

SQA Accreditation Annual Review 2015–16

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Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1FD

accreditation.sqa.org.uk

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Foreword

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has two distinct and autonomous parts — SQA the awarding body, and SQA Accreditation.

SQA Accreditation is a team of twenty-one people which, under Scottish legislation, has the responsibility to independently approve and regulate awarding bodies operating in Scotland. It accredits qualifications including Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), Regulatory and Licensing Qualifications and 'Other' competence-based qualifications.

SQA Accreditation quality assures awarding bodies and their accredited qualifications, thereby safeguarding the interests of learners, employers, parents, funding bodies, providers and Scottish Government.

SQA Accreditation consistently aims to work efficiently and effectively to fulfil its responsibilities. SQA Accreditation's operational activities are driven by the responsive nature of the team and their aim to continually review and improve processes and systems for the benefit of all external and internal customers.

This Annual Review provides a summary of operational activities carried out by SQA Accreditation in 2015–16, and highlights key performance statistics relating to accredited qualifications and awarding body regulatory activity.

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Chief Executive's Statement

In 2015 we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), and continue to see a healthy spread of choice and volume of take-up. This is exemplified by a substantial 66% of accredited qualifications being SVQs.

At the end of 2015–16, SQA Accreditation had a total of 993 accredited qualifications. The total is made up of:

657	Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)
52	Regulatory and Licensing Qualifications (R&L)
284	Other qualifications (such as competence-based qualifications)

In the period from April 2015 to end March 2016 there were a total of 116,672 registrations and 86,559 certifications.

In the final year of the Universal Services commissioning process for the development and review of standards and frameworks (responsibility for commissioning now lies with the three devolved authorities), we generally saw positive results from Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Standard Setting Organisations (SSOs). Just over 93% of all UK projects were successfully approved. The time and effort of all involved to achieve this was recognised and greatly appreciated.

We continue to strive for continuous improvement with all aspects of our operations, systems and processes. Much of this is derived from stakeholder feedback because we feel it is important that our focus should be influenced by our partners and customers. We are happy to report significant progress achieved over the last year through our development work and project group outputs, which are summarised in this review.

Our intent to be an enabling regulator remains, and this has been supported by the work done on improving our self-assessment process and the continued analysis of reported Issues and Recommendations that are raised through audit activity.

We have engaged with Skills Development Scotland on the content of Foundation Apprenticeships, and look forward to developing that relationship further to enable us to play an active role in supporting the Scottish Government's *Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy*.

The external environment of the Vocational Education Sector (VET) across the UK remains in a state of transition, with the picture beginning to become clearer in some areas. SQA Accreditation is working closely with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales to prepare for and react to developments and changes in the sector.

We remain fully committed to continuing to deliver a high quality service for Scotland, with a confidence born from the support and shared commitment of our colleagues and partners.

Dr Janet Brown

Chief Executive, SQA

Operational activity 2015–16

SQA Accreditation's annual operational activity from April 2015 to the end of March 2016 is summarised in this review. It gives an overview of significant developments that occurred throughout the year, and shows how SQA Accreditation met its operational objectives for the year through the implementation of project groups.

Significant developments

25th Anniversary of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)



SQA Accreditation celebrated the 25th anniversary of SVQs in 2015, having accredited the first SVQ in 1990. To mark the occasion Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, and education representatives from SQA and the SCQF, talked about the development of SVQs and how they continue to effectively contribute to the skills economy in Scotland. The video clips can be found on our [website](#).

Universal Services

The Universal Services commissioning process for funding the development of Standards and Frameworks products (National Occupational Standards (NOS), Vocational Qualifications and Modern Apprenticeships) had its last year of operation in 2015–16.

Another challenging year still saw Standard Setting Organisations (SSOs) generally perform well, with many outputs completed ahead of schedule. Although a small number of projects were completed late, at the end of March 2016, the actual delivery achieved was 93.2% of all UK outputs. Of the total 221 UK projects, 15 were either not delivered or delivered late.

Of the 162 projects that related to Scotland, a total of 11 (6.8%) were either not delivered or delivered late, which meant a similar 93.2% of outputs were completed by the end of March 2016.

For 2016–17 we will be embarking on a new process for the commissioning of Standards and Frameworks. With the UK Government withdrawing funding, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) will cease to exist in Autumn 2016. The work will then transfer to a new organisation to commission outputs for the three devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

NOS Capacity and Capability Training

SQA Accreditation delivered a training session to increase the capacity and capability of National Occupational Standards (NOS) Developers in the UK. The aim of the training was to improve the quality of NOS submissions received from Standards Setting Organisations (SSOs) to the NOS Database.

A total of 23 participants attended the first two training sessions held in Glasgow and Sheffield during May and June 2015. Most who attended were already involved in developing NOS in different capacities, and took part either to upskill or refresh their existing skills in line with good practice. They represented 11 (52%) of the existing 21 SSOs.

Evaluation sheets were completed by all participants and the results of these were collated and analysed. An overall summary of the responses indicated the training session was very effective, with 99.5% of participants rating all aspects either good or excellent. Comments made by participants in relation to the course content included:

- ◆ Good review of all areas and good to receive an update on the process. Interactive activities good, looking forward to getting to the 'nitty gritty' part of NOS writing
- ◆ Well-structured session supported by complementary PowerPoint slides. Practice exercises very helpful to test/embed the learning
- ◆ Very much enjoyed the training and would recommend to others involved in developing NOS
- ◆ NOS writing activity was extremely useful and would use this activity myself in a similar situation if it arose
- ◆ Good concise session focusing around do's and don'ts of writing NOS

In addition to the NOS Capacity and Capability training sessions, Accreditation Managers delivered further training at the request of individual awarding bodies.

European initiatives

SQA Accreditation is an active member of the UK Co-ordination Group for Vocational Education and Training Initiatives. We continue to monitor developments across a range of European initiatives, including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

In addition, our Head of Accreditation, George Brown, acts as Scotland's National Reference Point (NRP) for the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), on behalf of the Scottish VQ Board.

The 2012–13 evaluation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) called for the development of a common European approach to indicate EQF levels in qualification certificates, diplomas, Europass supplements and qualifications databases in a bid to help stakeholders to easily identify the EQF level of qualifications across Europe.

At that time, the UK agreed that it would not make it a mandatory requirement to include EQF level on qualification certificates.

The European Commission has revisited the 2012–13 recommendations and asserted the need to include the EQF level on certificates. A survey of UK awarding bodies was undertaken by the UK National Coordinating Points (NCP) for the EQF (SCQF Partnership is the Scottish NCP) and found that there was little appetite for the inclusion of EQF levels on certificates. The UK position therefore remains unchanged, and this will be reported back to the European Commission.

The survey did, however, identify that there was some demand to include the EQF level on certificates.

SQA Accreditation therefore revised the [Regulatory Principles Directive \(RPDIR\) 3](#) to state that awarding bodies can include the EQF level on certificates should they wish to do so, but that this is not a mandatory requirement.

Self-assessment

In April 2014 SQA Accreditation introduced self-assessments as part of the Regulatory Principles (2014). Self-Assessments are aimed at identifying and measuring the extent to which awarding bodies are engaged in continual improvement and regular ongoing review of key business activities.

Awarding bodies provide an annual self-assessment report / action plan to demonstrate that they continually review the effectiveness of their business services, systems, policies and processes. This should show, where necessary, what preventative and corrective action has been taken, and should highlight areas where continuous improvement has been made or planned.

Following a review of the first submission of self-assessments and feedback from awarding bodies, SQA Accreditation launched a new guidance document to support the self-assessment process: [Demonstrating Continual Review: Guidance to Awarding Bodies on Self-Assessment](#). We are confident that this will make our requirements clear and transparent and assist with self-assessment submissions.

A number of self-assessment exemplars were developed, which awarding bodies can consider when putting together their annual self-assessment return. These can be found on SQA Accreditation's [website](#).

Developing Young Workforce

SQA Accreditation is a member of the Foundation Apprenticeship Partnership Working Group, which is managed by Skills Development Scotland. The Head of Accreditation represents SQA Accreditation on this group, and has provided advice and guidance with regards to the use of SVQs and/or SVQ units in the Foundation Apprenticeship Framework. SQA Accreditation is supportive of the use of SVQ units within these frameworks.

The Head of Accreditation is also a member of Education Scotland's Employer Reference Group. This group meets on a regular basis to discuss activities relating to Developing the Young Workforce.

Stakeholder Survey Outcomes

In early 2015 SQA Accreditation invited stakeholders to take part in a biennial survey to gather feedback on performance and areas for improvements.

The key strengths of SQA Accreditation that stakeholders value continue to be:

- ◆ helpful and knowledgeable staff
- ◆ dedicated and personal point of contact
- ◆ professional and supportive nature
- ◆ rigorous processes
- ◆ communication
- ◆ continuous improvement activities

A number of areas for further improvement were highlighted. These included the Accreditation submission form, consistency of feedback from staff, and support and guidance on the self-assessment process. Work is already underway to address the feedback received.

A report on the findings was published and an action plan developed to address the issues highlighted. All actions were picked up by project groups or addressed via objectives in the operational plan for 2015–16.

Review of Regulatory Principles

The Regulatory Principles have been designed to encompass the five key aspects of better regulation, to ensure that the way SQA Accreditation carries out its regulatory duties is:

- ◆ transparent
- ◆ accountable
- ◆ proportionate
- ◆ consistent
- ◆ targeted

The Regulatory Principles define the standard that awarding bodies must meet in order to be compliant. Awarding bodies must provide appropriate evidence to demonstrate how they meet these principles. The Regulatory Principles document includes supplementary information exemplifying how you might choose to meet the principles.

It is important that the Regulatory Principles continue to be subject to ongoing review and monitoring by SQA Accreditation. This includes reviewing any feedback from awarding bodies to ensure that the Regulatory Principles continue to remain current and fit for purpose.

During the reporting year no areas of concern were identified, and it was considered that the current version of the Regulatory Principles (2014) continued to be an effective regulatory tool.

Quality Enhancement Rating (QER)

Quality Enhancement Rating (QER) risk profiles are now in place for each SQA Accreditation approved awarding body based upon a range of data available to SQA Accreditation.

Our QER process informs our risk assessment of each awarding body and is used to consider the level and frequency of audit activity. This includes how we identify and respond to the different types of risk. We use QER to identify any potential non-compliance with the Accreditation Licence, Regulatory Principles and Regulatory Directives and plan our activities appropriately.

Our risk analysis of each awarding body is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, allowing us to take account of emerging trends and maintain a proportionate response.

SQA Accreditation will assign its resources to support awarding bodies in improving their performance and in this respect, the QER risk profiles are already being used to inform future quality assurance activities.

Improvements and adjustments have been identified and applied to the QER as part of its introduction, and a full review will be carried out in 2016–17 to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

Project groups

To ensure that the objectives identified in SQA Accreditation's operational plan could be realised, a series of internal project groups were established. These included representatives from each of the SQA Accreditation sections. The key objectives and findings for each project group are summarised here.

SCQF level and titling

During 2015 SQA Accreditation developed an approach and transition plan to using only the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level in Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) titles. This is in line with the long-term strategy first communicated in 2010 and applicable now that there are a small (and reducing) number of SVQs still to be credit rated.

The following key stakeholders were consulted:

- ◆ Standard Setting Organisations / Sector Skills Councils (SSOs/SSCs)
- ◆ Awarding Bodies
- ◆ Colleges
- ◆ training providers
- ◆ employers
- ◆ Scottish Government
- ◆ Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
- ◆ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership

Following consultation, the SQA Accreditation Committee approved the following titling change for SVQs:

From 1 September 2016 the SVQ level is to be dropped from qualification titles and only the SCQF level will be specified.

For example, where the current titling convention is:

SVQ 2 Floristry at SCQF Level 5

The new titling convention will be:

SVQ Floristry at SCQF Level 5

It is also acceptable to title as:

SVQ in Floristry at SCQF Level 5

All awarding bodies and standard setting organisations are aware of and working to meet the implementation date for this change.

SQA Accreditation is currently engaging with awarding bodies to understand each of their preferred implementation plans. Awarding bodies will begin to transition their SVQs to the new titles from 1 September 2016.

SSOs and SSCs are required to implement this change from 1 April 2016 for any qualification product development work that takes place in 2016–2017 and beyond.

This change is expected to remove potential confusion with multiple levels being used in qualification titles, and to promote knowledge and understanding of the SCQF.

Awarding body approval

Following from work undertaken by the project group in 2014–15, a set of high-level approval requirements (General Approval Requirements), a revised approval process and the updated guidance for prospective awarding bodies was published in October 2015 and is now operational via the SQA Accreditation website.

In addition, a process for ensuring financial due diligence in all organisations seeking awarding body approval status is currently being piloted.

A review of supporting documentation for completion by organisations seeking approval status is underway and will continue into 2016–17. This review is aimed at ensuring that key information is being captured and that a robust and consistent review process is undertaken by SQA Accreditation.

Expanding Accreditation of Qualifications

This project group led on developing a strategy to increase the quality assurance and regulation of qualifications offered in Scotland for the benefit of learners and employers.

It was agreed that, to increase the profile of SQA Accreditation with external stakeholders, key opportunities lay in maximising engagement of current approved awarding bodies and encouraging them to bring forward more qualifications for accreditation.

In defining an overall strategy, it was identified that a 'one size fits all' approach would not be suitable. Since awarding bodies do not operate in the same way or in the same markets and they are not all the same size, customised strategies specific to each awarding body would be required.

As part of the strategic plan, SQA Accreditation will be engaging with all awarding bodies over the course of 2016 to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Regular Keep in Touch meetings, with a shared agenda, will be introduced for all, and we expect these to develop, and ideally produce positive outcomes, as befits each awarding body.

Quality of Submissions Review

This project group had the remit of identifying opportunities to improve the quality of submissions to Accreditation Coordination Group (ACG) by working with awarding bodies and Standard Setting Organisations (SSOs)

The group recognised a number of ways in which SQA Accreditation could better ascertain and subsequently address problem areas.

Significant improvements implemented in 2015–16 are:

- ◆ the ACG submissions tracker has been updated to better monitor, measure and manage problem areas; and
- ◆ additional guidance and support has been provided for SSOs and awarding bodies in the form of a new guidance document for qualification development and the simplification of a shared submission form for qualification structures

Activities planned for 2016–17 include:

- ◆ a further review of the standard AC2 Qualification Accreditation form with planned completion and implementation by June 2016; and
- ◆ an ongoing quarterly review of submissions and the utilisation of trend analysis to identify further opportunities for improvement.

Audit activity 2015–16

SQA Accreditation's regulatory function includes the approval of awarding bodies, audits and provider monitoring. This section provides an overview of accreditation activity for the period 2015–16.

SQA Accreditation carries out monitoring of all SQA-approved awarding bodies. In 2015–16, SQA Accreditation's quality assurance processes were based on a range of measures, and compliance was assessed against the [Regulatory Principles \(2014\) and the associated Regulatory Principles Directives](#). All analysis in this section is based on the audit and provider monitoring activity during this period.

Awarding body audits are based on a three-year cycle, depending on their level of risk. Provider monitoring visits (PMVs) aim to check the effectiveness of the awarding body's systems and enable SQA Accreditation to identify any areas of concern that may help to inform our regulatory activities and safeguard the learner experience.

SQA Accreditation carried out and completed 10 audits and 13 provider monitoring reports (24 provider monitoring visits in total) during 2015–16.

Awarding bodies

SQA Accreditation is responsible for approving awarding bodies to deliver qualifications of social, economic, environmental or cultural benefit to Scotland.

In 2015–16 one organisation gained SQA-approved awarding body status:

- ◆ British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM)

Throughout the year, a total of 16 organisations contacted SQA Accreditation to explore the possibility of becoming an approved awarding body. Eight submitted formal requests through the enquiry process. Two of those have decided to progress to the approval stage.

Three awarding bodies had their approved status withdrawn:

- ◆ Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- ◆ Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV)
- ◆ Education and Media Services Limited (ITEC)

Both CIPD and ITEC had approval withdrawn at their own request. IRRV had its approval withdrawn by SQA Accreditation's Accreditation Coordination Group (ACG) as a result of the Zero Uptake Policy.

At the end of the operational year 2015–16, there were 38 SQA Accreditation approved awarding bodies.

Quality Enhancement Rating (QER)

SQA Accreditation applies a three-year cycle of audit — annual monitoring of providers and/or training providers, compliance investigations, and any extraordinary circumstances that are reported, all determine the frequency of audits so that no inspection ever takes place without reason

Additionally, SQA Accreditation’s regulatory system uses a comprehensive risk assessment (QER) to supplement and concentrate resources on those areas that need them most.

Analysis of Issues and Recommendations

Issues are recorded where there is evidence that there is a risk to either the learner or the integrity of the qualification and therefore immediate and comprehensive action is required. During audit or PMV, one Issue may be raised against multiple principles.

A Recommendation can be made if auditors consider that an awarding body’s systems and processes meet the Regulatory Principles (see Appendix 3) but it has been identified that there could be areas for improvement. There is no requirement on the awarding body to take any action where a Recommendation has been made, but it would be seen as good practice and in the spirit of the continuous improvement principle to do so. During audit or PMV, one Recommendation may be raised against multiple principles.

Principle	Raised at Audit	Raised at Audit	Raised at PMV	Raised at PMV
	Issues	Recommendations	Issues	Recommendations
Principle 1	0	4	0	0
Principle 2	1	1	0	0
Principle 3	3	2	0	0
Principle 4	5	3	1	1
Principle 5	6	5	7	3
Principle 6	9	9	14	4
Principle 7	1	1	1	5
Principle 8	1	1	2	0
Principle 9	2	4	0	0
Principle 10	6	5	23	7
Principle 11	2	1	3	1
Principle 12	3	3	5	1
Principle 13	2	1	3	0
Principle 14	6	3	3	0
Principle 15	4	3	6	0
Total	51	45	68	22

Table 1: No of Issues and Recommendations by Principle

Principle	Raised at Audit	Raised at Audit	Raised at PMV	Raised at PMV
	Issues	Recommendations	Issues	Recommendations
RPDR 1	1	0	1	0
RPDR 2	0	0	0	0
RPDR 3	0	1	0	0
RPDR 4	1	0	0	0
RPDR 5	1	0	0	0
Total	3	1	1	0

Table 2: Issues and Recommendations by Regulatory Principle Directive (RPDR)

During 2015–16, audit and provider monitoring activity identified that the greatest number of Issues was recorded against Regulatory Principles 6 and 10:

- ◆ Principle 6: The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.
- ◆ Principle 10: The awarding body shall ensure that it has the necessary arrangements and resources for the effective delivery; assessment and quality assurance of SQA accredited qualifications.

Various Recommendations were identified, and again the greatest number was recorded against Regulatory Principles 6 and 10.

Principle 10 had a particularly high volume of Issues raised against it in comparison to other principles. It is a key area for review at provider monitoring, as it focuses on the arrangements for effective delivery, assessment and quality assurance of SQA Accredited qualifications. As a result, the high volume of Issues raised against Principle 10 will be considered as part of any future regulatory activity.

Those principles that have the greatest number of Issues and Recommendations raised during audit or PMV activity are key areas for SQA Accreditation, SQA Accreditation approved awarding bodies and providers to learn from and consider in future activity.

Accreditation activity 2015–16

SQA Accreditation’s core functions include the approval of awarding bodies, approval of qualification products, accreditation of qualifications, and credit rating approval. This section provides an overview of accreditation activity for the period 2015–16.

Qualifications accredited

At the end of 2015–16, SQA Accreditation had a total of 993 accredited qualifications¹. This is made up of the following qualification types:

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)	657
Regulatory and Licensing qualifications (R&L)	52
Other qualifications (such as competence-based qualifications)	284

Eighty-four qualifications were withdrawn during 2015–16. The common rationale for awarding bodies withdrawing SVQs was low or zero uptake and was a result of SQA Accreditation invoking the [Zero Uptake Policy](#). In some instances, SVQs were replaced with alternative accredited competence-based qualifications. This has been driven in part by Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks where the SVQ has not been successful. In addition, a number of EDI qualifications were withdrawn as a result of EDI being subsumed within Pearson Education Ltd and duplicate qualifications having their accreditation removed. SQA Accreditation will continue to monitor these movements and identify, where possible, the reasons behind these changes.

For further detailed information on the performance of our accredited qualifications on a quarterly basis, please see our [Quarterly Statistics Reports](#) for 2015–16.

SVQs accredited

At the end of 2015–16, there were 657 accredited SVQs, which is a decrease of 55 on the previous year. SVQs are offered by 15 different approved awarding bodies, and account for 66% of all accredited qualifications.

Accredited SVQs spanned the following levels:

SVQ Level 1	29
SVQ Level 2	287
SVQ Level 3	297
SVQ Level 4	37
SVQ Level 5	7

¹ Qualifications that have lapsed are not included.

As in previous years, more SVQ levels 2 and 3 were accredited. This is a result of them being a mandatory qualification in Modern Apprenticeships. Of level 2 and 3 SVQs, 77% and 86% respectively are present in Modern Apprenticeships. Currently, 22 SVQ 4 qualifications and five SVQ 5 qualifications are part of Apprenticeship frameworks. These numbers may increase as more Technical and Professional Apprenticeships are approved.

Regulatory and Licensing qualifications accredited

At the end of 2015–16, there were 52 Regulatory and Licensing qualifications accredited — the same volume as the previous year. Regulatory and Licensing qualifications are offered by 13 different approved awarding bodies, and account for 5% of all currently accredited qualifications.

There were 18 Regulatory and Licensing qualifications contained in MA Frameworks at the end of March 2016 representing 35% of Regulatory and Licensing qualifications.

Other qualifications accredited

At the end of 2015–16, there were 284 'Other' qualifications accredited, which is an increase of 9% on the previous year. 'Other' accredited qualifications are currently offered by 28 different approved awarding bodies and account for 29% of all accredited qualifications.

While SVQs remain as the Scottish Government's qualification of choice for inclusion in Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks, 'Other' accredited qualifications may be approved for inclusion. At the end of 2015–16 107 'Other' qualifications were included in Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks.

Market performance

Data on the performance of SQA accredited qualifications is collected from approved awarding bodies on a quarterly basis. The data presented covers SQA accredited qualifications during financial year 2015–16.

SQA Accreditation started collecting candidate data from awarding bodies offering accredited qualifications other than SVQs from April 2010. Table 4 shows the total registrations and certifications for all Regulatory and Licensing qualifications. Table 5 shows market performance for 'Other' qualifications from April 2010. Because no historical data is held for these qualification types, this data cannot be compared back any further than 2010.

SVQ market performance

Year	Registrations	+/- %	Certifications	+/- %
2007–08	48,761	n/a	29,357	n/a
2008–09	39,879	-18%	31,206	+6%
2009–10	45,155	+13%	35,066	+12%
2010–11	47,405	+5%	36,713	+4%
2011–12	40,245	-15%	29,945	-18%
2012–13	43,444	+8%	32,397	+8%
2013–14	48,116	+11%	34,362	+6%
2014–15	45,920	-4%	35,358	+3%
2015–16	46,620	+2%	33,856	-4%

Table 2: SVQ market performance

In 2015–16, there were small movements in uptake from the previous year. Registration increased marginally by 2%, while certifications decreased by 4% — the first decrease in annual registrations since 2011–12. The level of registrations for SVQs remain in line with the high levels seen in 2009–10 and 2010–11, which is a positive sign that business confidence remains and also that, although alternative competence-based qualifications are available, the SVQ is still the preferred qualification type for some sectors.

Regulatory and Licensing Qualifications market performance

Year	Registrations	+/-%	Certifications	+/-%
2010–11	13,880	n/a	13,227	n/a
2011–12	15,192	+9%	12,280	-7%
2012–13	17,842	+17%	17,166	+39%
2013–14	29,830	+67%	28,157	+64%
2014–15	49,737	+67%	48,161	+71%
2015–16	30,792	-38%	29,211	-40%

Table 3: Regulatory and Licensing qualifications market performance

In 2015–16, registrations decreased dramatically by 38% and certifications by 40%. However, this is a result of the compulsory Scottish Certificate for Personal Licence Holders (Refresher) at SCQF Level 6. Due to changes in legislation, all holders of the Personal Licence Holder qualifications who held the licence for five years were required to undertake the refresher qualification or latest accredited Scottish Certificate for Personal Licence Holders at SCQF level 6 in 2014–15. During 2015–16 uptake was more stable and returned the levels seen in 2013–14, with an increase of 3% in registrations and 4% in certifications.

Other Qualifications market performance

Year	Registrations	+/-%	Certifications	+/-%
2010–11	5,384	n/a	4,529	n/a
2011–12	25,652	+376%	19,281	+326%
2012–13	30,957	+21%	21,534	+12%
2013–14	36,158	+17%	24,146	+12%
2014–15	39,766	+10%	24,293	+1%
2015–16	39,260	-1%	23,492	-3%

Table 4: Other qualifications market performance

In 2015–16, uptake of ‘other’ qualifications bucked its usual trend of a stable year-on-year increase, with registrations and certifications decreasing by 1% and 3% respectively. While this is only a marginal decrease in uptake from the previous year, performance of other competence-based accredited qualifications will continue to be monitored on a quarterly and annual basis. An increasing volume of ‘other’ qualifications are being accredited year on year and, as a result, uptake of these qualifications is also increasing. While SVQs remain as the Scottish Government’s qualification of choice for inclusion in MA Frameworks, ‘Other’ accredited qualifications may be approved for inclusion where there is not an appropriate SVQ. As a result, an increasing number of ‘Other’ qualifications are now included in MA Frameworks, which could go some way to explaining the growing annual uptake of these qualifications.

Plan for 2016–17

Having celebrated the 25th anniversary of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in 2015, we now look forward to the next step in their evolution. From September 2016, we will begin to drop the SVQ level from the title of the qualifications and use only the SCQF level to differentiate between SVQs. Thus *an SVQ 2 in Business and Administration at SCQF level 5* will become the *SVQ in Business and Administration at SCQF level 5*. We continue to engage with awarding bodies regarding this change and will keep all stakeholders up to date as we move towards September of this year.

We currently work closely with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in a number of areas including Modern Apprenticeships (MAs). In recent years, we have recognised that there is an increasing need for co-operative working and further opportunities to support each other in our activities. We will, therefore, be looking to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SDS that will set out how we can formally collaborate for the mutual benefit of both organisations. It is likely that the MoU will cover activities such as:

- ◆ Foundation Apprenticeships
- ◆ Modern Apprenticeships
- ◆ Statistical Information
- ◆ Sectoral Skills Needs

With the National Occupational Standards (NOS) programme now being overseen by the three devolved administrations in the UK nations, we will continue to support those organisations that are contracted to develop NOS, SVQ structures and MA Frameworks.

Core Skills Signposting has been a requirement of developing an SVQ structure since the introduction of the SVQ Criteria and Guidance in 1995. In 2016–17 we plan to carry out an evaluation of Core Skills Signposting to determine the current value and use of the signpostings, and to assess their suitability as a future requirement.

We also plan to carry out a review of the SVQ Assessment Strategy requirements. This was initially introduced in 1999 following the Review of All NVQs and SVQs chaired by Gordon Beaumont. In particular, we want to determine the critical aspects of an Assessment Strategy that must be retained whilst identifying those aspects of the strategy which are least helpful to awarding bodies and providers. We will, however, seek to ensure that the removal of any aspects does not have an impact on the quality assurance of the SVQs.

Appendix 1: Summary of audit activity 2015–16 against Regulatory Principles (2014)

2015–16 Audit Reports			
Awarding Body	Audit Date	Issues	Recommendations
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants	26/08/2015	3	2
Chartered Institute of Housing	15/10/2015	5	3
Chartered Management Institute	23/02/2016	4	10
Excellence, Achievement and Learning Limited	16/09/2015	3	3
English Speaking Board	29/06/2015	5	1
Pearson Education Limited	24/06/2015 25/06/2015	3	3
PIABC	15/07/2015	4	7
Princes Trust	27/10/2015	5	2
Safe Cert Awards Limited	02/10/2015	6	3
Scottish Qualifications Authority	24/11/2015 25/11/2015	5	1

Appendix 2: Approved awarding bodies

This is a list of SQA Accreditation approved awarding bodies as at end March 2016.

Acronym	Awarding body
Not Applicable	1st4sport Qualifications
ASQ	Associated Sports Qualifications
AFS	Alcohol Focus Scotland
AAT	Association of Accounting Technicians
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
Not Applicable	BIIAB
BIFM	British Institute of Facilities Management
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
Not Applicable	City & Guilds of London Institute
ECITB	Engineering Construction Industry Training Board
ESB	English Speaking Board
EQL	Equestrian Qualifications GB Limited
EAL	Excellence, Achievement and Learning Limited
FAAL	First Aid Awards Limited
FAQ	Future (Awards & Qualifications) Limited
GQA	GQA Qualifications Limited
HABC	Highfield Awarding Body for Compliance
IMI	IMI Awards Limited
IQ	Industry Qualifications Limited
ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management
ITC	ITC First
Not Applicable	Lantra Awards Limited
MPQC	Mineral Products Qualifications Council
NEBOSH	National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health

Acronym	Awarding body
Not Applicable	PAA/VQ-SET
Not Applicable	PIABC
Not Applicable	Pearson Education Limited
Not Applicable	Princes Trust
Not Applicable	Rockschool Limited
RAD	Royal Academy of Dance
Not Applicable	Safe Cert Awards Limited
STA	Safety Training Awards Limited
Not Applicable	SFEDI Awards
Not Applicable	Scottish Bakers
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
VTCT	Vocational Training Charitable Trust
WCSM	Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers

Appendix 3: SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2014)

Regulatory Principle	Supplementary Information
<p>1. The awarding body shall have clearly defined and effective governance arrangements.</p>	<p>The awarding body must demonstrate effective governance arrangements, which support awarding body functions. Consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ key committees and groups ◆ partnership arrangements ◆ conflicts of interest ◆ policies and procedures ◆ organisational structure <p>The awarding body must nominate an Accountable Officer and deal with SQA Accreditation in an open and co-operative way and disclose anything which SQA Accreditation would reasonably expect to be made aware.</p>
<p>2. The awarding body shall ensure it has the necessary resources to effectively carry out its operational functions to meet regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>The awarding body must demonstrate that it has effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ leadership and expertise ◆ quality management systems and procedures ◆ technology ◆ human resources ◆ financial resources ◆ and other physical resources <p>in order to carry out its operational functions.</p>
<p>3. The awarding body shall have clearly defined business planning processes which show evidence of management commitment, decision making and ongoing review.</p>	<p>The awarding body's objectives must be clearly defined, measurable, show evidence of review and give consideration to SQA accredited qualifications.</p> <p>The awarding body must demonstrate that it employs robust processes to protect its own business interests, as well as the interests of its providers and learners and have systems in place to manage risk including business continuity and financial planning.</p>

Regulatory Principle	Supplementary Information
<p>4. The awarding body shall continually review the effectiveness of its business services, systems, policies and processes.</p>	<p>The awarding body must demonstrate it has systems in place which facilitate continual improvement and show evidence of regular ongoing review and evaluation of its key business activities.</p> <p>The findings from ongoing review must result in an annual self-assessment of the awarding body's operations in relation to SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.</p> <p>The awarding body must take appropriate measures to identify business risk and where appropriate take preventative or corrective action.</p> <p>The awarding body must demonstrate that it conducts its operations ethically and takes account of all relevant legislation.</p>
<p>5. The awarding body shall provide clear information on its procedures, products and services and ensure that they are accurate and appropriate to SQA accredited qualifications.</p>	<p>The awarding body must demonstrate that its procedures, products and services are clear and that providers are aware of what is expected of them in terms of resources and requirements.</p> <p>The awarding body must demonstrate that its policies, processes, systems, fees, guidance and publications, including those provided by its providers, make appropriate reference to SQA accredited qualifications and SQA Accreditation.</p> <p>The awarding body must demonstrate how it effectively promotes SQA accredited qualifications.</p>
<p>6. The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.</p>	<p>The awarding body must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ demonstrate it has systems in place for the version control of documents ◆ specify the type of records and data it holds and their associated retention periods including records which must be held by providers ◆ have robust arrangements and agreements in place with third parties or service providers where applicable ◆ ensure the accuracy and currency of information shared with SQA Accreditation
<p>7. The awarding body shall</p>	<p>The awarding body must demonstrate how it</p>

Regulatory Principle	Supplementary Information
<p>have effective arrangements for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.</p>	<p>communicates effectively with staff, providers, learners, external stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.</p> <p>The awarding body must demonstrate how it promotes an understanding of SQA accredited qualifications and the role of SQA accreditation.</p>
<p>8. The awarding body shall ensure that SQA Accreditation is granted access to all information pertaining to SQA accredited qualifications.</p>	<p>The awarding body is responsible for ensuring that SQA Accreditation has access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ awarding body premises and staff ◆ providers, assessment locations and learners where appropriate ◆ third parties and service providers where applicable ◆ documents, records and data <p>for the purposes of quality assurance.</p> <p>The awarding body must also make all providers, delivering accredited qualifications, aware of SQA Accreditation's right of access.</p>
<p>9. The awarding body shall ensure that it has robust systems and processes for the identification, design, development, implementation and review of qualifications, which meet the needs of users.</p>	<p>With specific regard to SQA accredited qualifications, the awarding body must demonstrate the application of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identifying the need/demand for a qualification ◆ designing and developing qualifications which are fit for purpose (including identification of appropriate assessment methods and quality assurance systems) ◆ maintaining and reviewing qualifications

Regulatory Principle	Supplementary Information
<p>10. The awarding body shall ensure that it has the necessary arrangements and resources for the effective delivery, assessment and quality assurance of SQA accredited qualifications.</p>	<p>To demonstrate the effective delivery of its qualifications the awarding body must develop and implement assessments which are fit for purpose, rigorous and reliable. The awarding body should consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the type of qualification ◆ methods of assessment ◆ conditions of assessment ◆ resources (including the roles, responsibilities and requirements of the personnel involved in delivery and assessment and also any technical or physical resources required) ◆ evidence requirements (including the type, amount and standard of evidence to be produced) ◆ assessment principles or requirements for the qualification (e.g. assessment strategies, assessment principles/requirements or any awarding body devised assessment criteria or guidelines) <p>The awarding body must demonstrate it has an effective and appropriate quality assurance system which ensures the quality and consistency of assessment provided over time, at any location and between locations. The awarding body should consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the type of qualification ◆ methods of assessment ◆ conditions of assessment ◆ resources (including the roles, responsibilities and requirements of the personnel involved in quality assurance and also any technical or physical resources required) ◆ frequency of quality assurance activity ◆ quality assurance principles or external quality control requirements for the qualification (e.g. assessment strategies, assessment principles/requirements or any awarding body devised criteria or guidelines)

Regulatory Principle	Supplementary Information
<p>11. The awarding body shall ensure that its qualifications and their assessment are inclusive and accessible to learners.</p>	<p>The awarding body must demonstrate how its equality and diversity policies comply with relevant legislation.</p> <p>The awarding body must demonstrate it has a clear process for reasonable adjustments and special considerations.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the awarding body must define any barriers, requirements or conditions which could affect standards.</p> <p>The awarding body must demonstrate that there are no unnecessary barriers to entry or assessment.</p>
<p>12. The awarding body and its providers shall have open and transparent systems to manage complaints.</p>	<p>The awarding body and its providers must deal with complaints on an equitable basis, in line with its published procedures and timescales, and without unreasonable delay.</p> <p>Awarding body personnel, providers and learners must be made aware of how and when they can complain to SQA Accreditation and where appropriate the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Where a complaint is upheld, the awarding body and/or provider must take appropriate, preventative and/or corrective action.</p>
<p>13. The awarding body and its providers shall have clear, fair and equitable procedures to manage appeals.</p>	<p>The awarding body and its providers must have clearly defined processes to deal with appeals for services that it offers.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ how, when and the circumstances under which an appeal can be made ◆ timescales for appeals ◆ independent review <p>Where a referral is made to SQA Accreditation, we may undertake activities to assess the effectiveness of the Awarding Body and/or the provider's appeals process to ensure they are in line with regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Where SQA Accreditation raises any concerns the Awarding Body and/or provider must take appropriate, preventative and/or corrective action to prevent re-occurrence.</p> <p>The awarding body and its providers should ensure that their documentation is clear that SQA Accreditation is unable to overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements.</p>

Regulatory Principle	Supplementary Information
<p>14. The awarding body and its providers shall ensure that it has safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration.</p>	<p>The awarding body and its providers must have clearly defined processes to deal with malpractice and maladministration. The awarding body must inform SQA Accreditation when any cases, or suspected cases, of malpractice and/or maladministration are discovered.</p> <p>The awarding body and its providers must develop and implement corrective action plans to prevent further occurrence.</p>
<p>15. The awarding body and its providers shall have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners.</p>	<p>The awarding body and its providers must maintain systems which hold secure information on learner achievement and progress and comply with relevant legislation.</p> <p>The awarding body must ensure that qualification and Unit certificates (including replacements):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ meet SQA Accreditation's minimum requirements ◆ reflect learner achievement ◆ are only issued on the basis of a valid claim ◆ are designed to protect against fraudulent use ◆ have published timescales for issue ◆ are revoked where fraud or malpractice has been identified <p>The awarding body must seek approval from SQA Accreditation prior to processing certificate claims for expired qualifications.</p>