

EQL supporting comments for Issue 1

Since EQL received the audit report from SQA Accreditation (SQAA) it has continued to address the business planning process to ensure that plans are documented with timescales. As discussed at the audit, oversight and the strategic objectives of EQL are under review by its parent company. This has been the case since mid-2017. During this time there has been and continues to be a commitment to quality and compliance and this is routinely discussed, endorsed and documented in the Board meetings. There is a standard agenda item (strategic business planning) at each meeting. Meetings are regular, professional and comprehensive.

Currently and as discussed at the audit, EQL is continuing to ensure all processes and practices are compliant and that certification of learners is secure. EQL is a small awarding organisation, with 67 SVQ registrations in 2018 and 35 expected in 2019.

In light of the audit report concerning this issue EQL is continuing with the process as described above. This was originally planned to continue until June 2019. As this was not considered sufficient EQL will produce a business plan with objectives and timescales that will be endorsed at the Board meeting on 11 March. EQL will send this to SQA Accreditation by 1 April 2019.

EQL has reviewed several business planning tools (as explained in the earlier submission of actions) and has now identified a format that suits. This includes objectives and timescales. A first draft is expected to be produced by 14 February for review by the Board in advance of the Board meeting. This allows for any subsequent drafts to be produced to ensure the timescale for endorsement is realistic.

It is important to EQL that the business planning process is robust and meaningful.

For your information EQL Board meetings in 2019 are scheduled on:

11 March
27 June
5 September
12 December.

In addition there have been interim conference calls on 21 January and the last Board meeting of 2018 was on 12 December. The minutes of past meetings provide evidence of business planning with timescales, though not in an individual document. Copies of minutes from previous Board meetings were reviewed by SQA Accreditation during the audit. In future meetings the standard agenda item, strategic business planning, will remain and there will be a business plan in place to be endorsed at the next meeting.

Please note there has been no period of inactivity regarding this issue. In your email of 14 November 2018 it states "this means over 8 months of inactivity". This has never been the intention.

To summarise:

- Evidence of a robust business planning process in place with documented objectives and timescales is through Board meeting minutes until March 11. After this date a formal business plan is expected to be adopted.
- The business plan will be submitted to SQA Accreditation by 1 April 2019.

EQL supporting comments for Issue 2

EQL are only using suitably qualified external verifiers to make equine-based decisions for portfolio evidence. These external verifiers have been part of the EQL EQA team over a substantial period and SQA Accreditation are aware of them all, having reviewed their files in previous audits.

Subsequent to the audit the Accountable Officer and education specialists have not been involved in SVQ verification activities of any kind or any other function, which could be construed as an external verifier's responsibility.

Please note prior to the audit the Accountable Officer and education specialists had not been involved in making assessment decisions but verification activities only.

EQL is in the process of appointing a suitably qualified and experienced lead external verifier as the external verifier for all Scottish centres offering SVQs. This external verifier will again be known to SQA Accreditation.

EQL records all external quality assurance activities and will provide a summary report to SQA Accreditation on a quarterly basis with the first report by 1 March 2019.

The SVQ handbook is accurate. The External Verifier Guide (SharePoint banked document under RP10) will be updated by 30 April 2019 in order to clarify the role and responsibilities of the external verifier. This will include information stating that EQL are only using suitably qualified external verifiers to make equine-based decisions for portfolio evidence. This will be timely for the 2019 centre visits and following EQA training.

To summarise evidence will include:

- Quarterly reports to SQA Accreditation by 1 March, 3 June, 2 September and 2 December detailing EQA activities.
- The updated External Verifier Guide will be sent to SQA Accreditation by 30 April 2019.