Audit Report

Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)

30 April 2021

Contents

1 Background

This was the third audit of the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in 2011.

RAD is an internationally recognised awarding body dealing with vocational and graded qualifications in dance. RAD's headquarters are in Battersea, London.

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 scoped and remote audit of RAD, 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 RAD 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 RAD'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

RAD: audit date: 30 April 2021

Audit Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 9 June 2021

Audit Report to be signed by RAD: 22 July 2021

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by RAD: Not applicable

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 RAD 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, no Issues have been recorded and six Recommendations have been noted.

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 4	RAD may wish to provide samples of Crisis Management Team (CMT) minutes and an updated Examinations Risk Register and Continuity Plan, to evidence the business continuity planning activities that have occurred across 2020.
2. Principle 7	RAD may wish to update its COVID-19 guidance on the website to provide a higher profile for applications relevant to Scotland, such as Protect Scotland and Check-In Scotland.
3. Principle 10	RAD should provide SQA Accreditation with revised Examiner guidance around video assessment.
4. Principle 10	RAD may wish to consider providing SQA Accreditation with a review on the pilot introduction of the Planet e-stream programme for video assessments.
5. Principle 10	RAD may wish to continue with the analysis of video assessment marking and results, relative to traditional face-to-face activity, and report any findings to SQA Accreditation.
6. Principle 15	RAD may wish to provide SQA Accreditation with an update on the potential introduction of e-certification (e-resulting), including implementation, when appropriate.

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 RAD'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 as part of the audit.

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

Prior to the audit itself, the Auditor was able to review the *Royal Academy of Dance Business Continuity Plan (BCP) (Battersea Square), June 2019*. The plan appeared to be sufficiently robust, if somewhat site/location focused, and contained prioritised provisional recovery plans related to teams and key functions, all co-ordinated via a Crisis Management Team (CMT).

Discussions during the audit mainly focused on the implementation and effectiveness of the plan in respect of delivery and assessment, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and indicated that the appointment of an Examinations Recovery Manager as part of the CMT was key to the implementation of the video assessment protocols which were outlined to SQA Accreditation in May 2020.

It was noted that the CMT met almost daily during the initial stages of the pandemic, with key departmental representatives reporting on proposed developments and actions to ensure business continuity. All meetings were formally minuted.

Awarding body representatives noted that the Business Continuity Plan was updated in April 2020, but in being fully tested through implementation during the pandemic, has yet to be further reviewed and consequently refined, as sustaining business operations remains the priority for 2021. Likewise, the *Examinations Risk Register and Contingency Plan (May 2019)* was due to be revised in May 2020, but the Examinations Recovery Manager has yet to update the document since implementing the video assessment protocols.

Therefore, RAD may wish to provide samples of CMT minutes and an updated Examinations Risk Register and Contingency Plan, to evidence the business continuity planning activities that have occurred across 2020.

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

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body shall have effective arrangements for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

A review of the awarding body's website identified an excellent range of COVID-19 guidance for stakeholders. This included a roadmap for easing restrictions and information on the NHS Track and Trace application.

The roadmap for easing restrictions is current and includes appropriate links to the respective devolved government guidance for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

In respect of the information on the Track and Trace application, the Auditor noted that this related only to that launched for England and Wales and not the equivalent applications for Scotland. A reference to the Protect Scotland application, not the Check-In Scotland application, is available via a link to the Scottish Government website contained within the information on the respective national roadmap for easing restrictions.

However, the Auditor is of the opinion that there is a possibility that stakeholders in Scotland may not necessarily find the relevant information and guidance on the relevant applications using the NHS Track and Trace application as this is given a higher profile on the website.

Therefore, RAD may wish to update its COVID-19 guidance on the website to provide a higher profile for applications relevant to Scotland, such as the Protect Scotland and Check-In Scotland.

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.

During the audit, awarding body representatives provided samples of video assessments, enabling the Auditor to evidence aspects of the video assessment protocols provided to SQA Accreditation in May 2020, as well as those available on the awarding body website. Principally, these included the *Guidelines for filming examinations (as a result of COVID-19 restrictions), April 2020,* and *FAQs for filming examinations due to COVID-19 restrictions.*

Thereafter, discussions at the audit focused on the additional functions taken on by teachers because of examiner unavailability due to lockdown, as well as examiner approaches to marking/assessment given the use of video assessment.

Awarding body representatives indicated that they are not aware of any negative impact on the assessment process because of teachers taking responsibility for additional tasks, such as venue layout, learner introductions, preparedness, and performance timings, usually allocated to examiners on normal examination days. Instead, video evidence has indicated that teachers have stepped up to ensure effective examination delivery. The video evidence available to the Auditor would seem to confirm this fact, though a wider sample of assessments will need to be reviewed through provider monitoring activity to fully confirm that this is consistently the case.

In respect of examiner approaches to assessing video submissions, RAD has advised that marking should be carried out as if assessments were being conducted in a face-to-face manner. There was an acknowledgement that RAD is not able to gauge if examiners are following this advice. For example, it is impossible to determine if examiners are re-visiting initial markings as the availability of recordings allows them to do so. However, it was noted that ongoing analysis and moderation of marking by individual examiners has not highlighted any areas of concern.

It was also noted that RAD continues to work on updating formal examiner guidance and this will be used to reinforce the awarding body's preferred approach to undertaking video assessments, which will include timescales for completion.

Therefore, to assist SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities, RAD should provide SQA Accreditation with revised examiner guidance around video assessment.

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

Currently, video assessments are accepted by RAD in any format and submitted in a variety of ways. Although this has provided RAD with some logistical problems, it was decided to take this approach to ensure that qualification delivery and assessment continued as best it could, despite the operational difficulties for much of 2020.

Going forward, it was noted that RAD are developing a more centralised approach to video assessment using Plant e-stream. The Auditor was able to see elements of this video platform during the audit which is currently at the pilot stage and being thoroughly tested by the awarding body.

Therefore, as the intention is to standardise all future video assessment activity using this system, RAD may wish to consider providing SQA Accreditation with a review on the pilot introduction of the Planet e-stream video platform.

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

As noted at Recommendation 3, the awarding body stated that it had carried out some initial analysis of the impact of using video assessment on marking and results. Principally aimed at identifying any variations to marking with individual examiners, early findings suggested no major concerns in this respect, with all marking being conducted within acceptable tolerances.

However, as RAD is looking to continue with a centralised approach to video assessment, it may wish to continue with this analysis of marking and results, relative to traditional face-to-face activity, and report any findings to SQA Accreditation.

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

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

The awarding body's self-assessment report for 2020 highlighted an action around the creation of a 'digital certificate system'. The report notes that RAD remained in discussion with a third-party organisation around ways to adopt and implement an e-certification system.

During the audit discussions, RAD indicated that it had experienced issues with certification timescales during 2019 and reiterated the position stated in the self-assessment report, that this action was recognition of an urgent need to refine the effectiveness of its certification/results services, including a review of all existing third-party contracts contributing to the process.

The discussions also noted that the likely outcome, at least in the short term, will be a form of e-resulting rather than the issuing of e-certificates. This being the consequence of the sector having an established tradition of awarding certificates, alongside ribbons and medals, and there is unlikely to be a willingness to change that.

Therefore, RAD may wish to provide SQA Accreditation with an update on the potential introduction of e-certification (e-resulting), including implementation, when appropriate.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 6**.

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of RAD: For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation: