

# SQA Accreditation Annual Review 2016–17

Publication date: June 2017

Publication code: FE7453

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority  
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[accreditation.sqa.org.uk](http://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 has a statutory remit under Scottish legislation to accredit and quality assure qualifications in Scotland, thereby safeguarding the interests of learners, employers, parents, funding bodies, providers and Scottish Government. It does this by independently approving and regulating awarding bodies operating in Scotland and accrediting their qualifications, which include Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), Regulatory and Licensing Qualifications, and other competence-based qualifications. SQA Accreditation has a statutory remit to accredit any type of qualification other than university degrees.

SQA Accreditation also plays a central role in advising and supporting Standards Setting Organisations (SSOs) and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in the development and review of National Occupational Standards (NOS), and also with regards to qualification development. It is responsible for approving and quality assuring National Occupational Standards (NOS) and qualification products that include qualification structures, assessment strategies and core skills signposting.

SQA Accreditation is also an approved SCQF credit rating body.

SQA Accreditation aims to work efficiently and effectively to fulfil its responsibilities. Work is underpinned by a set of Regulatory Principles and the Regulatory Principles Directives. Its operational activities are driven by the needs of Scotland and 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 2016–17, and highlights key performance statistics relating to accredited qualifications and awarding body regulatory activity.



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# Chief Executive's Statement

SQA Accreditation continues to carry out its responsibilities and activities as an enabling regulator. We provide appropriate specialist support, advice and guidance to our stakeholders. We strive to be an effective regulator operating in accordance with Scottish Government's principles of better regulation to promote the delivery, development and quality assurance of accredited qualifications in Scotland.

We also understand the benefits of continuous improvement across all aspects of our operations, systems and processes. Over the last year, we have made significant progress, in what are difficult and challenging times, through our development work and project group outputs. These are summarised in this review.

SQA Accreditation, like many organisations, continues to be affected by the wider external environment of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector across the UK. And we will continue to monitor these changes to ensure that SQA Accreditation is prepared for, and can react to, developments and changes in the sector.

An example of this has been the transition from a UK-wide to a Devolved Administrations management of the National Occupational Standards programme. SQA Accreditation continues to support Scottish Government, the other Devolved Nations and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in developing a Standards and Framework programme, fit for all the devolved authorities.

It is also important that we work closely with awarding bodies, providing a platform to keep them informed of any changes and developments within Scotland and across the UK. We achieve this in a number of ways including through regular Keep In Touch meetings, monthly newsletters and our annual stakeholder event.

SQA Accreditation remains fully committed to the continued delivery of a high-quality service for Scotland and our stakeholders, with a confidence borne from the support and shared commitment of our colleagues and partners.

**Dr Janet Brown**

**Chief Executive, SQA**

# Operational activity 2016–17

SQA Accreditation's annual operational activity from April 2016 to the end of March 2017 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

### Standards and frameworks commissioning

A new approach to the commissioning and funding arrangements for the development of National Occupational Standards (NOS), Vocational Qualifications and Modern Apprenticeships was introduced for 2016–17.

In late 2015, it was announced by the UK Government that it would be withdrawing funding from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). As a result, UKCES ceased to operate during Autumn 2016, and the work on Standards and Frameworks had to be transferred to an alternative organisation. Ultimately, this organisation was Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

In addition, with the focus in England being placed on Apprenticeship Trailblazers, English investment in the development of NOS was discontinued. The three Devolved Administrations (DAs) of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, however, maintained full commitment to the review and development of NOS and the benefits they provide.

Initially, UKCES facilitated the tendering process on behalf of the DAs. It also agreed contracts and working arrangements with the successful Delivery Partners (bidder organisations), and monitored project delivery until the Delivery Partner agreements and funding arrangements were transferred to SDS.

The enforced changes presented significant delays and challenges for the on-time approval of Standards and Frameworks project work. Despite this, 134 of the total of 148 projects for Scotland (90.5%) were completed by the end of March 2017. The remaining 14 (9.5%) projects were subject to extension agreements between Delivery Partners and Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

### 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).

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.

## **Developing the 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 on the use of SVQs and/or SVQ units in the Foundation Apprenticeship Framework. Individual Accreditation Managers have also provided specific feedback on the proposed content of Foundation Apprenticeship frameworks.

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

## **SQA Accreditation Stakeholder Event**

SQA Accreditation held its annual Stakeholder Event on Thursday 8 September 2016. There was a high turnout for the event, with representatives from SQA Accreditation approved awarding bodies and Standards Setting Organisations in attendance. Representatives from the three Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and two members of SQA's Accreditation Committee, also attended.

In the light of the UK Government's decision to withdraw from the National Occupational Standards programme in England, the event highlighted to stakeholders the continued commitment of the three Devolved Administrations to supporting the provision of National Occupational Standards (NOS).

Presentations were made on behalf of the three Devolved Administrations about the Standards and Frameworks commissioning process, and the short-, medium- and long-term future for NOS. There was also an overarching view that the three Devolved Administrations will continue to stay abreast of developments in England and consider what lessons can be learned.

Northern Ireland and Wales delegates provided a policy update, providing a strategic overview to the current policies around qualifications, apprenticeships and regulation in their administrations.

Skills Development Scotland provided an update on the apprenticeship family in Scotland, highlighting recent developments with regards to Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships.



In the afternoon, the event was split into two sessions: one for standards setting organisations, and one for awarding bodies.

The standards setting organisations had a presentation on the Modern Apprenticeship Group and the framework for approval of apprenticeship frameworks. The session also focused on work required for the remainder of the year with regards to the NOS Programme.

The awarding bodies were given an update from SQA Accreditation's Regulation section. The objective was to raise awareness of the importance of continuous improvement and identify ways to reduce the burden on awarding bodies. This session covered SQA Accreditation's role and relationship with other qualification regulators in UK, areas of improvement, and discussion to identify opportunities to reduce the burden of the Regulatory Principles.

## **New guidance on developing qualifications for accreditation**

Accreditation Managers developed new guidance: [Developing Qualifications for Accreditation: A Guide for Awarding Bodies](#). This document is designed to support awarding bodies in meeting Regulatory Principles 9 and 10 when designing, developing and reviewing qualifications for SQA Accreditation. them.

This guidance accompanies the [Guidance for Completion of Form AC2 Qualification Accreditation](#) and the AC2 form required for a formal accreditation request.

The publication of this new guidance document adds to the support materials on offer by SQA Accreditation, including guidance for standards setting organisations such as [Developing Scottish Qualification Products for Approval: A Guide for Standard Setting Organisations](#).

## **Quality Enhancement Rating**

SQA Accreditation continually reviews its risk-based approach to regulating approved awarding bodies and accredited qualifications. We utilise a Quality Enhancement Rating (QER) information management system to record information that may contribute to future regulatory activity. Our risk analysis allows us to take account of emerging trends and risks, not only for individual awarding bodies, but across all approved awarding bodies, and to maintain a proportionate response.

SQA Accreditation intends to review this approach further in 2017–18 and will look to further establish and embed its risk-based approach to regulating awarding bodies and accredited qualifications.

## **SharePoint**

In February 2017, SQA Accreditation introduced a new document management system, SharePoint, to replace the previous Quickr system. The transition from Quickr to SharePoint was completed successfully, with support and guidance provided to all 38 approved awarding bodies. All appropriate users have received their permissions and access rights to bank, manage and maintain the documents required to demonstrate compliance with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.

## **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.

### **Core Skills Signposting Evaluation**

SQA Accreditation insists that Core Skills Signposting is developed as a mandatory component of an SVQ. A Core Skills Signposting is developed by the standards setting organisation (SSO) and approved by SQA Accreditation's Accreditation Co-ordination Group (ACG) as a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) qualification product.

A project group was formed to carry out an evaluation on the value of Core Skills Signposting to determine whether it should be retained, reviewed or discontinued.

Due to the lack of existing awareness on how (or even if) stakeholders use Core Skills Signposting, it was agreed that a series of high-level open questions would be sent to SSOs, awarding bodies (ABs) and providers. The surveys were tailored to each stakeholder group and were designed to give stakeholders the freedom to show their understanding of Core Skills Signposting and demonstrate whether and how they used them.

The findings of the survey indicated that signposting is valuable to providers, and did not provide evidence to justify Core Skills Signposting being discontinued. Three recommendations were made following analysis of the survey responses:

- 1 Develop SQA Accreditation guidance on Core Skills Signposting to inform stakeholders of the purpose and value of mandatory Core Skills Signposting of an SVQ.
- 2 Clarify quality assurance procedures for Core Skills Signposting with standards setting organisations.
- 3 Bring clarity to the wider discourse of Core Skills by exploring opportunities to input to SQA's (awarding body) and Skills Development Scotland/MAG's reviews on Core Skills and Core Skills Mapping.

## **Expanding accreditation of qualifications**

SQA Accreditation continues to encourage all approved awarding bodies to consider bringing forward more of their qualifications for accreditation.

SQA Accreditation has also been developing plans to proactively engage with prospective new awarding bodies to consider the benefits of being approved by SQA Accreditation. The project group understands the need to be aligned with the risk strategy currently being developed by a working group that will be implemented in the coming year. We have therefore stalled new engagement activity until that is defined.

## **Quality of submissions review**

To maintain and further improve the quality of papers submitted to ACG for approval, two key areas of support for awarding bodies were developed:

- ◆ A revision of the standard AC2 Qualification Accreditation form resulted in an updated version being produced in April 2016.
- ◆ A new guidance document *Developing Qualifications for Accreditation: A Guide for Awarding Bodies* was produced and promoted in March 2017.

Submissions will continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis. To date, a general reduction in errors has been identified, with no significant trends to be addressed.

## **SCQF level and titling**

SVQ titles began to change from 1 September 2016, with the SVQ level dropped and only the SCQF level to be specified. For example, where the previous titling convention was:

SVQ 2 Floristry at SCQF Level 5

The new titling convention became:

SVQ Floristry at SCQF Level 5

It is also acceptable to title as:

SVQ in Floristry at SCQF Level 5

Awarding bodies started to transition their accredited SVQs to the new titles from 1 September 2016. However, not all qualification titles changed on that date.

With many SVQ titles changing at the point of re-accreditation we expect it to take a number of years before all SVQs reflect the new titling convention.

SSOs and SSCs were required to implement this change from 1 September 2016 for any qualification product development work that took place in 2016–17 and beyond.

The change is intended to remove potential confusion caused by multiple levels being used in qualification titles, and to promote knowledge and understanding of the SCQF.

All stakeholders were asked to make every effort to respect the simplicity of this titling change and offer reassurance that the removal of the SVQ level makes no difference to the structure, value and vocational competence of each certificated SVQ.

## **Awarding body approval**

As part of SQA Accreditation's ongoing approach to continuous improvement, and to support its position as an enabling regulator, SQA Accreditation looked at how it could improve the awarding body approval process. Following a review of the process, the option to conduct a [post approval development visit](#) (PADV) was included within the process.

The PADV is an opportunity to work with newly-approved awarding bodies in their transition into SQA Accreditation's regulatory environment. The purpose of the PADV will be to engage with newly approved awarding bodies (within six months of approval), to provide support, advice and guidance prior to their first audit.

It will also help SQA Accreditation to understand awarding body systems and processes, and to work closely with them to promote effective regulation, continuous improvement and future qualification accreditation.

A pilot of the PADV was completed with a recently-approved awarding body, and the outcome of this will set the approach to PADVs in the future.

Additionally, new [timeframes](#) to manage and monitor all requests from potential awarding bodies were agreed. These timeframes provide potential awarding bodies with the sufficient opportunity to make their case to become an approved awarding body and ensure that evidence provided throughout the application process remains current.

# Audit activity 2016–17

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 2016–17.

SQA Accreditation carries out monitoring of all SQA-approved awarding bodies. In 2016–17, 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 16 audits and 16 provider monitoring reports (25 provider monitoring visits in total) during 2016–17.

## Awarding bodies

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

In 2016–17 one organisation gained SQA-approved awarding body status:

- ◆ Qualifications for Industry (QFI)

Qualifications for Industry was subject to a Post Approval Development Visit and will be scheduled for a full audit in the next financial year.

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

One awarding body had its approved status withdrawn.

- ◆ Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)

This withdrawal was a result of the qualifications and quality assurance parts of the organisation being taken over by another awarding body that is currently approved by SQA Accreditation.

At the end of the operational year 2016–17, 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, meaning that immediate and comprehensive action is required. During an 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	7	5	0	0
Principle 2	1	0	0	0
Principle 3	1	2	0	0
Principle 4	1	7	1	2
Principle 5	7	13	4	5
Principle 6	10	9	10	10
Principle 7	0	3	4	2
Principle 8	1	0	1	0
Principle 9	4	4	0	0
Principle 10	12	6	16	8
Principle 11	3	0	4	0
Principle 12	3	5	3	0
Principle 13	3	3	2	1

Principle 14	4	3	5	0
Principle 15	10	4	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>28</b>

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	0	0	0	0
RPDR 2	0	0	0	0
RPDR 3	4	1	0	0
RPDR 4	1	0	0	0
RPDR 5	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

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

During 2016–17, audit and provider monitoring activity identified that the greatest number of Issues was recorded against Regulatory Principles 1, 5, 6, 10 and 15:

- ◆ Principle 1: The awarding body shall have clearly defined and effective governance arrangements.
- ◆ Principle 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.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Principle 15: The awarding body and its providers shall have effective, reliable and secure systems for the registration and certification of learners.

Various Recommendations were identified, and again the greatest number was recorded against Regulatory Principles 5 and 6. In addition Principle 4 had a larger volume of Recommendations identified against it:

- ◆ Principle 4: The awarding body shall continually review the effectiveness of its business services, systems policies and processes.

In addition, Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR 3 — Logos and Certificate Requirements for SQA Accredited Qualifications — had four Issues and one Recommendation raised against it.

The Regulatory Principles and Regulatory Principles Directives that are identified as having a higher volume of Issues and Recommendations raised against them (in comparison to other principles) are monitored by the Regulation team to evaluate trends and consider as part of any future regulatory activity.

## Accreditation activity 2016–17

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 2016–17.

### Qualifications accredited

At the end of 2016–17, SQA Accreditation had a total of 849 accredited qualifications<sup>1</sup>. This is made up of the following qualification types:

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)	547
Regulatory and Licensing qualifications (R&L)	50
Other qualifications (such as competence-based qualifications)	255

139 qualifications were withdrawn during 2016–17. 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 (MA) Frameworks where the SVQ has not been successful. 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 2016–17.

Accredited qualifications spanned the following SCQF levels:

<b>Level 4</b>	32	<b>Level 11</b>	12
<b>Level 5</b>	302		
<b>Level 6</b>	281		
<b>Level 7</b>	95		
<b>Level 8</b>	36		
<b>Level 9</b>	20		
<b>Level 10</b>	5		

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<sup>1</sup> Qualifications that have lapsed are not included.



The majority of qualifications sit at SCQF Levels 5 and 6. This is to be expected because SVQs (particularly), and 'Other' qualifications, form parts of Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks — the vast majority of which sit at SCQF Levels 5, 6 and 7.

### **SVQs accredited**

At the end of 2016–17, there were 547 accredited SVQs, which is a decrease of 101 on the previous year. SVQs are offered by 16 approved awarding bodies, and account for 64% of all accredited qualifications.

Of these SVQs, 348 formed part of MA Frameworks at the end of March 2017, representing 64% of accredited SVQs.

### **Regulatory and Licensing qualifications accredited**

At the end of 2016–17, there were 50 Regulatory and Licensing qualifications accredited — a minor decrease of three qualifications on the previous year. Regulatory and Licensing qualifications are offered by 13 approved awarding bodies, and account for 6% of all currently accredited qualifications.

There were 17 Regulatory and Licensing qualifications in MA Frameworks at the end of March 2017, representing 35% of accredited Regulatory and Licensing qualifications.

### **Other qualifications accredited**

At the end of 2016–17, there were 255 'Other' qualifications accredited, which is an increase of 30 qualifications on the previous year. 'Other' accredited qualifications are currently offered by 28 approved awarding bodies and account for 30% of all accredited qualifications.

While SVQs remain as the Scottish Government's qualification of choice for inclusion in Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks, accredited 'Other' qualifications may be approved for inclusion. At the end of 2016–17, 72 'Other' qualifications were included in Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks, which accounts for 28% of accredited 'Other' qualifications.

## **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 2016–17.

## SVQ Uptake

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%
2016–17	44,538	-5%	35,220	+4%

Table 2: SVQ market performance

In 2016–17, there were minor movements in uptake from the previous year. Registrations decreased by 5% from prior year (2,082 registrations), while certifications increased by 4% (1,364 certifications). The decrease in registrations could be explained by the reduction in the number of accredited SVQs available in 2016-17 however, many of the withdrawn qualifications had zero uptake so this does not fully explain the decrease in uptake. The performance of SVQs will continue to be monitored via SQA Accreditation’s Quarterly Statistics Reports.

## 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%
2016–17	30,462	-1%	29,199	<-1%

Table 3: Regulatory and Licensing qualifications market performance

In 2016–17, registrations decreased marginally by 1% and certifications by 0.04%, showing very little movement on prior year performance. The significant increases in 2013–14 and 2014–15, as well as the large decrease in 2015–16 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. This performance has continued into 2016–17 as expected.

### **‘Other’ Qualifications market performance**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Registrations</b>	<b>+/-%</b>	<b>Certifications</b>	<b>+/-%</b>
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%
2016–17	37,975	-4%	24,534	+4%

**Table 4: Other qualifications market performance**

In 2016–17, uptake of ‘other’ qualifications bucked its usual trend of a stable year-on-year increase, with registrations decreasing by 4% on the previous year. While this is only a minor decrease in uptake from the previous year, a decrease in uptake of these qualifications is not expected following the extremely strong levels of growth seen since 2011.

The performance of ‘Other’ competence-based accredited qualifications will continue to be monitored quarterly and annually. 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 2017–18

SQA Accreditation will continue to support and work with the three Devolved Administrations as they seek to put in place a permanent solution to the management of the National Occupational Standards programmes. In addition, we will support and work closely with Skills Development Scotland to ensure that the quality of projects delivered through the Standards and Frameworks Programme for 2017–18 are of an appropriate standard.

Through our Provider Monitoring Visits, we plan to visit a sample of providers that are delivering Foundation Apprenticeships, and will use these visits to ensure that the assessments of the SVQ units, included in the Foundation Apprenticeship frameworks, are of an appropriate standard.

To assist us in more effective targeting of our resources, a risk strategy will be developed which will set our risk appetite with regards to qualifications, awarding bodies and industry sectors.

Towards the end of the year, a stakeholder survey will be carried out to seek feedback on our performance. The results of this survey will then be fed into our continuous improvement process.

# Appendix 1: Summary of audit activity 2016–17 against Regulatory Principles (2014)

2016–17 Audit Reports			
Awarding Body	Audit Date	Issues	Recommendations
Associated Sports Qualifications	13-07-2016	7	3
Association of Accounting Technicians	08-12-2016	3	3
British Institute of Facilities Management	27-04-2016	2	2
Engineering Construction Industry Training Board	14-02-2017	5	3
FutureQuals	12-12-2016	5	3
IMI	22-11-2016	5	1
Industry Qualifications Limited	23-11-2016	0	6
Lantra	03-03-2016	2	1
Mineral Products Qualifications Council	02-03-2017	3	8
National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health	20-07-2016	1	2
RSL	22-03-1017	5	7
SafeCert Awards Limited	30-03-2017	7	1
Safety Training Awards Limited	25-10-2016	4	3
SFEDI Awards	31-01-2017	1	6
Vocational Training Charitable Trust	02-03-2017	2	1
Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers	25/26-10-2016	7	3

# Appendix 2: Approved awarding bodies

This is a list of SQA Accreditation approved awarding bodies as at end March 2017.

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Awarding body</b>
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
FAA	First Aid Awards
FutureQuals	Future (Awards and Qualifications) Limited
GQA	GQA Qualifications
Not Applicable	HABC
Not Applicable	IMI
IQ	Industry Qualifications Limited
ITC	ITC First
Not Applicable	Lantra
MPQC	Mineral Products Qualifications Council
NEBOSH	National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health
Not Applicable	PAA/VQ-SET

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Awarding body</b>
Not Applicable	PIABC
Not Applicable	Pearson Education Limited
Not Applicable	The Princes Trust
QFI	Qualifications for Industry
Not Applicable	RSL
RAD	Royal Academy of Dance
Not Applicable	SafeCert 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"> <li>◆ key committees and groups</li> <li>◆ partnership arrangements</li> <li>◆ conflicts of interest</li> <li>◆ policies and procedures</li> <li>◆ organisational structure</li> </ul> <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"> <li>◆ leadership and expertise</li> <li>◆ quality management systems and procedures</li> <li>◆ technology</li> <li>◆ human resources</li> <li>◆ financial resources</li> <li>◆ and other physical resources</li> </ul> <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"> <li>◆ demonstrate it has systems in place for the version control of documents</li> <li>◆ specify the type of records and data it holds and their associated retention periods including records which must be held by providers</li> <li>◆ have robust arrangements and agreements in place with third parties or service providers where applicable</li> <li>◆ ensure the accuracy and currency of information shared with SQA Accreditation</li> </ul>

Regulatory Principle	Supplementary Information
<p>7. The awarding body shall have effective arrangements for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.</p>	<p>The awarding body must demonstrate how it 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"> <li>◆ awarding body premises and staff</li> <li>◆ providers, assessment locations and learners where appropriate</li> <li>◆ third parties and service providers where applicable</li> <li>◆ documents, records and data</li> </ul> <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"> <li>◆ identifying the need/demand for a qualification</li> <li>◆ designing and developing qualifications which are fit for purpose (including identification of appropriate assessment methods and quality assurance systems)</li> <li>◆ maintaining and reviewing qualifications</li> </ul>

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"> <li>◆ the type of qualification</li> <li>◆ methods of assessment</li> <li>◆ conditions of assessment</li> <li>◆ resources (including the roles, responsibilities and requirements of the personnel involved in delivery and assessment and also any technical or physical resources required)</li> <li>◆ evidence requirements (including the type, amount and standard of evidence to be produced)</li> <li>◆ assessment principles or requirements for the qualification (e.g. assessment strategies, assessment principles/requirements or any awarding body devised assessment criteria or guidelines)</li> </ul> <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"> <li>◆ the type of qualification</li> <li>◆ methods of assessment</li> <li>◆ conditions of assessment</li> <li>◆ resources (including the roles, responsibilities and requirements of the personnel involved in quality assurance and also any technical or physical resources required)</li> <li>◆ frequency of quality assurance activity</li> <li>◆ 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)</li> </ul>

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"> <li>◆ how, when and the circumstances under which an appeal can be made</li> <li>◆ timescales for appeals</li> <li>◆ independent review</li> </ul> <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"> <li>◆ meet SQA Accreditation’s minimum requirements</li> <li>◆ reflect learner achievement</li> <li>◆ are only issued on the basis of a valid claim</li> <li>◆ are designed to protect against fraudulent use</li> <li>◆ have published timescales for issue</li> <li>◆ are revoked where fraud or malpractice has been identified</li> </ul> <p>The awarding body must seek approval from SQA Accreditation prior to processing certificate claims for expired qualifications.</p>