



# **Audit Report**

**Highfield Qualifications**

**26 February 2021**

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# 1 Background

This was the fourth audit of Highfield Qualifications since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in 2010.

Highfield Qualifications is a nationally-recognised awarding body that offers a range of compliance and work-based learning programmes and qualifications in a range of areas, including health and safety, security, first aid, teaching and licensing.

Highfield Qualifications has its headquarters in Doncaster, but the audit was conducted remotely due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

## 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 Highfield Qualifications, 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 Highfield Qualifications 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 Highfield Qualifications 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

Highfield Qualifications audit date: 16 February 2021

Audit Report approved by  
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 24 March 2021

Audit Report to be signed by Highfield Qualifications: 7 May 2021

Action Plan to be emailed to [regulation@sqa.org.uk](mailto:regulation@sqa.org.uk)  
by Highfield Qualifications: 7 May 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](mailto: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 Highfield Qualifications 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 two Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 15 and RPDIR - 3	The copy of an e-certificate supplied by Highfield Qualifications did not meet requirements as it was found to be missing a statement acknowledging SQA Accreditation as the credit rating body, and did not contain the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework logo.	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 10	It was recommended that Highfield Qualifications undertakes a piece of work to show if the outcomes of assessment (scores) are affected or vary between tests taken at exam venues/centres and tests taken by way of remote invigilation.
2. Principle 12 and 13	It was recommended that the awarding body reviews its <i>Complaints Procedure</i> and its <i>Enquiries and Appeals Procedure</i> to make clearer the circumstances for escalating complaints to SQA Accreditation.

### 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 Highfield Qualification'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 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**

As part of its Planning Scenario Project, SQA Accreditation contacted Highfield Qualifications in September 2020 and asked it to supply a sample of their e-certificate. The copy of an e-certificate supplied by Highfield Qualifications did not meet the requirements of Regulatory Principles Directive Regulatory Principles Directive — 3 'Logos and certificate requirements for SQA accredited qualifications', as it was found to be missing a statement acknowledging SQA Accreditation as the Credit Rating Body, and did not contain the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework logo. This has been recorded as **Issue 1**.

The SCQF logo must be used on either a commemorative/learning programme certificate or certificate transcript, where the qualification/learning programme has been credit rated by a recognised Credit Rating Body or where the credit rating of the qualification/learning programme has been approved by SQA's Accreditation Co-ordination Group and where a qualification has been credit rated, a statement must also be included to acknowledge the Credit Rating Body.

### 2.2 Recommendations

**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 the audit discussion, it became apparent that Highfield Qualifications have two means by which learners can undertake assessments. Learners can either sit assessments at a provider's venue or can choose to take an invigilated assessment.

It was recommended that Highfield Qualifications undertakes a piece of work to show whether the outcomes of assessment (scores) are affected or vary between tests taken at exam venues/centres and tests taken by way of remote invigilation. The work should compare test results over a period of time and analyse whether factors such as the assessment environment and test conditions affect scores or not. The work should also identify whether location is a threat to validity, if it affects reliability, fairness and generalisability. This has been noted as **Recommendation 1**.

Highfield Qualifications has been running invigilated assessments since the early onset of COVID-19, therefore the awarding body indicated that they could undertake this activity quite easily, as they had sufficient historical data to analyse.

**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.**

The Audit Team undertook a review of documentation banked on SharePoint prior to the audit. It was recommended that the awarding body reviews its *Complaints Procedure* and its *Enquiries and Appeals Procedure* to make clearer the circumstances for escalating complaints to SQA Accreditation. This has been noted as **Recommendation 2**.

## **3 Acceptance of Audit Findings**