



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Post-accreditation monitoring report: British Horse Society (BHS)

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Introduction

Regulating external qualifications

Responsibility for regulating external qualifications lies jointly with three regulatory authorities:

- the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the authority for England
- the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS), the body for Wales
- the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), the authority for Northern Ireland.

Following the accreditation of a qualification, the regulatory authorities 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 regulatory authorities 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 action plan will be agreed by the regulatory authorities and its implementation monitored.

The regulatory authorities 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.

About this report

This report is the outcome of a monitoring activity carried out on the British Horse Society (BHS) by QCA on behalf of the regulatory authorities and started in October 2006.

This is the second post-accreditation monitoring activity on BHS's activities since its recognition as an awarding body. This report draws together the regulatory authorities' findings on the arrangements BHS has for supporting its qualifications.

About the British Horse Society (BHS)

BHS offers a range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and vocationally related qualifications in equine care and management. For more information on BHS and the qualifications it offers visit the BHS website at www.bhs.org.uk.

Corporate governance

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

Findings

1. BHS awarding body is part of the British Horse Society¹. This is a membership organisation with a clear mission to promote riding and the welfare of horses. The awarding body team has regular meetings enabling staff to understand their roles. Each member of staff has a copy of the corporate plan outlining the aims and objectives of BHS.
2. The organisational chart shows the lines of reporting but it is not clear where the Examinations advisory group (EAG) is placed within the current structure of the awarding body. This group is responsible for qualification development, the recruitment of examiners and quality assurance.
3. The challenge for BHS is to identify itself as an awarding body instead of an examinations department within the Society as shown on the current website. This is being addressed as the awarding body is in discussions with the regulatory authorities on changing its name to Equestrian Qualifications Ltd (EQL) in 2007 while the wider organisation remains the British Horse Society.

Accreditation conditions

1. An organisational chart must be developed which demonstrates the position of the EAG within BHS the awarding body, with clear lines of reporting (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 5a).

Observations

1. BHS should use the website to show that it is an awarding body responsible for developing and awarding qualifications and is separate from the wider organisation, the British Horse Society.

¹ For the purpose of this report BHS, the wider organisation, will be referred to as the Society.

Resources and expertise

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 8, 10, 97e and 98.

Findings

1. BHS has sufficient staff at its head office to deal with the existing arrangements for booking examinations. However, administrative activities such as quality assurance and completing and posting certificates for some qualifications are done by the chief examiners on behalf of BHS. Therefore, BHS will need to review its staffing levels to take on these additional tasks.
2. All candidates have to be members of the Society to take examinations. Members are given a unique number they can use when booking examinations and membership includes public liability insurance.
3. Staff members at the BHS office have annual appraisals which focus on achieving agreed performance objectives. The performance of contracted members of staff is monitored at each stage of the exams process.
4. The awarding body has about 150 examiners; of these, 61 are chief examiners and 37 are senior examiners. The minimum requirements for examiners are clearly stated. They include age restrictions, as all examiners must be over 25 and have achieved the qualification prerequisites such as the 'British Horse Society Instructors Certificate' (BHSI).
5. There are robust arrangements for recruiting examiners. Potential examiners complete an application form requiring two references. These applications are reviewed by the EAG whose membership includes a number of chief examiners. Applicants with suitable experience in under-represented geographic regions are interviewed by the EAG. Successful applicants are allocated a mentor, usually a senior examiner, and complete a probationary period. There are written procedures for recruiting examiners in the *Code of conduct for examiners* which is currently under review.

6. BHS has a unique system for differentiating between its examiners. It uses a list system. Examiners are either on *Lists 1-3* or *Lists 5-7*. New or probationary examiners start on *List 7* and can only examine qualifications at levels 1 and 2. As examiners become more experienced chief examiners can recommend an upgrade to the next list. Examiners complete a probationary period for each list. This is good practice. The monitoring team noted from examiner records that it could take 14 years to move from *List 7* to *List 3*. Examiners on *List 1* have to be 'Fellows of the Society'.
7. All examiners have to attend a minimum of one training day per year and confirm this by signing the *Code of conduct for examiners*. Attendance is monitored by the senior executive examinations. Examiners who do not attend have to provide a written explanation and the EAG looks at each case on the basis of previous attendance and standard of examining. They may allow an examiner to miss one year provided that they attend an update meeting with the chairman of the EAG who organises examiner training. BHS said that two examiners had been removed from the lists this year because of non-attendance.
8. The content of training includes how to deal with candidates with particular assessment requirements and standards setting. BHS said that money had been set aside for customer care training in 2007 and that all examiners would be videoed carrying out a mock exam.

Accreditation conditions

2. BHS must review its staffing resources so that it has sufficient staff to support quality assurance checks for awarding and the certification of candidates (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 8).

Observations

2. BHS should consider separating out the *Code of conduct for examiners* from its recruitment procedures.

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 and 56-58.

Findings

1. BHS uses independent assessment for all qualifications. Each examination has both practical and theory components. Examiners ask oral questions to check knowledge for theory at all levels and some examinations include a written response to a scenario also marked by the examiners.
2. Examiners are given an *Examinations handbook* which includes the specification for each qualification, example questions, suggested programmes and guidelines for chief examiners on the organisation of the examination. The numbers of candidates for each examination is set by BHS. Chief examiners plan the programme and allocate each examiner to a specific section for the day. There are up to three examiners depending on the level of the qualification, and each examiner examines one section to promote consistency.
3. Candidates are sent a copy of the syllabus with their examination booking confirmation and can also buy the *Examinations handbook*. The monitoring team considers that the handbook is a useful tool for examiners. However, the number of sample questions listed for each section of the exam may give candidates who buy the handbook an unfair advantage as they will know what questions may be asked even if they are worded differently. BHS needs to consider limiting the number of sample questions or restricting access to the *Examinations handbook* to examiners.
4. BHS uses its chief examiners to standardise independent assessment. Examiners record their decisions on crib sheets with notes showing the number of compulsory and supporting assessment criteria achieved for each element. After the examination the chief examiner and examiners discuss results. A *BHS results sheet* is completed showing the elements not achieved by each candidate. The role of the chief examiner is to observe all examiners to ensure that assessment is consistent.

5. The chief examiner also sends the final results form for all candidates to BHS. The monitoring team observed a Preliminary Teaching Test (PTT) examination and is confident that examining of the practical components is robust.
6. BHS provides mark schemes for written scenarios. There are no written mark schemes for the theory questions for existing qualifications. Therefore, it is difficult to see how candidate responses to theory questions are standardised if examiners do not have guidelines on expected responses. For example, in the PTT candidates are expected to have an understanding of child abuse and explain the responsibilities of 'duty of care'. As this is part of a statutory act examiners must have an example of what answers are acceptable so that they are all examining to the same standards and there is consistency across examinations.
7. Candidates prepare and present lectures, and are questioned in small groups. While the questioning of candidates at the observed examination was suitable and the examiner well prepared, the monitoring team is not confident that the awarding body's approach tests the knowledge of all candidates or promotes consistency between examiners. In addition, the theory questions have not been reviewed since 2003 and may be out of date particularly if there have been changes to statutory legislation during this time.
8. The monitoring team also noted that the awarding body does not keep evidence of candidates' written work (except fails) in the PTT. Therefore, BHS cannot monitor if the standard for theory components is being met over time and it is unclear what arrangements are in place to monitor practical standards over time.
9. BHS has suitable arrangements for deploying examiners when examinations are booked. However, as external candidates may book an examination at any centre it is possible that an examiner could know one of the candidates. Examiners then have to declare a conflict of interest on the day to the chief examiner and they will alter the programme so that the candidate is excluded from that examiner's group. If the chief examiner knows a candidate this is declared to the senior examiner who takes over the decision making process for that candidate.
10. The *Examinations handbook* does not include information on checking candidate identity prior to examinations taking place. BHS staff said that the chief examiner might ask for a candidate's membership number and examination booking confirmation letter. At the observed examination the chief examiner confirmed that each candidate's identity was checked.

11. BHS has procedures for monitoring its examiners. The chief examiner completes an *Examiner report form*, which rates the examiner's performance from 1 to 3 against specific statements such as punctuality, understanding of standards and questioning technique. If an examiner receives either a 1 or 2 rating against a statement, comments have to be recorded explaining the issue. The content of report forms is entered onto the database enabling BHS to monitor specific problems, how they are dealt with and to issue reports on examiner performance over time. BHS writes to examiners about issues such as punctuality and report writing. The EAG discusses any problems in examiner performance and can recommend downgrading to the next list or removal as an examiner.

12. The monitoring team looked at a completed *Examiner report form* which had no comments, and the report issued to the EAG. They noted that on the report to EAG most comments said 'good to all points' where no issues were identified and any problems were recorded as brief statements. The monitoring team is not confident that the *Examiner report form* gives an overview of each examiner's performance, particularly if their practice is good unless comments are written against each of the statements.

13. The *Examiners news letter*, 2005 raises concerns that some examiners are responsible for the same section in each exam and may lose competence in other areas. This is a monitoring issue for BHS and they should track examiner participation in different examination units so that examiner competence is maintained.

Accreditation conditions

3. BHS must review the questions for its qualifications and ensure that any changes to statutory legislation are included. In addition, examiners must have marking guides for the theory components of all qualifications to promote consistency between examinations (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 58a and 58b).

4. BHS must introduce standardisation activities to ensure that mark schemes for written papers and theory questions are reviewed against candidate work and adjusted if necessary before results are issued (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 58c).

5. BHS must develop procedures for retaining candidate work so that standards for both the theory and practical components of qualifications can be monitored over time (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 13).

Observations

3. BHS should develop written guidance on the identification checks to be carried out before the examinations so that the identity of candidates is verified.
4. BHS should review its monitoring procedures for examiners so that they can track examiner participation in different units for examinations and record both good and poor practice.

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. There are no formal awarding procedures. BHS has devolved the awarding and certification process to its chief examiners for qualifications at levels 1-2 and the PTT. After each examination the chief examiners record the results, forward them to the awarding body, complete a certificate and send it to the candidate.
2. The monitoring team has a number of concerns about these arrangements. Firstly, BHS has not carried out any post-examination quality assurance checks and cannot guarantee that results are accurate and consistent between examiners. Secondly, the chief examiners, not the awarding body are issuing certificates to candidates. An *Examiner news letter* in 2005/6 refers to candidates receiving either incorrect unit certificates or certificates being issued to candidates who had failed. Chief examiners must not issue certificates and quality assurance checks must be carried out before results are issued. These arrangements should be implemented without delay.
3. The written scenario for the PTT is based on completing an accurate accident report form, and the marking guidelines identifies a minimum pass mark of 28. Guidance in the *Examiners news letter, 2005* recommends that 95 per cent of the accident report form is completed correctly but examiners can use their discretion. For example, examiners can pass candidates with less than 95 per cent if they have completed the essential sections of the document. Alternatively, they can fail candidates who achieve over 95 per cent if they miss an important section such as the name of the person involved. This is not good practice as there is no moderation of the decisions made by examiners.
4. Examiners are told to destroy pass papers and return failed papers to BHS in case of an appeal for the PTT. The monitoring team looked at two failed papers and found that an examiner had not used the marking scheme correctly. One candidate should have had two extra marks and while this did not affect the overall result it is possible that papers are not being marked consistently by examiners. Mistakes in marking may not be identified unless there is an appeal and candidates could be disadvantaged.

5. None of the examinations are graded. Passing examinations is based on candidates achieving a set number of compulsory and supporting assessment criteria for each element of the examination. The assessment criteria were pre-determined by the EAG and candidates receive a copy of the specification showing how many are allocated to each element.

Accreditation conditions

- 6 BHS must develop written awarding procedures which include post-examination quality assurance checks before issuing results. Chief examiners must not issue certificates (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 63b and 63c).
- 7 BHS must introduce moderation of written papers where applicable to improve the consistency of examiner marking (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 63d and 63e).
- 8 BHS must review the pass marks for written scenarios and give examiners consistent guidance on marking and pass marks (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 63a).
- 9 BHS must have procedures in place so that changes to incorrect assessment decisions can be made either before or after results have been determined (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 64).

Observations

- 5 BHS should review the marking arrangements for written scenarios or papers. They should consider changing the arrangements so that papers are marked centrally by specific examiners and moderated by the awarding body.
- 6 BHS should consider recording discussions on theory questions so that answers can be moderated and used for training purposes.
- 7 BHS should keep all examiner "crib sheets" so that they can check the accuracy of results against the number of compulsory and supporting statements.

Registration

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 11 and 12.

Findings

1. All riding establishments wishing to be examination venues must meet the BHS approval criteria and the prerequisites set by the Society. For example, they must be approved by the Society for a minimum of 12 months and be registered in the publication *Where to train*.
2. All potential examination venues complete an *Approved examination centre application form*. This application and the original inspection report completed by the Society are checked by the EAG and, if suitable, a preliminary visit is carried out by a chief examiner.
3. The awarding body checks the preliminary visit report. If satisfactory, a pilot examination is arranged with a chief examiner usually from the EAG. The awarding body reviews the completed *Examination centre report form* and the EAG can either approve or reject the centre as an examination venue. The monitoring team is satisfied that the arrangements for registering riding establishments as examination venues are suitable.
4. BHS has about 60 approved examination centres. Newly approved centres can hold level one examinations. If these centres wish to hold higher-level examinations an additional application form is completed. The approval process is repeated and ratified by the EAG.
5. All examination centres sign a contractual agreement and nominate a contact person for the awarding body to liaise with when organising examinations. However, there is no requirement that examination centres allow the regulatory authorities access to its premises, people and records.
6. Chief examiners complete an *Examination centre report form* after each examination and data is entered into the database. Centres are rated against specific criteria and a rating of 1 or 2 requires action to be taken. Centre reports are compiled quarterly and sent to the EAG for information. A member of the monitoring team attended an EAG meeting in September 2006 and noted that one centre had been reported twice for specific issues. BHS needs to consider how long these issues can be left before sanctions are applied.

7. As stated previously, the Society is a membership organisation and candidates must be active members to access BHS qualifications. When booking an examination candidates must give their membership number. BHS staff said that if a candidate's membership lapses and there is a gap between examinations a candidate could have a different membership number on renewal.
8. Examination dates are listed on the Society website and candidates can book examinations by telephone. Candidates then receive a confirmation letter and candidate pack. BHS said that it is working towards online registration for candidates but no timeframe was stated.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

- 8 BHS should notify all examination venues that the regulatory authorities must have access to premises, people and records at all the buildings it uses for running examinations.
- 9 BHS should set time limits and impose sanctions on examination centres which do not meet its health and safety criteria so that the safety of candidates and horses is not compromised.
- 10 BHS should have arrangements for tracking membership numbers so that if there is a gap in membership, candidates do not have more than one unique number.