Audit Report

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)

12 December 2023

Contents

1 Background

This was the fifth audit of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation on 11 January 2012.

ACCA is a globally recognised awarding body, dealing with accountancy qualifications. ACCA is a designated professional body under the Financial Services and Markets Act. ACCA's headquarters are in London with the principal administrative office in Glasgow.

1.1 Scope

SQA Accreditation carries out quality assurance activity in line with its *Quality Assurance of Approved Awarding Bodies Policy*. This states the type and frequency of our quality assurance activities, describes our reporting procedures and indicates how the awarding body's Quality Enhancement Rating is calculated.

As this was a full remote audit of ACCA, all regulatory requirements were included within the scope of the audit. Our quality assurance activities are conducted on a sampling basis and, consequently, not all aspects of the awarding body's systems, procedures and performance have been considered in this report to the same depth.

SQA Accreditation audit reports are written by exception focusing only on those areas where corrective action is required or recommended. Consequently, this approach to audit reporting does not detail areas where compliance or good practice was found.

The audit was designed to ensure ACCA complies with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements namely:

♦ *SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles* (2021)
♦ all *Regulatory Principle* Directives
♦ the awarding body's Accreditation Licence

Awarding body documentation considered for review by the Audit Team includes all documents banked on ACCA's SharePoint site at the time of audit and information supplied to support audit activity. Restricted or commercially sensitive information gathered during SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities is treated in the strictest confidence.

1.2 Audit Report and Action Plan Timescales

ACCA audit date: 12 December 2023

Audit Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 24 January 2024

Audit Report to be signed by ACCA   6 March 2024

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by ACCA   6 March 2024

The process will apply in relation to the timescales specified above:

♦ The awarding body will be sent a signed copy of the Audit Report by email.

♦ The awarding body must sign the copy of the Audit Report and return by email to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified above.

♦ The awarding body will also be emailed a copy of the Action Plan.

♦ The awarding body must complete and return the Action Plan in accordance with the timescale specified above and email this in Microsoft Word format to regulation@sqa.org.uk.

♦ SQA Accreditation will confirm when the Action Plan is appropriate to address the Issues and present it to Accreditation Co-ordination Group (ACG) for approval.

♦ Following approval by ACG, the awarding body will be sent a signed copy of the approved Action Plan by email.

♦ The awarding body must sign the copy of the Action Plan and return by email to SQA Accreditation.

The findings of this Audit Report and the associated Action Plan will be published on SQA Accreditation's website following signed agreement.

SQA Accreditation will continually monitor progress towards completion of the proposed actions identified in the Action Plan and update the awarding body's Quality Enhancement Rating as appropriate.

1.3 Summary of Audit Issues and Recommendations

An Issue has been recorded where evidence shows that the awarding body is not compliant with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements. The awarding body must address the Issues and specify corrective and preventative measures to address them through its Action Plan.

The Action Plan is emailed to ACCA as a separate document to the Audit Report, and must be submitted to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified in 1.2.
As a result of the audit and post-audit activities, three Issues have been recorded and no Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 7	ACCA has misunderstood what constitutes a provider of SQA accredited qualifications. ACCA had omitted to include providers that delivered the qualifications online as outlined in SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.	Medium
2. Principles 7 and 9	ACCA is not following its own processes for document control, with some documents in SharePoint uncontrolled and/or out of date. Some Principles in SharePoint do not have correct documentation assigned to them.	Low
3. Principle 16	A copy of the Complaint Policy was not available on SharePoint at time of audit.	Low

A Recommendation has been noted where SQA Accreditation considers there is potential for enhancement. The awarding body is advised to address any Recommendations in order to reinforce ongoing continuous improvement. However, measures to correct or prevent these are not mandatory and therefore do not form part of the Action Plan.

Recommendation	Detail of Recommendation noted
No Recommendations recorded	N/A

1.4 Risk Rating of Issues

SQA Accreditation assigns a rating to each Issue recorded, depending on the impact on or risk to the awarding body's operations, its SQA accredited qualifications and/or the learner. Issues recorded during the audit will count towards ACCA's Quality Enhancement Rating which will, in turn, contribute towards future quality assurance activity. Further detail on how the Quality Enhancement Rating is calculated can be found on the SQA Accreditation website.

2 Detail of Audit Issues and Recommendations

The following sections detail Issues recorded and Recommendations noted against SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.

2.1 Issues

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

Audit discussion revealed that while the SQA Accreditation Auditors believed there to be two providers currently delivering SQA accredited qualifications, there is potentially several more. Further discussions revealed this was down to the awarding body's understanding of what constituted a provider of SQA accredited qualifications. ACCA has not been recognising the providers that are delivering SQA accredited qualifications online as providers of SQA accredited qualifications. As this information informs provider monitoring, providers may have been excluded from provider monitoring selection. An up-to-date list of providers that deliver SQA accredited qualifications, however the qualification is delivered, is to be uploaded to SharePoint and updated every six months.

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

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

Regulatory Principle 9. The awarding body and its providers must maintain accurate documents, records and data.

ACCA is not following its own processes for document control. SQA Accreditation Auditors found various issues with documentation shared to SharePoint. Multiple documents did not have appropriate version control, such as the Complaint Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, the Syllabus Update Procedure, and Management and Reporting of Malpractice and Maladministration. There were outdated documents in SharePoint, for example, the ACCA Council Handbook is dated 2021–2022. Appropriate documentation was missing from some Principles and various documents in SharePoint were not assigned to the correct Principles; in some cases, documents were shared in a zip file with multiple documents and associated with every Principle.

ACCA must update SharePoint to ensure all documentation is current and valid, and Principles have only the relevant policies and processes associated to them.

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

Regulatory Principle 16. The awarding body and its providers must have open and transparent systems, policies and procedures to manage complaints.

SQA Accreditation Auditors were unable to find a copy of ACCA's Complaint Policy in SharePoint. Discussions on the day of the audit indicated that while ACCA does have a Complaint Policy, it was unaware this must be uploaded to SharePoint.

Several complaint-handling-related documents were submitted to SQA Accreditation Auditors post audit and subsequently reviewed.

This has been recorded as **Issue 3**.

2.2 Recommendations

There were no Recommendations made.

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings