



Audit Report

Associated Sport Qualifications (ASQ)

25 June 2014

Contents

1	Background	1
1.1	Scope	1
1.2	Audit Report and Action Plan Timescales	2
1.3	Summary of Audit Issues and Recommendations	3
1.4	Risk Rating of Issues	5
2	Detail of Audit Issues and Recommendations	6
2.1	Issues	6
2.2	Recommendations	9
3	Acceptance of Audit Findings	10

1 Background

This was the first audit of Associated Sports Qualifications (ASQ) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in July 2013.

ASQ is an awarding body which has been established to provide qualifications to service the national governing bodies of sports. Its headquarters are at the Belfry near Sutton Coldfield.

1.1 Scope

SQA Accreditation carries out quality assurance activity in line with our *Quality Assurance of Approved Awarding Bodies Policy*. This states the type and frequency of our quality assurance activities, describes our reporting procedures and indicates how the awarding body's Quality Enhancement Rating is calculated.

As this was a full audit of ASQ, all regulatory requirements were included within the scope of the audit. Our quality assurance activities are conducted on a sampling basis and, consequently, not all aspects of ASQ's systems, procedures and performance have been considered in this report to the same depth.

The audit was designed to ensure ASQ complies with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements namely:

- ◆ *SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2014)*
- ◆ all Regulatory Principles Directives
- ◆ the awarding body's Accreditation Licence

Awarding body documentation considered for review by the Audit Team includes all documents banked on ASQ's Quickr Place at the time of audit and information supplied to support audit activity. Restricted or commercially sensitive information gathered during SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities is treated in the strictest confidence.

1.2 Audit Report and Action Plan Timescales

ASQ audit date:	25 June 2014
Audit Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	16 July 2014
Audit Report to be signed by ASQ:	28 August 2014
Action Plan to be e-mailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by ASQ:	28 August 2014

The process will apply in relation to the timescales specified above:

- ◆ The awarding body will be sent two signed copies of the Audit Report by post.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign both copies of the Audit Report and return one by post to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified above.
- ◆ The awarding body will also be e-mailed a copy of the Audit Report (for information only) and an electronic copy of the Action Plan.
- ◆ The awarding body must complete and return the Action Plan in accordance with the timescale specified above and e-mail this in Microsoft Word format to regulation@sqa.org.uk
- ◆ SQA Accreditation will confirm when the Action Plan is appropriate to address the Issues and present it to Accreditation Co-ordination Group (ACG) for approval.
- ◆ Following approval by ACG, the awarding body will be sent two signed copies of the approved Action Plan by post.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign both copies of the Action Plan and return one by post to SQA Accreditation.

The findings of this Audit Report and the associated Action Plan will be published on SQA Accreditation's website following signed agreement.

SQA Accreditation will continually monitor progress towards completion of the proposed actions identified in the Action Plan and update the awarding body's Quality Enhancement Rating as appropriate.

1.3 Summary of Audit Issues and Recommendations

An Issue has been recorded where evidence shows that the awarding body is not compliant with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements. The awarding body must address the Issues and specify corrective and preventative measures to address them through its Action Plan.

The Action Plan is e-mailed to ASQ as a separate document to the Audit Report and must be submitted to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified in 1.2.

As a result of the audit and post-audit activities, seven Issues have been recorded and one Recommendation has been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 5	The status of the ASQ administrative headquarters in Scotland is unclear.	Medium
2. Principle 10	The awarding body is not visiting assessment locations over a period of time to witness candidate assessments.	Medium
3. Principle 10	The awarding body does not have a process in place for ensuring that actions raised during external verification visits are monitored and closed. In addition it is not carrying out external verification visits in line with its own policy.	Medium
4. Principle 10	The awarding body holds incomplete records on the qualifications and continuing professional development of its External Verifiers as required by its own qualification specifications.	Medium
5. Principle 12 and Regulatory Principles Directive 5	The awarding body's <i>Enquiries and Appeals Procedure</i> requires clarification on the process for complaints and appeals and the circumstances under which complaints and appeal reviews can be made to SQA Accreditation and with appropriate reference to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman with regards to complaints.	Low
6. Principle 15	The awarding body does not have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners.	Very High
7. Principle 15	The awarding body is not ensuring that certificates are issued on the basis of a valid claim.	High

A Recommendation has been noted where SQA Accreditation considers there is potential for improvement. The awarding body is advised to address any Recommendations noted as good practice; however, measures to correct or prevent these are not mandatory and therefore do not form part of the Action Plan.

Recommendation	Detail of Recommendation noted
1. Principle 5	ASQ should review the content of its documentation when banking documents against the new Regulatory Principles to ensure they make appropriate reference to SQA Accreditation. This should include documents identified during and post audit.

1.4 Risk Rating of Issues

SQA Accreditation assigns a rating to each Issue recorded depending on the impact or risk on the awarding body's operations, its SQA accredited qualifications and/or the learner.

Issues recorded during the audit will count towards ASQ's Quality Enhancement Rating which will, in turn, contribute towards future quality assurance activity. Further detail on how the Quality Enhancement Rating is calculated can be found on the SQA Accreditation website <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42387.2733.html>.

2 Detail of Audit Issues and Recommendations

The following sections detail Issues recorded and Recommendations noted against SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.

2.1 Issues

Regulatory Principle 5. The awarding body shall provide clear information on its procedures, products and services and ensure that they are accurate and appropriate to SQA accredited qualifications.

The Audit Team conducted a provider-monitoring visit to the ASQ administrative headquarters in Scotland prior to the audit. The purpose of this visit was to clarify the status of the venue as it was apparent from information supplied by ASQ that the headquarters carried out a role similar to that of a provider but was not classified by the awarding body as a provider.

During the visit it was established that the headquarters registered all candidates taking ASQ awards at various assessment locations, monitored learner progress towards completion, arranged examinations and the dispatch of exam papers, monitored the risk assessment process for assessment locations and carried out certification. The headquarters also seemed unclear as to its own status.

The Audit Team discussed the status of the headquarters with the ASQ Management Team on the day of the audit and they acknowledged that its role was significant in terms of the duties it carried out. This was backed up by the fact that ASQ had identified the potential risk and had carried out an external verification visit in October of 2013 — suggesting that the awarding body suspected that it was potentially operating at provider level or as a satellite provider. This has been recorded as **Issue 1**.

Regulatory Principle 10. The awarding body shall ensure that it has the necessary arrangements and resources for the effective delivery, assessment and quality assurance of SQA accredited qualifications.

The awarding body's *External Quality Assurance of Assessment E11b* states that the ASQ will carry out an annual verification visit to approved providers. Currently ASQ has only one provider; however, at last notification there were 23 assessment locations across Scotland and it is likely that this number will rise.

ASQ is not visiting these assessment locations to witness candidate assessment and an annual external verification visit to the provider will not identify a range of potential issues with quality assurance at assessment locations. There is a risk that by not carrying out quality assurance visits on a sampling basis either by a physical visit or by another means, standards across assessment locations will vary.

It was also noted that the last time the one provider was visited was in January 2013. Although an external verification visit had taken place in October 2013, this was undertaken at the administrative headquarters in Scotland, which is not a recognised provider in its own

right. Therefore the awarding body has not carried out quality assurance activity in line with its own policy in *External Quality Assurance of Assessment E11b*. This has been recorded as **Issue 2**.

The Audit Team reviewed all External Verifier reports for the past two years. It was evident that although actions were being raised during visits, these were not subsequently recorded as being formally signed off. Although the awarding body stated that the issues were being monitored and closed out there were no records to evidence this. This has been recorded as **Issue 3**.

The Audit Team asked to see the qualifications and training records for the ASQ staff involved in carrying out external verification. Although some qualifications for one EV were produced, other records were missing. The awarding body also had no system in place to record the ongoing continuing professional development of staff over time. The awarding body must hold accurate records in order to demonstrate that EVs meet the main competences as specified in the *External Quality Assurance of Assessment E11b* document. This has been recorded as **Issue 4**.

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers shall have open and transparent systems to manage complaints.

and

Regulatory Principles Directive 5

The awarding body's procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals are not clear. The awarding body has referenced its policy for complaints on Quickr with a document called *Enquiries and Appeals Procedure C1*. Within this document the term 'enquiry' is used throughout. This is acceptable. However, the awarding body needs to include complaints and the stages that they follow, particularly where a complaint can be escalated to SQA Accreditation. At the moment this policy does not cover complaints adequately.

The document also deals with ASQ's process for appeals and states that '*candidates who are not happy with our decision may express their dissatisfaction and the right to appeal to the relevant regulators as below*'. An appeal cannot be made to SQA Accreditation initially as an appeal is a second stage process, usually as a direct result of a learner exhausting both the provider's appeals process and that of the awarding body. The learner can then request that SQA Accreditation review how the appeals were dealt with to ensure that due process was followed in both cases.

The awarding body must also take account of Regulatory Principles Directive 5. This directive refers to delivery at public bodies within Scotland and ASQ qualifications fall within this scope. It is unlikely that delivery of ASQ qualifications will take place at public bodies such as colleges; however, ASQ must ensure that its *Enquiries and Appeals Procedure* at least clarifies this process in the event of a complaint. This has been recorded as **Issue 5**.

Regulatory Principle 15. The awarding body and its providers shall have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners.

During the visit to the ASQ administrative headquarters in Scotland, it became apparent from questioning staff that certificates were being issued from there and not the ASQ head office at the Belfry. As noted under Issue 1, the status of this venue is unclear and the fact that it is carrying out certification complicates this further.

During the ASQ audit, the Audit Team was given a demonstration of the system used by the awarding body for registration and certification. It became apparent that the system used by ASQ is in fact owned by the awarding body's one approved provider. As a result, ASQ only has read access to the information on the system, cannot edit information on it and has very limited permissions. The ASQ administrative headquarters also holds the stock of certificates and the system in place for the secure transportation of blank certificates from a third party printer to the venue was unclear.

The Audit Team expressed their concern that the system used for registration and certification was not owned by ASQ and that they had very little control over it. As the awarding body, they require their own secure system that records learner achievement and they must be the organisation that issues certificates. This has been recorded as **Issue 6**.

When asked what checks the awarding body carried out in order to verify candidate achievement, it became apparent that the awarding body does not verify that candidates have all component parts for the qualification, this responsibility again falls to the administrative headquarters. This means that the awarding body is not ensuring that certificates are issued on the basis of a valid claim. This has been recorded as **Issue 7**.

The Audit Team has serious concerns with both of the Issues recorded under Principle 15; however, having seen the quality of the awarding bodies other systems and spoken to the staff involved, they are confident that ASQ and SQA Accreditation can work closely on these matters in order to put effective working solutions in place.

2.2 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 5. The awarding body shall provide clear information on its procedures, products and services and ensure that they are accurate and appropriate to SQA accredited qualifications.

ASQ staff were reminded that SQA Accreditation requires awarding bodies to have banked their documentation on Quickr against the new Regulatory Principles by September 2014. In reviewing the existing banked documents the Audit Team had noted some technical inaccuracies which will be forwarded for attention.

In addition, the awarding body was advised to review the content of the *Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment E12b* document regarding the internal verification requirement for video-recording practical sessions, The awarding body has stated that this is not a requirement for the SQA accredited qualifications. This has been noted as **Recommendation 1.**

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of ASQ:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Signature

Signature

.....

.....

Designation

Designation

.....

.....

Date

Date

.....

.....