



Provider Monitoring Report

**The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers
(WCSM)**

18 December 2018

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1 Background

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM) is approved to offer SQA accredited qualifications which are assessed by examination.

The management and administration of examinations is undertaken by the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO).

Exams are held in examination venues where the exams are paper based and in e-examination venues where exams are taken online at the candidate's place of work.

One paper based examination venue was visited on 18 December 2018.

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

WCSM provider monitoring date: 18 December 2018

Provider Monitoring Report approved by
Accreditation Co-ordination Group on: 16 January 2019

Provider Monitoring Report to be signed by WCSM: 27 February 2019

Action Plan to be e-mailed
to regulation@sqa.org.uk by WCSM: 27 February 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 e-mailed 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 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 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 WCSM 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, two Issues have been recorded and four Recommendations have been noted.

Issue	Detail of Issue recorded	Risk rating
1. Principles 6 and 10	The <i>Guidance Notes for Conducting WCSM Written Examination</i> did not contain an invigilator brief and hence could not be read to candidates by the invigilator, in accordance with the documented procedure.	Low
2. Principle 10	The examinations for the SCQF Level 5 and Level 7 Certificates in Optical Care were convened in the same room but with different start times. This meant that documented procedures concerning candidate admittance to the room and briefing could not be followed as stated.	Medium

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	WCSM is encouraged to liaise with ABDO to ascertain the rationale for splitting the examination for the SCQF Level 5 Certificate in Optical Care into small time blocks, as is being done currently. WCSM is also encouraged to give consideration to whether the previous structure of a two hour exam was much more streamlined for both candidates and invigilators.
2. Principles 4 and 7	WCSM may wish to liaise with ABDO to consider the date of the examination relative to the Christmas period, and also when candidates are informed of this date.
3. Principle 6	WCSM should remove references to documents which are no longer in use when the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are next revised.
4. Principle 6	Information about confirming the receipt of examination papers should be included in the <i>Guidance Notes for Conducting WCSM Written Examinations</i> .

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 WCSM'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:

The invigilators spoke highly about the examination paperwork from ABDO. They commented that it is received in a timely manner and is extremely well organised in terms of resources supplied, such as spare papers, signs, and treasury tags.

The invigilators also highlighted the positive communication with the contact at ABDO who is extremely efficient and answers queries comprehensively.

2.2 Issues

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

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.

In reference to procedures at the start of the examination, page 3 of the *Guidance Notes for Conducting WCSM Written Examination* states that, 'once all the candidates are settled, the invigilator should read out the brief.' However, the document does not contain an invigilator brief as it did previously and therefore could not be read in accordance with the documented procedure.

The invigilators, who have invigilated WCSM examinations for many years, commented that they delivered the brief from memory when required.

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.

In reference to procedures before the examination, page 3 of the *Guidance Notes for Conducting WCSM Written Examination* states that, ‘the invigilator shall allow candidates to enter the room fifteen minutes before the start of the examination to allow enough time for them to find their seats for basic administration to be carried out and for a briefing to take place.’

The examinations for the SCQF Level 5 and Level 7 Certificates in Optical Care were convened in the same room but with different start times; the latter started at 9 am and the former started at 11 am, as detailed below. This unconventional timetabling meant that one of the invigilators had to conduct the basic administration and briefing in the corridor outside the room, contravening the documented procedure.

Start	End	SCQF Level 7
9.00	10.00	Unit 2
10.30	12.00	Unit 3
12.00	13.00	LUNCH
13.00	14.30	Unit 1
14.30	16.00	Unit 4

Start	End	SCQF level 5
11.00	11.24	Unit 5
11.30	11.54	Unit 4
11.54	13.00	LUNCH
13.00	13.24	Unit 3
13.30	13.54	Unit 1
14.00	14.24	Unit 2

Additionally, the entrance of the five candidates undertaking the later exam was quite disruptive to concentration, albeit momentarily, as they had winter coats, multiple seasonal accessories and stationery items which needed to be placed at the side of the room before they located their seat.

The Accreditation Auditor cannot see any rationale for the differing start times. If both examinations had started together at 9 am, the documented procedure could have been followed and the examination process would have been improved for both candidates and invigilators.

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

2.3 Recommendations

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

The examinations for the SCQF Level 5 Certificate in Optical Care were organised as follows:

Start	End	SCQF level 5
11.00	11.24	Unit 5
11.30	11.54	Unit 4
11.54	13.00	LUNCH
13.00	13.24	Unit 3
13.30	13.54	Unit 1
14.00	14.24	Unit 2

In previous years, these examinations were organised as a complete two hour examination with no break between papers. The Accreditation Auditor considers the new format to be both prolonged and quite fractured for candidates and invigilators.

WCSM is encouraged to liaise with ABDO to ascertain the rationale for splitting the examination for the SCQF Level 5 Certificate in Optical Care into small time blocks, as is being done currently. WCSM is also encouraged to give consideration to whether the previous structure of a two hour exam was much more streamlined for both candidates and invigilators.

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

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

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

Prior to the examination starting, the Accreditation Auditor spoke to four candidates undertaking the SCQF Level 7 Certificate in Optical Care. The candidates commented that the date of the examination (one week before Christmas) was not preferable. The busy season meant that it was difficult to give their full attention to examination preparation. It was also difficult to get time away from their optical practices to attend the examination because other staff were required to use up annual leave entitlement before Christmas. Candidates felt that having the examination scheduled earlier in December, as it was in previous years, would circumvent these difficulties.

Additionally, candidates commented that, where possible, it would be better to know the examination date several months in advance, rather than near the end of October.

WCSM may wish to liaise with ABDO to consider the date of the examination relative to the Christmas period and also when candidates are informed of this date.

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

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

The *WCSM Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) April 2018*, mention two documents: *Instructions for Examination Venues* and *Guidance Notes for Invigilators*, which are no longer in use. These documents have been replaced by the *Guidance Notes for Conducting WCSM Written Examinations*.

WCSM should remove references when the SOPs are next revised.

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

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

With regard to the security and handling of examination papers, SOP 9 states that the named individual for the receipt of papers will be, 'asked to confirm their arrival by telephone or e-mail immediately upon receipt.' The invigilator had complied with this instruction. However, this information is not included in the section on security of papers within the *Guidance Notes for Conducting WCSM Written Examinations*, as would be expected.

Given that invigilators are not given the SOPs, all information about the receipt of examination papers should be included in the *Guidance Notes for Conducting WCSM Written Examinations* to ensure all instructions are clear and can be followed.

This has been noted as **Recommendation 4**.

3 Acceptance of Provider Monitoring Findings

For and on behalf of WCSM:

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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