



Audit Report

ITC First

16 September 2021

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1 Background

This was the fifth audit of ITC First since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in July 2009.

ITC First is a nationally-recognised awarding organisation offering a range of environment-specific, tailored first aid qualifications, as well as a range of health and safety qualifications for industry — including fire safety training, manual handling, and general health and safety awareness training.

ITC First's headquarters are in Hartlepool, however, due to the ongoing pandemic the audit was conducted remotely.

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 ITC First, 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 ITC First 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 ITC First'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

ITC First audit date: 16 September 2021

Audit Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 13 October 2021

Audit Report to be signed by ITC First: 24 November 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 ITC First 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, zero Issues have been recorded and seven Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
No issues were recorded during the ITC First audit.		

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	It is recommended that ITC First updates its conflict of interest log to record personnel who are required to declare conflicts of interest annually and to include the date by when these should be received.
2. Principle 4	It is recommended that ITC First considers adding an identifier to information it holds so that it can easily identify if conflicts of interest, complaints, appeals etc are in relation to qualifications accredited by SQA Accreditation.
3. Principle 4	It is recommended that the awarding body reviews the processes described within the <i>Risk Management Policy, February 2020</i> to ensure that these reflect actual working practice.
4. Principle 5	It is recommended that the <i>Emergency First Aid for Dogs & First Aid for Dogs Virtual Delivery Guidance</i> is reviewed to reflect actual working practice for assessment and external quality assurance purposes, and that the awarding body takes account of the information requirements outlined by SQA Accreditation in its recent document on the use of technology in assessment.
5. Principle 5	It is recommended that the awarding body reviews the documents supplied on the day of the audit to enable it to

	ensure its documentation appropriately references SQA Accreditation and the qualifications it has accredited.
6. Principle 13	It is recommended that the awarding body reviews its <i>Appeals Policy & Procedures, June 2021</i> to make it clear that SQA Accreditation cannot overturn academic judgements.
7. Principle 15	It is recommended that the awarding body undertakes a 'housekeeping' check to ensure that the credit rating body statement appears on all qualification certificates accredited by 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 ITC First'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

No issues were recorded during the ITC First audit.

2.2 Recommendations

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

The Audit Team reviewed the information held within the conflict of interest log on SharePoint. It was noted that information in the log was only populated when declarations were received, therefore the awarding body was not maintaining a list of personnel for whom a declaration is required each year and they were only updating the log on receipt of a new declaration. This makes it difficult to identify individuals for whom declarations are outstanding or overdue.

It is recommended that ITC First updates its conflict of interest log to record personnel who are required to declare conflicts of interest annually and to include the date by when these should be received. This has been noted as **Recommendation 1**.

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

When reviewing information held by the awarding body on conflicts of interest, complaints and appeals, it was unclear to the Audit Team how the awarding body identified those relating to Scottish qualifications.

It is recommended that ITC First considers adding an identifier to information it holds so that it can easily identify if conflicts of interest, complaints, appeals etc are in relation to qualifications accredited by SQA Accreditation. This has been noted as **Recommendation 2**.

The Audit Team spent time discussing the awarding body's approach to business planning and the approach outlined within the *Risk Management Policy, February 2020*. Some anomalies were identified and, following the discussion, it is recommended that the awarding body reviews the processes described within the *Risk Management Policy, February 2020* to ensure that these reflect actual working practice. 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.

The Audit Team reviewed the *Emergency First Aid for Dogs & First Aid for Dogs Virtual Delivery Guidance* on SharePoint. The Audit Team had concerns around the guidance where it stated that, 'There is no requirement to record audio or video of the assessment, as assessment must occur in real-time'. When discussed with the awarding body, the Audit Team could see no issues with the way in which qualifications are currently externally quality assured however there were anomalies with how this was described in the guidance.

It is recommended that the *Emergency First Aid for Dogs & First Aid for Dogs Virtual Delivery Guidance* is reviewed to reflect actual working practice for assessment and external quality assurance purposes and that the awarding body takes account of the information requirements outlined by SQA Accreditation in its recent document on the use of technology in assessment. This has been noted as **Recommendation 4**.

Throughout ITC First's documentation, the awarding body has referred to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Qualifications and in one case it mentions withdrawal of qualifications from the SCQF. It is recommended that the awarding body reviews the documents supplied to them on the day of the audit to enable it to ensure its documentation appropriately references SQA Accreditation and the qualifications it has accredited. This has been noted as **Recommendation 5**.

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

It is recommended that the awarding body reviews its *Appeals Policy & Procedures, June 2021* to make it clear that SQA Accreditation cannot overturn academic judgements. This has been noted as **Recommendation 6**.

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

The sample certificate on SharePoint did not contain a reference to the credit rating body. When this was raised with the awarding body as a potential Issue, it was able to provide evidence that the certificate in question was for an old qualification which was no longer valid.

The awarding body was able to show evidence on the day of the audit that the credit rating body statement does appear on certificates which are current, however, it is recommended that the awarding body undertakes a 'housekeeping' check to ensure that the credit rating body statement appears on all qualification certificates accredited by SQA Accreditation. This has been noted as **Recommendation 7**.

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings