Guidance for Prospective Awarding Bodies

In order to become an SQA approved awarding body, organisations are required to demonstrate that they are capable of meeting SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.

http://accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/Regulation/Regulatory_Requirements

SQA Accreditation strongly recommends that any organisation considering applying for awarding body approval and qualification accreditation undertakes a process of self-appraisal to establish if it is currently in a position to make a viable application.

However, in undertaking self-appraisal, prospective awarding bodies should consider whether or not they are capable of meeting the requirements in the categories stated below. These are considered key to the viability of any application for awarding body approval:

♦ Governance
♦ Delivery and assessment
♦ Finance
♦ Resources and expertise

Governance

Prospective awarding bodies are required to have:

♦ a clear organisational structure and transparent governance arrangements
♦ terms of reference for governing committees, including details of roles and responsibilities and transparent lines of accountability
♦ a clear conflict-of-interest policy
♦ clear definitions for the roles and responsibilities of any partner organisations

Organisations operating in partnership must have a written agreement which outlines responsibilities for the critical activities of quality assurance and certification.

Delivery and assessment

Prospective awarding bodies must ensure that centres/providers approved to offer their qualifications:

♦ have the resources and expertise available to facilitate qualification delivery throughout the lifespan of any qualification that they seek to offer
♦ adhere to the quality assurance arrangements prescribed for any qualification

Prospective awarding bodies will be required to demonstrate that they have procedures in place to ensure that all assessment and verification staff are appropriately qualified and have current occupational competence with respect to any qualification being delivered.

They will also be required to demonstrate that they have the appropriate quality assurance arrangements in place to ensure that approved centres are carrying out the requisite quality assurance checks on qualification delivery.

Where a prospective awarding body intends to seek accreditation for qualifications with potentially low uptake for which the market is unlikely to significantly increase over time, SQA Accreditation would recommend that alternatives to awarding body approval are considered, such as:

♦ partnering with an existing approved awarding body currently delivering similar qualification types
♦ applying to become an approved centre/provider of an existing approved awarding body
♦ having qualifications SCQF credit rated through an approved credit rating body (CRB)

Finance

Sufficient financial resource is required to ensure awarding body operations remain viable.

SQA Accreditation reserves the right to conduct financial due diligence checks at any time during the application process.

Resource and expertise

Sufficient resources and expertise should be available in order to:

♦ identify the need/demand for a qualification (particularly in Scotland) — appropriate expertise and resource will be required in order to analyse the available labourforce market intelligence (LMI) and assess employer/stakeholder needs to ensure the suitability and viability of any proposed qualification
♦ design, develop, review and maintain qualifications (suitable for the Scottish market) — sufficient resource should be available to ensure an ongoing programme of qualification review and revision
♦ design assessment methods — expertise should be available to facilitate the design of appropriate assessment methods, depending on the nature of the qualification in question
♦ design, operate and monitor quality assurance systems that ensure the quality and consistency of assessment and qualification delivery

Any prospective awarding body should ensure that suitably qualified individuals with current knowledge of their specific area of expertise are appointed in relation to quality assuring candidate assessment and qualification delivery.

Qualifications

Prospective awarding bodies are required to have qualifications which:

♦ have been developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders (eg sector skills councils, employers, training providers) particularly those in Scotland
♦ are supported by the appropriate stakeholders in Scotland (eg employers, centres/providers)
♦ have been assessed as suitable for the Scottish market, for which clear marketing plans have been produced and a potential (or current) candidate base in Scotland have been established
♦ are assessed, certificated and quality assured

If after undertaking self-appraisal you are confident that your organisation can meet the above requirements, you must contact SQA Accreditation to discuss the intention to seek awarding body approval status.

You can contact SQA Accreditation by:

• e-mail: regulation@sqa.org.uk
• telephone: 0345 213 5249

Failure to do so is likely to result in any approval request being rejected at the submission stage.

Following discussion you may be asked to complete the Enquiry Form and send it to the regulation@sqa.org.uk should you have any difficulty in sending the completed enquiry form to the regulation mail box, please contact the Accreditation Officer.

We will contact you within five working days of receiving the Enquiry Form to discuss your organisation, proposed qualification(s) and the awarding body approval application process.