



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



# Awarding body monitoring report: PADI

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# Introduction

## Regulating external qualifications

Responsibility for regulating external qualifications lies jointly with three regulators:

- the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- 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 QCA for the purposes of 'banking' it 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 those most crucial in supporting an awarding body's ability to operate effectively. In order 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 as part of the annual self-assessment return.

## **About this report**

This is the second monitoring activity on the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) and was carried out by QCA on behalf of the regulators in February 2008.

The monitoring focused on the regulatory criteria relating to the following key areas:

- corporate governance
- resources and expertise
- quality assurance and control of independent assessment
- determination and reporting of results
- registration.

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by the regulators, including the Awarding Body Recognition Update (ABRU). Other activities included attending an instructor examination and scrutiny of the PADI website. The monitoring team visited PADI's UK office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation.

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

## **About the AB**

Founded in 1966, PADI is a global organisation and has become the largest recreational diving and diver training organisation to offer a range of diving-related qualifications. They have one accredited qualification at level 3 in the national qualifications framework. PADI is a member of the World Recreational Scuba Training Council. For more information on PADI, visit its website at [www.padi.com](http://www.padi.com).

# Corporate governance

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

## Findings

1. PADI is a global organisation and the UK office is referred to as PADI International Ltd (PIL). PADI has a clear, transparent governance structure. Since the last monitoring there have been one or two minor changes in staffing but their governance and structure essentially remains the same. Committee minutes and organisation charts were made available to the monitoring team.
2. PADI's overall strategic planning is decided at PADI's head office in the USA on an annual basis. This is then cascaded to all global offices and customised. All staff are made aware of business objectives as PADI hold monthly staff meetings. The vice presidents also circulate a monthly report to all staff which summarises PADI's business position.
3. The day to day function of the awarding body is the responsibility of the group manager, (education and instructor development.) This person oversees the vocationally related and education sectors for all PADI qualifications and reports to the vice president.

## Accreditation Conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

## Observations

There are no observations for this section.

# Resources and expertise

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

## Findings

1. PADI have sufficient resources and technical expertise to deliver the Level 3 Certificate in Scuba Instruction. PADI currently employ 62 staff. Eight staff work on aspects of the Level 3 certificate in scuba instruction. Both the supervisor, (instructor development) and the group manager, (education and instructor development) work primarily on this qualification.
2. All full time employed staff are subject to annual performance appraisals. This activity is used to identify any training and development requirements.
3. PADI use a model of verifiers and examiners for their qualifications. They have a pool of nine examiners, eight of which carry out verification duties. The verification requirement has been modified by PADI and the number of visits has reduced. Visits take place when and where there are issues identified.
4. Due to the nature of the qualification and the strength of their internal development and ethos PADI are able to recruit examiners from within their organisation and membership. To be a PADI examiner one must already be a course director and this therefore confirms a level of skills and knowledge achieved. Those PADI staff who are seen to have potential may be invited to train for this position. Adverts are placed in the trade press if there is a need for external recruitment.
5. PADI examiners are given feedback after every examination session so their performance is reviewed. Contracted examiners that do not perform well are not used again.

## Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

## Observations

There are no observations for this section.

# The quality assurance and control of independent assessment

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 13, 36, 38-42, 56-58.

## Findings

1. PADI have one accredited qualification. This is the Level 3 Certificate in Scuba Instruction. PADI refer to this as the Instructor Examination (IE). It was first accredited in 2002 and has changed very little since that time.
2. Candidates must have undertaken and passed the Instructor Diving Course (IDC) before undertaking the IE. Candidates bring their course work to the IE where the paperwork is checked. The course folder also has photographic identification of the candidate.
3. The IE is wholly externally assessed through a combination of examination and practical tests. These are carried out over a period of two days.
4. Before starting the examination candidates are required to sign a *IE Candidate Statement of Understanding*. This document informs candidates of how they will be assessed, their format, duration and pass marks. Examiners also provide candidates with a verbal 'orientation' that outlines the objectives of the IE, the roles of the relevant people involved and the timescales. This is to help put candidates at their ease and to fully inform them of the process and what is expected from them. The monitoring team considers this to be good practice.
5. Examiners are provided with the *Examiner handbook* which is a comprehensive document. It contains all the information required for the IE including the orientation, administration of the theory and practical examinations, marking and 'make up' procedures.
6. Examiner standardisation is maintained by attendance at examiner meetings. These are held twice a year and examiners must attend at least one. Examiner meetings



include a standardisation exercise. This was confirmed by a member of the monitoring team observing at an examiner meeting.

7. The theory elements of the Level 3 Certificate in Scuba Instruction are made up of two examinations. One is an 'open book' examination where candidates are allowed to refer to resource material. The second examination consists of five topics assessed by multiple choice questions. The topics are physics, physiology, recreational dive planner, skills and environment and equipment.
8. All questions are written by an international team made up of senior members of the Instructor Development teams from PADI offices in England, USA, Australia, Switzerland and Japan. The PADI representative from the UK is the group manager, education and instructor development. The team meets twice a year to review existing questions and write new ones.
9. Once the questions have been agreed by the team they go to a specialist education writing team based in the USA. This organisation reviews the structure and wording of the questions and ensures consistency. The PADI education team have the opportunity to make further revisions if necessary before the question papers are printed. The question and answer papers are translated into 22 languages.
10. There is currently a series of three question papers in circulation for both the open book examination and the theory examinations. The same question papers may be used two or three times over a two or three year period although some questions may have been slightly amended. The question papers are colour coded and all have a serial number. If there is a problem with a question or a paper it is easy to withdraw it from across the world by pulling the relevant colour out of the system.
11. Question papers are taken to examination venues by the examiners. Completed answer sheets are marked on the day by examiners and results entered onto a score sheet. The score sheet lists the candidates and the mark for each element of the qualification.
12. The practical tests consist of observations of teaching presentations, confined water diving and open water diving. For the teaching presentations there is a detailed mark sheet that includes performance descriptors. This is called the *knowledge*

*development evaluation form*. Examiners refer to this form to assess candidate performance. Results are entered onto the overall score sheet.

13. The diving tests for confined water are conducted in a swimming pool and for open water in a lake or other open area. Marks are entered onto a slate before being transferred to the overall score sheet. If there is any doubt about a candidate's performance the slate is copied so that it can be referred to later. Otherwise a clean slate is used for each candidate.
14. Candidates who fail one element (with the exception of the open water element) are able to 'make up' by retaking this on the day. If they fail two elements they can retake them at another examination session. If candidates fail more than two elements they are required to take the whole IE again.
15. A 'trip sheet' is sent to PADI that includes the number of candidates, numbers of make ups or retakes at the session. This sheet will also be used to note any incidents at the event. The trip sheet, score sheets and all failed answer papers are sent to PADI either by a courier or taken by PADI staff. Candidate answer sheets that have passed are shredded.
16. The supervisor, instructor development checks the score sheets for errors before they are signed off by the group manager, (education and instructor development.) Once they are signed off the score sheets are sent to the USA where they form part of the world wide bank.

### **Accreditation conditions**

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

### **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 (2004)*, paragraphs 63-67.

## Findings

1. The IE has a number of elements. The written examination has a pass mark of 75 per cent but the practical elements each have an individual performance benchmark. Candidates receive a pass or fail and there is no grading.
2. Borderline cases are usually dealt with by the 'make up' processes on the day of the examinations or by a re-sit opportunity. Failed candidate are provided with the opportunity to review their papers to identify their weak areas.
3. Scores are entered onto a database with individual marks entered onto individual candidate files.
4. Statistics on the qualification performance are reviewed annually although those that relate to individual question performance are reviewed by the international question writing team.

## 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 (2004)*, paragraphs 11&12.

## Findings

1. In order for candidates to register for the IE they must have achieved the IDC course which is seen as the pre-requisite qualification. Candidates can register individually or through a centre who run PADI-approved courses.
2. Candidates receive a unique id number which is computer generated. They also receive a PADI membership number.
3. PADI hire examination venues such as swimming pools for the confined water examination. They organise access to appropriate open water areas such as quarries. PADI staff are present during all assessments.

## Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

## Observations

There are no observations for this section.