



SQA Accreditation

Visit to Rockschool Limited

Awarding body centre report

17 November 2012

Note

The findings of this report will be presented to the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA) Accreditation Committee and made available to colleagues from the Welsh Government, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) with a view to informing future accreditation and re-accreditation submissions submitted by the awarding body.

The report will be published on SQA Accreditation's website.

Please note that SQA Accreditation monitoring activity is conducted on a sampling basis. As a consequence, not all aspects of an awarding body's performance in quality assurance, contract compliance, implementation, awarding of certificates, and fee arrangements have been considered in this report to the same depth.

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Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of the visit

SQA Accreditation conducts audits of all awarding bodies offering SQA accredited qualifications or Units. The audit methodology includes monitoring a sample of the awarding body's approved centres or assessment sites. The aim of monitoring is to:

- ◆ confirm that quality assurance arrangements are being conducted by the awarding body in accordance with its prescribed arrangements
- ◆ satisfy SQA Accreditation of the awarding body's performance against SQA Accreditation's *Awarding Body Criteria (2007)*
- ◆ confirm that the awarding body's quality assurance arrangements are being conducted in a consistent manner, within and between centres
- ◆ inform future monitoring activity for the awarding body

Centre visit dates

One centre was visited on 17 November 2012.

One non-compliance and one observation have been recorded.

Section 2: Discussion

Areas of good practice

The following areas of good practice were noted:

The Centre Manager stated that Rockscool is a well managed, professional organisation that communicates effectively with examination venues; plenty of notice for potential examination dates and a detailed exam session summary are given.

The Examiner highlighted the:

- ◆ flexibility and accommodating nature of Rockscool as an examination board
- ◆ positive contribution Rockscool has made to improving the accessibility of music qualifications, for people who traditionally may not have been of a socio-economic background to access specialist music exams
- ◆ feedback from candidates indicating that their exam experience was pleasant and encouraging

Areas of non-compliance

During the course of monitoring it was found that the awarding body was not in compliance with the following Key Goal.

Key Goal 6: The awarding body has an effective communications strategy that supports its awarding body activities

During the visit to the examination venue, one candidate undertaking Grade 8 Drums had elected to bring his own drum kit. Rockscool had scheduled this candidate to be examined after the 60 minute lunch break, in order that he could set up the equipment during this break. As the candidate was sitting a Grade 8 exam, he was required to undertake the Quick Study Piece (QSP) which is given to the candidate 20 minutes prior to the exam commencing. However, when the Examiner attempted to give the QSP to the candidate, he had not finished setting up his equipment, despite 40 minutes lapsing since arrival and the assistance of several family members. Although the Examiner tried to convey the necessity of starting promptly and the impact upon other candidates' start times, the candidate in question and his parents were agitated and expressed the need for more time. This placed the Examiner in an awkward situation and jeopardised the exam schedule, with the candidate starting around 10 minutes later than planned. Rockscool exams have very precise timings and even a small deviation from the schedule can have an impact on the start times of other candidates. Such an impact was only averted in this case because of subsequent absentees.

The Examiner commented that a late start time can cause candidates to become more nervous as they wait, which can lead to poorer performance, or a perception of this by the candidate, which may in turn lead to an increase in appeals to Rockscool for the accredited qualifications.

In addition, it is possible that some exam schedules may have several candidates who bring equipment which requires set-up time and this could have a major impact on the schedule, especially if some of these candidates cannot be accommodated after a break. Given that the examination room contains all equipment, the need for candidates to bring their own equipment that requires to be set up, may be questionable.

An observation was raised in the centre monitoring report of 2011–12 against this Key Goal, specifically concerning the set-up time required by some candidates who bring guitar-effects pedals.

In order to protect the integrity of the Rockscool Graded Music Exams and to safeguard the interests of all candidates who undertake these exams, Rockscool must establish precise time parameters for equipment set up time. Further, Rockscool must communicate these time parameters to examiners and candidates and ensure strict adherence.

This has been recorded as non-compliance 1.

Observations

The Auditor considers that the following areas, whilst meeting SQA Accreditation's *Awarding Body Criteria*, have the potential for improvement:

Key Goal 9: The awarding body has open and transparent procedures for complaints and appeals

Specifically criterion:

9.1.1 The awarding body must publish and implement an appeals and complaints procedure which includes the system for making a complaint or an appeal.

The Rockscool complaints policy is available in the policy section of the Rockscool website, which can be accessed through the general information page. However, a specific link to the complaints policy is not included on the general information page, as it is for the appeals policy.

Further, the Rockscool *Exam Regulations* document details the appeals process but does not refer to the complaints process.

To ensure complaints and appeals information is presented equally, Rockscool should consider adding a specific link to the complaints policy on the general information page of the website or alternatively, consider removing the appeals policy link from the general information page and locating the appeals information solely within the policy section. Further, Rockscool should consider including reference to the complaints process within the *Exam Regulations* document.

This has been recorded as observation 1.

Section 3: Action plan

A non-compliance will be recorded where the Auditor finds evidence of non-compliance with either any of the criteria contained in SQA Accreditation's *Awarding Body Criteria* (2007) or any of the conditions attached to SQA accredited qualifications at the time of accreditation. When recording a non-compliance, the Auditor will agree the action to be taken by the awarding body and a timetable for the resolution of each non-compliance.

SQA Accreditation risk rates each non-compliance recorded during an audit of the awarding body. This section lists the grade of risk attached to each of the awarding body's non-compliances. See Appendix 2 for an explanation of grades of risk.

An observation will be noted to ensure that any area of potential improvement is noted for future reference. As observations are recorded for awarding body consideration only, it is not necessary to agree a timescale to resolve the observation in the awarding body action plan.

Once agreed, the action plan is signed by representatives from both SQA Accreditation and the awarding body, and will inform future monitoring activity for the awarding body.

Non-compliance

Non-compliance	Agreed action and date	Criterion	Risk rating
1. During the visit to the examination venue, one candidate undertaking Grade 8 Drums had elected to bring his own drum kit. The time taken to set up this equipment jeopardised the exam schedule, as the candidate started around 10 minutes later than planned. Rockscool exams have very precise timings and even a small deviation from the schedule can have an impact on the start times of other candidates. Such an impact was only averted in this case because of subsequent absentees.	In order to protect the integrity of the Rockscool Graded Music Exams and to safeguard the interests of all candidates who undertake these exams, Rockscool must establish precise time parameters for equipment set up time. Further, Rockscool must communicate these time parameters to examiners and candidates and ensure strict adherence. Rockscool must provide evidence of this by 5 April 2013. Extension till 3 May 2013. Closed out 3 May 2013.	Key Goal 6	3

Observations

Observations	Recommendations	Criterion
<p>1. The Rockscool complaints policy is available in the policy section of the Rockscool website, which can be accessed through the general information page. However, a specific link to the complaints policy is not included on the general information page, as it is for the appeals policy.</p> <p>Further, the Rockscool <i>Exam Regulations</i> document details the appeals process but does not refer to the complaints process.</p>	<p>To ensure complaints and appeals information is presented equally, Rockscool should consider adding a specific link to the complaints policy on the general information page of the website or alternatively, consider removing the appeals policy link from the general information page and locating the appeals information solely within the policy section. Further, Rockscool should consider including reference to the complaints process within the <i>Exam Regulations</i> document.</p>	9.1.1

Signatures of agreement to awarding body action plan: 17 November 2012

For and on behalf of Rockscool Ltd

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Signature

Signature

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Designation

Designation

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Date

Date

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Appendix 1: Documents reviewed

The following documents were reviewed during the course of the centre monitoring visit.

Document title	Version number (if known)	Issue date (if known)
Examination administration process		
Exam centre requirements		
Rockschool examination venue approval procedure		
Rockschool Examiners' Handbook Graded Examinations in Music		October 2011
Exam Session Summary		2012
Exam Regulations		
Rockschool re-standardisation form		February 2012
Public Examination Centres: Terms and Conditions		
Centre details form		
Rockschool Syllabus Guides		2006–2012; 2012–2018
Rockschool Equal Opportunities policy		February 2011
Rockschool Malpractice policy		February 2011
Rockschool Customer Service policy		February 2011
Rockschool Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy		February 2011
Rockschool Appeals policy		
Rockschool Complaints policy		

Appendix 2: Risk rating of non-compliances

SQA Accreditation assigns a risk rating to each non-compliance recorded as a result of an awarding body audit or through our centre monitoring activity. The table below illustrates how the rating for a non-compliance is assigned and identifies the possible impact of the non-compliance on qualifications and/or the learner.

The assignment of a risk rating allows an awarding body to target their resources to areas that have been identified as having a major impact. The risk rating also allows SQA Accreditation to target its resources to support awarding bodies in improving their performance.

Rating	Risk	Impact of non-compliance
1	Very low	The non-compliance is likely to cause minimal concern and would not threaten the integrity of the qualification or impact adversely on the learner. Any overall effect is likely to be small scale and/or localised, rather than widespread. The issue identified is unlikely to recur once resolved and no long lasting damage would be anticipated.
2	Low	The non-compliance is of low impact but of sufficient importance to merit intervention, with a low threat to the systems or procedures associated with the qualification and/or impact on the learner. Disruption may not just be localised but more widespread and would possibly cause residual damage; however, this could be easily corrected without further consequence.
3	Medium	The non-compliance could potentially damage the credibility of the qualification and/or be detrimental to the learner. There may be some impact to the systems or procedures that support the qualification or the operational effectiveness of the awarding body.
4	High	The non-compliance could have a high impact on the integrity and reliability of the qualification or the effective operation of the awarding body as a whole if corrective action is not quickly taken. There is a high probability that the qualification and/or learner will be negatively affected.
5	Very high	The non-compliance will have a serious impact on the integrity and reliability of the qualification or the effective operation of the awarding body if corrective action is not immediately taken. There is a very high probability that the qualification and/or learner will be negatively affected.

In assigning a risk rating, each non-compliance is considered on its own merit, taking account of the context in which it was identified.