

**Ofqual**  
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# **Awarding body monitoring report**

## **Institute of Linguists Educational Trust**

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## Introduction

### Regulating external qualifications

Responsibility for regulating external qualifications lies jointly with three regulators:

- the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)<sup>1</sup>
- the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), the regulator for Wales
- the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), the regulator for Northern Ireland.

Following the accreditation of a qualification, the regulators systematically monitor awarding organisations against the requirements set out in the statutory regulations. The aim of this activity is to promote continuing improvement and public confidence in the quality of external qualifications.

Where an awarding organisation is found not to comply with relevant criteria, the regulators set conditions of accreditation. Even if an awarding organisation is compliant, the monitoring team may make observations on ways that the awarding organisation could change its systems and procedures to improve clarity or reduce bureaucracy.

Accreditation conditions and observations arising from this monitoring activity are specified at the end of each section of this report. Awarding organisations are required to produce an action plan to show how they will deal with accreditation conditions imposed as a result of a monitoring activity. The regulators will agree the action plan and monitor its implementation.

The regulators will use the outcomes of monitoring and any subsequent action taken by awarding organisations to inform decisions on the re-accreditation of qualifications, or if necessary, the withdrawal of accreditation.

### Banked documents

As part of its awarding organisation recognition processes, the regulators require awarding organisations to submit certain documents to QCA for the purposes of 'banking' them centrally. Information from banked documents will be used to inform monitoring activities and may also affect the awarding organisation's risk rating.

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<sup>1</sup> This report was written before the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) was created.

A suite of documents has been identified as suitable for banking and are those that are considered to be the most crucial in supporting an awarding organisation's ability to operate effectively. To maintain the currency of the banked documents, awarding organisations are responsible for updating them as and when changes occur. They are also reminded to review them at least annually as part of the annual self-assessment return.

## **About this report**

This report is the outcome of a monitoring activity on the Institute of Linguists Educational Trust (IoLET) awarding organisation and was carried out by QCA on behalf of the regulators in March 2008. It draws together the regulator's findings on areas of:

- corporate governance
- resources and expertise
- the quality assurance and control of independent assessments
- the determination and reporting of results
- registration
- banked documents.

This is the second post-accreditation monitoring activity on IoLET's activities. An awarding body recognition update (ABRU) was completed in 2005 for which there are no outstanding accreditation conditions.

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by the regulators, the previous monitoring report, ABRU submission and scrutiny of the IoLET website. The monitoring team visited IoLET's head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation. The regulators observed an examination panel meeting to check how the awarding organisation's quality assurance systems worked in practice.

## **About IoLET**

IoLET provides access to three vocationally-related qualifications (VRQs) in translation and public interpreting. The qualifications are assessed either by written examinations or role play and oral examinations, depending on the level. For more information on IoLET and the qualifications it offers, visit the IoLET website at [www.iol.org.uk](http://www.iol.org.uk).

## Corporate governance

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

### Findings

1. There have been no changes to the awarding organisation's corporate governance arrangements since the ABRU was completed in 2005.
2. IoLET, the awarding organisation, is a company limited by guarantee. It is an associated charity of the Chartered Institute of Linguists, which exists for the promotion of linguistic proficiency and the encouragement of higher standards of language education. The institute has two additional subsidiary companies.
3. There is an overarching Council for the Institute and a board for each of the subsidiary companies, and one for IoLET the awarding organisation. The monitoring team noted that the website does not identify IoLET as an awarding organisation.
4. There are a number of groups that support the awarding organisation. The Examinations Review Board (ERB) meets after moderation of the examination sessions. Its role is advisory and includes looking at reports on the quality of marking, the conduct of examinations or other issues identified from the examination sessions. The ERB has no power to make changes, but can ask for specific issues to be taken to the Quality Assurance Panel (QAP). For example, the ERB suggested that examiners in a particular discipline should have extra training. The QAP membership includes experts from universities. Its role is to look at appeals, reasonable adjustments, complaints and customer service. A member of the monitoring team observed a meeting and is confident that the ERB is fulfilling its advisory role.
5. IoLET has a Reasonable Adjustments Panel (RAP), which looks at all requests for reasonable adjustments to check that the request is valid. The RAP includes an independent person from another organisation. This is good practice.
6. The day-to-day operations are managed by the director of examinations. Any changes to policies and procedures would be discussed with the chief executive and could be reviewed by the ERB and/or QAP. The IoLET board would consider any changes before deciding to approve them or not.
7. The monitoring team reviewed the banked documents and recommended that changes were made to some of the policies.
8. The monitoring team were given full access to awarding organisation documentation, including the operational plan, minutes and reports.

## **Accreditation conditions**

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

## **Observations**

1. IoLET should clearly identify itself as an awarding organisation on the institute's website.
2. IoLET is reminded to provide the regulators with the updated policies for banking.

## Resources and expertise

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraphs 8 and 10.

### Findings

1. There are 13 full-time and six part-time members of staff to support the awarding organisation's activities, including the chief executive and director of examinations. IoLET has six managers. One is responsible for the recruitment and training of oral examiners and interlocutors, using the external examination consultants. Two managers are responsible for commissioning papers, written assessment and reviewing assessment tasks for the relevant qualifications, and managing the tape sampling of oral examinations and marking of the written papers. There is also an examinations administration controller responsible for the registration and certification of candidates, a candidate manager and a quality assurance manager. Each has a small team to support these activities. All senior awarding organisation staff have expertise in languages.
2. There is a staff appraisal process, which is under review. It includes an annual review of performance and identification of training needs. The director of operations confirmed that there is a budget for training and all members of staff were recently offered training to use Excel.
3. The design and assessment of the accredited qualifications involve a variety of roles. The examination teams include chief moderators, chief examiners and scrutineers for the specialist subjects, setters, proofreaders, oral examiners, tape samplers, interlocutors and written markers. IoLET has suitable documented procedures for recruiting and training people for these posts. The application process is thorough and potential applicants for all roles must meet strict criteria to be accepted onto the training. For example, oral examiners must have a first degree or equivalent in the language being assessed and English.
4. The training for these roles does vary. Oral examiners and interlocutors<sup>2</sup> are invited to attend an induction or refresher training session and are required to complete a number of tasks. All assessors attend a final briefing session held in the four weeks prior to the examinations where they receive final instructions and examination material, which they are required to sign for. The performance of each assessor is evaluated at the end of each examination session and feedback is provided on an individual basis. Where any concerns are highlighted then that assessor will receive additional training and appropriate

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<sup>2</sup> Interlocutors interpret oral tasks for specific examinations. They act out a role play, delivering a script in their native language, and do not participate in the assessment of candidates.

advice prior to being re-commissioned for the next examination session. If suitable, they are included on the database, which is accessible to the examination consultants. Markers and tape samplers also attend briefing sessions either in person or by distance and are given written guidance to assist them in their role. All members of the examination team agree to the code of conduct, which details the general roles and responsibilities and requires them to declare any conflicts of interest.

5. IoLET employs regional examination consultants. They attend training sessions before and after examinations. Part of their role is to appoint examiners and interlocutors to venues within their area and deliver the training for specific examination sessions. In addition, the examiner manager visits all examination consultants to check that the training of oral examiners and interlocutors is consistent across the regions.
6. IoLET contracts with the chief moderator for the level 3 Certificate in bilingual skills (CBS), the chief moderator for the level 6 Diploma in public services interpreting (DPSI), and the chief examiners and chief moderators for the level 7 Diploma in translation (DipTrans). These contracts are reviewed each year.
7. IoLET has a database, which is being upgraded. There is a disaster recovery programme in place, but the awarding organisation is looking at ways to improve the existing plan. Data is backed-up daily and kept off-site.

### **Accreditation conditions**

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

### **Observations**

There are no observations for this section.

## The quality assurance and control of internal and independent assessments

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraphs 13, 36, 38–42 and 56–62.

### Findings

1. The monitoring team looked at the quality assurance and control systems in place to support the assessment of VRQs.
2. IoLET has three accredited vocationally-related qualifications in translating and interpreting. They are offered in over 46 different languages. The main assessment methods are written tasks and oral assessment. The oral assessment consists of role play with simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, and sight translations into and out of English.
3. IoLET produces comprehensive information for candidates and course providers for each accredited qualification. The information is in the form of a handbook, which includes the assessment methods and tasks, assessment criteria, performance level descriptors and marking criteria. Handbooks are available in hard copy or can be downloaded from the IoLET website.
4. The DipTrans is the only IoLET qualification based on written tasks. Candidates have to translate from one language into (most likely) their mother tongue. One unit is a general paper, which all candidates take. It incorporates a translation from English to another language or vice versa. There are two other units, which allow candidates to choose one task from a choice of three. All translations are sourced from relevant textbooks or other printed material.
5. Question paper setters produce three draft papers for the general paper and two draft papers for each of the other options in the other high entry languages. There is one chief examiner and a chief moderator for each high entry language combination. There is one chief examiner for small entry languages. Chief examiners and chief moderators meet to discuss the draft question papers and select the ones that will be used.
6. The papers are formatted by IoLET staff and sent to external proofreaders. There is a well documented process of amending and checking. Reviews are carried out at various stages both by IoLET staff and, finally, by the chief examiners and moderators before printing.
7. The CBS and DPSI use a combination of written and oral tasks. The DPSI question paper setters produce original material for role-play situations such as interviews in a police station or court of law. There are four pathways for the DPSI: English law, Scottish law, health and local government. The CBS

question paper setter produces adapted tasks from material taken from public services scenarios. The DPSI qualification incorporates translating and interpreting from and to English plus another language. The CBS qualification contains a role play where candidates have to convey messages in both English and another language, plus oral and written translations and a letter-writing task.

8. The chief moderator and IoLET examination manager review and agree the question papers. They are also sent to independent scrutineers who are specialists in each of the pathways. The papers for the CBS are reviewed by the scrutineer for the local government pathway for the DPSI.
9. Written text for translation is first produced in English. This is a 'skeleton' text with key technical words that provides the scenario. When the papers are translated into other languages, experts transpose the text using appropriate words that are logical in the other language, bearing in mind that exact translation is not always possible.
10. Following a series of checks and amendments, IoLET staff format and proofread the papers. Staff members also carry out the role-play task as a further test. When all amendments and checks are completed, the papers are sent to the other language setters and proofreaders.
11. The IoLET central registration department is responsible for issuing the right number of papers in the appropriate language combinations to examination venues.
12. The monitoring team considers that the processes IoLET use to produce question papers is complex, but well documented and managed.
13. Candidates take examinations either at an examination venue hosted by their course provider or at a central 'open' venue managed by IoLET staff. They are required to produce their examination entry card with photographic identification. Spot checks on examinations are carried out by IoLET staff or examination consultants to check on the examination and security arrangements.
14. The oral role-play examinations are scenarios that are taken from real-life situations. The examination team consists of an examiner and two interlocutors, one for each of the languages used. Further guidance on how to approach role-play activities is provided to centres and candidates in a DVD, which is available for both qualifications.
15. As part of their training and standardisation, the examination teams practise before the actual examinations so they are well rehearsed and can maintain a

16. All completed assessment material, including tapes, are sent to IoLET. Answer papers are sent for marking., with a sample copied for second marking. Tape samplers check the performance of the examination teams. They note issues on examiner performance that may affect the outcome such as talking too fast or too quietly. IoLET provides guidance material for each aspect of the marking system such as the *DPSI written marking instructions handbook* and the *CBS tape sampling instructions handbook*.
17. The completed papers for the DipTrans are sent to IoLET, which checks for completeness before going forward to examiners. The number of examiners used depends on numbers of candidates, but examiners mark according to their speciality. Examiners send a number of marked scripts to the chief examiner who reviews them for consistency before confirming that the examiner can proceed with further marking. The awarding organisation does not specify the sampling percentage. IoLET staff confirmed that they would expect a minimum of 10 per cent and that each sample must be appropriate to the amount of scripts. The chief examiner may discuss any issues on examiner performance with the chief moderator. Comments made on mark sheets are logged by IoLET staff where a potential training need has been identified.
18. IoLET staff highlight the samples for moderation. These are usually those with borderline marks, but chief moderators can ask to see further samples. The moderation process takes into account any incidents arising at the time of the examinations such as disruption by fire alarms. It is the chief moderators who make the final mark decisions.
19. The chief moderators produce a detailed report for each examination session, which includes reporting on statistics, the structure of the examination and recommendations for centres and candidates.

### **Accreditation conditions**

There are no accreditation conditions.

### **Observations**

There are no observations for this section.

## **Determination and reporting of results**

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraphs 63–67.

### **Findings**

1. IoLET holds awarding meetings for each of the qualifications to confirm the results. Chief examiners and moderators present their reports on the examinations and statistics on past examinations are compared. The reports also include recommendations to assist candidates and course providers, and are available on the awarding organisation website.
2. To achieve the full qualification, candidates must pass each unit. The pass marks and criteria for marking are clear and available to all interested parties in the handbooks.
3. Each unit has set pass marks. There are pass, merit and distinction grades for individual units. However, the overall qualification is not graded. Candidate performance is reviewed after every examination session at the ERB meetings.
4. Unit certificates and letters of credit are issued to candidates if they do not achieve the whole qualification.
5. Candidates are given five years to complete all three examinations.

### **Accreditation conditions**

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

### **Observations**

There are no observations for this section.

## Registration

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraphs 11 and 12.

## Findings

1. Organisations wishing to offer IoLET examinations complete an *Examination centre registration form*. Examination consultants visit potential centres to check their suitability as examination venues. They complete a centre visit report, detailing that the venues are complying with IoLET requirements in terms of noise-free accommodation, equipment and storage of examination materials. If approved, the centre is allocated a centre number. Candidates cannot be registered for examinations until the venue is approved. Centres are given a *Centre information guide* that includes for example information on the timetables for examinations, and policies and procedures.
2. There are suitable arrangements to register candidates. The monitoring team noted that this is a manual process and that the centre number prefixes the candidate number. The existing database does not generate a unique candidate number. The awarding organisation is developing a new database that will issue a unique candidate number at registration and working towards online registration. IoLET collects data about its candidates, including ethnic origin and any reasonable adjustments required.
3. IoLET offers the DipTrans and DPSI qualifications overseas. Awarding organisations are required to inform their clients that the regulatory logos on the certificate indicate that the qualification is accredited only for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is not stated in the documentation or on the website and will need to be addressed.

## Accreditation conditions

1. IoLET must inform its clients that the regulatory logos on the certificate indicate that the qualification is accredited only for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraph 21b).

## Observations

There are no observations for this section.

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Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

Spring Place

Coventry Business Park

Herald Avenue

Coventry CV5 6UB

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346

[www.ofqual.gov.uk](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk)