



Audit Report

SFEDI Awards

22 January 2020

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1 Background

This was the third audit of SFEDI Awards since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in January 2013.

SFEDI Awards is the awarding body for Business Support and Enterprise. The organisation develops and delivers a range of qualifications as a means of enabling those who wish to start or grow their own business and the business support professionals who work with them.

SFEDI Awards' headquarters are in Darlington.

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 SFEDI Awards, 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 SFEDI Awards 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 SFEDI Awards' 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

SFEDI Awards: audit date: 22 January 2020

Audit Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 11 March 2020

Audit Report to be signed by SFEDI Awards: 24 April 2020

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by SFEDI Awards: 24 April 2020

The process will apply in relation to the timescales specified above:

- ◆ The awarding body will be sent two signed copies of the Audit Report by post.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign both copies of the Audit Report and return one by post to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified above.
- ◆ The awarding body will also be emailed a copy of the Audit Report (for information only) and an electronic 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 two signed copies of the approved Action Plan by post.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign both copies of the Action Plan and return one by post 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 SFEDI Awards 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 one Recommendation has been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 6	<p>The audit team noted a lack of policies, procedures and other organisational documentation uploaded to a number of regulatory principles on SQA Info Centre. It was also noted that the range of documentation that had been uploaded, although fit for purpose, was on some occasions logged against the wrong regulatory principle.</p> <p>The audit team also noted that the majority of available documentation on SQA Info Centre and available via the awarding body's website lacked version control, therefore making it difficult to determine the currency of a number of policies, procedures and associated documents.</p>	Low
2. Principle 13	<p>On reviewing the <i>Assessment Appeal Procedure</i>, available on the awarding body website, it was noted that it does not adequately reflect the role of SQA Accreditation in respect of appeals.</p>	Low
3. Principle 14	<p>The <i>Malpractice Procedure</i>, available on the awarding body website, does not accurately reflect SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements as outlined in Regulatory Principle 14, the associated supplementary information, and the <i>Regulatory Principles Guidance Note — 14, Reporting and Managing Cases of Malpractice and Maladministration</i>, 1 June 2017.</p>	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 9	SFEDI Awards may wish to review the document, <i>A Guide to Total Qualification Time (TQT)</i> to ensure that it reflects the way in which the 'size' and potential time necessary to complete a qualification is noted, while referencing the appropriate terminology as specified in current SCQF guidance.

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 SFEDI Awards' 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 6. The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.

On reviewing SFEDI Awards' SQA Info Centre site, the audit team noted a lack of policies, procedures and other organisational documentation uploaded to a number of regulatory principles. It was also noted that the range of documentation that had been uploaded, although fit for purpose, was on some occasions logged against the wrong regulatory principle.

The audit team recognised that the awarding body had attempted to follow general SQA Accreditation guidelines by uploading certain documents to one regulatory principle and referencing across to other relevant regulatory principles as a means minimising bureaucracy. However, in several instances, the choice of regulatory principle accommodating a document was not always appropriate.

While acknowledging the lack of available information on SQA Info Centre, SFEDI Awards' representative noted that it was not user-friendly or intuitive, being both time consuming and bureaucratic in general.

Lastly, the audit team noted that most of the available documentation on SQA Info Centre and available via the awarding body's website lacked version control. This made it difficult to determine the currency of a number of policies, procedures and associated documents.

This has recorded as Issue 1.

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

On reviewing the *Assessment Appeal Procedure*, available on the awarding body website, it was noted that it does not adequately reflect the role of SQA Accreditation in respect of appeals.

The procedure states that, following a referral to the awarding body, there 'may be further rights to appeal, dependent upon the arrangements between the Awarding Organisation and the qualification regulator'. However, the procedure does not provide details on the relevant qualification regulators, noting instead that the relevant details 'can be found by contacting the Awarding Organisation'. The audit team considers this approach to be a potential barrier as appellants may be reluctant to make contact because if the appeal is escalated, this could constitute as a complaint about the awarding body.

Equally, the procedure does not make it clear that in the case of such a referral to SQA Accreditation, the qualification regulator is unable to overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements.

This has recorded as Issue 2.

Regulatory Principle 14. The awarding body and its providers shall ensure that it has safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration.

On reviewing the *Malpractice Procedure*, available on the awarding body website, it was noted that it does not accurately reflect SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements as outlined in Regulatory Principle 14 and the associated supplementary information, as well as *Regulatory Principles Guidance Note — 14, Reporting and Managing Cases of Malpractice and Maladministration, 1 June 2017*.

Although a detailed procedure, the audit team found it difficult to determine if it was focussed on the centre or the awarding body. Consequently, it was difficult to note any escalation or referral process from centre to awarding body, should the need arise.

The procedure also failed to acknowledge and define maladministration, as well as outlining the processes required for mitigating any instances upon discovery.

Lastly, the procedure does not acknowledge the role of SQA Accreditation in addressing instances of malpractice and/or maladministration, including the need to inform the qualification regulator when cases, or suspected cases, of malpractice and/or maladministration are discovered.

This has recorded as Issue 3.

2.2 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 9. The awarding body shall ensure that it has robust systems and processes for the identification, design, development, implementation and review of qualifications, which meet the needs of users.

In reviewing the awarding body document, *A Guide to Total Qualification Time (TQT)*, the audit team noted a lack of references to notional learning hours and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

TQT is defined in Ofqual's *General Conditions of Recognition* as 'the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required in order for a learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification'. This is relevant to regulated provision within the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). In the main, the document appears to focus largely on RQF regulated provision.

The concept of notional hours is also integral to the SCQF credit rating process, being described in SQA Accreditation's *Credit Rating of SQA Accredited Qualifications for the*

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, Guidance for Sector Skills Councils, Standard Setting Organisations, Awarding Bodies and Participants, April 2014, as encompassing 'both contact time and self-directed learning undertaken by the learner'.

More importantly, the same SQA Accreditation document cites the following extract of Guideline 3.3 from the *SCQF Handbook: User Guide (2009)* which, under the heading of *Notional Learning Hours*, states that 'Notional learning hours should include all learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes. It is made up of formal activities that involve teaching and tutor contact time; self-directed activities that involve study, research, applied learning, developing practice, reflection and review; and assessment activities that involve planning and completing assessment tasks.'

Therefore, SFEDI Awards may wish to review the document, *A Guide to Total Qualification Time (TQT)* to ensure that it reflects the way in which the 'size' and potential time necessary to complete a qualification is noted, while referencing the appropriate terminology as specified in current SCQF guidance.

This has been noted as Recommendation 1.

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of SFEDI Awards:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Print name

Print name

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Signature

Signature

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Designation

Designation

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Date

Date

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Document control and revision history

Version	Date	Author	Amendment Details
11	18 March 2019	Senior Regulation Manager	Removal of the wording reference to 'good practice' under recommendations. Footer updated.