



Audit Report

SFEDI Awards

30 October 2013

Note

Restricted or commercially sensitive information gathered during SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities is treated in the strictest confidence. However, please note the following:

- ◆ The findings of this report and the associated Action Plan will be presented to SQA's Accreditation Committee.
- ◆ The report and Action Plan will be published on SQA Accreditation's website following receipt of the signed acceptance of audit findings.
- ◆ The contents will contribute towards the Quality Enhancement Rating which will, in turn, contribute towards the quality assurance activity and timescales.

Please note that SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities are conducted on a sampling basis. Consequently, not all aspects of an awarding body's performance in quality assurance, contract compliance, implementation, awarding of certificates and fee arrangements (not an exhaustive list) may have been considered in this report to the same depth.

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Executive summary

This was the first audit of SFEDI Awards since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in January 2013.

1.1 Scope and approach

The audit was designed to review and evaluate SFEDI Awards' strategies, policies and procedures to ensure compliance under **SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2011), Regulatory Principles Directives, the requirements of the clauses within and any conditions attached to the approved awarding body agreement and the Criteria for Accredited Qualifications.**

As this was a full audit of SFEDI Awards, all Principles were included within the scope of the audit.

A Requirement has been raised where SQA Accreditation found evidence that the awarding body has not met SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.

The following timescales apply:

- ◆ SQA Accreditation will issue this report within 30 working days of the audit date.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign and return the audit report and associated Action Plan within 30 working days of the audit report being issued.
- ◆ Within a further 20 working days of receiving the proposed Action Plan, SQA Accreditation will confirm whether the Action Plan is appropriate to address the Requirements. This will be subject to the actions proving appropriate to the issues raised.
- ◆ SQA Accreditation will monitor progress towards completion of the actions identified in the Action Plan.

A Recommendation may be recorded in instances where SQA Accreditation considers there to be scope for improvement. Where these are agreed during the audit, they are recorded on the report for future reference. As Recommendations are recorded for awarding body consideration only, it is not necessary to agree either actions or timescales to resolve these in the awarding body Action Plan.

1.2 Awarding body audit report timeline

SFEDI Awards audit date	30 October 2013
SQA Accreditation audit report date	11 December 2013
Date audit report and Action Plan to be signed and submitted by SFEDI Awards	3 February 2014

1.3 Background

SFEDI Awards is the awarding body for Business Support and Enterprise. The organisation develops and delivers a range of qualifications as a means of enabling those who wish to start and grow their own business and the business support professionals who work with them.

SFEDI Awards' headquarters are situated in Darlington. The audit team was provided with full access to the awarding body's premises, staff and documentation.

1.4 Overview

As a result of the audit and post-audit activities, three Requirements have been raised and six Recommendations have been recorded.

The three Requirements form the basis of the SFEDI Awards Action Plan. This must be completed and submitted to SQA Accreditation for agreement within 30 working days of the audit report being issued. The Action Plan must be submitted by 3 February 2014.

Outcome(s)	Area(s) of concern	Risk rating
Requirement 1	Principle 3	Medium
Requirement 2	Principle 10	Low
Requirement 3	Principle 18 and Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR 5	Low
Recommendation 1	Principle 2	n/a
Recommendation 2	Principle 2	n/a
Recommendation 3	Principle 2 and Principle 14	n/a
Recommendation 4	Principle 4 and Principle 14	n/a
Recommendation 5	Principle 6	n/a
Recommendation 6	Principle 16 and Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR 4	n/a

2 Audit findings

The following sections detail Requirements raised and Recommendations recorded against SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles (2011)*, Regulatory Principles Directives, the requirements of the clauses within and any conditions attached to the Approved Awarding Body agreement and the Criteria for Accredited Qualifications.

2.1 Requirements

Principle 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.

The audit team noted that SFEDI Awards had not provided a documented business development and marketing strategy/plan in respect of both SQA accredited qualifications and the awarding body's proposed activities in Scotland.

Discussions with the relevant awarding body representatives recognised this fact and that there is a need to raise the profile of the SFEDI Awards brand in Scotland as soon as possible.

Business development will remain market-led for the foreseeable future, relying on existing partners (including approved centres) in Scotland to identify opportunities for future qualification development.

Although largely reactive, this has proved successful to date and has been responsible for the current accredited qualification which continues to garner interest from other potential centres.

SFEDI Awards' presence in Scotland, no matter how low key for the moment, has already raised interest within its portfolio of approved centres. There have been suggestions that centres may wish to see existing QCF provision tailored and accredited in Scotland.

The awarding body is conscious of the need to document a strategy, and it indicated that this process would commence in the first week of November 2013. The aim is to be in a position to proactively promote the SFEDI Awards brand by February 2014.

At that point it is likely that the initial focus will be the network of Scottish colleges and given the ongoing activity around mergers, the awarding body representatives believe that this will be a continuous piece of work over the next six to twelve months.

SFEDI Awards is currently in the process of increasing the number of Customer Account Managers responsible for regular and ongoing liaison with current stakeholders across the UK. On completion of this recruitment drive, the awarding body may take a regional and key account approach to stakeholder support. This will further assist the stated aim of being proactive in terms of business development and marketing.

The audit team was comfortable with the nature of these discussions and gained a real sense that SFEDI Awards has a focused direction of travel to support continued growth around SQA accredited provision. However, there is a need to document this process to allow for the establishment of appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as an aid to monitoring achievement.

The available evidence indicates that SFEDI Awards does not currently meet the requirements of Principle 3. This has been raised as **Requirement 1**.

Principle 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.

A review of documentation and information held on the awarding body's website in respect of the *Diploma in Business and Enterprise Support at SCQF Level 8* does not provide sufficient information on progression or outcome opportunities for candidates who successfully achieve the qualification.

It was noted by the audit team that one of the awarding body's approved centres delivering SQA accredited provision does indicate potential routes for progression into higher education, as well as other relevant provision offered by an SQA accredited awarding body.

SFEDI Awards should ensure that they build upon such good practice to ensure a consistent approach to promoting progression on achieving an SQA accredited qualification at both awarding body and approved centre level.

The available evidence indicates that SFEDI Awards does not currently meet the requirements of Principle 10. This has been raised as **Requirement 2**.

Principle 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.

And

Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 5 Complaints handling.

SFEDI Awards' current complaints procedure, *Complaints Procedure, V2 01/12/12*, does not meet the requirements of *Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 5 Complaints handling*. This regulatory directive states that any awarding body devised complaints handling process must reflect the role of the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) in investigating complaints from users of public bodies in Scotland.

The audit team were conscious of the fact that neither of SFEDI Awards' two currently approved centres delivering the SQA accredited qualification constitutes a public body. However, the awarding body may wish to future-proof its procedures in this area to ensure no problems arise as a consequence of increasing the number of centres.

The available evidence indicates that SFEDI Awards does not currently meet the requirements of Principle 18. This has been raised as **Requirement 3**.

2.2 Recommendations

Principle 2. The awarding body must publish clear information on their products, services and associated charges and fees.

On reviewing the awarding body's completed AC1 Form the audit team noted the following:

On approval by SQA we will split our qualification section to show a Scottish qualification section separate to the England/Wales/NI section due to differences in levelling to ensure that centres and learners are directed to the correct version of the qualifications for their geographical area.

Also the following:

Our fees and prices are published within the Centre Documentation section of the website which is free to view by all visitors to the website. As our fees and prices for qualifications are categorized by the size and level of the qualification a separate fees and prices document will be created for Scottish qualifications due to the differences between levelling and we will ensure that all parties are charged at the same rate and no preferential treatment is given by geographical area.

A review of the SFEDI Awards' website did not indicate the presence of a dedicated area for Scottish qualifications.

The audit team was advised that the awarding body would be launching a new website in due course and that a dedicated area for Scottish qualifications would be considered as part of the design, if still considered to be appropriate.

SFEDI Awards may wish to consider liaising with its appointed Regulation Manager prior to launching the revised website to ensure that the refreshed content remains compliant and fit for purpose. **This has been recorded as Recommendation 1.**

On reviewing the document *Diploma in Business and Enterprise Support at SCQF Level 8, Qualification Specification, V1.0, January 2013*, the audit team noted that within the section on 'Learner Registration' centres are advised to 'obtain a Unique Learner Number (ULN) from the Learner Records Service'. A link to the Learner Record Service is also provided.

The information appears to be at odds with that contained within the *SFEDI Awards Centre Manual, February 2013*, which notes that approved centres have 'a duty' to provide candidates undertaking 'SQA regulated qualifications' with a 'Scottish learner Number'.

The audit team provided SFEDI Awards representatives with an overview of the Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) and its purpose and use in Scotland. It was also made clear that SFEDI Awards can devise and adopt any process for noting candidate registrations that the organisation believes to be appropriate on the understanding that is transparent, consistent and fit for purpose.

Therefore the awarding body may wish to review the advice and information provided to centres over candidate registration to ensure all of the above. **This has been recorded as Recommendation 2.**

Principle 2. The awarding body must publish clear information on their products, services and associated charges and fees.

And

Principle 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.

In reviewing the document *Who is SFEDI Awards?* the audit team noted that a reference to the *Diploma in Business and Enterprise Support at SCQF Level 8* contained a qualifying statement to the effect that the qualification was only available for delivery in Scotland.

The audit team was not clear on the rationale and purpose of this statement. Initial thoughts focused on the possibility that this may be a simple reflection of the fact that the two currently approved centres are based in Scotland. However, this proved not to be the case as one centre was subsequently shown to operate in England also. Consequently, concerns were raised that this statement constituted a potential barrier to candidate uptake given the fact that the qualification has in effect been accredited for delivery across the UK.

The awarding body representatives explained that the statement was present because the accredited qualification had been originally designed for the purposes of supporting a specific job role within a key Scottish stakeholder which may not look favourably upon its use elsewhere.

Whilst appreciating the awarding body's concerns regarding its stakeholder, the audit team noted that this should have been highlighted at the point of accreditation for consideration by SQA's Accreditation Co-ordination Group (ACG). However, as the qualification now holds accredited status, SFEDI Awards may wish to revise or remove the qualifying statement to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to entry for candidates wishing to undertake the award. **This has been recorded as Recommendation 3.**

Principle 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.

And

Principle 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.

SFEDI Awards may wish to review its *Equality & Diversity Policy* and *Equality Check* documents make relevant and appropriate reference to the Equality Act 2010, revising the current list of areas of focus to fully and accurately reflect the eight protected characteristics defined within the Act.

This will assist SQA Accreditation as a public sector body to fulfil its general equality duty in eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as prohibited by the Act, as well as ensuring that there is an equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. **This has been recorded as Recommendation 4.**

Principle 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 *SFEDI Awards Manual, February 2013*, outlines the criteria that approved centres must achieve to be granted Direct Claim Status (DCS) by the awarding body.

Granted on a qualification-by-qualification basis, centres achieve this status based upon an acceptable risk rating allied to demonstrating consistent and quality delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance of qualification delivery.

However, the audit team was unable to determine from the criteria over what period of time a centre must effectively operate before being granted DCS status.

SFEDI Awards provided an overview of the Registr8 system and the audit team noted that certification requests are currently subject to manual review to ensure that they are dealt with appropriately according to centre status in respect of DCS, ensuring that the appropriate quality assurance mechanisms are in place and implemented in a timely manner.

The processes surrounding DCS still appear to be informal in certain respects regarding how centres are awarded this status, associated timeframes and the processing of certification. The audit team accepts that this is manageable at present given the current number of centres and approved learners but is concerned that this could potentially be problematic as numbers increase.

Therefore, SFEDI Awards may wish to consider devising a policy and procedure regarding DCS to provide a framework that is consistent and transparent for both approved centres and relevant awarding body staff. **This has been recorded as Recommendation 5.**

Principle 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).**

And

Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 4 Titling Conventions for SCQF credit rated qualifications.

In reviewing a range of documentation available on the awarding body website and Quickr relating to the *Diploma in Business and Enterprise Support at SCQF Level 8*, the audit team noted a small number of inconsistencies in qualification titling and SCQF referencing.

For example, it was noted in a number of documents that the awarding body name has been added at the beginning of the qualification title. As required by *Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 4 Titling Conventions for SCQF credit rated qualifications* this may only occur should the awarding body name or acronym be specified at the point of accreditation. Likewise, the awarding body should desist from appending the SQA initialism at the end of the qualification title for the same reason.

The awarding body should also be clear on its use of SCQF referencing. It was noted that there were a number of references to 'SCQF Reference Number'. This is not appropriate as SCQF does not distinguish types of qualification.

The audit team is aware that SFEDI Awards made many such changes to close out a condition raised post-awarding body approval. Therefore, it may wish to conduct a further review of relevant documentation and information to correct any remaining inconsistencies. **This has been recorded as Recommendation 6.**

3 Outstanding approval and accreditation conditions

A condition will be recorded at the time of approval of the awarding body or at the time of accreditation for an SQA accredited qualification. A condition is recorded when SQA Accreditation's Co-ordination Group (ACG) finds evidence that the awarding body does not fully meet the requirements under SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles (2011)*, Regulatory Principles Directives, the requirements of the clauses within and any conditions attached to the Approved Awarding Body agreement and the Criteria for Accredited Qualifications.

Principle no.	Condition	Date due
None		

4 Risk rating of Requirements

SQA Accreditation assigns a risk rating to each Requirement recorded as a result of awarding body quality assurance activity. The table below illustrates how the rating for a Requirement is assigned. A weighting is applied that depends on the risk identified and the possible impact on qualifications and/or the learner of failure to implement that Requirement.

The assignment of a risk rating allows an awarding body to assign their resources to areas which have been identified as having a major impact on the qualifications and/or the learner. The risk rating also allows SQA Accreditation to assign its resources to support awarding bodies in improving their performance.

Risk	Impact of Requirements identified through quality assurance activity
Very Low	The Requirement has been identified as 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 identified Requirement is unlikely to recur once resolved and no long lasting damage would be anticipated.
Low	The Requirement has been identified as low impact but is 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.
Medium	The Requirement has been identified as having the potential to 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.
High	The Requirement has been identified as having a potentially 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.
Very High	The Requirement has been identified as having 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 Requirement is considered on its own merit, taking account of the context in which it was identified.

5 Table of awards

Accredited qualifications currently offered by SFEDI Awards

SQA-accredited qualification title	Level	Code	Accreditation date	Re-accreditation date
Diploma in Business and Enterprise Support	SCQF Level 8	R276 04	30/01/2013	31/10/2017

6 List of documents reviewed pre and post audit

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Application for SFEDI Awards Qualification Approval		
Malpractice Investigation Report	16/09/2011	Version 1
Customer Service Charter	February 2012	Version 1.2
SFEDI Awards Centre Application Form		
SFEDI Awards Centre Approval Report		
SFEDI Awards Manual	Updated February 2013	
Procedure for the Development and Review of Units		
Procedure for the Development and Review of Assessment Methods		
SQA Notification of Events Policy		
Code of Business Conduct and Ethics		
Who is SFEDI Awards?		
SFEDI Awards Diploma in Business and Enterprise Support at SCQF Level 8 (SQA) – Business Support leaflet		
SFEDI Awards organisational structure		
Equality & Diversity Policy		

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
SFEDI Awards Complaints Procedure		
SFEDI Awards Irregularities, Maladministration and Malpractice Investigation Procedure		
SFEDI Awards Centre Appeal Procedure		
External Quality Assurance Visit Report		
Welcome to the SFEDI Awards Delivery Network		



7 Action Plan

A separate document in Microsoft Word has been forwarded with this audit report.

Areas of concern	Requirement	Risk rating	Proposed action <small>(Please include a description of your intended methodology and details of the evidence that will be provided.)</small>	Target date for completion
Principle 3	The audit team noted that SFEDI Awards had not provided a documented business development and marketing strategy/plan in respect of both SQA accredited qualifications and the awarding body's proposed activities in Scotland.	Medium	The SFEDI Awards SMT are currently reviewing our business and marketing strategy/plan as part of our annual review of business and qualification activities. This will be finalised and presented to the Board at the next meeting on 12 th March 2014 for consultation, agreement and sign off. At this point in time SFEDI Awards will be in a position to upload the latest agreed plans to Quickr which will detail activities to date and plans going forward for the next 12 months. Closed out 13 March 2014.	13 th March 2014

Areas of concern	Requirement	Risk rating	Proposed action <small>(Please include a description of your intended methodology and details of the evidence that will be provided.)</small>	Target date for completion
Principle 10	A review of documentation undertaken as part of information held on the awarding body's website in respect of the Diploma in Business and Enterprise Support at SCQF Level 8 does not provide sufficient information on progression or outcome opportunities for candidates who successfully achieve the qualification.	Low	<p>The SFEDI Awards website has recently been relaunched and as part of this now lists associated qualifications that learners could undertake. We have also updated the layout/information contained within the SFEDI Awards qualification specifications to signpost individuals to other qualifications within the suites of qualifications that may be of interest.</p> <p>Within the response to Principle 3 above we will also be detailing our intentions and strategies to engage with HE institutions to attempt to develop progression routes for those who undertake our higher level qualifications to gain exemptions where possible as a route to HE Closed out 13 February 2014.</p>	Complete 13 th March 2014
Principle 18 and Regulatory Principles Directive 5	SFEDI Awards' current complaints procedure, <i>Complaints Procedure, V2 01/12/12</i> , does not meet the requirements of Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 5 Complaints handling.	Low	<p>The complaints policy has been reviewed as per the feedback gained from the SQA audit report. This will be presented at the next SFEDI Awards team meeting to ensure all are aware of the new policy and procedure on 12th February 2014. This will then be uploaded to the SFEDI Awards website for public viewing under our new Policies and Procedures section within our website. Closed out 13 February 2014.</p>	13 th February 2014

Signatures of agreement of Action Plan

For and on behalf of SFEDI Awards:

Signature

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Date

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For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Signature

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Date

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8 Acceptance of audit findings

For and on behalf of SFEDI Awards:

Signature

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Designation

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Date

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For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Signature

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Designation

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Date

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