



Audit Report

Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)

19 March 2013

Note

Restricted or commercially sensitive information gathered during SQA Accreditation monitoring activities is treated in the strictest confidence. However:

- ◆ The findings of this report, and the associated Action Plan, will be presented to SQA's Accreditation Committee and made available to colleagues from the Welsh Government, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), with a view to the contents informing future accreditation and re-accreditation submissions by the awarding body
- ◆ The report will be published on SQA Accreditation's website.

Please note that SQA Accreditation monitoring activity is conducted on a sampling basis. As a consequence, not all aspects of an awarding body's performance in quality assurance, contract compliance, implementation, awarding of certificates and fee arrangements have been considered in this report to the same depth.

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Executive summary

This was the twelfth audit of the Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in 1998.

1.1 Scope and approach

The audit was designed to review and evaluate VTCT's strategies, policies and procedures to ensure compliance under SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles (2011)*, Regulatory Directives or Awarding Body Agreement including any Conditions noted.

As this was a full audit of VTCT, all Principles were included within the scope of the audit.

An issue has been recorded where the Lead Accreditation Auditor found evidence that the awarding body has not met the requirements of one of the following:

- SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles (2011)*
- Regulatory Directives
- Awarding Body Agreement or any conditions (s) noted
- any conditions of the qualification(s) accreditation at the time of approval.

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.
- ◆ SQA Accreditation will confirm whether the Action Plan is appropriate to address the issue within a further 20 working days from the date of receipt. This will be subject to the actions proving appropriate to the issues raised.
- ◆ SQA Accreditation will monitor progress towards completion of the actions identified within the Action Plan.

Recommendations are noted to ensure that, where these are agreed during the audit, they are recorded 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

VTCT	19 March 2013
SQA Accreditation Audit Report Date	24 April 2013
Date audit report and Action Plan to be signed and submitted by VTCT	5 June 2013

1.3 Background

VTCT is an independent educational charity that was approved by SQA Accreditation as an awarding body during 1998. VTCT has been accredited to offer a range of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Hairdressing and Barbering, Beauty and Spa Therapy, Nail Services, as well as Workplace Core Skills.

VTCT has recently changed address and is now located at Prysman House, Dew Lane, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO50 9PX.

The audit team was provided with full access to the awarding body premises, staff and documentation.

1.4 Overview

As a result of the audit and post-audit activities, three issues have been recorded and three recommendations noted.

The three issues and three recommendations form the basis of the VTCT Action Plan. This must be completed and submitted to SQA Accreditation for agreement within 30 working days of this report being issued. The Action Plan must be submitted by 5 June 2013.

Area of Concern	No. of Issues	No. of Recommendations	Risk rating
Principle No. 1	0	1	n/a
Principle No. 5	1	0	Low
Principle No. 6	1	0	Medium
Principle No. 10	0	1	n/a
Principle No. 18	1	1	Low
TOTAL	3	3	

2 Audit findings

The following sections detail issues raised and recommendations noted against SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles (2011)*, Regulatory Directives or Awarding Body Agreement through the course of the awarding body audit.

2.1 Issues

Principle 5. The awarding body must promote a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation and throughout their approved centres, and have in place a system which allows them to manage risk.

VTCT provided SQA Accreditation with a list of approved centres which was uploaded to Quickr on 22 February 2013. It was noted by the audit team that this document did not comply with the format specified in correspondence, dated 9 March 2012.

The correspondence in question also specified a requirement to update the list of approved centres as of 30 September 2012 which also did not happen.

The centre list does not specify SQA accredited qualifications per centre and the audit team believed that the information on centres was by occupational area only. It was also noted that the format was considerably different from that previously uploaded on 29 February 2012 against Key Goal 6 of SQA Accreditation's *Awarding Body Criteria (2007)*. The earlier version of the centre list met the requirements of the March 2012 correspondence and therefore, would have been deemed compliant.

During the audit, discussion took place around the large turnover of centres that appeared to have taken place within the timeframe of both centre lists, as well as the need for information on approved centres and the qualifications that they are delivering to be as current and accurate as possible to support SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities at centre level.

VTCT's Quality Assurance Manager acknowledged that there had been a marked change in the type of centres operating in Scotland, with the awarding body noting that more independent training providers were being approved than ever before but that there was also an almost equivalent downturn in the number of colleges holding approval status.

To support SQA Accreditation's ongoing quality assurance activities at centre level, the Quality Assurance Manager provided a revised copy of approved centres in Scotland. However, this did not satisfactorily resolve the problems of relevant information and formatting. For example, the revised listing provided information on centres only delivering Ofqual recognised provision, adding the same details to centres which also delivered SQA accredited qualifications, as well as omitting information on candidate certifications in all cases.

Therefore, the evidence available indicates that VTCT does not meet the requirements of Principle 5. **Issue 1 refers.**

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.

During the preparation for the audit, the Lead Auditor was provided with details of candidate registrations and certifications for the full suite of VTCT's accredited provision.

It was noted that almost half of the qualifications in question had shown no candidate activity since initial accreditation, a point of concern given the fact that a number of them were accredited as early as August 2009.

The audit team noted that VTCT has a document entitled *Strategy and Procedures for Qualification Development (Scotland), Version 3.2*, which outlines a qualification design, development and review process. It was noted that said document indicated a continual review of provision with a specific emphasis on qualifications 'nearing the end of their accreditation cycle (within 1 year of their review date) or with less than 100 registrations per year or for which there is significant feedback are considered in detail, as a standing QDC (annual) agenda item to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose'.

Given the specified timescale, the audit team expected to be able to view evidence of at least two reviews of the range of accredited qualifications which had generated no candidate interest. In particular, the audit team sought evidence that VTCT's Qualification Development Committee (QDC) had reviewed the qualifications in line with all of the requirements of the stated 'Qualification review cycle' which constitutes Section 5 of the document in question.

These requirements include evidence of feedback from the appropriate SSC/SSB, consultation with key stakeholders through focus groups, development officer visits, external verification, regional centre advisor visits, etc., as well as a review of labour market information (LMI) to ensure that they remained fit for purpose.

However, no evidence of the above was available to the audit team with VTCT's Qualification Manager indicating that although a review by the QDC had taken place it was unlikely to have been in the manner outlined in Section 5 of the document. The only available evidence was a generic reference in committee minutes to a review of qualifications with zero uptake. There was no identification of specific qualifications concerned.

Therefore, the evidence available indicates that VTCT does not meet the requirements of Principle 6. **Issue 2 refers.**

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.

On reviewing VTCT's *Complaints Policy and Procedure, Version 2, February 2013*, it was noted that the document does not make reference to the process for complainants to escalate their concerns to SQA Accreditation as the Qualification Regulator.

Although containing considerable detail in terms of the steps involved and timescales associated with making a complaint, the lack of a reference to the role of SQA Accreditation places the document at odds with VTCT's *Centre Handbook* which contains a section entitled 'Scotland centre appeals' and includes a reference to 'the role of SQA Accreditation in any appeal and/or complaint relating to SQA accredited qualifications'.

Therefore, the evidence available indicates that VTCT does not meet the requirements of Principle 18. **Issue 3 refers.**

2.2 Recommendations

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.

VTCT uploaded a range of documentation to support the audit process in advance of the audit date.

The audit team recognises the efforts of the awarding body staff concerned in uploading documents and is conscious that the requirement to do so for audit purposes superseded a previous instruction from SQA Accreditation to all awarding bodies to ensure that this activity was completed by 31 March 2013.

However, despite best endeavours a number of documents were not referenced to specific principles, although they were logged within particular folders.

For example, VTCT's *Assessment Guidance 2012* and *Learner Handbook 2012* both sit within the folder relevant to Principles 6 to 17 in respect of qualification design and development but with no link to any of the relevant principles.

There are also multiple instances of full documents being uploaded to Quickr. For example, the *Centre Agreement, Version 2.2*, appears across a number of folders when the appropriate referencing to relevant principles would require a single upload.

With the above in mind, the awarding body may wish to ensure that it follows the guidance for uploading documents to Quickr set out in SQA Accreditation's *Awarding Bodies Guide to Using Quickr, Version 2 – May 2012*. **Recommendation 1 refers.**

Principle 10. The awarding body must ensure that, where possible, progression or outcome opportunities for learners are clearly identified in terms of qualification pathways or employment opportunities.

On the VTCT website, the audit team noted the presence of a section entitled *Career Pathways*. As the title suggests, this section outlines the different career opportunities available to individuals within the Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy, Holistic Therapies and Health and Fitness sectors.

Outlining the personal attributes for success, the section of the website carries links to a range of leaflets on each occupational area. Where appropriate, the range of leaflets included those submitted by both the awarding body and Habia as the relevant standard setting body.

The awarding body may wish to undertake a review of the qualification information contained within the leaflets to ensure that it is current and reflects the fact that all of the accredited provision has now been credit rated to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Given that the focus of the website information is career progression, it may be worth considering more generic information on the role that the SCQF can play in determining educational choices as part of any such progression. **Recommendation 2 refers.**

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.

As noted above in respect of Issue 3, *VTCT's Complaints Policy and Procedure, Version 2, February 2013*, contains considerable detail in terms of the steps involved and timescales associated with making a complaint. However, the audit team noticed a discrepancy in the designated working days that VTCT has allocated itself to provide a written response to a complaint. Specifically, stage 4 of the process states twenty-one working days but the associated process map makes reference to '18 days'. The awarding body may wish to review the document to ensure consistency of information on timelines. **Recommendation 3 refers.**

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's Accreditation Co-ordination Group finds evidence that the awarding body does not fully meet SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles (2011)*, Regulatory Directives or Awarding Body Agreement

Principle No.	Condition	Date Due
None		

4 Risk rating of issues

SQA Accreditation assigns a risk rating to each issue recorded as a result of an awarding body audit activity. The table below illustrates how the rating for an issue is assigned, and identifies the possible impact of the issue on qualifications and/or the learner.

The assignment of a risk rating allows an awarding body to target their resources to areas which have been identified as having a major impact in these areas. The risk rating also allows SQA Accreditation to target its resources to support awarding bodies in improving their performance.

Risk	Impact of issues
Very Low	The issue is 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 issue identified is unlikely to recur once resolved and no long lasting damage would be anticipated.
Low	The issue is of low impact but 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 issue could potentially 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 issue could have a 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 issue will have 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 issue 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 VTCT

SQA Accredited Qualification Title	Level	Code	Accreditation date	Re-accreditation date
SVQ 1 in Hairdressing and Barbering at SCQF Level 4	G9KX	21	01/08/2009	31/05/2014
SVQ 2 in Barbering at SCQF Level 5	G9L2	22	01/08/2009	31/05/2014
SVQ 2 in Hairdressing (Combined Hair Types) at SCQF Level 5	G9KY	22	01/08/2009	31/05/2014
SVQ 2 in Hairdressing at SCQF level 5	G9L0	22	01/08/2009	31/05/2014
SVQ 3 in Barbering at SCQF Level 6	G9L3	23	01/08/2009	31/05/2014
SVQ 3 in Hairdressing at SCQF level 6	G9L1	23	01/08/2009	31/05/2014
SVQ 1 in Beauty Therapy at SCQF Level 4	G9YE	21	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
SVQ 2 in Beauty Therapy (Make-Up) at SCQF Level 5	G9YH	22	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
SVQ 2 in Beauty Therapy at SCQF Level 5	G9YC	22	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
SVQ 2 in Nail Services at SCQF Level 5	G9Y9	22	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
SVQ 3 in Beauty Therapy (Make Up) at SCQF Level 6	G9YG	23	11/08/2010	31/07/2015

SQA Accredited Qualification Title	Level	Code	Accreditation date	Re-accreditation date
SVQ 3 in Beauty Therapy (Massage) at SCQF Level 6	G9YF	23	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
SVQ 3 in Beauty Therapy at SCQF Level 6	G9YA	23	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
SVQ 3 in Nail Services at SCQF Level 6	G9Y8	23	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
SVQ 3 in Spa Therapy at SCQF Level 6	G9Y7	23	11/08/2010	31/07/2015
Communication (SCQF level 3)	FD7K	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Communication (SCQF level 4)	FD7L	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Communication (SCQF level 5)	FD7M	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Communication (SCQF level 6)	FD7N	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Numeracy (SCQF level 3)	FD7P	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Numeracy (SCQF level 4)	FD7R	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Numeracy (SCQF level 5)	FD7W	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Numeracy (SCQF level 6)	FD7X	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Information and Communication Technology (SCQF level 3)	FD7Y	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Information and Communication Technology (SCQF level 4)	FD80	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Information and Communication Technology (SCQF level 5)	FD81	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Information and Communication Technology (SCQF level 6)	FD82	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016

SQA Accredited Qualification Title	Level	Code	Accreditation date	Re-accreditation date
Problem Solving (SCQF level 3)	FD83	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Problem Solving (SCQF level 4)	FD84	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Problem Solving (SCQF level 5)	FD85	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Problem Solving (SCQF level 6)	FD86	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Working with Others (SCQF level 3)	FD87	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Working with Others (SCQF level 4)	FD88	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Working with Others (SCQF level 5)	FD89	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016
Working with Others (SCQF level 6)	FD8A	04	08/12/2010	31/07/2016

6 List of documents reviewed pre-audit and post-audit

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Strategy and Procedures for Qualification Development (Scotland)		Version 3.2
Complaints Policy and Procedure	February 2013	Version 2
Assessment Guidance 2012		
Learner Handbook 2012		
VTCT Board of Trustees Terms of Reference	20 December 2011	Version 3
VTCT Chair of Board Roles and Responsibilities	11 February 2010	Draft 4
VTCT Charitable Giving Committee Terms of Reference		
Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee Terms of Reference		
VTCT Governance Change Notification	27 February 2013	Version 2.0
VTCT Trustee Roles and Responsibilities		
Risk Register	March 2013	
Marketing plan: Scotland 2012/13		
VTCT Fees and Qualifications	April 2012	
Centre Agreement	28 February 2013	
Responsible Officer: Role Description	31 October 2011	Version 1.0
Centre Recognition Application Form		

Document title	Date of issue	Version number
Invigilation arrangements for 2011 assessment series		
SVQ Record of Achievement Handbooks		
Centre Handbook	March 2012	
VTCT Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration in Vocational Qualifications	September 2012	
Centre verification/recognition report		
Form for Special Considerations		
VTCT e-Bulletin		
VTCT Centre Manager's Handbook	September 2010	Version 1.1
VTCT Annual Report	2011/12	
VTCT News		
Operational Plan Progress Review	July 2011	
Customer Survey	2010	
VTCT Mission Statement		
VTCT Conflict of Interest Policy	2 August 2011	Version 1.0
External Verifier's Handbook	January 2011	

7 Action plan

A separate document in Microsoft Word has been forwarded with this Audit Report.

Areas of Concern	Issue	Risk rating	Proposed action	Target date for completion
Principle No. 5	VTCT provided SQA Accreditation with a list of approved centres on Quickr. It was noted by the audit team that this document did not comply with the format specified in correspondence to the awarding body, dated 9 March 2012. The correspondence in question also specified a requirement to update the list of approved centres as of 30 September 2012 which also did not happen.	Low		

Areas of Concern	Issue	Risk rating	Proposed action	Target date for completion
Principle No. 6	The audit team were unable to see evidence of a review of qualifications with no registrations and candidates in line with the qualification review cycle as specified within VTCT's <i>Strategy and Procedures for Qualification Development (Scotland), Version 3.2.</i>	Medium		
Principle No. 18	A review of VTCT's <i>Complaints Policy and Procedure, Version 2, February 2013</i> , indicated that there is no reference to the process for complainant's escalating concerns to SQA Accreditation.	Low		

Signatures of agreement of action plan

For and on behalf of VTCT:

Signature

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Date

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For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Signature

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Date

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8 Acceptance of audit findings

For and on behalf of VTCT:

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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