



# **Audit Report**

**PIABC**

**24 September 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 PIABC since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in August 2012.

### 1.1 Scope and approach

The audit was designed to review and evaluate PIABC'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 PIABC, 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**

PIABC audit date	24 September 2013
SQA Accreditation audit report date	23 October 2013
Date audit report and Action Plan to be signed and submitted by PIABC	4 December 2013

## **1.3 Background**

PIABC is an awarding body which specialises in qualifications for the timber, wood and sawmilling industries. PIABC's headquarters are situated in Grantham. The Audit Team was provided with full access to the awarding body's Grantham premises, staff and documentation.

## 1.4 Overview

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

The four Requirements form the basis of the PIABC 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 4 December 2103.

Outcome(s)	Area(s) of concern	Risk rating
Requirement 1	Principle 3	Medium
Requirement 2	Principles 11 and 12	Medium
Requirement 3	Principle 18 and RPDIR5	Medium
Requirement 4	Principle 22	Medium
Recommendation 1	Principle 3	N/A
Recommendation 2	Principle 23	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.**

PIABC does not require its External Verifiers to maintain records on their continuing professional development. This is a requirement of the Proskills Assessment Strategy which covers the SVQs which PIABC is accredited to offer.

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

**Principle 11. The awarding body must ensure that the design of the qualification provides for assessment methods that:**

- a. allow the generation of evidence that is relevant and can be authenticated**
- b. enable learners to demonstrate their abilities against the full range of qualification requirements**
- c. clearly define centre requirements for controlled conditions**
- d. use language and terminology that is appropriate for the target group**

and

**Principle 12: The awarding body must ensure that assessments are accessible and produce results that are valid, reliable, transparent and fair.**

PIABC was approved by SQA Accreditation in August 2012 and accredited for the Award in Timber and Panel Products and their Uses simultaneously. At the time of accreditation the Regulation Manager and Accreditation Manager questioned the difference in assessment instruments within the qualification.

The qualification is assessed by an examination which covers six learning outcomes. If a learner fails one learning outcome within the exam paper, but still achieves a mark over 50%, they are allowed to re-sit the failed outcome. The assessment for the failed outcome is via an assignment to demonstrate that they have appropriate knowledge and understanding.

On the day of the audit, the Audit Team and awarding body representatives discussed the suitability of the re-assessment approach. The Lead Auditor was not satisfied that the re-assessment approach will provide results which are robust or reliable.

PIABC is using two different instruments of assessment, an examination in the first instance and an assignment if the candidate needs a re-sit. Using two different instruments of assessment to measure the same knowledge and understanding is unlikely to give comparable results.

The Audit Team was also informed that the learner has a three week period in which to submit their assignment. When asked how the awarding body ensures that the assignment is the learner's own work, they stated that a written declaration had to be submitted with the work. The Lead Auditor was not satisfied that a written declaration constitutes a reliable measure to confirm the authenticity of the submitted assignment as the learner's own work.

In addition, it became apparent that the awarding body had not yet fully prepared arrangements for submission of assignments or the marking scheme for them. The Lead Auditor made it clear that he was not satisfied with the reliability and robustness for the re-assessment of the qualification and stated that PIABC must carry out further work to review the approach and put safeguards in place which address the issues raised.

The evidence available indicates that PIABC does not meet the requirements of Principles 11 and 12. This has been raised as **Requirement 2**.

### Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR - 5 Complaints Handling

and

**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.**

PIABC's *Complaints Policy and Procedure* does not adequately take account of Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR - 5 Complaints Handling. This Directive focuses on complaints handling and, in particular, aims to help ensure that the complaints processes of all approved awarding bodies meet with the requirements of the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO).

The evidence available indicates that PIABC does not meet the requirements of Principle 18 and RPDIR - 5. This has been raised as **Requirement 3**.

**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.**

Following approval PIABC supplied SQA Accreditation with a mock-up certificate for the Award in Timber Panel Products and their Uses. The award has since been credit rated but the banked certificate does not show the SCQF level. PIABC also has three SVQs but as yet has not produced or banked a mock-up certificate for these. In addition the Audit Team stated that they require to see an example of a Unit certificate to ensure it meets the minimum regulatory requirements.

The evidence available indicates that PIABC does not meet the requirements of Principle 22. This has been raised as **Requirement 4**.

## **2.2 Recommendations**

**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 reviewed the information banked on Quickr prior to the visit. The instructions within the *Guidance Note to Invigilators* state that candidates are unable to leave the examination unless accompanied by an invigilator. This is not practical where there is only one invigilator. The awarding body should also review the procedures for acceptable forms of identity for examinations.

**This has been recorded as Recommendation 1.**

**Principle 23. The awarding body and their centres must publish clear, fair and equitable procedures and timelines for dealing with enquiries about results and appeals. They must take appropriate, corrective and/or preventative action for all learners and centres affected.**

PIABC has various documents and policies which explain its process for appeals all of which meet SQA Accreditation requirements, however, the description of the stages within the various publications differ. The awarding body may wish to consider reviewing the various descriptions of its appeals process across publications to ensure they all convey a consistent message.

**This has been recorded as Recommendation 2.**

### 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
N/A		

## 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 PIABC

SQA-accredited qualification title	Level	Code	Accreditation date	Re-accreditation date
Sawmilling	SCQF Level 5	GG2M 22	16.01.2013	31.05.2017
Merchant Supplies - Timber	SCQF Level 5	GG2R 22	30.01.2013	31.05.2017
Wood Machining (Furniture)	SCQF Level 5	GG32 22	20.02.2013	31.05.2017
Award in Timber and Panel Products and their Uses	SCQF Level 5	R249 04	15.08.2012	31.12.2016

## 6 List of documents reviewed pre and post audit

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Terms of Reference - PIABC Advisory Board		Updated 24.10.2012
Job Description - Lead External Verifier		Updated 08.11.2012
Job Description - PIABC Manager		Updated 07.11.2012
Terms of Reference - PIABC Advisory Board		
Terms of Reference - PIABC Advisory Board - Revised		
Assessor and Internal Verifier Approval Form		Updated 20.05.2013
Assessor Approval Checklist blank		Updated 25.10.2012
Assessor Characteristics		Updated 25.10.2012
Calendar Of Wood Examination Dates (2013)		
Calendar Of Wood Examination Dates (2014)		Updated 23.10.2012
Calendar Of Wood Examination Dates (2015)		Updated 18.07.2013
Examination venue verification form		Updated 23.10.2012

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Guidance Notes for Invigilators		Updated 01.07.2013
Internal Verifier Characteristics		Updated 25.10.2012
PIABC Internal Verifier Approval Checklist		Updated 25.10.2012
Centre Handbook for Workbased Competence Qualifications		Update 01.07.2013
Centre Handbook for Non-Competence Based Qualifications		Updated 01.07.2013
Access to Assessments		Reviewed 29 May 2013
Equality and Diversity Policy for Developing Credit Based Assessment		Revised 23.07.2013
Complaints Policy and Procedure		Reviewed 09.05.2013
Malpractice & Maladministration Policy and Procedure		Reviewed 29.05.2013
Job Description - Head PIABC		Updated 08.11.2012
PIABC Structure		
Agenda - Master Template - Operations Group		Updated 26.06.2013
Fees and Charges 2013-14 (with effect from 01092013)		
Candidate Completion Claim Form (CCCF3) SVQ 2 Merchant Supplier - Timber at SCQF Level 5		Revised 16.08.2013
Candidate Completion Claim Form (CCCF3) SVQ 2 Sawmilling at SCQF Level 5		

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Candidate Completion Claim Form (CCCF3) SVQ 2 Wood Machining at SCQF Level 5		Revised 16.08.2013
PIABC Draft Certificate SQA - Award in Timber and Panel Products and Their Uses (23102012)		Revised 16.08.2013
PIABC Draft Replacement Certificate SQA - Award in Timber and Panel Products and Their Uses		
Assessment Review and Appeals Procedure		Revised 23.10.2012
Award in Timber Panel Products and their Uses Specification (SQA) Award Approval from Castle College following approval visit on 18 08 09		
Centre Approval Form Amended 14 September 2010 Didacc following visit on 24.11.11		Reviewed 29.05.2013 Reviewed 29.05.2013
Centre Guidance on Applying for PIABC Centre and Qualification Approval		
Centre Monitoring Form - IOM3		
Centre Monitoring Procedures		
Conflict of Interest Policy		Revised 24.07.2013
Declaration of conflict of interest Form		
External Verifier Code of Practice for Work Based Competence Qualifications		Updated 24.07.2013

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
External Verifier report for Castle College visit 2 20.05.2010		Reviewed 14 March 2013
External Verification Handbook		Reviewed 14.03.2013
Centre Monitoring Form		Updated 24.07.2013
External Verifier Report		
Qualification Approval Form		Updated 23.07.2013
Centre Approval Form		Revised 16.04.2013
Data Protection Policy		Updated 24.07.2013
Equality and Diversity Policy		Updated 24.07.2013
PIABC Incident Management		Updated 24 July 2013
PIABC Risk Register 2013		Updated 07.11.2012
Quality Assurance and Control Arrangements (for qualification approved by SQA Accreditation)		Reviewed 23.07.2013
		Updated 24.07.2013
Quality Assurance and Control Arrangements (for qualification approved by SQA Accreditation)		Update 01 July 2013
PIABC Unit and RoC Checklist for Level 2 Award for Packing Operations		Updated 21.08.2013
PIABC Unit and Structure Checklist for SQA		

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Centre + Qualification Approval Update Form		Updated 21.08.2013
Job Description - Consultant		
Job Description - Lead Marker		
Job Description - Lead Question Setter		Updated 24.05.2012
Job Description - Marker		Reviewed 16.08.2013
Job Description - Question Setter		Updated July 2010
Terms of Reference - Wood Assessment Board		Updated 24.10.2012
		Updated 24.10.2012
		Updated July 2010
		Updated 24.10.2012
		Reviewed 23.07.2013



## 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	PIABC must put systems in place to record the continuing professional development, occupational competence and qualifications of its External Verifiers.	Medium		
Principles 11 and 12	PIABC must review the assessment arrangements for candidates re-sitting a failed outcome from the Award in Timber Panel Products and their Uses at SCQF Level 5.	High		
Principle 18 and RPDIR5	PIABC must update its <i>Complaints Policy and Procedure</i> to explain the circumstances where it may be appropriate to involve the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman.	Medium		

<b>Areas of concern</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>	<b>Proposed action</b> <small>(Please include a description of your intended methodology and details of the evidence that will be provided.)</small>	<b>Target date for completion</b>
Principle 22	PIABC must provide SQA Accreditation with final proofs for its qualification and Unit certificates.	Medium		

**Signatures of agreement of Action Plan**

For and on behalf of PIABC:

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 PIABC:

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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