



Audit Report

**British Horse Society Qualifications Limited
(BHSQL)**

15 March 2021

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1 Background

This was the 15th audit of The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited (previously Equestrian Qualifications GB Limited) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in 1993. The audit was conducted remotely via Starleaf.

The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited is an approved awarding body that works in partnership with a variety of organisations such as Lantra to develop and award Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) for the equestrian industry. The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited's headquarters are situated in Kenilworth, Warwickshire.

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 The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited, 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 The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited 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 The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited'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

BHSQL audit date: 15 March 2021

Audit Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 21 April 2021

Audit Report to be signed by BHSQL: 4 June 2021

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by BHSQL: 4 June 2021

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 The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited 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, seven Issues have been recorded and eleven Recommendations have been noted.

| Issue | Detail of Issue recorded | Risk rating |
|------------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. Principle 3 | The awarding body's Risk Management Policy did not match the Risk Register January 2020. The awarding body Risk Management Policy needs updated to reflect the implementation of a new system to manage risk. | Medium |
| 2. Principle 3 and 9 | The qualifications plan for Scotland has not followed the stages in the awarding body's own Qualification Development and Review Policy. | Medium |
| 3. Principle 5 | The website will need to be reviewed and updated in terms of referencing international venues. | Low |
| 4. Principle 5 and 6 | The awarding body SharePoint site needs reviewed and updated. A number of documents refer back to the old company name, EQL and some of the documents do not match the versions available on the organisation's website. The Document Mapping document will need to be updated to reflect this. | Low |
| 5. Principle 10 | The awarding body should ensure that all unit titles match those approved by ACG to ensure that there can be no ambiguity by the centre or candidate about expected outcomes. | Medium |
| 6. Principle 12 and 13 | The Complaints and Appeals Policy need to make it clear how a user of the policy can escalate their concerns through the various stages. | Medium |
| 7. Principle 15 and 5 | The Application for Replacement Certificates should cover all accredited qualifications. | 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 1 | The awarding body may wish to consider implementing a checklist log when onboarding external resources, third parties and/or consultants. |
| 2. Principle 5 | The awarding body may wish to reconsider the name of its BHSQ Corporate Guidelines document. |
| 3. Principle 5 | The awarding body may wish to review its fee structure in order to make certain elements clearer. |
| 4. Principle 5 and 6 | In terms of full transparency, the awarding body may wish to consider making other processes and policies available on its website. |
| 5. Principle 5 and 15 | The awarding body may wish to consider charging for unit certification. |
| 6. Principle 6 | The awarding body may wish to introduce a data retention schedule which includes review dates. |
| 7. Principle 6 and 8 | The awarding body may wish to revisit its Privacy Statement and Terms and Conditions on its website. |
| 8. Principle 10 | The awarding body may wish to review the layout of its Qualification Specification for SVQ in Horse Care and Management at SCQF level 6. |
| 9. Principle 11 | The awarding body may wish to review its Reasonable Adjustment policy to make it clearer with regards to instances that do need to be reported. |
| 10. Principle 12 | The awarding body may wish to review its Whistleblowing Policy to qualify what a whistle blower is in order that users can make an informed decision as to the path they take. |
| 11. Principle 14 | The awarding body may wish to separate out the examples in Appendix 1 of the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy to ensure that there can be no ambiguity between the examples associated with each term. |

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 The British Horse Society Qualifications Limited'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 3. The awarding body shall have clearly defined business planning processes which show evidence of management commitment, decision making and ongoing review.

A desktop review of the information on SharePoint highlighted that the Risk Management Policy did not match the Risk Register, dated 17 January 2020. The application of 'likelihood' and 'impact' seemed to be different. In addition, it could not be determined if the list of risks were current or perceived risks and there were no dates for review or mitigation — just a list of risks. This matter was raised at audit and BHSQL walked the auditors through a newly developed system to manage risks which has now been implemented and used. The awarding body must update its Risk Management Policy to take account of this new way of working and managing risks.

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

Regulatory Principle 3. The awarding body shall have clearly defined business planning processes which show evidence of management commitment, decision making and ongoing review.

And

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.

A check of documentation on SharePoint led to the review of the business and qualification plan for Scotland, the *Accreditation plan for stages 2–4 with SQAA*. Having reviewed this plan against the Qualification Development and Review Policy, it seemed that there were gaps in terms of steps followed, specifically in terms of initial market research and consultation phases. It was queried what the findings of the research and consultations showed for the current SVQ qualifications. This was further discussed at the audit and the awarding body advised that the plan is still a work in progress and that the Operational Handbook and the Centre Assessment Strategy Scrutiny (CASS) still need to be finalised. The awarding body should follow their own policy and finalise this work.

This has been recorded as **Issue 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.

A review of the organisation website uncovered an issue which needs to be addressed.

The 'About us' section of the website refers to international venues. This must not apply to our accredited provision and this should be made clearer.

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

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 6. The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.

The awarding body's SharePoint site needs to be reviewed and some documentation issues addressed, and the Document Mapping document must be updated to reflect this. These are some examples that were picked up as part of the desktop review:

- ◆ The centre information on the website mentions assessor and verifier guidance packs — these could not be found on SharePoint
- ◆ Role descriptors are EQL documents
- ◆ Centre agreements are EQL documents
- ◆ The Fee Structure 2021 was on the website but not on SharePoint
- ◆ The Customer Services Standards Policy on the website did not match the SharePoint version
- ◆ RP4, 7, 9 and 10 all contained old files
- ◆ The Business Continuity plan was only a partial document
- ◆ The Operational Handbook and CASS need updated

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

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.

A review of the Qualifications Specifications for all three qualifications offered, identified an erroneous unit title. The Qualification Specification for SVQ in Horse Care at SCQF level 4, page 9, mentions 'assist with cleaning the stables and the yard' rather than 'clean the stables and yard, under supervision'. This should be corrected so that the unit title matches that approved by ACG.

This has been recorded as **Issue 5**.

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers shall have open and transparent systems to manage complaints.

And

Regulatory Principle 13. The awarding body and its providers shall have clear, fair and equitable procedures to manage appeals.

For both the Complaints and Appeals Policy, it is not clear how a user of the policy is able to escalate their concern from stage 2 to stage 3. Both policies read that only BHSQL staff can escalate to stage 3. This should be reviewed and amended.

This has been recorded as **Issue 6**.

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 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.

A review of the Application for Replacement Certificates highlighted that the old qualification titles are the only ones available on the list. The current active qualifications are not an option. The Application for Replacement Certificates should be updated to cover all accredited provision.

This has been recorded as Issue 7.

2.2 Recommendations

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

In discussing the terms and conditions relating to contracting with BHSQL, the various due diligence checks were discussed including relevant insurance checks. The auditors suggested that the awarding body may wish to implement a checklist for bringing external resources on board, to ensure that all checks are recorded as carried out.

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

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.

In reviewing the document BHSQL Corporate Guidelines, the auditors became aware that the document was in fact guidelines on the use of the BHSQL logo(s). This was not evidently clear when opening the document. The awarding body may wish to rename the document to make it clearer to external users what it is.

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

On reviewing the Fee Structure for 2021, it was noted that there was the addition of remote External Quality Assurance (EQA) at £50 per hour as well as an option for remote visit EQA at either £200/£400 per day. The auditors were unsure which was applicable and when. The awarding body may wish to make this clearer in the document.

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

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 6. The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.

As part of the desktop review, it was noted that the following policies could not be found on the website:

- ◆ Centre Approval Policy and Process
- ◆ Management of Incidents Policy
- ◆ Risk Management Policy

In the spirit of full transparency, the awarding body may wish to make them publicly available.

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

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

Further discussion at audit around the Fee Structure 2021 touched upon the fact that unit certification charges had been removed from the previous 2020 structure. The auditors wanted to be assured that unit certification was available and being carried out. The awarding body provided assurance that unit certification is available, therefore the awarding body may wish to add this fee back into their fee structure.

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

Regulatory Principle 6. The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.

A review of the Privacy Statement on the awarding body's website under the section 'How long we keep your personal information' highlighted examples of personal data that might be retained. The awarding body may wish to introduce a data retention schedule aligned to this with key dates for review of data held.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 6**.

Regulatory Principle 6. The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.

And

Regulatory Principle 8. The awarding body shall ensure that SQA Accreditation is granted access to all information pertaining to SQA accredited qualifications.

The awarding body may wish to review the website Privacy Statement under 'Sharing personal information' to reference the UK qualifications regulators more explicitly.

In addition the website terms and conditions, section 3 'Content accuracy' states that 'BHSQL have no responsibility for errors or omissions'. The awarding body may wish to consider rewording this more positively in terms of 'best endeavours'.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 7**.

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.

A review of the Qualifications Specification for SVQ in Horse Care and Management at SCQF level 6 revealed that the optional units under occupational groups had not been split out, but rather all placed together in order of unit number. In order to match the Record of Achievement and make the document more user friendly, the awarding body may wish to separate these optional occupational groups.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 8**.

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

A review of the Reasonable Adjustment Policy led the auditors to believe that there might be some benefit in the awarding body making it clear about instances that do need to be reported to them. The awarding body may wish to review this.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 9**.

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers shall have open and transparent systems to manage complaints.

A desktop review of the awarding bodies Whistleblowing Policy highlighted that it was not entirely clear what the awarding body defined as a whistle blower. In order for users of the policy to make an informed decision about what route to take, the awarding body may wish to review this.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 10**.

Regulatory Principle 14. The awarding body and its providers shall ensure that it has safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration.

A desktop review of the awarding body's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy: Appendix 1 identified a list of examples. It was not entirely clear which examples the awarding body was designating under either term. The awarding body may wish to review this and possibly group them, to ensure that there can be no ambiguity between the examples associated with each term.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 11**.

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of The British Horse
Society Qualifications Limited:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation: