



Provider Monitoring Report

Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)

5 November 2019

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1 Background

One provider was monitored on 5 November 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

VTCT provider monitoring date:	5 November 2019
Provider Monitoring Report approved by Accreditation Co-ordination Group on:	11 December 2019
Provider Monitoring Report to be signed by VTCT:	4 February 2020
Action Plan to be emailed to regulation@sqa.org.uk by VTCT:	4 February 2020

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 e-mailed to VTCT 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 three Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 10 and 6	Learner identity checks were not recorded at provider 1 in accordance with VTCT requirements for examinations. Additionally, the VTCT attendance list is not sufficient to ensure invigilators can record verification as intended, as it does not have a column designed for recording identity.	Low
2. Principles 10 and 7	At provider 1, invigilation reports have not been completed and retained as required by VTCT and VTCT external quality assurers have not identified this discrepancy. Additionally, the absence of invigilation reports has been raised previously in the provider monitoring report of 2017-18.	Medium
3. Principle 14	The malpractice and maladministration policy at provider 1 did not include any reference to VTCT in any respect, which contravenes the <i>VTCT Centre Agreement, April 2019</i> and would not ensure necessary safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration.	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 6	VTCT should ensure that the number of permitted attempts at an examination is stated in documentation.
2. Principle 10	VTCT may wish to consider the efficacy of remote external quality assurance activities.
3. Principle 10	VTCT may wish to consider the current assessment methods used for its SQA accredited qualifications and whether these facilitate progression to more advanced qualifications.

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 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 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 provider 1:

- VTCT record of assessment books are easy to navigate and very user friendly for learners
- external quality assurers have established good relationships with provider staff
- awarding body processes are straightforward and easy to follow

2.2 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.

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

Page 11 of the *VTCT Instructions for Conducting Examinations, August 2019* states that the invigilator must always, 'confirm the identity of the learners....and record verification on the attendance list.'

The Accreditation Auditor noted that the VTCT attendance list provided and used for this purpose only has two columns to denote absent and present. Staff at provider 1 commented to the Accreditation Auditor that identification is checked but only attendance is recorded rather than that the candidate's identity itself has been checked. This practice does not accord with the VTCT requirements but the VTCT document is not sufficient to ensure invigilators can record verification as intended, as it does not have a column designed for recording identity.

This has been recorded as **Issue 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.

Regulatory Principle 7. The awarding body shall have effective arrangements for communicating with its staff, stakeholders and SQA Accreditation.

Page 10 of the *VTCT Instructions for Conducting Examinations, August 2019* states that providers have the responsibility to, 'complete an invigilation report for all VRQ, NVQ, SVQ, Applied General and Technical Qualification examinations. VTCT's invigilation report template is published in the Document Library.'

With regard to retention, page 23 then states that the provider, 'examinations office must retain signed records of the invigilation reports for each examination for a minimum of 6 months from the date of the examination. VTCT reserves the right to request copies of these records at any time and sample them as part of external quality assurance visits.'

At provider 1, the Accreditation Auditor was presented with a file of invigilation records. This file showed that seating plans and attendance registers were completed and retained. However, invigilation reports were not completed and hence not retained, in accordance with VTCT instruction. The main representative at the provider was not aware of the requirement to complete and retain invigilation reports.

Recent VTCT external quality assurance reports for SQA accredited hair/barbering and beauty qualifications at the provider do not note the absence of invigilation reports. Indeed one of these reports contains a specific comment that invigilation reports are completed and stored but this is not the case. The Accreditation Auditor did view invigilation reports for other qualifications offered by a different awarding body within the provider file and hence can only assume that the VTCT external quality assurer has looked at these in error.

The main representative at the provider commented that there have been no issues in the course of the VTCT examinations, as although there has been no formal report, any issues would have been recorded by the examinations officer on the attendance register. Nonetheless, invigilation reports have not been completed and retained as required and VTCT external quality assurers have not identified this discrepancy. Additionally, the absence of invigilation reports has been raised previously in the provider monitoring report of 2017-18, although the latter report did not pertain to the provider monitored in this report.

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

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

In reference to malpractice and maladministration, section 8.1.1 of the *VTCT Centre Agreement April 2019*, states that, providers must, 'adopt a policy and procedure, complementary to VTCT's Policies and Procedures on malpractice and maladministration, that allows for the identification of, and aims to reduce, the risk and incidents of malpractice or maladministration occurring.'

However, the malpractice and maladministration policy at provider 1 did not include any reference to VTCT in any respect, only referencing processes, procedures and escalation routes for another awarding body.

The Accreditation Auditor acknowledges that there have not been any incidences of malpractice or maladministration at the provider with regard to SQA accredited VTCT qualifications. Nonetheless the policy contravenes VTCT requirements and would not ensure necessary safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration, in accordance with the Regulatory Principle.

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

2.3 Recommendations

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

When sitting examinations for SQA accredited VTCT qualifications, learners are permitted three attempts, as confirmed by staff at provider 1. After the third attempt, learners using the *Lynx2Achieve* e-testing platform are blocked from further attempts. However, neither the provider staff nor the Accreditation Auditor could find where the information regarding resits is stated in the VTCT documentation. It was stated previously but seems to be missing from current versions of relevant documents such as the *VTCT Instructions for Conducting Examinations, August 2019*.

For clarity, VTCT should ensure that the number of permitted attempts at an examination is stated in documentation.

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.

Recently, provider 1 has been subject to some remote external quality assurance activity by VTCT, in addition to the traditional physical visits, as permitted in the visit policy outlined in the *VTCT EQA Handbook, April 2019*.

Staff at the provider commented to the Accreditation Auditor that the two remote activities conducted in different sectors to date were quite onerous with a lot of screen time required. Staff further commented that they found the remote activities to be of reduced benefit compared to the physical visit.

VTCT may wish to consider the efficacy of remote external quality assurance activities.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 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.

Staff at provider 1 felt that the examinations for SQA accredited VTCT qualifications were not challenging enough in their current multiple choice format. In the absence of any short answer or other written methods, staff felt that the academic level required did not prepare learners for progression to more advanced qualifications. As a result, those progressing from SQA accredited VTCT qualifications to other industry qualifications offered by the provider, often struggled to develop skills necessary to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

VTCT may wish to consider the current assessment methods used for its SQA accredited qualifications and whether these facilitate progression to more advanced qualifications.

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

3 Acceptance of Provider Monitoring Findings

For and on behalf of VTCT:

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

Date

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