

SQA Accreditation

Sanctions Policy

Policy	<p>There are a number of circumstances under which SQA Accreditation applies sanctions – the sanctions noted below may be imposed on awarding bodies where they fail to comply with any or all regulatory requirements. The sanctions that SQA Accreditation can impose on awarding bodies fall into the following categories:</p> <p>Category 1 Sanction – suspension of qualification accreditation Category 2 Sanction – withdrawal of qualification accreditation Category 3 Sanction – removal of approved awarding body status</p> <p>SQA Accreditation tracks the progress of awarding bodies in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• meeting conditions of awarding body approval and qualification accreditation• completing actions assigned through awarding body audit and provider monitoring activity to ensure regulatory principles are met <p>and provides regular updates to Accreditation Co-ordination Group (ACG) members on awarding body performance.</p>
Why do we need this policy?	<p>SQA Accreditation requires a range of sanctions that can be imposed on awarding bodies where they fail to comply with regulatory requirements through not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• completing actions agreed through awarding body audit and monitoring activity to agreed timescales; or• meeting conditions attached to accredited qualifications at the point of approval; or• meeting the requirements of the clauses within and/or conditions attached to the Accreditation Licence. <p>To be read in conjunction with: Removal of Approved Awarding Body Status Policy Zero Uptake Policy</p>

How does the policy apply and to whom/what does it apply?	This policy applies to SQA accredited qualifications and approved awarding bodies.
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Guidelines on implementing SQA Accreditation's Sanctions Policy

1 Policy

This policy has been approved by SQA's Accreditation Committee.

The sanctions which SQA Accreditation can impose on awarding bodies fall into the following categories:

Category 1 Sanctions – suspension of qualification accreditation

Category 2 Sanctions – withdrawal of qualification accreditation

Category 3 Sanctions – removal of Approved Awarding Body status

SQA Accreditation tracks the progress of awarding bodies in

- meeting conditions of awarding body approval and qualification accreditation.
- completing actions assigned through awarding body audit and provider monitoring activity to ensure regulatory requirements are met.

SQA Accreditation provides regular updates to the Accreditation Co-ordination Group (ACG) Members.

The Accreditation Committee is authorised by the Scottish Government to delegate authority to the Accreditation Coordination Group.

2 Process

When an application is made for qualification accreditation and an awarding body is identified as having not met all SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements then either:

- the qualification will be accredited subject to the awarding body fulfilling specified condition(s) within an agreed timescale; or
- the awarding body will not be accredited in relation to that qualification.

If it is established during an SQA Accreditation audit, monitoring activity or compliance investigation that an awarding body is failing to meet SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements, details of the requirements not being met will be recorded. The awarding body will be required to produce an action plan designed to ensure that regulatory requirements are met within an appropriate timescale.

Awarding bodies are required to meet conditions attached to accredited qualifications and to complete action plans within an agreed timeframe and it is the responsibility of each awarding body to track and monitor progress against conditions or action plans raised on their own systems. SQA Accreditation will monitor whether approved awarding bodies are implementing the changes necessary to satisfy conditions or meet regulatory requirements.

SQA Accreditation will ensure that all reasonable avenues of communication with the awarding body have been exhausted in an attempt to ensure all conditions and regulatory requirements are met before implementing this sanctions policy. However, when the awarding body does not ultimately take the required action(s) within agreed timescales, the ACG will then consider the application of sanctions.

Where the ACG indicates that the imposition of a sanction is appropriate, the awarding body will be notified within five working days of the ACG decision date. The awarding body will be given a further fifteen working days (beginning with the date on which the decision to impose a sanction is sent to the awarding body) to implement the required changes or actions needed to ensure regulatory requirements are met and will be required to provide SQA Accreditation staff with details of the actions taken. Details of the response will be presented to the ACG at the next available meeting. If the awarding body does not satisfy the ACG that the condition(s) and/or requirements has/have been met within this time, then sanctions will be escalated to the next level.

Sanctions will normally be applied sequentially until the awarding body complies with the condition(s) of accreditation and all regulatory requirements.

3 Details

The level of the sanction(s) applied will be determined by the impact on qualification delivery and/or awarding operations of the awarding body not meeting the condition(s) of accreditation and/or regulatory requirements. The ACG will consider the severity of the impact on qualification delivery and awarding operations when considering which sanction(s) to apply and also whether the failures to meet regulatory requirements or the condition(s) of accreditation relate to:

- ◆ a specific accredited qualification
- ◆ a suite of accredited qualifications
- ◆ all accredited qualifications.

For example, in cases of malpractice, the ACG may apply a higher level sanction immediately.

When applying sanctions the ACG will also consider:

- ◆ whether the awarding body has previously not resolved regulatory issues and/or conditions of accreditation; and
- ◆ the effect of the awarding body not complying with the condition(s) of accreditation and/or regulatory requirements, particularly in relation to the learner and integrity of the accredited qualification.

For further instances of where sanctions which may be applied to awarding bodies in cases where regulatory compliance has not been *maintained*, please refer to both: [SQA Accreditation Removal of Approved Awarding Body Status Policy](#) [SQA Accreditation Zero Uptake Policy](#)

The following outlines the categories of sanctions which may be imposed and provides some examples (not an exhaustive list) of the types of scenarios which may lead to each individual sanction being initially imposed:

Category 1 Sanction: Suspension of qualification accreditation

SQA Accreditation may suspend accreditation of one or more qualifications dependent upon the specific issue(s) identified.

Please note that the application of the following sanctions may not be sequential and may be applied independently of each other depending upon specific circumstances.

1.1 Suspension of accreditation of a specific qualification

No further accreditation of the specific qualification

Example: May be applied in circumstances where the methods of assessment used for a specific qualification have been found not to meet regulatory requirements and where the required actions have not been taken to ensure compliance.

1.2 Suspension of accreditation for a specific suite of qualifications

No further re-accreditations or accreditations for qualifications within the relevant suite.

Example: May be applied in circumstances where accreditation conditions were applied to a specific suite of qualifications which have not been met.

1.3 Suspension of all accredited qualifications

No further re-accreditations or accreditations for any qualifications

Example: may be applied where a regulatory requirement has not been met which fundamentally affects the delivery of all accredited qualifications and where the required actions have not been taken to ensure compliance within the agreed timescale.

The awarding body will be given a specific time scale (decided by the ACG and dependent on the level of perceived risk to candidates and/or qualifications delivery or integrity) to resolve the conditions(s) of accreditation and/or satisfy all regulatory requirements.

Category 2 Sanction: Withdrawal of qualification accreditation

Please note that the application of the following level 2 sanctions may not be sequential and may be applied independently of each other depending upon specific circumstances.

2.1 Withdrawal of accreditation of a specific qualification

The accreditation for a specific qualification will be withdrawn and a further accreditation submission for this qualification will not be accepted until the condition(s) of accreditation and/or all regulatory requirements have been met by the awarding body.

2.2 Withdrawal of accreditation for a specific suite of qualifications

The accreditation for a specific suite of qualifications will be withdrawn and a further accreditation submission for this suite of qualifications will not be accepted until the condition(s) of accreditation and/or all regulatory requirements have been met by the awarding body.

2.3 Withdrawal of accreditation for all qualifications

All accredited qualifications for the awarding body will be withdrawn and no further accreditation submissions for any qualifications will be accepted until the condition(s) of accreditation and/or all regulatory requirements have been met by the awarding body.

Once the category 2 sanction has been imposed, the awarding body will be given a specific timescale (decided by the ACG and dependent on the level of perceived risk to qualification delivery) to resolve the condition(s) of accreditation and/or all regulatory requirements or sanction 3 may be applied.

Category 3 Sanction: Removal of approved awarding body status

The awarding body approval status may be removed and the awarding body will be unable to resubmit an awarding body approval request until the condition(s) of accreditation and/or regulatory requirements have been met by the awarding body.

SQA Accreditation reserve the right to request that an awarding body who has had approval removed is treated as a new awarding body and will need to complete the Awarding Body approval process in full.

There are additional scenarios which may lead to SQA Accreditation applying a Category 3 Sanction removing approved awarding body status.

For details of these, please refer to [SQA Accreditation's Removal of Approved Awarding Body Status Policy](#) and [Zero Uptake Policy](#).

4 Appeals

All awarding bodies will have the right to appeal **any** decision made by the ACG. Grounds for appeal will vary depending on individual situations, therefore, all appeals made will be considered in their own right. Full details of the [Process for Appeals and complaints](#) can be found on the SQA Accreditation section of the SQA website.

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