



Audit Report

Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd

29 January 2014

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 Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation on 12 December 2012.

1.1 Scope and approach

The audit was designed to review and evaluate Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd's 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 Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd, 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

Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd audit date	29 January 2014
SQA Accreditation audit report date	5 March 2014
Date audit report and Action Plan to be signed and submitted by Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd	16 April 2014

1.3 Background

Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd is private limited company offering a range of vocationally related qualifications across the United Kingdom in areas as diverse as Health and Safety, First Aid, Business Management, Customer Service, Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Sport, Leisure and Recreation.

Currently, First Aid is the only area which has SQA accredited qualifications.

Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd.'s headquarters are situated in Coalville, Leicestershire.

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, two Requirements have been raised and four Recommendations have been recorded.

The two Requirements form the basis of the Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd 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 16 April 2014.

Outcome(s)	Area(s) of concern	Risk rating
Requirement 1	Principle 1 Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 2	Medium
Requirement 2	Principle 22 Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 3	Low
Recommendation 1	Principle 2	n/a
Recommendation 2	Principle 6 Principle 22	n/a

Recommendation 3	Principle 3	n/a
Recommendation 4	Principle 7	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 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.

And

Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 2 Data submissions

At the audit, discussions took place around the perceived low uptake of the awarding body's SQA accredited provision in *Emergency First Aid at Work, R268 04* and *First Aid at Work, R267 04*, since awarding body approval was granted in December 2012.

The audit team noted that one qualification in particular appeared to have zero uptake throughout its first year of accreditation and discussions focused on possible actions to improve uptake and likely future consequences, should the situation not improve, in line with SQA Accreditation's Zero Uptake Policy.

A particular focus for discussion was an apparent discrepancy between registration and certification data provided in the awarding body's quarterly returns across 2013 when compared to that provided by the single approved centre delivering the accredited provision. The latter indicating more registrations and certifications than had been reported to SQA Accreditation.

With the assistance of the relevant awarding body staff, a comparison of the two sets of data was carried out which resulted in the identification of a problem with the awarding body's internal database. It was identified that the system appeared to fail to record candidate certifications within a given quarter if there was not an equivalent registration in the same quarter.

Consequently, the audit team was satisfied that uptake of the First Aid at Work qualification, although still relatively low, was not as great a concern as first thought. Uptake of the Emergency First Aid at Work qualification might remain an issue but recognizing that the qualification forms part of First Aid at Work, the awarding body has been asked to give thought to its registration process for the latter as a possible solution to uptake issues.

However, it was confirmed that the data returned to SQA Accreditation to date was not fully accurate in terms of registrations and certifications. The awarding body indicated that it would provide SQA Accreditation's Information Officer with updated data as a matter of urgency.

The evidence available indicates that Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd does not meet the requirements of Principle 1 and Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR - 2. This has been raised as **Requirement 1**.

Principle 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.

And

Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 3 Logos and certificate requirements for SQA accredited qualifications

At the audit an opportunity arose to review actual certificates at the point of issue for *First Aid at Work, R267 04*. It was noted that the certificates identified the approved centre responsible for the delivery of the qualification in contravention of the requirements of Regulatory Principles Directive 3.

This Regulatory Principles Directive states that it is 'not permitted for certificates to include centre names, co-branding logos or logos from other organisations, professional bodies and SSCs other than the Awarding Body(s)'.

It should be noted that the awarding body immediately suspended the issue of certificates until such time as the error could be addressed and the certificates amended. However, it is likely to be the case that any previously issued certificates for SQA accredited provision, however few in number, will have contained the same error.

The evidence available indicates that Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd does not meet the requirements of Principle 22 and Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR - 3. This has been raised as **Requirement 2**.

2.2 Recommendations

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

The awarding body may wish to revisit the website to ensure that references and links to the SQA Accreditation and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) are accurate and functional.

All website links designed to direct stakeholders to information on SQA Accreditation currently takes them to the SCQF Partnership website.

The website equates the SCQF with the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF), incorrectly describing the former as a qualification type.

The awarding body may wish to ensure that SQA accredited provision is adequately referenced on the website. For example, the audit team noted that a list of qualifications within the section on becoming an approved centre did not identify the SQA accredited versions of the First Aid qualifications.

Also, within the section headed 'Centre Support News' a link to the awarding body's Assessment and Quality Assurance processes does not appear to work.

This has been recorded as Recommendation 1.

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.

And

Principle 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.

The pre-audit review of documentation highlighted a number of questions around how the awarding body managed Direct Claims Status (DCS) in respect of its approved centres.

It was noted that a response to questions raised by SQA Accreditation as part of the awarding body approval process stated that 'all centres now have DCS given to them on approval but Future will only issue certificates after the EQA has quality assured the first cohort of learners to confirm all the systems in the centre are robust'. This position appeared to be endorsed by the awarding body's *FAQ Direct Claims Policy, 2011*, submitted as part of the approval process.

However, the version of the *FAQ Direct Claims Policy* available on Quickr at the time of the audit stated that 'DCS will not be given to newly approved centres except in exceptional circumstances'.

In seeking clarification, the audit team was advised that the awarding body practice was not to grant DCS status to any approved centre irrespective of the effectiveness of its internal systems and procedures. It was felt that such an approach left the awarding body in a better position to respond quickly to any quality assurance issues.

Whilst understanding the awarding body's approach to quality assurance, the audit team felt that it may wish to give some further thought to what appears to be a somewhat confusing position as it runs contrary to the awarding body's published policy regarding DCS.

Awarding representatives indicated that steps had already begun to review documentation in respect of DCS and the audit team would recommend that they may wish to continue this process up to and including policy level to ensure a consistent and coherent message to stakeholders.

This has been recorded as Recommendation 2.

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 was concerned that they were unable to review any significant business development or marketing strategy planning as part of the pre-audit document review. Given the perceived low uptake of SQA accredited qualifications this formed a key area of discussion during the audit.

The awarding body's Chief Executive spent some considerable time outlining proposed business development and marketing strategy for 2014 and beyond, taking time to outline the work carried out by The Directors' Centre in this area.

The Lead Auditor was able to review evidence of the ongoing process, draft planning documentation, as well as timescales for completion and is content that the direction of travel will result in a plan that has appropriate objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs) and risk indicators.

As an interim measure, the audit team was provided with a ten point summary document which outline the awarding body's current position, the potential challenges and risks going forward, as well as a number of summary recommendations going forward.

The awarding body may wish to consider uploading to Quickr some of the reviewed documentation as evidence of the interim steps being taken to formulate an effective three year business development plan.

This has been recorded as Recommendation 3.

Principle 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

Policies, procedures and other supporting information and documentation held on Quickr to detail the awarding body's strategic and operational practices were reviewed in some detail as part of the audit process.

On a number of occasions, the audit team was advised during discussions that there was a more current version of a given document available. Some of documents were made available for review on the day of the audit. However, it was clear that they were not available on Quickr.

It is in the best interests of the awarding body to ensure that current versions of policies, procedures and other key documentation are available to SQA Accreditation as a matter of course. With this in mind, the awarding body may wish to ensure that its process for reviewing and updating such documentation is robust and that uploading to Quickr in a timely fashion is a key requirement.

This has been recorded as Recommendation 4.

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 Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd.

SQA-accredited qualification title	Level	Code	Accreditation date	Re-accreditation date
First Aid at Work	SCQF Level 6	R267 04	01/01/13	31/03/17
Emergency First Aid at Work	SCQF Level 5	R268 04	01/01/13	31/03/17

6 List of documents reviewed pre and post audit

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Future Awards and Qualifications Centre Guidance Pack	2013	
Banked list of approved centres/providers delivering SQA accredited qualifications	14 May 2013	
Future Awards and Qualifications Emergency First Aid at Work SCQF Level 5 SQA Qualification Specification	2012	
Future Organisation Chart	December 2011	
FAQ Direct Claims Policy	2011	
FAQ Appeals Policy	2011 - 2013	
FAQ Conflict of Interest	2011	
Future Awards and Qualifications Centre Fees List	April 2013	
Future Awards and Qualifications Centre Agreement	2011	
Application to become a Future (Awards and Qualification) Ltd Approved Centre – 2012/2013	4 February 2012	
Future Awards and Qualifications External Quality Assurance (EQA) Centre Report	May 2013	Version 2

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Future Awards and Qualifications External Quality Assurance (EQA) Centre Report (Scotland)		
Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd Annual Review Procedures		
FAQ Qualification Review and Withdrawal Policy	2011	
Emergency First Aid at Work at SCQF Level 5 Evidence Logbook	2012	
Form AC1: Awarding Body Approval Submission	August 2012	Version 2
External Quality Assurer Qualification Sampling Form	May 2013	Version 2
External Quality Assurance (EQA) Handbook for use in Scotland	2011	
Future Awards and Qualifications Emergency First Aid at Work at SCQF Level 5 Evidence logbook	2012	
Register of potential conflicts of interest		
Future Organisation chart	September 2013	
Appeals Form		
Risk and issue management strategy		
FAQ Contingency Plan	2011	

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
FAQ 3.4 Person Specifications – Job Roles for Key Members of Staff	2013	
Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd Self-evaluation policy and procedures		
FAQ Equality Policy	2011	
Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd Governance Document	2012	
FAQ Published Customer Service Statement	2013	
Qualifications Development Process for Qualifications offered in Scotland		
FAQ Malpractice and Maladministration Policy	2013	
FAQ Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy and Procedures	2011	
The Future of Future Quals: Ten Point Summary	15 November 2013	
External Quality Assurance (EQA) Visit Process		
First aid at Work at SCQF level 6 Evidence Logbook	2011	

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 1 Regulatory Principle Directive 2	<p>It was identified that the awarding body system for recording candidate data appeared to fail to record certifications within a given quarter if there was not an equivalent registration in the same quarter.</p> <p>As a consequence, it was confirmed that the data returned to SQA Accreditation to date was not fully accurate in terms of candidate registrations and certifications.</p>	Medium		

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 22 Regulatory Principle Directive 3	The audit team noted that certificates identified the approved centre responsible for the delivery of the qualification, in contravention of the requirements of Regulatory Principles Directive 3.	Low		

Signatures of agreement of action plan

For and on behalf of Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Signature

Signature

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Date

Date

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8 Acceptance of audit findings

For and on behalf of Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd:

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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