

SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles (2011)

General	Guidance
<p>1. The awarding body must deal with SQA Accreditation in an open and co-operative way, and disclose anything which SQA Accreditation would reasonably expect to be made aware.</p>	<p>The type, timing and frequency of the communication and information required will depend on a number of factors, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ impact upon the reputation of the qualification ◆ impact upon the learner/s ◆ impact upon the operations and/or reputation of the awarding body ◆ impact on any funding ◆ impact on the reputation of SQA Accreditation <p>SQA Accreditation would expect to be made aware of:</p> <p>changes to key personnel within the awarding body which have a significant impact on the awarding body's operations; or changes to the awarding body's ownership, eg change of Chief Executive, Directors, Accountable Officer. We would not expect to be made aware of changes to appointees such as External Verifiers etc on a day-to-day basis, but would follow this up as part of regular monitoring activities.</p> <p>We would expect to be made aware of situations where an awarding body is facing, or is anticipating, significant financial issues, eg inability to pay staff or creditors, possible bankruptcy, or loss of funding streams which will have a significant impact on learners and/or qualifications. We would not expect to be made aware of extending an overdraft or loan etc which does not have a significant impact upon the operations or longevity of the awarding body.</p> <p>We would also expect to be advised about incidents affecting the assessment of learners, eg substantial errors in assessment materials, breach of confidentiality, malpractice and/or maladministration. The timing will be dictated by the severity and potential impact upon the awarding body, learner, funding or SQA Accreditation. For example in the case of a learner or centre complaint, we would expect it to be managed at awarding body or centre level, and we would review it through our regular monitoring activities. Where there was a complaint affecting qualifications such as Care, or a licence to practice, or high volumes of learners or funding etc, we would expect to be notified immediately. The notification should include details of how the potential impact of the issue can be minimised and how a further occurrence can be prevented.</p>

	The submission and retention of data by a specified deadline, eg registration and certification statistics, must meet SQA Accreditation's needs and adequate information must be available for all accredited provision.
Governance	Guidance
2. The awarding body must publish clear information on their products, services and associated charges and fees.	The awarding body ensures that the fees/prices associated with their products and services are sufficiently clear to ensure stakeholders are aware of the full cost associated when engaging with the awarding body. The awarding body gives stakeholders advance notice where they anticipate any increase in their fees.
3. The awarding body must ensure that they employ robust processes to protect their own business interests as well as the interests of their approved centres and learners.	This would include the identification, and where possible, mitigation of conflicts of interest. Where any conflicts are identified the awarding body ensures the protection of the learner, qualification, awarding body, SQA Accreditation, and any other stakeholder involved in the design, development, delivery, assessment and award of the accredited qualifications or Units. In the event that a centre goes into liquidation, withdraws or can no longer deliver a qualification, the awarding body takes steps to protect the interests of learners and to inform SQA Accreditation how they will manage any issues.
4. The awarding body must ensure that they conduct their operations ethically, taking account of any legislation, including but not limited to equalities, competition and data protection laws.	The awarding body must ensure that they comply with all legislation which impacts on their operations. They must also ensure that they do not conduct their business in a manner which has the potential to negatively impact on any accredited qualification or Unit, on SQA Accreditation or on the users of qualifications. The awarding body will be expected to nominate an Accountable Officer who will act as the single point of contact for all regulatory matters in relation to their accredited provision.
5. The awarding body must promote a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation and throughout their approved centres, and have in place a system which allows them to manage risk.	The awarding body has in place a system for the identification and reduction of risks associated with their accredited qualification or Units. Where possible, mitigating actions should be identified. The awarding body should carry out a regular and systematic review of their processes, procedures and systems associated with their accredited provision, to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, to identify best practice, and to ensure that their approved centres adopt a system for continuous improvement. The systematic review should result in a self-assessment of the awarding body's operations in relation to their accredited provision, and the outcome should be reported to SQA Accreditation by the Accountable Officer.

Qualification design and development	Guidance
6. The awarding body and their approved centres must have the relevant expertise, quality assurance procedures, technological, financial, human resources and other physical resources, to carry out their regulated functions, during the life of the qualifications and Units they offer.	The awarding body is able to demonstrate that they, their approved centres and satellite/ assessment sites, have the capacity and capability to deliver their planned or accredited provision over the life of the qualifications and Units. Where the awarding body's centres have satellite/assessment sites there is a formal agreement or arrangements stipulating the duties of each party.
7. The awarding body must ensure that SQA Accreditation is granted access to the awarding body, their approved centres, assessment locations, staff, learners, premises, meetings, documents, data, analysis and evaluations on request.	The awarding body informs their approved centres that SQA Accreditation, as the qualifications regulator, will carry out quality assurance activities, including centre monitoring visits and desktop audits.
8. The awarding body must ensure that the identification, design, development and review of qualifications and Units, meet the needs of the users of qualifications.	When developing and reviewing qualifications and Units, the awarding body is able to demonstrate their process for ensuring that products are designed with a clear need and demand. This should include engagement with sectors, employers, centres and learners.
9. The awarding body must ensure that the qualification subject content, skills knowledge and understanding, where relevant to the aim of the qualification, are clearly defined for each SQA accredited qualification.	None required
10. The awarding body must ensure that, where possible, progression or outcome opportunities for learners are clearly identified in terms of qualification pathways or employment opportunities.	The awarding body should identify the range of opportunities where qualifications or Units allow the learner to progress on to other qualifications, within career pathways or across sectors.
11. The awarding body must ensure that the design of the qualification provides for assessment methods that: a. allow the generation of evidence that is relevant and can be authenticated b. enable learners to demonstrate their abilities against the full range of qualification requirements c. clearly define centre requirements for controlled conditions. d. use language and terminology that is appropriate for the target group.	None required

Qualification design and development	Guidance
<p>12. The awarding body must ensure that assessments are accessible and produce results that are valid, reliable, transparent and fair.</p>	<p>The awarding body should produce evidence and results that demonstrate the maintenance of appropriate standards and coverage of the qualification specification; and provide comparability of standards between centres, and over time. They should ensure that internal and external assessment decisions are robust, meet defined standards, and are supported by standardisation of marking and moderation and/or verification, and define roles and responsibilities and points of accountability to ensure that assessment methods are subject to the necessary scrutiny and testing. They should issue clear procedures where appropriate for the sampling of marking.</p>
<p>13. The awarding body must have clearly defined processes for reasonable adjustments to assessments.</p>	<p>The awarding body can demonstrate that, where required, they can deal with learners that experience temporary illness, injury, bereavement, or other relevant circumstances that impact significantly on the learner at the time of an assessment, to allow them to demonstrate the achievement they are capable of for the qualifications or Units that are subject to reasonable adjustment.</p>
<p>14. The awarding body must consult with stakeholders, taking into account relevant equality and diversity groups, to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to entry to the assessment of the qualifications they design and/or offer for different groups of learners.</p>	<p>For qualifications or Units designed for the workplace, the awarding body will provide assessments in English, and only offer assessments in other languages where proficiency in English is not required for learners to properly carry out the role that is supported by the qualification.</p>
<p>15. The awarding body must state the nature of any necessary barrier to the assessment and must justify the inclusion of the requirements that create the barrier, only and explicitly in terms of the integrity of the qualification.</p>	<p>None required</p>
<p>16. Qualification title: The awarding body must ensure that qualifications and Unit titles: a. are clear, meaningful and consistent b. specify the relevant subject area c. include the SCQF level of the qualification or Unit (where relevant).</p>	<p>None required</p>
<p>17. The awarding body must: a. make clear how pass marks and any grade boundaries are determined, or specify the grading scale or the criteria against which learners' performance will be differentiated b. clearly state the form in which the qualification and/or Unit results will be reported c. ensure that learners receive accurate and timely results.</p>	<p>None required</p>

Malpractice and complaints	Guidance
18. The awarding body and their centres must deal with complaints on a fair and equitable basis, in line with their published procedures and timescales, and without unreasonable delay. The awarding body, their centres and learners must be made aware of how and when they can complain to SQA Accreditation. Where a complaint is upheld, the awarding body and/or centre must take appropriate, corrective and/or preventative action.	Within the awarding body or centre devised processes and documents there is a clear process for the learner and centre which informs them how and when they can make a complaint. This must include at what point they can escalate their complaint to SQA Accreditation.
19. The awarding body must ensure that steps are taken to prevent malpractice and maladministration, inform SQA Accreditation when any cases, or suspected cases, of malpractice and/or maladministration are discovered, and develop and implement corrective action plans to prevent further occurrence.	Where the awarding body or centre carries out any investigation, the investigation is carried out rigorously by persons with appropriate competence and who have no personal interest in the outcome. The investigation should result in a report to SQA Accreditation.
20. Where a centre undertakes any part of the delivery of a qualification which an awarding body makes available, the awarding body must keep under review the arrangements put in place by that centre for preventing malpractice and maladministration.	None required
Certification	Guidance
21. The awarding body must take measures in the design and issuing of their certificates to protect against fraudulent use.	The awarding body should implement safeguards to prevent fraudulent or mistaken claims for certificates, and ensure that replacement certificates are labelled as such, and are only issued after steps have been taken to authenticate the claims.
22. The awarding body must ensure that qualification and Unit certificates meet SQA Accreditation's minimum requirements, reflect learner achievement, are only issued on the basis of a valid claim, and are supplied within a reasonable and clearly communicated timescale.	Certificates issued conform to the agreed format at the time of accreditation. Any changes requested subsequent to the agreed format should be submitted to SQA Accreditation for approval. Examples could include the addition or removal of a partner awarding body's logo.
Appeals	Guidance
23. The awarding body and their centres must publish clear, fair and equitable procedures and timelines for dealing with enquiries about results and appeals. They must take appropriate, corrective and/or preventative action for all learners and centres affected.	None required
24. The awarding body must make available to SQA Accreditation statistics on the number of enquiries about results and appeals they have received and dealt with.	None required
25. The awarding body must ensure that the resolution of appeals includes independent consideration and that appropriate records are retained.	None required