

SQA Accreditation Annual Review 2013–14: Summary

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Operational activity

Significant developments 2013–14

Regulatory Principles Review: During 2013–14, we developed a revised set of Regulatory Principles. The development included a formal consultation with stakeholders, and you can see a report at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46985.html>. The Regulatory Principles (2014) went live in April, and can be accessed on our website at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42165.2702.html>.

Universal Services: Year two of Universal Services Commissioning encompassed National Occupational Standards, Qualification Products and Modern Apprenticeships. There were sustained operational pressures for SSCs and SQA Accreditation, and tight timescales, but the vast majority of submissions achieved first-time approval. Most projects (96%) met their deadlines, with some completed early.

UK Reform: The interim report of Sir Ian Wood's Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce was published in September. This report focused on the transition from school into the workplace or into further education, which is less clear-cut than progression to university. It recommends pathways in the senior phase that lead to recognised vocational qualifications. The full report is due in May 2014 and we will work to support the Scottish Government in implementing the recommendations.

European Initiatives: We take part in and monitor developments in VET across Europe. George Brown, Head of Accreditation, was on a working group for the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), which was tasked with producing guidance on aligning a quality assurance approach. The guidance and the ISO9001 and EFQM mapping tables can be found at <http://www.eqavet.eu/WebBasedQA/GNS/home.aspx>.

Awarding body/SSC event: Our annual stakeholder event brings together approved awarding bodies, SSCs and standards-setting bodies. This year's event was in Paisley, in March. Highlights included the launch of the new Regulatory Principles (2014); workshops on Universal Services; and a presentation from Scottish Government on the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. You can see more detail on our website: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48423.3185.html.

Policy Reviews: We reviewed and updated policies including: Quality Assurance of Approved Awarding Bodies; Awarding Body Approval; Awarding Body Sanctions; Awarding Body Removal of Approved Awarding Body Status; and Awarding Body Zero Uptake. All policies are available online at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42389.2735.html>.

Also, the Criteria for Unit Accreditation and Approval of Qualification Products policies were replaced with work instructions; the Ensuring SVQs Meet Demand

policy was replaced by the Zero Uptake policy; and our review of the Lapsing Period for Accredited Qualifications policy led to a change to lapsing periods.

Project groups

Each year we set up internal project groups to ensure that the objectives identified in the operational plan can be realised. The key objectives and findings for each project group are summarised here.

Our **Awarding Body Approval** Project Group reviewed the awarding body approval process to ensure there's an open and transparent application process for all prospective and new awarding bodies. A new enquiry form was developed to help prospective awarding bodies carry out self-appraisal. There's more information at: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48712.html>.

The **Credit Rating** Group revised our Credit Rating guidance document. The guidance was previously specifically for SVQs, but it now applies to all accredited qualifications. It has been re-ordered, and gives information on levelling, average candidate guidance, and the credit rating approach and process.

The **De-approval** Project Group produced a new policy that would allow SQA Accreditation to remove the approved status of an awarding body that failed to meet SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements on a regular basis, or which no longer had any SQA accredited qualifications.

The **E-assessment and E-certification** Project Group's produced guidance on how e-systems should be considered when reviewing qualification accreditation submissions and assessing whether an awarding body is meeting our regulatory requirements.

Equality and Diversity: We reviewed all 39 awarding bodies' policies and procedures to evaluate the level of commitment and due regard to the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010. Awarding bodies were able to show that they were meeting their duties.

The **Other Regulators** Project Group's aim is to facilitate our work with other regulators to minimise potential risks to critical sectors and qualifications. Formal documents, Memoranda of Understanding, Data Sharing Agreements and Confidentiality Agreements were developed and shared with the Care Inspectorate, Welsh Government, and Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

The **Self-assessment** Group developed a robust system for awarding bodies to demonstrate annually how effective their continuous improvement and internal audit activities are. Advice and guidance on self-assessment was included as part of the Regulatory Principles (2014) launch in March, and is available on our website at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42165.2702.html>.

The **Website** Project Group addressed feedback from our Stakeholder Survey 2012 and made improvements to our webpages. It gathered further detail from

stakeholders via a questionnaire to identify areas for improvement, and gained approval to create a separate dedicated SQA Accreditation website.

Audit Activity

We audit all SQA-approved awarding bodies on a three-year cycle, depending on perceived risk, using our Quality Enhancement Rating system. Also, centre monitoring visits check the effectiveness of the awarding body's systems and enable us to help improve both regulation and learner experience. Audit and centre monitoring reports approved this year included 15 audits and 27 centre monitoring reports (from 67 visits).

Awarding bodies

Three organisations gained SQA-approved awarding body status: Association Sports Qualification (ASQ); Safe Cert Awards Ltd; and Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

Twenty organisations contacted us about becoming an approved awarding body, and 15 submitted applications. Six of those have decided not to progress to the approval stage.

Two awarding bodies had their approved status withdrawn at their request, due to zero uptake of their accredited qualifications: National Open College Network (NOCN); and Central YMCA Qualifications (CYQ).

At the end of the year, there were 39 SQA-approved awarding bodies.

Recorded Requirements and Recommendations

Requirements 2013–14

Requirements are recorded where there is evidence that there is significant risk to either the learner or the integrity of the qualification. A total of 46 Requirements were recorded. The biggest number of these was in the area of Qualification Design and Development, with 17, followed by Governance with 16.

There are more requirements recorded under 'Qualification Design and Development' because there is more detail there — this group covers Regulatory Principles 6–17. The requirements noted under 'Governance' were variable, and did not reflect any significant trends.

Recommendations 2013–14

A recommendation can be made if auditors consider that an awarding body's processes meet the Regulatory Principles but that improvements could be made.

A total of 51 recommendations were made. Various improvements were identified and these were not attributable to one specific area.

Accreditation Activity 2013–14

For more detailed information on the performance of our accredited qualifications, see our Quarterly Statistics Reports, at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42397.html>.

Qualifications accredited

At the end of 2013–14, SQA Accreditation had a total of 1,008 accredited qualifications¹. This is made up of the following qualification types:

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| Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) | 708 |
| Regulatory and Licensing qualifications (R&L) | 57 |
| Other qualifications (such as competence-based qualifications) | 243 |

SVQs

At the end of 2013–14, there were 708 SVQs accredited, which is an increase of 2% on the previous year. SVQs are offered by 19 different approved awarding bodies, and account for 70% of all accredited qualifications.

Thirty-seven accredited SVQs were withdrawn during 2012–13. The common rationale for awarding bodies withdrawing SVQs was low or zero uptake.

More SVQ levels 2 and 3 were accredited because they are a mandatory qualification in Modern Apprenticeships — of level 2 and 3 SVQs, 69% and 81% respectively are in Modern Apprenticeships.

Regulatory and Licensing qualifications

At the end of 2013–14, there were 57 Regulatory and Licensing qualifications accredited, which is an increase of 14% on the previous year. Regulatory and Licensing qualifications are offered by 13 different approved awarding bodies, and account for 6% of all currently accredited qualifications.

Other qualifications accredited

At the end of 2013–14, there were 243 'Other' qualifications accredited, which is an increase of 23% on the previous year. 'Other' accredited qualifications are currently offered by 25 different approved awarding bodies and account for 24% of all accredited qualifications. This increase is due to existing awarding bodies expanding their provision in 'Other' qualifications, particularly City & Guilds and IMI, plus newly-approved awarding body Associated Sports Qualifications (ASQ).

Market Performance

Data on the performance of SQA accredited qualifications is collected from approved awarding bodies quarterly.

¹ Qualifications that have lapsed are not included.

Both registrations and certifications for SVQs increased from the previous year by 11% and 6% respectively. This may be a result of available funding for Modern Apprenticeships that include SVQs.

There has been a significant increase in uptake of Regulatory and Licensing qualifications. The number of Regulatory and Licensing qualifications accredited has increased, and anyone who has held the Personal Licence Holder qualifications for five years is now required by law to undertake the refresher qualification or latest accredited Scottish Certificate for Personal Licence Holders at SCQF level 6.

There was a less significant rise in uptake of 'Other' qualifications than seen in previous years, though uptake continues to increase. This increase in Other qualifications in particular partly explains the less significant increase in SVQ uptake, with some awarding bodies opting for alternative competence-based qualifications over the traditional SVQ.

Plan for 2014–15

We shared our Operational Plan for 2014–15 at our annual stakeholder event. The highlights include:

- ◆ Considering the steps that we need to take towards removing the SVQ level from the title of SVQs and to use only the SCQF level to describe the level of qualification.
- ◆ Carrying out a scoping exercise for a review of SVQs. SVQs have remained largely unchanged since they were first introduced in 1990, and we want to ensure that they continue to be fit for the key role that they play in the VET system.
- ◆ Conducting our bi-annual stakeholder survey. The results of this will inform future activities and continuous improvement. In addition, we plan to launch a dedicated SQA Accreditation website.