Audit Report

Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)

31 October 2024

Contents

1 Background

This was the fourth 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 and is a registered charity in England and Wales. 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 remote and scoped audit of RAD, only specific 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 Regulatory Principles* (2021)
♦ all *Regulatory Principle* 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: 31 October 2024

Audit Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 11 December 2024

Audit Report to be signed by RAD: 3 February 2025

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by RAD: 3 February 2025

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, three Issues have been recorded and six Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 5	RAD must undertake an urgent review of policies, procedures, and guidance documents to ensure currency, through standardised version control, so that the latest version is available on SharePoint.	Low
2. Principle 9	RAD must revise the *RAD exams – specifications, rules, and regulations for qualifications regulated in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland* document to ensure that it correctly references both the current qualification codes for SQA accredited provision and the SCQF Framework.	Low
3. Principle 15	Since RAD confirmed that unit certificates had been issued to candidates, it must make a sample certificate available for scrutiny and approval by the Regulation Manager. It should also provide a brief summary report noting which units have been certificated to date, as well as the number issued going back to the point of accreditation.	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 1	RAD may wish to provide SQA Accreditation with access to the current *Conflict of Interest Register* on SharePoint.
2. Principle 1	RAD may wish to provide current Terms of Reference, a sample agenda and meeting minutes for committees in which the Examinations Department has a role (for example, Examinations Strategy and Operations Committee).
3. Principles 2, 3 and 4	RAD may wish to provide SQA Accreditation with copies of the current Strategic Plan, Business Plan and Business Continuity for review.
4. Principles 5 and 12	Following the completion of the current cycle of quality assurance activity with SQA Accreditation (audit and provider monitoring activity), RAD may wish to provide both the Regulation Manager and Regulation Officer with a detailed overview of the RADius system, given its increasingly important role in supporting registration, delivery, and certification of the awarding body's curriculum.
5. Principles 5, 12 and 13	RAD may wish to complete the review of its Examiner Handbook as a priority.
6. Principle 15	RAD may wish to provide a redacted copy of the third-party contract in relating to the proposed outsourcing of certificate printing and dispatch.

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

Regulatory Principle 5. The awarding body and its providers must provide clear information on their procedures, products and services and ensure that they are accurate and appropriate to accredited qualifications.

The audit team carried out a thorough review of awarding body policies, processes, and guidance documentation available on SharePoint (SQA Info Centre) and the RAD website.

In the main, RAD's documentation was clear, concise, detailed, and fit for purpose, with wide-ranging guidance documents as examples of good practice, such as the *Applicant Guidelines, RAD online exam entries, How to create and submit AEC, RAV and video assessment entries*, 26 January 2022, and the awarding body's *Safeguarding Policy*.

However, it was difficult to determine the currency of a range of documentation as it appeared as if much of it had not been reviewed in line with the awarding body's *Examinations document control policy and procedures*. There appeared to be differing practice in respect of identifying versions of documents, recording amendments and additions, with a considerable number of documents looking as if they had not been reviewed for some time, having originally been approved and adopted by previous Directors of Examinations no longer employed by the organisation.

RAD representatives acknowledged the need to urgently review all documentation was acknowledged by RAD representatives, and the audit team was able to view the current *Master list of policies*, which indicated that work had begun to remedy the situation. It was also noted that RAD had recently recruited a new Head of Examination Operations who will be tasked with undertaking a major review of awarding body documentation.

The audit team acknowledged these positive steps, but it remains a matter of urgency that RAD undertakes an effective review of policies, procedures, and guidance documents to ensure currency, through a standardised version control, so that the latest version is available on both SharePoint and the awarding body's website.

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

Regulatory Principle 9. The awarding body and its providers must maintain accurate documents, records, and data.

The awarding body's guidance document, *RAD exams – specifications, rules, and regulations for qualifications regulated in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland*, in place from November 2023, is a comprehensive publication which provides a range of detailed information. It includes the availability of exams, registration processes, fees, syllabus content and mark schemes, as well as resulting, certification and medals.

The audit team considered the information contained in the document to be clear, concise, and relevant for stakeholders delivering qualifications and arranging exams. However, in reviewing the document, it was noted that the qualification codes listed in the document had not been amended to match those allocated by SQA Accreditation following the accreditation submissions which were approved on 26 June 2024.

Also, although the document contains a range of detailed and accurate references, as well as web links, to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) in the section on regulation in Scotland, there are a small number of inaccurate references to 'SQA Framework' levels in the section providing an overview of provision.

Therefore, RAD must revise the *RAD exams – specifications, rules, and regulations for qualifications regulated in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland* document to ensure that it correctly references both the current qualification codes for SQA accredited provision and the SCQF Framework.

This has been recorded as **Issue 2**.

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

RAD is currently liaising with the Accreditation Manager to determine next steps for the ongoing accreditation of its suite of Classical Ballet qualifications, which are due to reach their accreditation end date on 31 December 2024:

♦ R622 04 Certificate in Classic Ballet Repertoire at SCQF level 6
♦ R623 04 Certificate in Classic Ballet Repertoire at SCQF level 7
♦ R624 04 Certificate in Classic Ballet Repertoire at SCQF level 8

Options being considered are the re-accreditation of the existing qualifications or an extension to allow consultation with stakeholders on any future content and structure of the qualifications.

During the audit, discussions on progress with the various options being considered focused upon the fact that there had been no registered candidates for any of the qualifications since the original accreditation date of 18 December 2019.

However, awarding body representatives noted that single unit uptake is present across all three qualifications and confirmed their belief that there is value in retaining accreditation of the full Classical Ballet Repertoire suite in one form or another.

Since RAD confirmed that unit certificates had been issued to candidates, it must make a sample certificate available for scrutiny and approval by the Regulation Manager. It should also provide a brief summary report noting which units have been certificated to date, as well as the number issued going back to the point of accreditation.

This has been recorded as **Issue 3**.

2.2 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 1. The awarding body must have an accountable officer and demonstrate that it has clearly defined and effective governance arrangements.

The audit team reviewed the awarding body's *Examinations Conflict of Interest Policy* and identified no major concerns. However, in seeking the current status of one of RAD's Examiners, the audit team was unable to view the information as access to the current *Conflict of Interest Register* sat with another member of staff and department.

A verbal update on the Examiner's current status in respect of conflict of interest was provided, but RAD may wish to provide SQA Accreditation with access to the current *Conflict of Interest Register* on SharePoint.

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

Likewise, RAD may wish to update or provide current Terms of Reference, sample agendas and meeting minutes for committees in which the Examinations Department has a role (for example, Examinations Strategy and Operations Committee) on SharePoint.

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

Regulatory Principle 2. The awarding body must demonstrate clearly defined business planning processes which show evidence of management commitment and decision making and ongoing review.

Regulatory Principle 3. The awarding body must have the necessary resources to effectively carry out their operational functions to meet regulatory requirements.

Regulatory Principle 4. The awarding body must demonstrate an effective approach to the identification and management of risk.

While the following documentation is not the direct responsibility of the Examinations Department, RAD may also wish to update SharePoint with copies of the current Strategic Plan, Business Plan and Business Continuity for review.

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

Regulatory Principle 5. The awarding body and its providers must provide clear information on their procedures, products and services and ensure that they are accurate and appropriate to accredited qualifications.

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers must ensure that they have the necessary arrangements and resources required to manage and administer qualification delivery and assessment.

Following the completion of the current cycle of quality assurance activity with SQA Accreditation (audit and provider monitoring activity), RAD may wish to provide both the Regulation Manager and Regulation Officer with a detailed overview of the RADius system,

given its increasingly important role in supporting registration, delivery, and certification of the awarding body's curriculum.

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

Regulatory Principle 5. The awarding body and its providers must provide clear information on their procedures, products and services and ensure that they are accurate and appropriate to accredited qualifications.

Regulatory Principle 12. The awarding body and its providers must ensure that they have the necessary arrangements and resources required to manage and administer qualification delivery and assessment.

Regulatory Principle 13. The awarding body and its providers must ensure that they have systems and processes which ensure the effective quality assurance of accredited qualifications.

Relative to Issue 1, the audit team noted that the *Examiner Handbook*, although in use, remained in draft format as there appeared to be a range of comments and suggested changes to the document from awarding body staff, extending back to 2019, from awarding body staff associated with proposed curriculum changes and developments over the period.

Although these suggested changes did not appear to impact directly on the core functions of a RAD Examiner, the awarding body may wish to review the comments and make any necessary changes to the *Examiner Handbook* as a priority.

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

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

As part of the self-assessment report for 2024, RAD noted that the organisation is considering the outsourcing of the printing and dispatch of hard copy certificates. The aim being to increase quality assurance checks, reduce human error through a revised process that allows for all certificates printed to be checked and dispatched in one place with multiple checks in a single centralised location, ultimately freeing up resources that could be allocated to encouraging growth in exam uptake.

The audit team is conscious that this development is still at an early stage of the tender process, but on completion RAD may wish to provide a redacted copy of the (redacted) third-party contract outlining areas of responsibility and plans for ongoing review.

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

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings