

SQA Accreditation Annual Report 2010–11

Contents

SQA Accreditation Annual Report 2010–11	0
Chief Executive's statement	1
Annual update: operational activity 2010–11	2
Significant developments: Ashbrook Research 2011	2
Update from all project groups for 2010–11	2
Quality enhancement	3
Streamlined approach to accreditation	3
Progression pathways	3
Audit and self-assessment	4
SCQF credit rating of SQA accredited qualifications	5
Revision of Assessment Strategy Criteria and SVQ Criteria	5
Audit activity 2010–11	7
Newly approved awarding bodies	7
Quality Enhancement Rating (QER)	7
Analysis of non-compliances recorded and observations noted	8
Non-compliances 2010–11	8
Observations 2010–11	8
Accreditation activity 2010–11	10
Qualifications accredited	10
Accredited SVQs	10
Regulatory and licensing qualifications accredited	10
Other qualifications accredited	10
SVQ market performance	11
Regulatory and other qualifications market performance	11
Plan for 2011–12	12
Appendix 1: Summary of Audit Activity 2010-2011	13
Appendix 2: Current Awarding Bodies	15

Chief Executive's statement

2010–11 has been another extremely busy year that has meant the SQA Accreditation Team has had to rise to, and overcome, a very diverse set of challenges.

The accreditation role was expanded in 2008 to provide a wider range of accredited qualifications. This has enabled us to be proactive in helping the Scottish Government to realise the vision of its refreshed Skills Strategy – *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth (October 2010)*.

Scotland, like the rest of the United Kingdom, has been operating in an extended recessionary period. SQA Accreditation has been successfully navigating these conditions by improving and streamlining its services and processes, and focusing its resources to support our customers and reduce bureaucracy.

We are certain that the work which begun in 2010–11 will deliver:

- ◆ a streamlined approach to accreditation
- ◆ a process for SCQF credit rating of SQA accredited qualifications
- ◆ regulatory criteria developed in partnership with other UK Qualification Regulators
- ◆ processes and systems for quality enhancement rating of awarding bodies
- ◆ updated SVQ criteria and assessment strategy criteria

This will result in SQA Accreditation delivering more flexible and responsive services at a crucial point in Scotland's economic recovery.

Our focus for 2011–12 will be informed by our 2020 vision to accredit demand-led qualifications which:

- ◆ encourage economic growth
- ◆ provide both personal and societal benefits
- ◆ are designed to meet future demand
- ◆ reduce the skills gap
- ◆ ensure Scotland can compete nationally and internationally

We are confident that, with your continued support, we can fulfil our vision. This will ensure that Scotland has the accredited qualifications that are required to provide a workforce with a skills base that reflects both current and future market demand and provides progression opportunities.

Dr Janet Brown
Chief Executive, SQA

Annual update: operational activity 2010–11

This section summarises SQA Accreditation's operational activity for April 2010 to March 2011. It gives an overview of significant developments that occurred throughout the year, and shows how SQA Accreditation met its operational objectives for the year through the implementation of project groups.

Significant developments: Ashbrook Research 2011

During 2010–11, in addition to the general operational objectives, we needed to understand stakeholders' perspectives of SQA Accreditation with a view to continually improving our services. This was achieved by commissioning a research project to evaluate the marketing and communication campaign of the previous year, which had itself been designed in response to stakeholder feedback. The research was benchmarked against a similar project carried out early in 2009.

The 2011 report showed improvement in the areas where SQA Accreditation was already strong. Support for SQA Accreditation staff, their knowledge, willingness to help and integrity was made clear by stakeholders, such as awarding bodies, Sector Skills Councils, Sector Bodies and other key influencing organisations. New awarding bodies were included in the research, and there were similar findings across new and established groups. The thoroughness of SQA Accreditation's services was appreciated and each group continued to express a willingness to work with SQA Accreditation.

Areas for potential improvements were identified, and a plan for external communication has been prepared for the coming year. Where weaknesses in SQA Accreditation's processes were identified these have been reported to internal project groups, and we will continue to address concerns about what is perceived as unnecessary bureaucracy.

It was clear from the research feedback that stakeholders have an increasing desire to use the SQA Accreditation web pages as a source of information. This will be addressed in the coming year, with the Accreditation pages remaining within the structure of the SQA corporate website.

Update from all project groups for 2010–11

To ensure that the objectives identified in the operational plan could be realised, a series of internal project groups were established. These included representatives from each of the SQA Accreditation Sections. This section summarises the key objectives and findings for each group.

SQA Accreditation's model of delivery was positively recognised at the Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) Audit on 25 March 2011.

Quality enhancement

The quality enhancement project group was formed to review SQA Accreditation's system and processes for quality enhancement rating of awarding bodies. After discussions, it was clear that the quality enhancement rating process already in place was meeting their needs. The responses suggested that the awarding bodies were content with the current process and did not anticipate any benefits from major changes being made to the process.

Streamlined approach to accreditation

SQA Accreditation began developing a streamlined approach to accreditation in 2009. Further testing and refinement of the associated quality assurance procedures was carried out in 2010.

During 2009–10 (October to February) a pilot was undertaken as part of this group under the name Empowered Accreditation. Five approved awarding bodies were selected to give their perspectives on the proposed process. After evaluation of these findings in May 2010, it was agreed that the project group work would need to be more encompassing — ie that there was a need to develop a more streamlined approach to accreditation which would benefit all SQA approved awarding bodies.

Consideration of a streamlined approach started by determining the minimum requirement that would provide the SQA Accreditation Committee with confidence that the qualification submitted was suitable for accreditation and was fit for purpose for Scotland. The project group reviewed the existing accreditation submission forms and made recommendations for refining them to ensure that only critical information was requested.

The project group is currently finalising the operating procedures, documentation and processes for Streamlined Accreditation. When these have been completed, they will be submitted to the SQA Accreditation Committee for approval. Once that approval is in place, Streamlined Accreditation will be rolled out to all SQA approved awarding bodies.

Progression pathways

The progression pathways project group was tasked with working with Sector Skills Councils and Skills Development Scotland to support awarding bodies in the identification and promotion of progression pathways for accredited qualifications. This involved:

- 1 Identifying ways in which SQA Accreditation could promote progression pathways, involving — where appropriate — other Scottish stakeholders.

- 2 Identifying ways in which SQA Accreditation could work with Scottish stakeholders to raise the visibility of progression pathways, and identify the benefits from increased visibility.
- 3 In partnership with other key stakeholders, identifying the most appropriate communication method to be used to disseminate information on progression pathways. For SQA Accreditation, this must include an Accreditation News article and case studies where appropriate.

The project group produced a report which provided a much needed definition of progression pathways, highlighted the perceived benefits of progression pathways, and highlighted areas of best practice based on case studies of stakeholders who already produce and publicise progression pathways. These were used to provide recommendation on how to develop progression pathways as an aid to approved awarding bodies when producing their own progression pathways.

Based on the recommendations of in this report, in the 2011–12 operational plan the project group will be working on producing a finalised list of recommendations which can be posted on the SQA Accreditation section of the website. The project group will liaise with another internal group (External Communications) with a view to ensuring this information is available to ensure maximum stakeholder awareness.

Audit and self-assessment

This project group was set up to review and revise the self-assessment process and ensure that any revised process reflected the requirements of the four Qualifications Regulators.

Unfortunately, the work of the group was unavoidably delayed to allow for the finalisation of the Common Conditions for Recognition being developed by the four-nation Qualification Regulators. Without this document the Group was unable to produce a set of regulatory principles that would underpin the self-assessment activities of SQA Accreditation. Work on the revision of the self-assessment model has been similarly affected. The group has been able to make some revision to the existing audit and centre monitoring visit processes and procedures.

SQA Accreditation is currently considering its position in light of the publication of the Recognition Conditions by the other Qualifications Regulators. It is currently envisaged that SQA Accreditation will develop a set of high level Accreditation Principles which will encompass most of the Recognition Conditions. Once the Principles have been finalised for SQA Accreditation use, the Group can start the process of mapping the existing *Awarding Body Criteria (2007)* to these with a view to establishing which criteria are covered by the Conditions and where there are gaps between the two. This will inform future regulatory activity in terms of the evidence awarding bodies will require to demonstrate compliance. Work will also be carried out to revise the self-assessment model, should it be decided that such a process is still required.

SCQF credit rating of SQA accredited qualifications

In terms of SCQF credit rating, SQA Accreditation had largely confined itself to SVQs, but latterly this has extended to approving the credit rating of several other types of competence-based qualifications developed by Sector Skills Councils and/or awarding bodies. The SCQF project group was asked to examine processes and develop a policy to support the SCQF credit rating of all SQA accredited qualifications. The Group mainly focused on:

- ◆ Reviewing and revising, as appropriate, the SVQ Credit Rating methodology, processes and documentation in light of experience and to reduce bureaucracy.
- ◆ Introducing a revised SCQF Credit Rating methodology, process and documentation that are fit for purpose for use in credit rating all qualifications that are suitable for accreditation.

The evaluation processes in this work have been completed and draft documentation has been produced. The project group will test the policy, processes and guidance with submitting organisations from June to August 2011 as part of the 2011–12 operational plan. A final proposal documenting the recommendation of the Group will be submitted to SQA's Accreditation Committee in September 2011.

Revision of Assessment Strategy Criteria and SVQ Criteria

The Assessment Strategy Criteria and SVQ criteria project group was tasked with reviewing the SVQ Criteria and Assessment Strategy Criteria to determine an approach which improves flexibility and innovation in SVQs.

As part of the review of the assessment strategy criteria, document analysis was conducted to establish whether awarding bodies developed their strategies in line with these guidelines. Findings indicated that the current assessment strategy criteria were still fit for purpose for SVQs and, in addition, non-SVQ assessment principles already generally adhere to these design principles. Therefore, no changes were required.

The appropriateness of the SVQ criteria was also explored via five parallel focus groups. This allowed SQA Accreditation to obtain the perspectives of 60 external stakeholders. Participants were prompted with a series of questions which covered both the original 2007 criteria as well as a draft of the 2011 revised criteria.

The analyses of these qualitative data highlighted the value placed on SVQ criteria for standardising the qualifications and adding to the overall quality of the qualifications. The data indicated that having criteria results in higher standards of delivery, which increases the reputation of SVQs. While issues have been raised around the criteria, with a few amendments suggested, participants believed that the criteria could continue to aid the development and delivery of SVQs.

Where problems with the criteria were highlighted, they generally related to those aspects of the criteria that held the greatest cost for SSCs and ABs; either in terms of time or financial cost. Participants wanted to ensure that their investments were justified and in some cases, specifically in relation to Core Skills, they felt that the

benefit did not sufficiently balance their outlay. Participants were particularly interested in maintaining investment in areas which benefited the SVQ. In particular the focus on external quality control was considered vital for improving the reputation of vocational qualifications, and should be maintained.

For 2011–12 the outcomes from this report will be used to redraft the SVQ criteria further and feedback on these revised criteria will be obtained through a three month consultation.

Audit activity 2010–11

SQA Accreditation carries out monitoring of all SQA approved awarding bodies. Monitoring consists of either an audit of the awarding body or the awarding body completing a self-assessment report. This is followed by monitoring visits to a sample of the awarding body's approved centres.

Centre monitoring visits assist by confirming the effectiveness of the awarding body's systems and procedures with respect to *SQA Accreditation's awarding body Criteria (April 2007)*. Further to this, the audit and/or the self-assessment report and centre monitoring reports assist SQA Accreditation in establishing trends and identifying areas that may need further development across awarding bodies.

The SQA Accreditation audit and centre monitoring reports approved during 2010–11 were for 10 audits and 17 centre monitoring reports (49 centre monitoring visits).

Newly approved awarding bodies

The following organisations gained awarding body approval in 2010-11:

- ◆ Highfield awarding body for Compliance (HABC)
- ◆ Active IQ (AIQ)
- ◆ Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ)
- ◆ The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM)
- ◆ First Aid Awards Limited (FAAL)
- ◆ RockschooL Ltd

In the financial year 2010–11, 12 organisations contacted SQA Accreditation to explore the possibility of becoming an approved awarding body, and six were granted approval.

Quality Enhancement Rating (QER)

SQA Accreditation moved to an audit system based on an awarding body's Quality Enhancement profile in December 2008. This profile determines when an awarding body will receive an audit within a three year cycle. If an awarding body is rated Low it would be visited within the three year time scale, if rated Medium within a two year time scale, and if rated High it would receive an annual audit.

The ratings are based on the number of non-compliances and their rating, any compliance investigations or any extraordinary regulatory issues which may arise. The ratings are reviewed bi-annually and communicated to each awarding body. Irrespective of the awarding body's rating, SQA Accreditation will carry out centre monitoring visits as part of our on-going quality assurance activities.

Analysis of non-compliances recorded and observations noted

SQA Accreditation's Awarding Body Criteria (April 2007) consists of five statements of excellence. These are:

- ◆ Governance and leadership
- ◆ Quality enhancement
- ◆ Administration and support
- ◆ Qualification development and design
- ◆ Assessment and verification

Non-compliances 2010–11

Table 1 shows the number of non-compliances recorded during the main awarding body audit and the centre monitoring visits against statements of excellence (SoE).

Statement of excellence (SoE)	Total non-compliances, by SoE
Governance and leadership	0
Quality enhancement	0
Administration and support	23
Qualification development and design	3
Assessment and verification	10
Total	36

Table 1: non-compliances, by SoE

During this audit period, the majority of non-compliances were recorded against the administration and support SoE. The full audit reports can be accessed via our website at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/16767.1403.html>

Although trends in non-compliances cannot be compared year-on-year because the nature of the issues differ, for 2010-2011 SQA Accreditation saw an increase in non-compliances in relation to referencing SQA Accreditation within the awarding bodies and their approved centres complaints and appeals process. SQA Accreditation wrote to awarding bodies to make them aware of this so that it can be avoided in future. This explains the high number of non-compliances in relation to Administration and Support.

Observations 2010–11

An observation will be noted where an awarding body's processes meet the criteria but there is a potential weakness which may eventually result in a non-compliance if no action is taken. As such, the awarding body is free to choose whether or not to act on the observation.

It was recorded in last year's Annual Report that where an awarding body has had an observation noted during an audit, follow up action by SQA Accreditation tended to confirm that the awarding body has taken some form of action in regards to the

observation. Because of this, it is rare for an observation to become non-compliance in the following audit. Encouragingly, this continues to be the case.

Table 2 shows observations made, against statements of Excellence. The table shows the number noted during the main awarding body audit and during the round of centre monitoring visits.

Statement of excellence (SoE)	Total observations recorded, by SoE
Governance and leadership	3
Quality enhancement	1
Administration and support	34
Qualification development and design	2
Assessment and verification	15
Total	55

Table 2: observations, by SoE

During this audit period, the majority of observations were recorded against the administration and support SoE.

Accreditation activity 2010–11

One of SQA Accreditation's core functions is to approve awarding bodies, approve qualification products and accredit qualifications. This section provides an overview of accreditation activity for the period 2010–11.

Qualifications accredited

SQA Accreditation has accredited a total of 885 qualifications¹. This is made up of the following qualification types:

SVQs	773
Other qualifications (such as competence-based qualifications)	77
Regulatory and Licensing qualifications	35

Accredited SVQs

773 SVQs were accredited (up by 5.1% from last year). There were increases from City and Guilds, EDI, EAL and VTCT. Almost all new SVQs accredited during this year were from the providing goods and services area of competence, such as beauty therapy, customer service and hospitality. For SVQs, they spanned the following levels:

SVQ level 1	47
SVQ level 2	354
SVQ level 3	312
SVQ level 4	51
SVQ level 5	9

46 accredited SVQs were withdrawn during 2010–11. The common rationale for awarding bodies withdrawing SVQs was low or zero uptake of the qualification.

Regulatory and licensing qualifications accredited

35 regulatory and licensing qualifications were accredited (up by 6%). This increase has come from First Aid Awards Limited and the Scottish Qualifications Authority, who were both accredited to offer the Emergency First Aid at Work qualifications.

Other qualifications accredited

77 other qualifications were accredited (up by 71%). This increase is directly related to the approval of five of the new awarding bodies; Active IQ (AIQ), First Aid Awards Limited (FAAL), the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM), Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ) and Rockschool Ltd.

¹ Please note, these qualifications, or a variation of the qualification, can be offered by more than 1 awarding body simultaneously.

SVQ market performance

Table 3 shows SVQ market performance during 2010–11.

This information was previously presented by calendar year, however to align this report to all others produced by SQA Accreditation, the time period has been changed to financial year. In the future, based on the new reporting time frame, this section will include a report of trends in uptake.

Year	Registrations	+/- %	Certifications	+/- %
2007-08	48,761	n/a	29,357	n/a
2008-09	39,879	-18%	31,206	+6%
2009-10	45,155	+13%	35,066	+12%
2010-11	47,405	+5%	36,713	+4%

Table 3: SVQ market performance

Regulatory and other qualifications market performance

SQA Accreditation started collecting candidate data from awarding bodies offering accredited qualifications other than SVQs from April 2010. Table 4 shows the total registrations and certifications for all regulatory and licensing qualifications from April 2010. Because we hold no historical data, this data cannot be compared until the 2011–12 annual report.

Year	Registrations	+/-%	Certifications	+/-%
2010-11	19,264	n/a	17,756	n/a

Table 4: regulatory and other qualifications market performance

Plan for 2011–12

Moving into the next operational year, several of the project groups were carried forward including:

- ◆ progression pathways
- ◆ SVQ Assessment Strategy and SVQ Criteria
- ◆ Streamlined Accreditation
- ◆ SCQF Credit Rating of SQA Accredited Qualifications

In addition, a series of new groups were established to tackle emerging issues, including:

- ◆ Accreditation Co-ordination Group review
- ◆ alternative models of regulation

The Regulations and Accreditations section will continue to provide SQA Accreditation's core services, albeit with a reduced budget compared to 2010–11. The reduction in funding will require an evaluation of SQA Accreditation's current working practices to establish cost-saving measures while still offering the high quality service that was so frequently highlighted in the Ashbrook research.

With direction from senior management, these project groups and all staff at SQA Accreditation will work together to meet the strategic goal included in SQA's Corporate and Business Plan 2010-2013, which is "Subject to demand and statutory requirement, accredit and assure quality of qualifications, delivered in Scotland, other than those conferred by higher education institutions.

Appendix 1: Summary of Audit Activity 2010-2011

Key

CMV	Centre monitoring visit
Non-comp	non-compliances (total)
C.off	closed off
Obs	observations

Awarding Body	2010-11 Audit Report			
	Audit / centre monitoring date	Non-compliances and observation		
		Non-comp	C. off	Obs
Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)	CMV 20 Jan 2010, 27 Jan 2010, 17 Feb 2010	0	0	2
Chartered Management Institute (CMI)	CMV 25 April 2009, 7 Oct 2009, 8 Dec 2009, 8 Feb 2010	1	1	2
City and Guilds	Audit 25 March 2010 & 22 June 2010	1	1	1
Edexcel	CMV 6 Nov 2009, 25 Jan 2010, 19 May 2010	2	2	1
Education Development International	CMV 9 Dec 2009, 26 Jan 2010, 2 Feb 2010	1	1	1
EMTA Awards Ltd	CMV 9 Dec 2009, 11 Jan 2010, 19 Jan 2010, 5 Feb 2010, 12 Apr 2010	1	1	4
Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB)	CMV 28 June 2010, 22 Oct 2010	2	2	1
Equestrian Qualifications Limited (EQL)	CMV 4 Nov 2010	0	0	0
IMI Awards Limited	CMV 5 Nov 2009, 27 Nov 2009, 24 June 2010	4	4	3
Institute of Revenue rating and Valuation (IRRV)	CMV 9 Sept 2010	3	3	3
Lantra Awards Limited	CMV 3 Dec 2009	1	0	1
Mineral Products Qualifications Council (MPQC)	Audit 23 Nov 2010 CMV 25 Mar 2010	2	1	5
NOCN	CMV 29 Sept 2009, 30 Sept 2009, 6 Oct 2009, 13 Oct 2009, 27 Oct 2009	4	4	5
PAA/VQ-SET	CMV 17 Sept 2009, 23 Sept 2009, 4 Dec 2009	2	2	4

Pensions Management Institute	CMV 18 Nov 2009, 9 March 2010	1	1	3
Safety Training Awards (STA)	Audit 17 Nov 2009 & 2 March 2010 CMV 22 Sept 2010, 28 Sept 2010, 7 Oct 2010	3	3	4
Scottish Qualifications Authority	Audit 10 & 11 Feb 2010 CMV 26 Aug 2009, 3 Sept 2009, 8 Oct 2009, 29 Oct 2009, 11 March 2010, 30 March 2010	9	9	10
Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)	CMV 31 Aug 2009, 23 Oct 2009, 12 March 2010	2	1	5
		39	36	55

Notes

Non-compliance and observations totals include centre monitoring visits and Awarding Body audits

Appendix 2: Current Awarding Bodies

Active IQ (AIQ)
Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS)
Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)
Association of Business Executives (ABE)
BIIAB
Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ)
Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
City and Guilds
Edexcel
Education Development International (EDI)
EMTA Awards Limited (EAL)
Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB)
Equestrian Qualifications GB Limited (EQL)
First Aid Awards Limited (FAAL)
Glass Qualifications Authority (GQA)
Highfield Awarding Body for Compliance (HABC)
Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)
IMI Awards Limited (IMIAL)
Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV)
ITC First Aid
Lantra Awards Limited (LAL)
Mineral Products Qualification Council (MPQC)
National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH)
National Open College Network (NOCN)
Process Awards Authority Limited/VQ-SET (PAA/VQ-SET)
Rockschool
Safety Training Awards (STA)
SAMB Awarding Body (SAMB)
Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)
Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM)