



Audit Report

Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)

7 November 2023

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1 Background

This was the 16th 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.

This was a remote 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 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 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:	7 November 2023
Audit Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	29 November 2023
Audit Report to be signed by VTCT:	23 January 2024
Action Plan to be emailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by VTCT:	23 January 2024

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 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, five Issues have been recorded and two Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 7, 9	VTCT must ensure there are procedures in place to confirm the accuracy of information held on provider lists uploaded to SharePoint.	Low
2. Principles 7, 16	VTCT Complaints Policy and Procedures, 5P0AD10, August 2023, version 15.0 omits that awarding body staff, providers and learners must be made aware of how and when they can complain to SQA Accreditation and, where appropriate, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).	Low
3. Principles 7, 17	VTCT’s Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures, 5P0AD3, January 2023, version 12.0 omits that a referral can be made to SQA Accreditation, however SQA Accreditation is unable to overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements.	Low
4. Principle 7	VTCT’s website does not make appropriate reference to SQA Accreditation and accredited qualifications.	Low
5. Principles 3, 7	VTCT must carry out a review of documentation to ensure they follow their own processes for documentation control. They must also, where appropriate, ensure reference is made to SQA 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 7	It is recommended that VTCT carry out a cleansing of SharePoint and ensure documentation is current and assigned to at least one Regulatory Principle.
2. Principles 8, 12	<p>VTCT should consider including within their Centre Agreements, 5F0AD6, November 2022, version 7.0 that SQA Accreditation must have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provider and assessment locations • all documents, records and data • learners (where required) • third parties and service providers (where applicable) • online systems (where relevant)

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 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

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

As part of the audit preparation, SQA Accreditation Auditors reviewed the provider details which are uploaded to SharePoint. This highlighted that some contact information at centres was out of date and/or qualifications had been omitted from providers' information.

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

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

Regulatory Principle 16. The awarding body and its providers must have open and transparent systems, policies and procedures to manage complaints.

In preparation for the audit, several documents were reviewed including VTCT's Complaints Policy and Procedures, August 2023, version 15.0. It was noted that the policy had omitted that awarding body staff, providers and learners must be made aware of how and when they can complain to SQA Accreditation and, where appropriate, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

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

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

Regulatory Principle 17. The awarding body and its providers must have clear, fair and equitable systems, policies and procedures to manage appeals.

On review of the Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures, January 2023, version 12.0, it was noted that the documentation had omitted that a referral can be made to SQA Accreditation for SQA Accreditation's accredited qualifications. Additionally, the documentation didn't state that SQA Accreditation is unable to overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements.

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

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

The SQA Accreditation Auditors reviewed VTCT's website prior to the audit and were unable to find any SQA Accreditation's regulated qualifications unless they specifically used the qualification name within the search area. Through discussion with VTCT's representatives, they explained that a new website is being created and that this will have the ability to tailor searches to geographical areas and this will ensure VTCT raises awareness of SQA Accreditation and promotes its accredited qualifications.

This has been recorded as **Issue 4**.

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

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

Through review of VTCT's documentation it was noted that several documents had not followed VTCT's document control process and had conflicting version control numbers within the documents. It was also noted that some documentation had omitted SQA Accreditation when referring to other regulators.

Some examples are below:

Complaint Management Process, 3P0CD37, July 2022, version 16.0 — some pages of the document reference version 13.0 with others referencing version 16.0.

Trustee Roles and Responsibilities, 6DGCED17, February 2021, version 2.1 on front cover and version 3.0 in footers.

Risk Management Team Terms of Reference, 6GUCE10, October 2021, version.1.0 throughout the document and version 1.0 in sign-off section.

Assessment Management Incident Procedure, 5PRAD75, September 2023, version 4.0 omitted SQA Accreditation when referencing other regulators.

This has been recorded as **Issue 5**.

2.2 Recommendations

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body must have an effective approach for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

Following a review of VTCT's SharePoint site, it was noted that several documents could be archived as they were no longer relevant. Additionally, it was noted that some documents had metadata missing as they had not been assigned at least one Regulatory Principle.

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

Regulatory Principle 8. The awarding body must ensure that SQA Accreditation is granted access to all information relating 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.

The SQA Accreditation Auditors reviewed VTCT's Centre Agreements, 5F0AD6, November 2022, version 7.0, and noted that the document omitted that SQA Accreditation must have access to:

- ◆ provider and assessment locations
- ◆ all documents, records and data
- ◆ learners (where required)
- ◆ third parties and service providers (where applicable)
- ◆ online systems (where relevant), for providers.

It is however, in the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure, 5P0AD13, November 2022, version 11.0 and in the Centre Handbook, 5FOAD7, August 2021, version 11.0.

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

3 Acceptance of Audit Findings