



Provider Monitoring Report

Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)

3 October 2022 to 6 October 2022

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1 Background

Two providers were monitored remotely on 3 October 2022 and 6 October 2022.

1.1 Scope

SQA Accreditation carries out quality assurance activity in line with its *Quality Assurance of Approved Awarding Bodies Policy*. This involves monitoring a sample of the awarding body's approved providers or assessment sites. Provider monitoring visits will be conducted in a consistent manner within and between providers.

The aim of monitoring is to:

- ◆ ensure the awarding body's compliance with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements
- ◆ confirm that quality assurance arrangements are being conducted by the awarding body in accordance with its prescribed arrangements
- ◆ ensure that quality assurance arrangements are being conducted in a consistent manner, within and between providers
- ◆ ensure that providers are receiving the appropriate guidance, support and documentation from the awarding body in order to facilitate a high standard of qualification delivery
- ◆ inform future audit and monitoring activity for the awarding body

All Principles may be included within the scope of the provider monitoring activity.

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

SQA Accreditation provider monitoring reports are written by exception focusing only on those areas where corrective action is required or recommended.

1.2 Provider Monitoring Report Timescales

VTCT provider monitoring dates: 3 - 6 October 2022

Provider Monitoring Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 26 October 2022

Provider Monitoring Report to be signed by VTCT: 8 December 2022

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by VTCT: 8 December 2022

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

- ◆ The awarding body will be sent a copy of the Provider Monitoring Report by email.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign the copy of the Provider Monitoring 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 Action Plan and return by email to SQA Accreditation.

The findings of this Provider Monitoring 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 Provider Monitoring 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 VTCT as a separate document to the Provider Monitoring Report and must be submitted to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified in 1.2.

As a result of the provider monitoring activity, four Issues have been recorded and five Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 9	None of the policies and procedures viewed by the Accreditation Auditor in provider 2 had a date or version number.	Low
2. Principle 13	<p>During recent external quality assurance activities at provider 2, the external quality assurer (EQA) viewed a sample of paper portfolios on screen which involved provider staff showing individual pages in each portfolio on camera.</p> <p>Viewing paper portfolios on camera severely limits the EQA in freely navigating portfolio information and is therefore not as effective as other in absentia methods, which may then compromise the robust nature of the quality assurance process.</p>	Medium
3. Principle 16	The complaints procedure at provider 2 did not reference the fact that learners can escalate complaints to VTCT or to SQA Accreditation as the regulator.	Low
4. Principle 18	The malpractice and maladministration policy at provider 2 did not state that all suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration would be reported to VTCT.	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
1. Principle 6	VTCT may wish to consider its Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs) and whether there are benefits to learners and providers by having these qualifications accredited and credit rated for the SCQF by SQA Accreditation.
2. Principle 12	VTCT may wish to include Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) within the <i>ManageAssess</i> e-portfolio system.
3. Principle 12	VTCT should review the functionality of the <i>Linx2Achieve</i> system to determine if feedback can be given for all external assessments in the SVQs in Beauty Therapy and the SVQs in Spa and Massage Therapy qualifications, ensuring parity with the SVQs in Hairdressing.
4. Principle 15	VTCT may wish to open their registration system before 1 September, thereby allowing providers with courses starting before this date to register learners and record progress, as soon as courses commence.
5. Principle 15	VTCT may wish to advise providers about the processes and any relevant timescales applicable to learners who are still registered for qualifications but not active.

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 provider monitoring will count towards VTCT'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 Good Practice, Issues and Recommendations

The following sections detail:

- ◆ good practice noted by providers
- ◆ Issues recorded and Recommendations noted against SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements

2.1 Good Practice

The following areas of good practice were noted by providers:

Provider 1 spoke very highly of VTCT and highlighted many areas of good practice, including:

- ◆ excellent support from VTCT through the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the form of webinars and question/answer sessions
- ◆ Linx2Achieve system which facilitates online assessment for external assessment
- ◆ randomly generated questions in external assessments ensuring that learners are not answering the same questions in the same assessment, thereby minimising opportunities for malpractice
- ◆ feedback on learner answers in external assessments for Hairdressing which aids remediation work
- ◆ helpful and enabling awarding body staff, especially the external quality assurer
- ◆ good working relationship with all VTCT staff
- ◆ extensive range of qualifications
- ◆ willingness to engage with providers and react to feedback, especially in the development of qualifications

Provider 2 highlighted:

- ◆ supportive customer service for all aspects, from learner enquiries to technical queries
- ◆ supportive EQA
- ◆ contact and regular updates through the COVID-19 pandemic
- ◆ industry leader status of VTCT

2.2 Issues

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

None of the policies and procedures viewed by the Accreditation Auditor in provider 2 had a date or version number. This included policies and procedures for complaints, appeals, equality and diversity, internal quality assurance, health and safety, malpractice and maladministration.

Staff in the provider commented that documents were reviewed and changed as necessary, but acknowledged that a date or version number had not been included.

VTCT must ensure that its providers have systems in place to ensure the currency and accuracy of information.

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

Regulatory Principle 13. The awarding body and its providers must ensure that they have systems and processes which ensure the effective quality assurance of accredited qualifications.

Provider 2 had received two recent external quality assurance activities, one in 2021 and one in 2022, with both activities being conducted remotely. Provider 2 uses paper portfolios for its SVQs in Beauty and SVQs in Massage and Spa. Staff explained that the paper format suits the learner needs in the industry and that they are very happy with this method. The Accreditation Auditor understands this completely.

During both external quality assurance activities, the EQA chose candidates and viewed a sample of their paper portfolios on screen, which involved provider staff showing individual pages in each portfolio on camera. The provider staff had tried to upload some paper documentation in advance of the activities but had encountered difficulties. The Accreditation Auditor viewed the portfolios in the same way and found it difficult to navigate the information, especially given that some of the assignments involved quite lengthy written descriptions for onscreen camera viewing. Notably, the Accreditation Auditor was only viewing a fraction of the content the EQA had viewed and was viewing from a general quality assurance perspective, rather than the occupationally competent perspective of the EQA, who is thoroughly checking candidate evidence. It was also discussed that it was very time-consuming to hold up a succession of individual pages during EQA activities, while achieving the correct camera angle for optimum visibility at all times.

The Accreditation Auditor acknowledges that the provider is rated very low risk and the EQA is a subject expert who is very familiar with the portfolio format and with the provider generally. It is further fully acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic and its ramifications have meant that adaptations have been necessary to allow EQA activity to proceed. Nevertheless, viewing paper portfolios on camera in the format described severely limits the EQA in freely navigating portfolio information. It is therefore not as effective as other in absentia methods, such as reviewing paper evidence that has been sent electronically or physically by post/courier and may therefore compromise the robust nature of the quality assurance process.

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.

The complaints procedure at provider 2 did not reference the fact that learners can escalate complaints to VTCT or to SQA Accreditation as the regulator.

The complaints procedure had been checked in recent VTCT external quality assurance activity but the discrepancy had not been highlighted.

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

Regulatory Principle 18. The awarding body and its providers must ensure that it has safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration.

The malpractice and maladministration policy at provider 2 did not state that all suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration would be reported to VTCT.

The policy had been checked in recent VTCT external quality assurance activity but the discrepancy had not been highlighted.

This has been recorded as **Issue 4**.

2.3 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 6. The awarding body must continually review the effectiveness of its services, systems, policies and processes.

Provider 1 delivers a large number of VRQs along with some SVQs. Staff commented that the content and scope of the VRQs meets the needs of some learners better than the SVQs. However, provider staff also stated that they do favour Scottish qualifications, as do employers in their area.

Accordingly, VTCT may wish to consider its VRQs and whether there are benefits to learners and providers by having these qualifications accredited and credit rated for the SCQF by SQA Accreditation.

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

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers must ensure that they have the necessary arrangements and resources required to manage and administer qualification delivery and assessment.

Staff at provider 1 informed the Accreditation Auditor that the VTCT *ManageAssess* e-portfolio system did not support SVQs, only VRQs, and that the provider had to develop and populate its own e-portfolio system using *OneNote* for the SVQs offered. Staff commented that this had been a very time-consuming and labour-intensive process.

VTCT may wish to include SVQs within the *ManageAssess* e-portfolio system.

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

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers must ensure that they have the necessary arrangements and resources required to manage and administer qualification delivery and assessment.

Staff at provider 2 commented that feedback on learner answers in external assessments was not given on the *Linx2Achieve* system for the SVQs in Beauty and the SVQs in Spa and Massage being delivered, with the exception of a couple of units. Staff commented that feedback on learner answers is important, as it would allow both staff and learners to know which questions had been answered incorrectly when learning outcomes had not been achieved. This knowledge would then aid remediation. Staff felt that learners were being disadvantaged as the feedback is available for other industry qualifications such as Hairdressing.

VTCT should review the functionality of the *Linx2Achieve* system to determine if feedback can be given for all external assessments in the SVQs in Beauty Therapy and the SVQs in Spa and Massage Therapy qualifications, thus ensuring parity with the SVQs in Hairdressing.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 3**.

Regulatory Principle 15. The awarding body must have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners.

Staff in provider 1 commented that the VTCT registration system *Linx2Online* opens for entries on 1 September. However, provider 1 starts delivering courses mid-August each year. Although providers have eight weeks to register learners in accordance with VTCT requirements, staff commented that they would like to register learners and start recording learner progress as soon as possible without delay.

VTCT may wish to open their registration system before 1 September thereby allowing providers with courses starting before this date to register learners and record progress as soon as courses commence.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 4**.

Regulatory Principle 15. The awarding body must have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners.

Provider 1 had current registrations for the qualifications being delivered but informed the Accreditation Auditor that they had hundreds of open registrations on their internal system who were still registered with VTCT. Provider staff were unsure how to manage these registrations.

VTCT may wish to advise providers about the processes and any relevant timescales applicable to learners who are still registered for qualifications but not active.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 5**.