



Provider Monitoring Report

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

21 November 2018 to 26 April 2019

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1 Background

Five SQA providers were monitored between 21 November 2018 and 26 April 2019.

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

SQA provider monitoring dates:	21 November 2018 to 26 April 2019
Provider Monitoring Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	3 July 2019
Provider Monitoring Report to be signed by SQA:	15 August 2019
Action Plan to be emailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by SQA	15 August 2019

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

- ◆ The awarding body will be sent two signed copies of the Provider Monitoring Report by post.
- ◆ The awarding body must sign both copies of the Provider Monitoring 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 Provider Monitoring 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 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 SQA 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, five Issues have been recorded and two Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 6 & 11	The provider-devised Equal Opportunities Policy for Provider 1 does not makes reference to both the Equality Act (2010) and the nine protected characteristics.	Low
2. Principles 6 & 12	Provider 5 did not inform candidates that, if they are still not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint to the awarding body, they have the right to escalate a complaint to SQA Accreditation as the qualification regulator.	Medium
3. Principles 6 & 13	The provider-devised appeals process in relation to record retention for Provider 5 is not compliant with SQA's <i>The Appeals Process: Information for Centres</i> , valid from April 2018.	Medium
4. Principles 6 & 14	Both Providers 3 and 5's provider-devised malpractice policies are not compliant with SQA's <i>Enhanced guidance to centres on writing malpractice in assessment procedure's criterion 1.5</i> (May 2018).	Medium
5. Principles 10 & 15	The Accreditation Auditor considers there to be a potential barrier to candidates at Provider 3 as they have to complete their SVQ qualification within a 12 month period, time bounding the candidate with no consideration given to the SCQF level of the qualification being undertaken.	High

A Recommendation has been noted where SQA Accreditation considers that 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 4	SQA may wish to consider organising network groups and continuous professional development (CPD) events for both advice and guidance and providing financial services qualifications.
2. Principle 10	SQA awarding body may wish to consider feedback from Provider 4 when convening standardisation activities for its qualification verifiers.

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 SQA'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:

- ◆ tutor and course delivery material provided for the Scottish Certificate for Personal Licence Holders qualification
- ◆ good customer service from the awarding body
- ◆ good support and knowledge from qualification verifiers
- ◆ extensive portfolio of qualifications
- ◆ SQA connect system user friendly
- ◆ good information technology support provided

2.2 Issues

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

Principle 11. The awarding body shall ensure that its qualifications and their assessment are inclusive and accessible to learners.

Reviewing the provider-devised Equal Opportunities Policy for SVQ candidates for Provider 1, the Accreditation Auditor noted that this did not reference the Equality Act (2010) or the nine protected characteristics.

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

Reviewing the SQA *Systems Verification — Evidence Report* for Provider 5, the Accreditation Auditor noted the system verifier had raised an agreed action for 'The procedure to include the right of candidates undertaking regulated qualifications to be able to complain to SQA Accreditation by 7 March 2018'.

However, the provider-devised *Complaints & Escalation Policy Operations 2019*, (April, V2) reviewed by the Accreditation Auditor for Provider 5 in April 2019, does not inform candidates that, if still not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint to the awarding body, they have the right to escalate a complaint to SQA Accreditation as the qualification regulator.

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

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.

SQA's *The Appeals Process: Information for Centres*, valid from April 2018, states that 'SQA and centres must retain records, including all materials and evidence, until the appeal has been resolved. Thereafter, assessment and internal verification records for appeals cases should be retained for six years, unless there is a legitimate reason to retain the records for a further period'.

The provider-devised appeals process contained in the *First Aid Assessment Policy & Procedures* document (2018) for Provider 5 reviewed by the Accreditation Auditor states that 'All documentation completed will be held on file for three years'.

Therefore, the provider-devised appeals process in relation to record retention for Provider 5 is not compliant with SQA's *The Appeals Process: Information for Centres*, valid from April 2018.

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

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

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

SQA *Enhanced guidance to centres on writing malpractice in assessment procedures, criterion 1.5* (May 2018) states that 'Any suspected cases of centre malpractice must be reported to SQA' and 'for regulated qualifications only: Candidates and centres have the right to request a review by the appropriate regulator, SQA Accreditation of the awarding body's process in reaching a decision in an appeal of a malpractice decision for qualifications subject to regulation'.

Both the provider-devised *Centre Malpractice Policy*, (Oct 2017) and *Candidate Malpractice Policy*, (Sept 2017) reviewed by the Accreditation Auditor for Provider 1 does not inform centres/candidates that suspected malpractice must be reported to the SQA awarding body. Nor does it inform centres/candidates that they have the right to a review by the regulator, SQA Accreditation.

SQA's *Enhanced guidance to centres on writing malpractice in assessment procedures, criterion 1.5* (May 2018) states that 'In the case of an appeal to SQA against the outcome of a malpractice investigation, assessment records must be retained for six years'.

Reviewing the SQA *Systems Verification — Evidence Report* for Provider 5, the Accreditation Auditor noted the system verifier had raised an agreed action for 'The current retention period for records relating to any suspected malpractice to be changed to six years'.

The provider-devised malpractice policy reviewed by the Accreditation Auditor in April 2019 for Provider 5 still states that 'All documentation completed will be held on file for three years'.

Both Providers 3 and 5 provider-devised malpractice policies are not compliant with SQA's *Enhanced guidance to centres on writing malpractice in assessment procedures, criterion 1.5* (May 2018).

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

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.

While reviewing the provider-devised *SVQ Candidate Induction* given to candidates by Provider 3, the Accreditation Auditor noted the following question in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

'Can I fail an SVQ?

No. It is not an exam so there is no 'pass' or 'fail', although SVQs are now time restricted. If a candidate has not achieved an award within 12 months, they will only be accredited with the units they have achieved and will have to undergo further registration and assessment with a centre to complete the award, which will incur further costs.

The provider-devised *Associate Assessor Responsibilities* document, which has to be agreed and signed by all Assessors, also states that 'it requires the candidate to complete the qualification within 12 months from induction. It is the Assessors responsibility to ensure that the candidate completes the qualification within this period'.

The Accreditation Auditor considers there to be a potential barrier to candidates at Provider 3 as they have to complete their SVQ qualification within a 12 month period, time bounding the candidate with no consideration given to the SCQF level of the qualification being undertaken.

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

2.3 Recommendations

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

Both the assessor and internal verifier at Provider 3 had previously discussed with the qualification verifier, which was recorded in its Qualification Verification Report (March 2018), the fact that there is no SQA networking group for advice and guidance, and similarly highlighted the fact that continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for this area are sparse.

Similarly, Provider 4 also discussed with the Accreditation Auditor the fact that there is no SQA networking group or CPD events for providing financial services.

SQA may wish to consider organising network groups and CPD events for both advice and guidance and providing financial services qualifications.

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

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.

Provider 4 commented that they had received inconsistent advice, particularly from qualification verifiers for the SVQs in Business and Administration over time and compared to other qualification areas.

SQA may wish to consider the feedback from Provider 4 when convening standardisation activities for its qualification verifiers.

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

3 Acceptance of Provider Monitoring Findings

For and on behalf of SQA:

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

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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.