



Audit Report

Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)

28 February 2018

Contents

1 Background	1
1.1 Scope	1
1.2 Audit Report and Action Plan Timescales	2
1.3 Summary of Audit Issues and Recommendations	3
1.4 Risk Rating of Issues	5
2 Detail of Audit Issues and Recommendations	6
2.1 Issues	6
2.2 Recommendations	7
3 Acceptance of Audit Findings	9

1 Background

This was the 14th audit of the Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) since it was approved as an awarding body by SQA Accreditation in 1998.

VTCT is an independent educational charity that has been accredited to offer Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in the Hairdressing and Barbering, Beauty/Spa Therapy and Nail Services industries.

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 VTCT, 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 VTCT 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 VTCT'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

VTCT audit date:	28 February 2018
Audit Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	11 April 2018
Audit Report to be signed by VTCT:	24 May 2018
Action Plan to be e-mailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by VTCT:	24 May 2018

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 e-mailed 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 e-mail 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 e-mailed to VTCT 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 three Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principle 10	The awarding body does not centrally record external quality assurance action points placed upon a provider. This is left to the individual External Quality Assurer (EQA) to monitor and manage, without overall awarding body oversight. Therefore, there is potential for the risk that action points may not be managed adequately and closed out by dates set by the EQA.	Low
2. Principle 15 and Regulatory Principles Directive 3	The certificate for SQA accredited qualifications did not make a statement regarding the credit rating body and also noted the term 'grade' on the SVQ certificate.	Low

A Recommendation has been noted where SQA Accreditation considers there is potential for improvement. The awarding body is advised to address any Recommendations noted as good practice. 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 4	It is recommended that the <i>Conflict of Interest Policy, February 2018, V1</i> policy and process be amended to reflect discussions with the auditors. Staff should refresh their conflict of interest declarations yearly, and this should be recorded adequately for audit purposes.
2. Principle 5 and 6	It is recommended that the <i>Instructions for Conducting Examinations</i> policy be updated to clarify that identification checks are required for online examinations.
3. Principle 6, 12, 13 and 14	It is recommended that the awarding body review and amend its Complaints, Appeals, Malpractice and Maladministration policies to include contact details for SQA Accreditation and neutralise references to specific regulators where 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 VTCT'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 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.

At the request of the Accreditation Auditor, the awarding body representatives provided a run-through of the external quality assurance process, which included reviewing the candidate record management system utilised in this process. Although it was evidenced that the system stores provider external quality assurance reports, there is nowhere centrally that records any action points placed upon a provider. This is left to the individual EQA's to monitor and manage, without overall awarding body oversight. Therefore, there is potential for the risk that action points may not be managed adequately and closed out by the dates set during the EQA.

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

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

And

Regulatory Principle Directive (RPDIR) – 3 Logos and certificate requirements for SQA accredited qualifications.

Accreditation Auditors asked awarding body representatives for a sample of the certificate provided to learners who are awarded SQA accredited qualifications. The sample did not make a statement regarding the credit rating body, and also noted the term 'grade' on the SVQ certificate. This would not accurately reflect SVQ achievement, as there is no grade — the learner either achieves the qualification or does not.

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

2.2 Recommendations

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

The Accreditation Auditors reviewed the awarding body *Conflict of Interest Policy, February 2018, V1*, which states that VTCT staff sign conflict of interest (COI) declarations at beginning of their employment and thereafter at any time they believe conflicts may occur. There appears to be no annual refresh of these COI declarations. The Accreditation Auditors recommend that this should take place annually, as best practice would suggest. However, during discussions with awarding body representatives, various representatives agreed that contrary to what the policy states, they do actually sign a COI declaration yearly, although the Accreditation Auditors could not find evidence of this at the time of the audit. Therefore, it is recommended that the policy and the process documented in the policy be amended to reflect the actual practice, and for this to be recorded adequately for audit trail purposes.

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

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

When reviewing the awarding body policy *Instructions for Conducting Examinations*, it was clear to the Accreditation Auditors that identification checks should be conducted where paper examinations were administered. However, the requirement to check identification for online examinations was not explicitly referenced, and it was therefore unclear whether such checks would be conducted. It is recommended that the policy be updated to clarify that identification checks are required for both types of examination undertaken.

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

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

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

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

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

The Accreditation Auditors reviewed the awarding body policies: Complaints; Appeals; and Malpractice and Maladministration. The same errors were identified across all three policies.

Specifically, there were no contact details for SQA Accreditation, and under section 1.3, all policies noted only one qualification regulator, which was not relevant to SQA accredited qualifications. However, although the aforementioned policies did not have the correct details, other awarding body policies did appropriately reference SQA Accreditation. It is recommended that the awarding body review and amend the aforementioned policies as appropriate, and neutralise references to specific regulators where appropriate.

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

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings

For and on behalf of VTCT:

For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Print name

Print name

.....

George Brown

.....

Signature

Signature

.....

.....

Designation

Designation

.....

Head of Accreditation

.....

Date

Date

.....

11 April 2018

.....