



Awarding body monitoring report for: Lantra Awards

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Introduction

Regulating external qualifications

Responsibility for regulating external qualifications lies jointly with three regulators:

- the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual)
- the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), the body for Wales
- and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), the authority for Northern Ireland.

Following the accreditation of a qualification, the regulators systematically monitor awarding bodies 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 body is found not to comply with relevant criteria, the regulators set conditions of accreditation. Even if an awarding body is compliant, the monitoring team may make observations on ways that the awarding body 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 bodies 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 bodies to inform decisions on the re-accreditation of qualifications, or, if necessary, the withdrawal of accreditation.

Banked documents

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

A suite of documents has been identified as suitable for banking and are those that are considered to be most crucial in supporting an awarding body's ability to operate effectively. To maintain the currency of the banked documents awarding bodies are responsible for updating

them as and when changes occur. They are also reminded to review them at least annually at the time of completion of the self-assessment return.

About this report

The monitoring activity for Lantra Awards was carried out by Ofqual on behalf of the regulators in November 2008 and July 2009. The July date was to facilitate the observation of Lantra Awards qualifications development training for its associate staff.

The monitoring focused on the regulatory criteria relating to the following key areas but specifically those relating to the qualifications development process against the Lantra Awards application for access to the 5 day accreditation process:

- corporate governance
- resources and expertise
- qualifications development
 - planning
 - content and design of assessment
 - quality assurance of the qualifications process
- assessment arrangements
 - independent assessment
 - internal assessment.

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by the regulators including the awarding body 5 day application and scrutiny of the Lantra Awards website. The monitoring team visited the Lantra Awards head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation. Finally, the first Lantra Qualifications and Credit Framework external moderator training day was observed in July 2009.

This report draws together the regulators' findings from these monitoring activities.

About Lantra Awards

Lantra Awards is an awarding body specialising in vocational qualifications and training for people in the land-based and environmental sector and also offers provision for the voluntary and construction sectors. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Lantra, the sector skills council for the

environmental and land-based sector. For further information on the work of Lantra Awards visit the website www.lantra-awards.co.uk.

Corporate governance

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

Findings

1. Since it was last monitored in July 2004 there have been no changes to Lantra Awards' company status. It remains a private company limited by shares with charitable status and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Lantra, the sector skills council for the land-based industries. Lantra Awards is required to comply with the Lantra conflict of interest policy statement which governs the arrangements of the parent company with Lantra Awards. A memorandum of understanding and service level agreements exist between Lantra and Lantra Awards for corporate services. Lantra provides personnel, IT and finance services.
2. However, there have been significant staffing and organisational changes to Lantra Awards. A new managing director was appointed in March 2006, who is the single named point of accountability for maintaining the quality and standards of all qualifications. The managing director reports to the Lantra Awards board.
3. Lantra Awards has restructured its departments and teams to reflect a corporate move away from products to process and systems management. A new organisational chart outlining this new structure was provided to the monitoring team.
4. A new senior management team of six, heading up five new departments, now reports directly to the managing director. A three year business plan, 2008 – 2011, is now in operation detailing the strategic objectives for each department. This is reviewed annually. Each department has its own departmental objectives and a departmental action plan. A risk-assessment plan is active for each department. Team and individual objectives are reviewed annually.
5. A Lantra Awards Quality Committee is currently the single standing committee responsible for monitoring the quality assurance and quality control of Lantra Awards provision. Previously the committee was chaired by a member of the board of directors. This has now been revised and the chair is independent of other roles. Up to nine committee members are appointed from Lantra Awards approved centres and independent members from other private and public sector bodies. Its scope is to consider quality issues relating to existing provision and review quality assurance arrangements. The committee has the power to require the Lantra Awards board to take corrective action where necessary. The monitoring team was provided with and reviewed the terms of reference of this committee.

6. An awards sub-committee of the quality committee has recently been established to oversee Lantra Awards provision that sits outside the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).
7. The operation of Lantra Awards is overseen by a board of directors. The chair of the board is currently appointed on an interim basis.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

1. Lantra Awards is to submit the new terms of reference for the quality committee as a banked document.
2. Lantra Awards is to notify the regulators when the permanent appointment of the new chair to the Lantra Awards board takes place.

Resources and expertise

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 8 and 10.

Findings

1. The awarding body has 42 employed staff at head office. They are split into five teams responsible for development, qualifications, quality and standards, customer service, and sales and marketing, including website support. There are sufficient staff resources to support the delivery of Lantra Awards' accredited qualifications. In 2007 the awarding body employed a qualifications manager with expertise in assigning credit and levelling to assist in the development of its QCF qualifications.
2. Lantra Awards has a formal staff review process that links individual performance objectives to departmental objectives. Progress is regularly reviewed and training needs identified. The monitoring team noted that staff attending external events such as those offered by Ofqual or QCDA complete stakeholder reports on the events that are available to all staff. This is good practice.
3. Lantra Awards has about 15 external verifiers, three chief external verifiers and 28 examiners. Of these three are working towards V2. The procedures for recruiting and training external verifiers and examiners are suitable. They include an application and selection process. External verifiers attend an induction day with Lantra Awards followed by a shadow and accompanied visit with a chief verifier or experienced external verifier. Appointments are confirmed if the report submitted by the reviewer is satisfactory.
4. The NVQ code of practice 2006 requires awarding bodies to provide a code of practice that external verifiers must sign and agree to. External verifiers sign a contract for the provision of services. This states the roles and responsibilities of external verifiers, the requirements for declaring conflicts of interest and continuing professional development. Most of the requirements are met in the contract but appeals against external verifier decisions are not included. Lantra Awards will need to amend the existing arrangements or develop a separate code of practice to meet this requirement.
5. The monitoring team looked at the agendas for a number of external verifier training days. The content was suitable and included for example, standardisation of candidate evidence. External verifiers are given an NVQ/SVQ external verifier resource pack to assist them in their role. The pack and accompanying CD includes the NVQ code of practice 2006,

information on the roles and responsibilities of the external verifier and sampling requirements.

6. There are suitable arrangements to monitor the performance of external verifiers. Peer reviews are carried out annually against the V2 standards by a chief or experienced verifier. Lantra Awards also requests information from centres about the conduct of external verifiers. Any issues identified are shared with the relevant chief verifier.
7. Examiners are given a handbook *Policies and procedures: vocationally related qualifications (VRQs)*. This includes guidance on marking written tests, the conduct of practical examinations and standardisation activities. There are some guidelines for item writers but all the procedures are not fully documented.
8. The awarding body has three qualifications in the QCF. Only one is independently assessed. Lantra Awards employs technical experts to assist in writing units and multiple-choice question papers. They are supported by the qualifications manager during this process.

Accreditation conditions

1. Lantra Awards must amend its existing documentation or develop a separate code of practice for external verifiers to include information on appeals against external verifier decisions. External verifiers must agree to comply with this code (*NVQ code of practice (2006), paragraph 4*).

Observations

3. Lantra Awards should document the process for writing items for independent assessment.

Qualifications development: planning, content and design of qualifications

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 1, 4, 43–44 and 45–55.

Findings

1. As part of its involvement in the tests and trials of the QCF, Lantra Awards has amended its process for developing all qualifications to reflect the requirements for developing QCF qualifications. However, for all current qualifications provision, Lantra Awards has relied on either sector skills councils and/or industry legislative drivers to initiate the proposal to develop a qualification.
2. Lantra Awards has developed a process that identifies its specific roles in the planning, content development and design of qualifications and the quality assurance process it applies to the development of all its qualifications.
3. Proposals and requests for new qualifications have traditionally come from the sector skills councils and/or industries that Lantra Awards has relationships with. Lantra Awards then may conduct further research to confirm the need for the qualification. Also, if the proposal is internally identified additional research is undertaken to confirm the demand and take-up.
4. A detailed proposal identifying the need is then developed and includes the aims and objectives of the qualification, the target group for the qualification and the sector skills council support required. This is then discussed at meetings involving senior management and the qualification initiation is confirmed.
5. Once the qualification proposal is accepted the process then describes how the content and design of qualifications is to be undertaken. This process includes obtaining the requisite letters of support from key organisations, relevant stakeholders and the formal support of the appropriate sector skills council. The stages for this are unit consultation unit writing and the development and writing of the assessment methodology. For most of the qualifications it develops Lantra Awards adopts the processes and assessment strategies developed by either the relevant sector skills council and/or the legislative bodies who have initiated the need for the qualification. Each of these stages incorporates a sign-off requirement by the qualifications manager.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

4. Given that the present amended qualifications development process for the planning and content and design of qualifications has been based upon previous NQF provision, Lantra Awards will need to ensure that in the content and design of new QCF qualifications its processes fully meets its obligations under the QCF regulatory arrangements, and in particular in respect to assigning credit and level.

Quality assurance of the qualifications development process

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 33a.

Findings

1. Lantra Awards has a process for developing QCF qualifications, based on its existing NQF provision, that outlines the roles and processes to be followed in a systemised way.
2. Lantra Awards also presented a project chart detailing the specific steps to be followed, which are broken down into the key tasks to be followed.
3. Lantra Awards also produced a common product development process in flowchart form that outlined the process to be followed in qualifications development for all qualification types, from concept to rationale approval through to qualifications launch. This development flowchart was supported by new qualifications notes to accompany the process. All of the stages above require sign-off at key points and final sign-off by the managing director.
4. Staff interviewed were able to describe the process to be followed and their respective roles and responsibilities in it. Processes and documented procedures for the quality assurance of the qualifications development process were in place. However, the staff also indicated that no actual formalised processes or procedures were systematically followed nor that any internal quality assurance oversight of the internal processes and procedures was systematically followed and documented.

Accreditation conditions

2. Lantra Awards must demonstrate that it has developed an internal quality assurance process for qualifications development that is consistently and systematically adhered to and is documented and recorded appropriately.

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

Assessment arrangements: independent assessment

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 13, 38–42 and 56–58.

Findings

1. When new qualifications are launched the regulators expect awarding bodies to have suitable guidance and quality assurance arrangements in place to promote reliable and consistent results. This will include for example, information and guidance for item writers, examiners, moderators and centres. The effectiveness of these procedures was not tested.
2. The monitoring team looked at examples of the draft guidance document to support the Level 2 award in wild game meat hygiene (QCF). Centres will be issued with the qualification specification detailing the standards to be assessed, assessment methods and evidence requirements. Lantra Awards provides specifications for all accredited qualifications.
3. There are arrangements in place to protect the security of question papers and mark schemes. For example, test items and answers are sent electronically to Lantra Awards. In addition item writers have to, as part of their contractual arrangements, maintain confidentiality at all times. The monitoring team would have more confidence in the arrangements if they were documented explaining how the security of test items is managed from writing items to the sign-off of the final paper. Lantra Awards also needs to explain how candidates will not be disadvantaged if security is breached during these stages.
4. The security arrangements for examinations are suitable and clearly specified in the relevant documentation. Tests are sent electronically with a request for a read receipt; Lantra Awards has the facility to delete the tests off the centre's system if they have not done this. Candidate identity is checked prior to the examination. In addition the awarding body carries out spot checks prior to examinations to ensure that centres are complying with their requirements. The monitoring team is confident that all reasonable security measures are in place for examinations.
5. Information on marking and standardisation is included in the *Policies and procedures: vocationally related qualifications (VRQs)* document. Examiners also have the qualification specifications access to assist them in their role.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

5. Lantra Awards should review and document its security arrangements for the development and evaluation of independent assessment test items.

Assessment arrangements: internal assessment

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 13, 38–42 and 56–62.

Findings

1. The monitoring team looked at the guidance documents to support the assessment and verification of existing QCF qualifications but did not test the effectiveness of these procedures.
2. Lantra Awards provides award-specific guidance to centres and candidates. The information and documents for each qualification are available on the website. Details of the responsibilities of assessors, internal verifiers and the awarding body's requirements for maintaining records are included within this documentation.
3. The quality assurance arrangements for NVQs or QCF qualifications are detailed in the centre guidance document for competency-based qualifications. The awarding body also arranges workshops for assessors and internal verifiers when new qualifications are launched.
4. External verifiers have the NVQ/SVQ external verifier resource pack to assist them in their role. This guidance is suitable. It includes clear information on the external verifier role and how to conduct visits.
5. The monitoring team are confident that Lantra Award's centres, assessors, internal and external verifiers are provided with suitable guidance to deliver the accredited qualifications.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

There are no observations for this section.