



Audit Report
Alcohol Focus Scotland
25 January 2018

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1 Background

This was the fifth audit of Alcohol Focus Scotland since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in 2007.

Alcohol Focus Scotland is Scotland's national alcohol charity working to reduce the harm caused by alcohol. As a nationally recognised awarding body the organisation delivers accredited qualifications for Licensing Board Members and Licensing Standards Officers.

Alcohol Focus Scotland's headquarters are based 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 audit of Alcohol Focus Scotland, 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 Alcohol Focus Scotland complies with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements namely:

- ◆ *SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles (2014)*
- ◆ *all Regulatory Principles Directives*
- ◆ the awarding body's Accreditation Licence

Awarding body documentation considered for review by the Audit Team includes all documents banked on Alcohol Focus Scotland'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

Alcohol Focus Scotland: audit date:	25 January 2018
Audit Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	7 March 2018
Audit Report to be signed by Alcohol Focus Scotland:	17 April 2018
Action Plan to be e-mailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by Alcohol Focus Scotland:	17 April 2018

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

- ◆ The awarding body will be sent two signed copies of the Audit Report by post.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign both copies of the Audit Report and return one by post to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified above.
- ◆ The awarding body will also be e-mailed a copy of the Audit Report (for information only) and an electronic copy of the Action Plan.
- ◆ The awarding body must complete and return the Action Plan in accordance with the timescale specified above and e-mail 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 two signed copies of the approved Action Plan by post.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign both copies of the Action Plan and return one by post 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 e-mailed to Alcohol Focus Scotland 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, two Issues have been recorded and five Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 10	<p>A sample check of candidate results during the audit highlighted an instance of two resits taking place for the Licensing Board Member qualification. It was noted that the second resit resulted in the candidate undertaking the original examination paper, which was subsequently passed.</p> <p>The Auditors consider that the use of an identical question paper so close to the original examination date might undermine the robustness of the assessment process.</p>	Medium
2. Principle 11	<p>On reviewing the <i>Awarding Body Regulations, August 2017</i>, it is the opinion of the audit team that 'it will be acceptable for the reader to read out the question only to the candidate', with the latter providing an answer, 'which the reader-scribe should then match to one of the options given in the distractors' is not appropriate.</p>	Medium

A Recommendation has been noted where SQA Accreditation considers there is potential for improvement. The awarding body is advised to address any Recommendations noted as good practice. 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 1	Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to consider formalising its approach to conflict of interest, giving due consideration to the production of an appropriate policy and/or procedure to ensure sufficient consideration is given to the monitoring and recording of instances should they arise.
2. Principle 4	Given the proximity of the accreditation end dates for both the Licensing Standards Officer qualification, awarding body representatives may wish to record this as a separate issue with an appropriate risk rating as a means of ensuring that key stakeholders are aware of the urgent need for review to make sure that the qualifications remain both current and relevant.
3. Principle 5 and 11	Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to ensure that all instances of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations used in the assessment process are noted in the appropriate candidate records in the Licensing Board Database.
4. Principle 9	Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to consider a means of capturing and recording amendments to locally-devised training materials which support qualification delivery, as well as formative assessment, to ensure that current industry practice and legislative changes are reflected; as well as a means of highlighting to SQA Accreditation the nature of such adjustments.
5. Principle 15 and RPDIR -3.	Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to revise the titles of both the Licensing Board Member and Licensing Standards Officer qualifications, at the point of re-accreditation or through an accreditation amendment, to ensure that the certificates of achievement issued to candidates are compliant with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.

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 Alcohol Focus Scotland'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 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.

Candidates undertaking the Licensing Board Members qualification are entitled to a free resit should they fail the examination, if taken within 12 months of the original assessment, as specified in the awarding body's *Centre Guidance LBM Qualification, v2, August 2017*.

In such cases, Alcohol Focus Scotland's *Awarding Body Regulations, v4, August 2017*, clearly states that the registration process must be sufficiently robust to ensure that 'the candidate does not sit the same paper a second time'.

As part of the Alcohol Focus Scotland audit held on 1 October 2013, an action was noted against the awarding body regarding the need to devise re-sit examination papers, although not specifically in relation to the Licensing Board Members qualification.

The document, *Terms of Reference for Alcohol Focus Scotland as an Awarding Body and Servewise as a Training Provider, v2, August 2017*, states that the development, production, review and update of question banks and question papers is the responsibility of the awarding body. However, the awarding body representatives indicated that in respect of the Licensing Board Member qualification no review had taken place since 2012.

A sample check of candidate results during the audit highlighted an instance of two resits taking place for the Licensing Board Member qualification. The candidate in question sat and failed the original examination paper on 26 May 2017, the first resit taking place on 8 June 2017 and a further resit taking place on 5 July 2017, after the candidate undertook the full course again. However, on this occasion the assessment process involved the candidate undertaking the original examination paper from 26 May 2017, which was passed.

It was acknowledged that the current question bank is only sufficient to produce two question papers. Awarding body representatives noted that the delayed review of the training specification is having an impact on their ability to effectively update the question bank.

Nonetheless, whilst acknowledging the impact of the ongoing delay that the review of the training specification may be having on a proposed question bank review, the Auditors consider that the use of an identical question paper so close to the original examination date can be seen to undermine the robustness of the assessment process.

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

Regulatory Principle 11. The awarding body shall ensure that its qualifications and their assessment are inclusive and accessible to learners.

On reviewing the *Awarding Body Regulations, August 2017*, it was noted that Clause 7.10 on the use of reader-scribes states 'that it can be difficult for a candidate with literacy problems, who is having the questions read to him or her, to remember the full question and all four possible answers, and then to decide between them'.

Whilst SQA Accreditation recognises the difficulties that can arise for a candidate in such a position, it does not accept that the solution specified within the document — that 'it will be acceptable for the reader to read out the question only to the candidate', with the latter providing an answer, 'which the reader-scribe should then match to one of the options given in the distractors' — is appropriate.

In the opinion of the audit team, this constitutes the reader-scribe making a subjective decision regarding the mapping of the candidate's answer to one of the stated distractors and, therefore, answering the question on behalf of the candidate.

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

2.2 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 1. The awarding body shall have clearly defined and effective governance arrangements.

The audit team were unable to see any evidence of a formal policy or process for recognising and recording conflict of interest within the awarding body.

Through discussions with awarding body representatives, it was clear that there was a recognition and understanding of the potential for conflict of interest to arise at all levels within the organisation, particularly given the considerable overlap in both the awarding and provider functions. This included elaborating on how potential instances are handled informally.

Nonetheless, Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to consider formalising its approach to conflict of interest, and consider producing a policy and/or procedure to ensure that any instances that arise are monitored and recorded appropriately.

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

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

The audit team was able to review the process for determining risk prior to visiting the awarding body, but not the current risk profile and matrix itself. This was provided on the day and the audit team was able to discuss the content and the risk ratings allocated.

Whilst recognising that there appeared to be appropriate reference to the work of the Learning and Development team in respect of qualifications and training, it was noted that issues regarding the lack of timely and effective review of the Licensing Board Member and Licensing Standards Officer qualifications had not been currently recorded as a separate risk within the matrix.

Given the proximity of the accreditation end dates for both qualifications (the Licensing Standards Officers qualification in September 2018 and the Licensing Board Members qualification in March 2019), awarding body representatives may wish to make this a separate issue, with an appropriate risk rating, as a means of ensuring that key stakeholders are aware of the urgent need for review to make sure that the qualifications remain both current and relevant.

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

Regulatory 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.

And

Regulatory Principle 11. The awarding body shall ensure that its qualifications and their assessment are inclusive and accessible to learners

Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to ensure that all instances of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations used in the assessment process are duly noted in the candidate records within the Licensing Board Database.

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

Regulatory Principle 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.

During discussions with awarding body representatives on the continued lack of consultation on the current training specifications that underpin both the Licensing Board Member and Licensing Standards Officer qualifications, it was noted that current practice linked to course preparation includes making appropriate amendments to locally-devised training materials which support qualification delivery, as well as formative assessment, to ensure that current industry practice and legislative changes are reflected accordingly.

The awarding body representatives made it clear that no changes were made to the summative assessment process and that all questions used for examination purposes remain firmly linked to the appropriate training specifications.

Nonetheless, Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to consider a means of capturing and recording such amendments to the training materials as a means of highlighting to SQA Accreditation the nature and breadth of such adjustments.

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

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

And

Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR- 3 Logos and certificate requirements for SQA Accredited qualifications.

Alcohol Focus Scotland may wish to revise the titles of both the Licensing Board Member and Licensing Standards Officer qualifications, at the point of re-accreditation or through an accreditation amendment, to ensure that the certificates of achievement issued to candidates are compliant with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements by not including 'provider names, co-branding logos or logos from other organisations, professional bodies and Standard Setting Organisations unless these organisations are in partnership to award the qualification'.

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

Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of Alcohol Focus
Scotland:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Print name

Print name

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Andrew Crone

Signature

Signature

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Designation

Designation

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Senior Accreditation Manager

Date

Date

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8 March 2018