



Audit Report

PIABC

20 July 2021

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1 Background

This was the fifth audit of PIABC since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in August 2012. The audit was carried out remotely due to ongoing travel limitations.

PIABC is a small awarding body, with a suite of accredited and nationally recognised qualifications in timber and wood. PIABC's headquarters are in Grantham.

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 PIABC, 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 PIABC 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 PIABC'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

PIABC audit date:	20 July 2021
Audit Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	25 August 2021
Audit Report to be signed by PIABC:	7 October 2021
Action Plan to be emailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by PIABC:	7 October 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 PIABC 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 four Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 3 and 5	In order that re-occurring Issues are not raised at every audit, PIABC must ensure that it produces a marketing plan which takes appropriate cognisance of Scottish qualifications and learners.	High
2. Principles 2 and 4	PIABC's <i>Incident Management Policy and Procedure</i> did not contain any reference to the recent pandemic as a risk or potential incident which could affect the awarding body's activities.	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 and 5	It is recommended that the awarding body undertakes activities to establish demand in Scotland for new qualifications such as packaging, when producing its marketing plan as this would fit well with its objectives to increase revenue opportunities.
2. Principle 4	It is recommended that PIABC updates its <i>Arrangements with Third Parties Terms and Conditions</i> as this makes no reference to SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles despite referencing other UK regulators' criteria.
3. Principle 10	It is recommended that the awarding body updates its <i>External Quality Assurer (EQA) Code of Practice</i> to reflect current practice.
4. Principle 12	It is recommended that the awarding body reviews its guidance around complaints in documents such as its centre handbooks to ensure that it is clear that SQA Accreditation cannot overturn academic judgements.

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 PIABC'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 3. The awarding body shall have clearly defined business planning processes which show evidence of management commitment, decision making and ongoing review.

and

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 awarding body's strategic business plan states that it will create a comprehensive marketing plan with quarterly reviews by the end of April 2021. However, no marketing plan has been produced. The Audit Team also noted from Board meeting minutes that this piece of work was noted to be of high importance. Previous audits of PIABC have recorded that the awarding body has not effectively promoted and marketed SQA Accredited qualifications effectively to Scottish providers and learners.

In order that re-occurring Issues are not raised at every audit, PIABC must ensure that it produces a marketing plan which takes appropriate cognisance of Scottish qualifications and learners. This has been recorded as **Issue 1**.

Regulatory Principle 2. The awarding body shall ensure it has the necessary resources to effectively carry out its operational functions to meet regulatory requirements.

and

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

Following a pre-audit review of the awarding body's documentation on SharePoint, it was noted that PIABC's *Incident Management Policy and Procedure* did not contain any reference to the recent pandemic as a risk or potential incident which could affect the awarding body's activities. Given that the document was only recently updated in June 2021, the Audit Team considered this to be a large oversight given the huge changes PIABC has undergone during COVID-19 and did not consider the policy was fit for purpose. This has been recorded as **Issue 2**.

2.2 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 3. The awarding body shall have clearly defined business planning processes which show evidence of management commitment, decision making and ongoing review.

and

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.

It is recommended that the awarding body undertakes activities to establish demand in Scotland for new qualifications such as packaging, when producing its marketing plan as this would fit well with its objectives to increase revenue opportunities.

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

It is recommended that PIABC updates its *Arrangements with Third Parties Terms and Conditions* as this makes no reference to SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles despite referencing other UK regulators criteria. This has been noted as **Recommendation 2**.

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.

The awarding body's quality assurance documentation states that External Quality Assurer (EQA) standardisation takes place annually. When asked when the last event took place the awarding body representative replied that there had been no event as PIABC only has one External Quality Assurer. However, the EQA is in regular contact with the awarding body.

It is recommended that the awarding body updates its *External Quality Assurer (EQA) Code of Practice* to reflect current practice. This has been noted as **Recommendation 3**.

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers shall have open and transparent systems to manage complaints.

It is recommended that the awarding body reviews its guidance on complaints contained in documents such as its centre handbooks to ensure that it is clear that SQA Accreditation cannot overturn academic judgements. This has been noted as **Recommendation 4**.

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of PIABC:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation: