid the SQA in its progress. These include that the organisation develops performance indicators linked to key objectives, and that it explore opportunities for greater use of benchmarking to inform performance management activity. The SQA also needs to continue to develop a more strategic focus and to identify opportunities for efficiency savings."

Total government funding for SQA has reduced from a peak of £23.8 million in 2003/04 to £17.5 million in 2005/06.

In 2005/06 SQA generated £33.8 million in revenue through examination fees and consultancy assignments. This largely covers its core work of assessment and certification and is an increase of 50 per cent on 2000. The SQA received £10.6m additional grant funding, covering development costs, and £6.9 million of other government funding.

Ends

For further information contact Leon Thompson tel: 0131 625 1651 or Simon Ebbett tel: 0131 625 1652.

Notes to Editors:

1. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission.
2. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Executive and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.
3. The full report can be found on Audit Scotland's website – www.audit-scotland.gov.uk