

# Standards Commission for Scotland

Annual Audit Plan 2023/24



Prepared for Standards Commission for Scotland

March 2024

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# Introduction

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## Summary of planned audit work

1. I, Liz Maconachie, have been appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland as the external auditor of the Standards Commission for Scotland for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27. The 2023/24 financial year is the second of my five-year audit appointment.

2. This document summarises the work plan for my 2023/24 audit. The main elements of the audit include:

- an audit of the financial statements and an opinion on whether they give a true and fair view and are free from material misstatement
- an audit opinion on regularity and other statutory information published with the financial statements in the annual report and accounts, including the Performance Report, Governance Statement, and the Remuneration and Staff Report
- concluding on the financial sustainability of the Standards Commission for Scotland and a review of the Governance Statement
- provision of an Independent Auditor's Report expressing my opinions on the different elements of the annual report and accounts and an Annual Audit Report setting out conclusions on the wide scope areas.

## Respective responsibilities of the auditor and Audited Body

3. The [Code of Audit Practice](#) sets out in detail the respective responsibilities of the auditor and the Standards Commission for Scotland. Key responsibilities are summarised below.

### Auditor responsibilities

4. My responsibilities as appointed auditor are established by the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Code of Audit Practice (including [supplementary guidance](#)) and guided by the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard.

5. Auditors in the public sector give an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information within the annual report and accounts. We also review and report on the wider scope arrangements in place at the Standards Commission for Scotland. In doing this, we aim to support improvement and accountability.

## **Standard Commission for Scotland's responsibilities**

**6.** The Standards Commission for Scotland is responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records and internal controls, and preparing financial statements for audit that give a true and fair view. It is also required to produce other reports in the annual report and accounts in accordance with applicable requirements.

**7.** It also has the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation, and establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety, and regularity that enable them to deliver their objectives.

## **Adding Value**

**8.** My team and I aim to add value by being constructive and forward looking and providing independent conclusions. We will also attend meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee and recommend and encourage good practice. In so doing, we will help the Standards Commission for Scotland promote improved standards of governance, better management and decision making.

# Annual report and accounts

## Introduction

**9.** The annual report and accounts are an essential part of demonstrating the Standard Commission for Scotland's stewardship of resources and its performance in the use of those resources.

**10.** As appointed auditor, I am required to perform an audit of the financial statements, consider other information within the annual report and accounts, and express a number of audit opinions in an Independent Auditor's Report in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) in the UK, Practice Note 10 from the Public Audit Forum which interprets the ISAs for the public sector, and guidance from Audit Scotland.

**11.** My team and I focus our work on the areas of highest risk. As part of our planning process, we perform a risk assessment highlighting the audit risks relating to each of the main financial systems relevant to the production of the financial statements.

## Materiality

**12.** The concept of materiality is applied by auditors in planning and performing the audit, and in evaluating the effect of any uncorrected misstatements on the financial statements. I am required to plan my audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement over both the amount and the nature of the misstatement.

### Materiality levels for the 2023/24 audit

**13.** We assess materiality at different levels as described in [Exhibit 1](#). The materiality values for the Standards Commission for Scotland are set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

## Exhibit 1

### 2023/24 Materiality levels for Standards Commission for Scotland

Materiality	Amount
<b>Planning materiality</b> – This is the figure we calculate to assess the overall impact of audit adjustments on the financial statements. Materiality has been set based on our assessment of the needs of the users of the financial statements and the nature of Standard Commission for Scotland's operations. For the year ended 31 March 2024, we have set our materiality at 2% of gross expenditure based on the audited financial statements for 2023/24.	£5,800

**Performance materiality** – This acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of errors identified during the financial statements audit exceeds performance materiality, this could indicate that further audit procedures are required. Using our professional judgement, we have assessed performance materiality at 75% of planning materiality. £4,400

**Reporting threshold (i.e. clearly trivial)** – We are required to report to those charged with governance on all unadjusted misstatements more than the 'reporting threshold' amount. £1,000

Source: Audit Scotland

## Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

**14.** Our risk assessment draws on our cumulative knowledge of Standards Commission for Scotland, its major transaction streams, key systems of internal control, and risk management processes. It is informed by our discussions with management, meetings with internal audit, attendance at committees, and a review of supporting information.

**15.** Audit risk assessment is an iterative and dynamic process. Our assessment of risks set out in this plan may change as more information and evidence becomes available during the progress of the audit. Where such changes occur, we will advise management, and where relevant, report them to those charged with governance.

**16.** Based on our risk assessment process, we identified the following significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements. These are risks which have the greatest impact on our planned audit procedures. [Exhibit 2](#) summarises the nature of the risks, management's sources of assurance over these risks, and the further audit procedures we plan to perform to gain assurance over the risks.

### Exhibit 2

#### 2023/24 Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

Significant risk of material misstatement	Management's sources of assurance	Planned audit response
<p><b>1. Risk of material misstatement due to fraud caused by management override of controls</b></p> <p>As stated in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a</p>	<p>Owing to the nature of this risk, assurances from management are not applicable in this instance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries and other adjustments.</li> <li>• Detailed testing of journal entries.</li> <li>• Review of accounting estimates and judgements.</li> <li>• Substantive testing of income and expenditure transactions around the year end to confirm</li> </ul>

Significant risk of material misstatement	Management's sources of assurance	Planned audit response
unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.		they are accounted for in the correct financial year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused testing of accruals and prepayments.</li> <li>• Evaluation of significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business.</li> </ul>

Source: Audit Scotland

**17.** As set out in ISA (UK) 240: *The auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statement*, there is a presumed risk of fraud over the recognition of revenue. There is a risk that revenue may be misstated resulting in a material misstatement in the financial statements. We have rebutted this presumed risk due to the nature of the funding being funds drawn down from the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

**18.** In line with Practice Note 10: *Audit of financial statements and regularity of public sector bodies in the United Kingdom*, as most public-sector bodies are net spending bodies, the risk of material misstatement due to fraud related to expenditure recognition may in some cases be greater than the risk relating to revenue recognition. We have rebutted this risk for Standards Commission for Scotland as the main expenditure stream relates to payroll costs which are readily forecast based on a predictable pattern of costs. Other expenditure incurred is comprised of a low volume of transactions and there would be limited opportunity to manipulate the financial statements.

**19.** We have not, therefore, incorporated specific work into our audit plan in these areas over and above our standard audit procedures.

## Regularity

**20.** Auditors are required by the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 to report on whether expenditure and income were incurred or applied, in all material respects, in accordance with applicable enactments and guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers (generally referred to as the regularity opinion).

**21.** We will adopt an integrated audit approach to meeting this responsibility and use work on the audit of the financial statements supplemented by additional testing for any irregular transactions, where necessary.

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# Wider Scope and Best Value

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## Introduction

**22.** Reflecting the fact that public money is involved, public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. The Code of Audit Practice sets out the four areas that frame the wider scope of public sector audit, and requires auditors to consider and conclude on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the arrangements in place for each wider scope area in audited bodies.

**23.** Due to the nature of the Standards Commission for Scotland, including the low volume and lack of complexity of financial transactions, we plan to apply the less complex bodies provision to the 2023/24 audit.

**24.** Under the less complex bodies provision our wider scope work will be limited to:

- a review of the Annual Governance Statement
- concluding on the financial sustainability of the body and the services it delivers over the medium to longer.

**25.** We have not identified any risks in relation to wider scope.

**26.** Our planned work on the wider scope areas is risk based and proportionate, and in addition to local risks, we may be asked by the Auditor General for Scotland to consider specific risk areas which are impacting the public sector as a whole. We have not been asked to consider specific risks for 2023/24 audits, but we will remain cognisant of challenges identified in prior years such as climate change.



# Reporting arrangements, timetable, and audit fee

## Reporting arrangements

**27.** Matters arising from our audit will be reported on a timely basis and will include agreed action plans. Draft reports will be shared with the relevant officers to confirm factual accuracy.

**28.** We will provide:

- an Independent Auditor's Report to the Standards Commission for Scotland, the Scottish Parliament, and the Auditor General for Scotland setting out our opinions on the annual report and accounts
- the Standards Commission for Scotland and the Auditor General for Scotland with an Annual Audit Report containing observations and recommendations on significant matters which have arisen during the audit and conclusions on wider scope areas.

**29.** [Exhibit 3](#) outlines the target dates for our audit outputs set by the Auditor General for Scotland. In determining the target reporting date of 31 October, due regard is paid to meeting the statutory deadline for laying the accounts of 31 December 2024.

**30.** We plan to issue our Independent Auditor's Report and Annual Audit Report before the target date 31 October 2024.

## Exhibit 3

### 2023/24 Audit outputs

Audit Output	Target date	Audit and Risk Committee Date
Annual Audit Plan	31/03/2024	No meeting date *
Independent Auditor's Report	31/10/2024**	23/07/2024
Annual Audit Report	31/10/2024**	23/07/2024

Source: Audit Scotland

\* The Standards Commission for Scotland's Audit and Risk Committee does not meet before 31 March 2024. The Executive Director will distribute the Annual Audit Plan to non-executive members separately.

\*\*These dates represent the date for the independent auditor's report to be signed and the final annual audit report issued per the planning guidance. We will provide copies to those charged with governance in advance of the July committee to enable them to be considered.

**31.** All Annual Audit Plans and the outputs detailed in [Exhibit 4](#), and any other outputs on matters of public interest, will be published on our website: [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk).



## Timetable

**32.** To support an efficient audit, it is critical that the timetable for producing the annual report and accounts for audit is achieved. We have included a proposed timetable for the audit at [Exhibit 4](#) that has been discussed with management.

**33.** We will continue to work closely with management to identify the most efficient approach as appropriate and will keep timeframes and logistics for the completion of the audit under review. Progress will be discussed with management and finance officers over the course of the audit.

## Exhibit 4

### Proposed annual report and accounts timetable

 Key stage	 Provisional Date
Consideration of the unaudited annual report and accounts by those charged with governance	14 May 2024
Latest submission date for the receipt of the unaudited annual report and accounts with complete working papers package.	3 June 2024
Latest date for final clearance meeting with the Executive Director and Office Manager	20 June 2024
Issue draft Letter of Representation and proposed Independent Auditor's Report	27 June 2024
Agreement of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts	27 June 2024
Issue Annual Audit Report to those charged with governance.	27 June 2024
Signed Independent Auditor's Report	30 July 2024

Source: Audit Scotland

## Audit fee

**34.** In determining the audit fee, we have taken account of the risk exposure of the Standards Commission for Scotland and the planned management

assurances in place. Fee levels are also impacted by inflation which increases the cost of audit delivery. The baseline audit fee for 2023/24 is £3,950 as set out in [Exhibit 5](#).

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## Exhibit 5

### Audit fees (including VAT)

Fee component	Fees (£)
External Auditor Remuneration	23,070
Pooled costs	250
Sectoral Cap Adjustment	(19,370)
<b>2023/24 Audit Fee</b>	<b>3,950</b>

Source: Audit Scotland

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**35.** In setting the fee for 2023/24, we have assumed that the Standards Commission for Scotland has effective governance arrangements and will prepare a comprehensive and accurate set of annual report and accounts for audit in line with the agreed timetable for the audit. The audit fee assumes there will be no major change in respect of the scope of the audit during the year and where our audit cannot proceed as planned, a supplementary fee may be levied.

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# Other matters

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## Internal audit

**36.** It is the responsibility of the Standards Commission for Scotland to establish adequate internal audit arrangements. We will review the internal audit plan and the results of internal audit's work.

**37.** While we are not planning to place formal reliance on internal audit's work in 2023/24, we will review its audit reports and assess the impact of the findings on our financial statements and wider scope audit responsibilities.

## Independence and objectivity

**38.** I am independent of the Standards Commission for Scotland in accordance with relevant ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. This standard imposes stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors.

**39.** Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with Ethical Standard including an annual *'fit and proper'* declaration for all members of staff. The arrangements are overseen by the Executive Director of Innovation and Quality, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

**40.** The Ethical Standard requires auditors to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team. I am not aware of any such relationships pertaining to this audit.

## Audit Quality

**41.** Audit Scotland is committed to the consistent delivery of high-quality public audit. Audit quality requires ongoing attention and improvement to keep pace with external and internal changes. A document explaining the arrangements for providing assurance on the delivery of high-quality audits is available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

**42.** The International Standards on Quality Management (ISQM) applicable to Audit Scotland for 2023/24 audits are:

- ISQM (UK) 1 which deals with an audit organisation's responsibilities to design, implement and operate a system of quality management (SoQM) for audits. Our SoQM consists of a variety of components, such as: our governance arrangements and culture to support audit quality, compliance with ethical requirements, ensuring we are dedicated to high-quality audit through our engagement performance and resourcing arrangements, and ensuring we have robust quality monitoring arrangements in place. Audit Scotland carries out an annual evaluation of our SoQM and has concluded that we comply with this standard.

- ISQM (UK) 2 which sets out arrangements for conducting engagement quality reviews, which are performed by senior management not involved in the audit to review significant judgements and conclusions reached by the audit team, and the appropriateness of proposed audit opinions of high-risk audit engagements.

**43.** To monitor quality at an individual audit level, Audit Scotland also carries out internal quality reviews of a sample of audits. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) carries out independent quality reviews.

**44.** Actions to address deficiencies identified by internal and external quality reviews are included in a rolling Quality Improvement Action Plan which is used to support continuous improvement. Progress with implementing planned actions is regularly monitored by Audit Scotland's Quality and Ethics Committee.

**45.** Audit Scotland may periodically seek your views on the quality of our service provision. The team would also welcome feedback more informally at any time.

# Standards Commission for Scotland

## Annual Audit Plan 2023/24

Audit Scotland's published material is available for download on the website in a number of formats. For information on our accessibility principles, please visit:

[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accessibility)

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