



Audit Report

The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB)

16 April 2024

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1 Background

This was the sixteenth audit of The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation on 28 January 1993.

ECITB is a nationally recognised awarding body that deals with competence-based qualifications in engineering construction. ECITB's qualifications certify learning and validate competence across craft and technical skills, as well as supervisory, management and professional disciplines with the aim to improve quality and standards for industry.

ECITB's headquarters are in Kings Langley, Herts.

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 remote audit of ECITB, 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 ECITB complies with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements namely:

- ◆ *SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles (2021)*
- ◆ all *Regulatory Principle Directives*
- ◆ the awarding body's Accreditation Licence

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

ECITB audit date:	16 April 2024
Audit Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	08 May 2024
Audit Report to be signed by ECITB:	20 June 2024
Action Plan to be emailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by ECITB:	20 June 2024

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 ECITB 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 three Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 10, 11, 12	The awarding body must ensure that it has robust systems and processes in place for the identification, design, development, implementation and review of qualifications, which meet the needs of users.	Medium
2. Principles 13, 16	The awarding body must ensure documentation used for the approval and monitoring of providers complies with <i>SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles (2021)</i> requirements.	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. Principles 3, 12, 13	The awarding body should ensure it maintains the necessary resources to effectively carry out its operational functions to meet regulatory requirements.
2. Principles 1, 2, 4, 7, 13, 18	It is recommended that the awarding body consider SQA Accreditation Auditors' feedback regarding several points relating to documentation.
3. Principles 7, 15	It is recommended that ECITB add information to their website that details the procedures for checking the authenticity of learner qualification certificates.

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 ECITB'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 must ensure that its systems and processes for the identification, design, development, implementation and review of qualifications and assessments are fit for purpose.

Regulatory Principle 11. The awarding body must ensure that its qualifications portfolio is effectively managed, maintained and reviewed.

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.

ECITB has been working together with SQA Accreditation representatives to bring forward new qualifications for accreditation. As part of this, ECITB identified the need to improve their current processes for qualification, assessment, development, and review. They acknowledged that the current processes required the user to have a certain amount of knowledge and understanding, and there was a need to make this more robust and supportive to the end user.

ECITB has been actively working towards an improved process, and although no target dates for completion has been set, the expectation is that the process will be complete by the end of the year.

The awarding body must ensure that it has robust systems and processes in place for the identification, design, development, implementation, and review of qualifications, which meet the needs of users.

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.

Regulatory Principle 16. The awarding body and its providers must have open and transparent systems, policies and procedures to manage complaints.

As part of the audit preparation, SQA Accreditation Auditors reviewed documentation used by ECITB for the approval and monitoring of providers. It was noted that VQ001a Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form RV 3.3 and VQ021 Approved Centre Monitoring Report, RV3.1 omitted the complaints escalation route to SQA Accreditation for accredited qualifications and the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) where appropriate.

The awarding body must ensure documentation used for the approval and monitoring of providers complies with *SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles* (2021) requirements.

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

2.2 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 3. The awarding body must have the necessary resources to effectively carry out their operational functions to meet regulatory requirements

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.

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.

As part of audit preparation, it was noted from the AO Ops Risk Register, V3, that there could be a risk of the awarding body becoming under resourced. Effective and appropriate staffing levels were discussed at the audit; ECITB representatives confirmed that while both the Operations and Compliance Manager and Qualifications Portfolio Manager are on fixed term contracts, this is only until December 2024. In addition to this, ECITB advised SQA Accreditation Auditors that the Responsible Officer was leaving ECITB at the end of April 2024.

The awarding body should ensure it maintains the necessary resources to effectively carry out its operational functions to meet regulatory requirements.

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

Regulatory Principle 1. The awarding body must have an accountable officer and demonstrate that it has clearly defined and effective governance arrangements

Regulatory Principle 2. The awarding body must demonstrate clearly defined business planning processes which show evidence of management commitment and decision making and ongoing review.

Regulatory Principle 4. The awarding body must demonstrate an effective approach to the identification and management of risk.

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

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

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 review of documentation uploaded to SQA Accreditation's SharePoint site showed an inconsistency in the template format used for documentation. For example, Malpractice Investigation Report Template, RV1-0, and the Witness Statement Template, RV1-0,

documents only have version numbers on the first page. The Data Breach and Incident Management Policy do not have version control but a version management table at the end of the document. It was also noted that the Data Breach and Incident Management Policy didn't include reporting of incidents to SQA Accreditation.

Additionally, the Head of Awarding Organisation Role Profile states: 'Reports To: Head of Competence Assurance' and requires updating. The Role Profile for Awarding Organisation Operations and Compliance Manager, 07/03/24, and AO Operations and Regulation Manager, July 2023 have not been signed as approved and correct by the line director.

The auditors also suggested that the AO Ops Risk Register, V3, could benefit from including the last and next review dates to support management of risk.

The above was discussed at audit with ECITB representatives; they acknowledged these areas of improvement and are already making progress to use a consistent format and update documents as discussed.

Furthermore, during audit discussions, SQA Accreditation Auditors sought clarification as to whether external quality assurance was risk-based as stated in the ECITB Approved Centre Application and Recognition Form, VQ001, or a minimum of one monitoring visit per annum as stated in the ECITB Awarding Organisation Centre Assessment Scrutiny and External Quality Assurance Strategy, RV1.4. ECITB representatives explained that it is a combination of both — the minimum visits per annum is one visit, but depending on risk, this can increase to up to four visits per annum. It was suggested that ECITB update their documentation to make this clear to the reader.

Discussion took place regarding Regulatory Principle 18, which states: 'The awarding body and its providers must ensure that it has safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration.' It was discussed that it may be helpful to add a section to the Malpractice/Maladministration Investigation Report, RV 1.0, showing any appropriate corrective and/or preventative action taken.

The ECITB Awarding Organisation Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures, March 2024, RV2-2, states: 'The Approved Centre procedure must include the reporting to the ECITB Awarding Organisation of any identified conflicts of interest that cause, or have the potential to cause, an adverse effect.' In the discussion, ECITB representatives advised that they had not been notified of any provider conflicts of interest; however they noted there may be an opportunity to make improvements in these areas.

It is recommended that the awarding body consider SQA Accreditation Auditors' feedback regarding documentation.

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

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

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

During audit discussions, SQA Accreditation Auditors queried the procedures for a prospective employer to check the authenticity of learner qualification certificates. ECITB explained that they do have a procedure but this is not in the public domain. It is recommended that ECITB add information to their website that details how to check the authenticity of a learner qualification certificates.

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

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings