



Audit Report

English Speaking Board (ESB)

21 June 2017

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1 Background

This was the second audit of the English Speaking Board (ESB) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation on 2 July 2014.

English Speaking Board is a national awarding organisation offering qualifications focused on communication skills at school, in college and throughout life. A registered charity, the organisation promotes clear, effective oral communication at all levels by providing high quality assessments, training and services in the UK and overseas, recognising and encouraging the potential of all.

ESB's headquarters are in Ormskirk.

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 ESB, 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 ESB 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 ESB'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

ESB: audit date:	21 June 2017
Audit Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	19 July 2017
Audit Report to be signed by ESB:	30 August 2017
Action Plan to be e-mailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by ESB:	30 August 2017

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 ESB 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, one Issue has been recorded and five Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 9	The Accreditation Auditors felt that there was lack of a documented process to capture where zero uptake figures are initially flagged internally to staff, where these are recorded, and when they are subsequently considered by management for review.	Low

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 4	The Accreditation Auditors recommend amending awarding body policies and documents which make reference to Assessors/Examiners and using the correct title consistently throughout for clarity and continuity.
2. Principle 6	It is recommended that the Market Analysis document is reviewed to remove the erroneous references that all qualifications are reviewed every 12 months.
3. Principle 9	<p>Awarding body representatives demonstrated a tracker system where information relevant to regulated qualifications was stored internally in terms of qualification titles, start and end dates. However, this information did not contain the lapse dates of the qualifications.</p> <p>The awarding body had a separate online database for qualification information, including lapse dates, but at the time of the audit the Accreditation Auditors were unable to review the online database system due to IT staffing issues. The Accreditation Auditors recommend inserting an extra column into ESB's internal tracker, as a contingency for IT failure, as demonstrated in this instance.</p>
4. Principle 10	During audit discussions awarding body staff made reference to criteria they use to determine whether examiner contracts will be extended after 12 months. These criteria are not documented internally nor provided to examiners. The Accreditation Auditors recommend that such criteria are documented both internally and provided to examiners in order to maintain transparency.
5. Principle 14	The Accreditation Auditors reviewed the awarding body malpractice and maladministration policy and would recommend that the wording be amended to clarify the definitions of both, in terms of one being deliberate and the other being accidental/negligent.

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 ESB'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 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.

When reviewing the awarding body's process for qualification review, the Accreditation Auditors sought evidence that the review process captured the lack of learner uptake on SQA accredited qualifications and provided an appropriate rationale to support retaining the qualifications as opposed to submitting a withdrawal request. The awarding body representatives explained that their method of review only considered the product in isolation, without considering geographical discrepancies in numbers.

The majority of SQA accredited qualifications had zero registrations since being accredited in 2014, however the QCF versions did have registrations. The awarding body further explained (and evidenced) that the lack of uptake was captured in the central business intelligence log. Such information was in fact considered a facet of 'business' as opposed to 'qualification', so it was not considered under a qualification review. The Accreditation Auditors accepted the awarding body's explanation of why these figures were not captured within the documented qualification review process, evidenced by way of a validity statement.

The Accreditation Auditors felt that there was lack of a documented process for capturing zero uptake figures. These are initially flagged internally to staff, then recorded and subsequently considered by management for review. This information was not apparent in either the Qualification Development Process or the Market Analysis document.

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

2.2 Recommendations

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

The Accreditation Auditors recommend amending awarding body policies and documents which make reference to Assessors/Examiners and keeping the title consistent throughout for clarity and continuity.

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

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

It is recommended that the awarding body reviews the Market Analysis document to remove the erroneous references that all qualifications are reviewed every 12 months.

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

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.

Awarding body representatives demonstrated a tracker system where information relevant to regulated qualifications was stored internally in terms of qualification titles, start dates and end dates. However, this information did not contain lapse dates of the qualifications.

The awarding body had a separate online database for qualification information, including lapse dates, but at the time of the audit the Accreditation auditors were unable to review the online database system due to IT staffing issues. The Accreditation Auditors recommend inserting an extra column into ESB's internal tracker, as a contingency for IT failure, as demonstrated in this instance.

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

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.

During audit discussions awarding body staff made reference to criteria they use to determine whether examiner contracts will be extended after 12 months. These criteria are not documented internally nor provided to examiners. The Accreditation Auditors recommend that such criteria are documented both internally and provided to examiners in order to maintain transparency.

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

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

The Accreditation Auditors reviewed the awarding body malpractice and maladministration policy and would recommend that the wording be amended to clarify the definitions of both, in terms of one being deliberate and the other being accidental/negligent.

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

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of ESB:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Print name

Print name

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Signature

Signature

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Designation

Designation

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Date

Date

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