Provider Monitoring Report

Pearson Education Limited

14 January 2021 to 25 January 2021

Contents

1   Background

Two providers were remotely monitored between 8 January and 25 January 2021.

1.1   Scope

SQA Accreditation carries out quality assurance activity in line with its *Quality Assurance of Approved Awarding Bodies Policy.* This involves monitoring a sample of the awarding body's approved providers or assessment sites. Provider monitoring visits will be conducted in a consistent manner within and between providers.

The aim of monitoring is to:

♦ ensure the awarding body's compliance with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements
♦ confirm that quality assurance arrangements are being conducted by the awarding body in accordance with its prescribed arrangements
♦ ensure that quality assurance arrangements are being conducted in a consistent manner, within and between providers
♦ ensure that providers are receiving the appropriate guidance, support and documentation from the awarding body in order to facilitate a high standard of qualification delivery
♦ inform future audit and monitoring activity for the awarding body

All Principles may be included within the scope of the provider monitoring activity.

Awarding body documentation considered for review includes all documents banked on the awarding body's SharePoint Place at the time of provider monitoring and information supplied by providers to support provider monitoring activity. Restricted or commercially sensitive information gathered during SQA Accreditation's quality assurance activities is treated in the strictest confidence.

SQA Accreditation provider monitoring reports are written by exception focusing only on those areas where corrective action is required or recommended.

1.2   Provider Monitoring Report Timescales

Pearson Education Limited provider monitoring dates: 8 January to 22 January 2021

Provider Monitoring Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 17 February 2021

Provider Monitoring Report to be signed by Pearson
Education Limited: 31 March 2021

Action Plan to be emailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by Pearson Education Limited   31 March 2021

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

♦ The awarding body will be sent a copy of the Provider Monitoring Report by email.

♦ The awarding body must sign the copy of the Provider Monitoring 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 Action Plan and return by email to SQA Accreditation.

The findings of this Provider Monitoring 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 Provider Monitoring 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 Pearson Education Limited as a separate document to the Provider Monitoring Report and must be submitted to SQA Accreditation in accordance with the timescale specified in 1.2.

As a result of the provider monitoring activity, three Issues have been recorded and one Recommendation has been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 6 & 12	The provider devised *Complaints* procedure given to the Accreditation Auditor by provider 2 did not reference escalation to the awarding body or SQA Accreditation, as the qualifications regulator. In addition, the contact details given to candidates in the provider devised *Complaints* policy (August 2020) by provider 1 directs candidates to make complaints to a competitor awarding body and not SQA Accreditation, as the qualifications regulator.	Low
2. Principles 6 & 13	The provider devised *Appeals* policy (July 2020) given to the Accreditation Auditor by provider 1 did not it make it clear that SQA Accreditation is unable to overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements. Neither did it inform candidates, if still dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal to Pearson Education Limited, that they have the right to submit a complaint to SQA Accreditation, as the qualifications regulator.	Low
3. Principles 10 & 15	Provider 1 had not received a standards verification visit in over 18 months. Delays to standards verification meant that certification results had not been released for learners causing a backlog in certification, as confirmation is required through the submission of the standards verifier report form.	Medium

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 & 6	Pearson Education Limited should consider reminding its lead external verifiers to ensure that its providers who are approved to deliver qualifications accredited by SQA Accreditation make appropriate reference to SQA Accreditation and SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles* (2014).

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 provider monitoring will count towards Pearson Education Limited'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   Good Practice, Issues and Recommendations

The following sections detail:

♦ good practice noted by providers
♦ Issues recorded and Recommendations noted against SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements

2.1   Good Practice

The following areas of good practice were noted by providers:

Provider 1 highlighted:

♦ the excellent working relationship provided by both the lead sampling verifier and sampling verifier
♦ it is extremely beneficial to have the opportunity to ask challenging questions and have them answered during verification visits
♦ if any questions arise outside the verification visit, they can contact the sampling verifier who will advise and provide guidance on how to approach questions raised

Provider 2 highlighted:

♦ communication with Pearson Education Limited is good

2.2   Issues

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.

For guidance to centres on complaints, page 19 of the *Pearson Work Based Learning Delivery Guidance & Quality Assurance Requirements* 2020–2021 states that, 'To support centres with their responsibility to ensure learners are aware of how to escalate their concerns to the awarding body and appropriate regulator.'

The provider devised *Complaints* procedure given to the Accreditation Auditor by provider 2 did not reference escalation to the awarding body or SQA Accreditation, as the qualifications regulator.

In addition, the contact details given to candidates in the provider devised *Complaints* policy (August 2020) by provider 1 directs candidates to make complaints to a competitor awarding body and not SQA Accreditation, as the qualifications regulator.

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

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

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

The provider devised *Appeals* policy (July 2020) given to the Accreditation Auditor by provider 1 did not it make it clear that SQA Accreditation is unable to overturn assessment decisions or academic judgements.

Neither did it inform candidates if still dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal to Pearson Education Limited that they have the right to submit a complaint to SQA Accreditation, as the qualifications regulator — whose role it is to review and ensure that the correct awarding body policies and procedures had been followed.

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

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.

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

For standards verification, page 14 of the *Pearson Work Based Learning Delivery Guidance & Quality Assurance Requirements* 2020–2021 states that, 'Sampling takes place following the lead standards verifier carrying out a visit looking at process, etc. Then the sampling visit from the standards verifier looks at workbooks on an annual basis.'

At the time of remote provider monitoring, provider 1 had not received a standards verification visit in over 18 months. They were due to have a standards verification visit in October/November 2019; however, this was cancelled due to their standards verifier being off ill at this time.

The *Pearson Work Based Learning Delivery Guidance & Quality Assurance Requirements* 2020–2021 for certification release, page 17 states that, 'The release for claims to certification for Pearson work based learning programmes will expire after 365 days, unless there has been a further recommendation for release to claims for certification by an allocated standards verifier through the submission of a further e-QRF/QMA SV Report. Centres must engage with the standards verification process to maintain the release of claims for certification and direct claims status. Centres should work with their allocated lead standards verifier to avoid delays to certification.'

The provider has had a steady flow of candidates throughout the 18 months since it last received a standards verification visit. Delays to standards verification meant that certification results had not been released for learners causing a backlog in certification, as confirmation is required through the submission of the standards verifier report form.

The quality nominee from provider 1 had contacted Pearson Education Limited and was expecting a standards verification visit imminently, although this had yet to be confirmed.

However, the impending standing verification visit does not detract from the fact that the Pearson Education Limited policy for standards verification and certification release had not been adhered to in this instance.

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

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

The provider devised *Quality Assurance Handbook* (September 20), section on assessment policy states, 'To ensure that the assessment procedure(s) is open, fair and free from bias and to the appropriate level as referred to in the awarding body and Ofqual criteria.'

Provider 2 is approved to deliver accredited qualifications by SQA Accreditation, however, the section on assessment policy makes no reference to SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles* (2014) within its provider devised *Quality Assurance Handbook.*

Pearson Education Limited should consider reminding its lead external verifiers to ensure that its providers who are approved to deliver qualifications accredited by SQA Accreditation make appropriate reference to SQA Accreditation and SQA Accreditation's *Regulatory Principles* (2014).

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

3   Acceptance of Provider Monitoring Findings

For and on behalf of Pearson Education Limited:

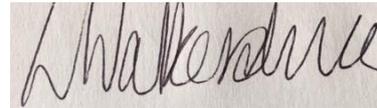For and on behalf of SQA Accreditation:

Print name

Print name

....

LAURA WALKERDINE

....

Signature

....

Designation

Designation
SENIOR REGULATION MANAGER

....

....

Date

Date
17 FEBRUARY 2021

....

....