



## Welcome

This provides an overview of the benefits and opportunities available to SQA's staff.

Working closely with our recognised trade unions through the Joint Negotiation & Consultative Committee, we are continually developing our range of staff benefits, as well as new and exciting ways to make SQA an employer of choice.

## Staff assistance, well-being and health

The work-life balance and health and wellbeing of our employees is important to us and to that end we provide a range of staff assistance and well-being programmes e.g. employee assistance programme, occupational health, eye-care support, health plans and flexible working arrangements including special leave and additional leave to support employees and their families.

## Development

### **Hands-Up – Corporate Volunteering**

Working with, and supporting our local communities is important to us, and we actively encourage staff to get involved in corporate volunteering as part of our *Hands-Up* scheme.

All permanent and fixed term contract staff can contribute to volunteering activities. A wide range of volunteering activities is regularly promoted, or you can use your volunteering time to work on your own volunteering activity (if the activity meets our volunteering criteria).

### **SVQ programme**

We currently operate an SVQ programme whereby you can ask to undertake an SVQ which is relevant to your role. As the qualifications are competence-based, you will need to ensure that your role is relevant to the qualification you wish to undertake.

### **Financial Assistance for formal qualifications**

After a qualifying period of 12 months we will consider applications to support your development by providing support and financial assistance toward fees for formal qualifications that are relevant to your role.

## Loans and savings

### **Savings Schemes**

SQA offer opportunities to save via a Christmas savings scheme and/or transferring part of your salary into a savings account.

### **Travel season ticket loans**

SQA support employees by providing interest-free loans to facilitate the purchase of a season travel ticket for rail or bus travel from home to work (subject to conditions).

## Pensions, retirement and life assurance

### Life Assurance scheme

We have in place a Life Assurance scheme which makes provision for a tax-free lump sum equal to one times your annual salary and paid to a nominated beneficiary if you die in service (you can add additional benefits if you join the pension scheme - see next section).

### Local Government Pension Scheme

All our permanent and fixed term staff have the opportunity to join the Strathclyde Pension Scheme. Detailed information is available from the Strathclyde Pension Fund Office (SPFO) at [www.spfo.org.uk](http://www.spfo.org.uk).

The pension scheme is a career-average scheme. Each year you will build up a pension at a rate of one 49th of your pensionable pay for that year. Inflation increases will be added to ensure pension keeps pace with the cost of living. In addition to this, you can also opt to exchange part of the pension for a lump sum payable on retirement.

Provisions are available for Flexible Retirement, Ill Health Retirement and a Death in Service payment of three times your pensionable pay, paid to nominated beneficiaries. Pension benefits are payable on your death to a surviving spouse and dependent children, including those who are over 17 in full time education.

You pay a monthly percentage of your salary, depending on salary level and SQA contributes 19.3% of each member's salary.

## Pleasure, leisure and other benefits

### Annual Leave and public holidays

We offer a generous leave package of 27 days per annum which increases to 28 days after 5 years service. All staff members are entitled to 14 public holidays per annum. The leave year runs from 1 Jan to 31 Dec and entitlements are pro-rated.

### Childcare vouchers

We recognise the importance of supporting you with the costs of childcare, and operate a 'salary sacrifice' childcare voucher scheme.

### Civil Service Sports Council (CSSC)/Motoring Association

SQA staff members are welcome to join the CSSC and use their facilities. CSSC was founded to coordinate sporting activities throughout the civil service and associated public sector bodies. For a small membership fee this enables you to access sporting programmes and leisure activities. Further details are available at [www.cssc.co.uk](http://www.cssc.co.uk)

You can also join the Civil Service Motoring Association, [www.csmclub.co.uk](http://www.csmclub.co.uk) which helps you get more for your money through a range of money saving motor, leisure and financial benefits.

### Cycle to work scheme

We operate a cycle purchase scheme which helps you buy a bike of your choice with an interest-free loan. (subject to conditions)

### Food and drink

Subsidised staff restaurants are located in Glasgow and Dalkeith providing a range of hot food and snacks, including healthy eating options.

Tea and coffee sourced from Fair Trade providers are available free of charge to our staff in staff breakout areas.

## **On yer bike!**

We have a pool of bikes in Glasgow and Dalkeith that staff can borrow to cycle to local meetings, at lunchtime or for weekends.

## **Parking**

At our Lowden office, free parking is available for staff. Reduced rate parking is also available at selected Glasgow City Centre car parks.

## **SQA Lifestyles**

As an SQA employee you can access SQA Lifestyles - our online shopping experience where you can benefit from substantial reductions and money back offers from a range of High Street stores. There are regular promotions.

Major stores covering a wide area of services and products are represented, including DIY, Department Stores, Mobile phone providers, Health & Beauty, Supermarkets, Sports & Leisure, Travel & Holiday, Entertainment & Eating out, Fashion, Insurance, Home & Gardens and many more.

## **Supporting charity**

We care about others less fortunate than ourselves. Our Informal Committees organise a wide variety of fundraising activities to support SQA's nominated charities, and we encourage staff to take part. Activities include quiz nights, cake sales, sponsored walks and many others.