Audit Report

SafeCert Awards Ltd

29 March 2021

Contents

1 Background

This was the fifth audit of SafeCert Awards Ltd since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation on 17 April 2013.

SafeCert Awards is a health-and-safety-based organisation and delivers qualifications such as First Aid at Work, Emergency First Aid, Manual Handling, Patient Handling, and Fire Safety. SafeCert Awards' headquarters are situated in Gortin, Omagh.

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 audit of SafeCert Awards, only a sample of 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 SafeCert 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 SafeCert 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

SafeCert Awards Ltd audit date: 29 March 2021

Audit Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 12 May 2021

Audit Report to be signed by SafeCert Awards: 23 June 2021

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by SafeCert Awards: 23 June 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 SafeCert 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, two Issues have been recorded and one Recommendation has been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 1 & 3	The awarding body risk register appears not to have taken an in-depth account of the short-term or long-term potential risks and impact posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the business. Additionally, the *Risk Management Strategy* document makes no reference to taking account of external concerns when deciding risks.	Medium
2. Principle 6	It appears that a newly introduced document in the document control register, *EQA Observation of Assessment Monitoring Report Version 1.0* has not been logged.	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 5 & 10	We recommend that the awarding body reviews its quality assurance documents and processes to both clarify and, importantly, standardise the External Quality Assurance (EQA) process across all such documentation for all stakeholders.

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 SafeCert Award'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 1. The awarding body shall have clearly defined and effective governance arrangements.

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

The Accreditation Auditors reviewed SafeCert Awards' *Operational Risk Review Version 2.1 March 2021* document, which contained a variety of risks, but appeared not to have taken an in-depth account of the short-term or long-term potential risks and impact posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the business. Although the auditors noted there was a brief mention of risk to Providers. This document had been updated as recently as March 2021, yet there was no indication that the external situation had been considered in depth. The Accreditation Auditor subsequently reviewed the *Risk Management Strategy, Version 1.3, February 2021* policy and noted that there was no reference to factors that should be considered when identifying risk, particularly no mention of external or environmental considerations.

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

Regulatory Principle 6. The awarding body and its providers shall maintain accurate documents, records and data.

Previous audits have raised concerns regarding the appropriate recording and currency of SafeCert Awards' documentation. This has, by and large, been addressed with the development and maintenance of a document control register. However, on this occasion it appears that a newly introduced document *EQA Observation of Assessment Monitoring Report Version 1.0* has not been logged in the register. SafeCert Awards needs to continue to be diligent in recording new policy/procedural documents in the register, to mitigate the risk of obsolete documentation being used unknowingly, instead of the revised and current version.

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

2.2 Recommendations

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.

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 Accreditation Auditors reviewed SafeCert Awards' EQA documents and processes. We think that some aspects of the processes could be made clearer to providers, such as when each quality assurance activity takes place.

For example, the external-facing *Centre Handbook, Version 2.5, January 2020* notes that there will be an EQA visit, as a minimum, at least once in every three-year cycle, based on risk level. However, the risk levels and what impacts a risk level are not clear, and neither are the associated EQA timeframes.

In addition, the internal-facing *EQA Guidance, Version 1.4, February 2020* states: *'each centre will receive quality assurance visits appropriate to their size and activity by the allocated EQA'.* However, although this guidance indicates what impacts the level of EQA, it does not refer to risk or to the three-year cycle. Therefore, we recommend that the awarding body reviews its quality assurance documents and processes to clarify and, importantly, standardise the EQA process across all relevant documentation for all stakeholders.

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

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of SafeCert Awards Ltd: For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation: