



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Post-accreditation monitoring report: CABWI Awarding Body

September 2007

QCA/07/3435

Contents

Introduction	3
Regulating external qualifications.....	3
Banked documents	3
About this report.....	4
About CABWI Awarding Body	4
Corporate governance	5
Findings.....	5
Accreditation conditions	5
Observations	5
Resources and expertise.....	6
Findings.....	6
Accreditation conditions	7
Observations	7
The quality assurance and control of internal assessment.....	8
Findings.....	8
Accreditation conditions	10
Observations	11
Registration and certification	12
Findings.....	12
Accreditation conditions	13
Observations	13

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
- 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' them 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 considered to be the 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

This is the second monitoring activity on CABWI Awarding Body (CABWI) and was carried out by QCA on behalf of the regulators in July 2007.

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

- corporate governance
- resources and expertise
- quality assurance and control of internal assessment
- registration and certification.

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by the regulators, including the Awarding Body Recognition Update (ABRU), visits to three centres, attendance at an external verifier meeting and scrutiny of CABWI's website. The monitoring team visited CABWI's head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation.

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

About CABWI Awarding Body

CABWI (formerly the Certification and Assessment Board for the Water Industry) was set up in 1991 to award NVQs for people working in the water industry. They are one of the three recognised awarding bodies for the Street Works qualifications, in excavation and reinstatement in the highway.

In 1998, the name changed to CABWI Awarding Body, to reflect the fact that the qualifications relate to several sectors, including the utilities (electricity, gas and water) and more general skills, such as customer service.

CABWI awards water industry NVQs (covering both clean and waste water), and the NVQ coverage, has now extended to cover some multi-utilities NVQs for people working in the electricity, gas and water industries. You can find more information about current CABWI qualifications through their website at www.cabwi.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. Staff at CABWI confirmed that the organisation structure and lines of accountability remain the same as those described in the 2005 ABRU submission. CABWI's documents relating to this section currently banked at QCA do not require updating. However, a new chair, and point of accountability for the quality of the accredited qualifications, is due to be appointed in the near future. CABWI will need to inform QCA when this takes place.
2. The CABWI board of directors reviews fees on an annual basis. The review carried out in 2006 resulted in changes to the fee structure that related to certification.
3. No standards development work for this sector has been carried out for a number of years. There were considerable delays in the production and implementation of new qualifications which, in turn, led to a decrease in CABWI centre and candidate activity for the existing qualifications.
4. The formation of EU Skills has now focused on organisations in the sector on the development of new occupational standards. An intense period of activity during the past year has seen the recent accreditation of a new suite of qualifications, the Network Construction Operations (NCO) at levels 1, 2 and 3, that replaces the Public Utilities Distribution (PUD) qualifications. The NCO qualifications have a broader industry spectrum as they cover activities that are common to both gas and electric industries. New Operating Process Plant (OPP) qualifications have also been developed to replace the current ones but are not yet accredited. CABWI anticipates that these new qualifications will increase activity. Further standards development work for other CABWI qualifications will now be programmed.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

1. CABWI are reminded that they will need to inform QCA of changes to the single point of accountability when a new chairman is appointed. This will also require changes to certificates and examples of these will need to be submitted for banking.

Resources and expertise

This is subject to The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004), paragraphs 8 and 10, and the NVQ Code of Practice (2006), paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 19 and 71.

Findings

1. There are three members of CABWI staff who work on the delivery of qualifications. The qualifications administered include non-accredited qualifications such as Streetworks. The team includes the post of a general manager who is responsible for the overall management and administration of the awarding body and for developing new qualifications.
2. The day-to-day customer service relationships of the awarding body, including dealing with centres and supporting external verifiers, is carried out by a full-time customer service manager with support from a part-time office administrator.
3. Staff are aware that the new qualifications will increase the demand for centre support and candidate entries. The general manager will be monitoring staff workloads closely over the next few months with a view to reviewing numbers if necessary.
4. There is no formal appraisal system in place. However, the general manager works closely with the staff and is able to identify specific training needs. CABWI staff development is further encouraged through attendance at external verifier meetings and visits to water companies, contractors or assessment centres where they can observe a variety of activities taking place.
5. CABWI contracts a team of six external verifiers to carry out external verification activities and to assist in reviewing technical details of new qualifications. The qualifications and occupational expertise requirements for external verifiers are specified in *NVQ Guidance for External Verifiers*. The external verifier team members are all occupationally competent and have all achieved the external verifier qualification. External verifiers confirm acceptance of their roles and responsibilities by signing the External Verifier NVQ Declaration. The declaration is re-issued when significant changes have been made, such as the introduction of the new *NVQ Code of Practice (2006)*.
6. External verifiers are allocated to centres on a geographic and availability basis. One external verifier is due to retire this year and his centres are being reallocated across the existing team. CABWI recognises that they will need to review the number of external verifiers and intend to do this next year with a view to recruiting at least one more.

7. External verifiers meet twice a year and are fully involved in developing awarding body policy and qualifications. Although the external verifiers understand the national occupational standards that they verify, no formal standardisation of assessment is carried out routinely. This will be a key quality assurance factor for the new qualifications and CABWI is expected to ensure that external verifiers undertake at least two standardisation activities a year.

Accreditation conditions

1. CABWI must ensure that external verifiers participate in at least two standardisation activities per year (*NVQ Code of Practice (2006)*, paragraph 5).

Observations

2. The monitoring team noted that there is little mention of standardisation of external verifiers in *NVQ Guidance for External Verifiers*. CABWI should consider placing more emphasis on this when it next reviews this document.

The quality assurance and control of internal assessment

This is subject to The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004), paragraphs 13, 36, 56, 57, 59 and 60–62, and the NVQ Code of Practice (2006), paragraphs 40–70 and 72.

Findings

1. Candidates registering for existing CABWI qualifications, but not the new NCO and OPP qualifications, receive a copy of the *Candidate's NVQ Help Pack*. This document clearly explains information on NVQs, methods of assessment, evidence collection and includes the units for the specific qualification. Assessors and internal verifiers receive the same information within the *NVQ Assessors Help Pack*. This pack is the same as the candidates' help pack but has additional notes for assessors, including recording different methods of assessment, use of question banks and forms. These are provided in CD or hard-copy format.
2. These documents have been updated and reformatted for the new and forthcoming qualifications following feedback from centres. Guidance will now be provided to centres in the *Centre Guidance Notes* that relates to approval with the delivery requirements for specific qualifications. CABWI are in the process of developing new candidate materials to accompany these.
3. Centres are required to appoint assessors and verifiers with appropriate qualifications and occupational expertise. All centres visited were aware of these requirements and of countersigning arrangements for unqualified staff. Not all assessment staff at centres could demonstrate that they had updated their knowledge to that of A1/V1. This should be encouraged to ensure assessment is being carried out to A1/V1 standard.
4. CABWI issues licenses for all assessors and internal verifiers. These are issued annually following centre re-approval and list the units and qualifications the individual is qualified to assess or verify. Applications for licenses are submitted to CABWI with CVs and copies of relevant certificates. CABWI documentation does not require staff to see original assessor and verifier qualification certificates. It is suggested that these do need to be seen at least once to assure their authenticity. CABWI staff and external verifiers use the signatures of assessors and verifiers from these applications to make verification checks prior to candidate certification, which is good practice.
5. All centres visited had detailed guidance documentation from CABWI and kept records of their assessment teams with CVs, licenses and copies of certificates.

6. Some other aspects of administration at the centres visited were insufficient. Meetings of assessment teams within and across centres were not always documented and those that were recorded were often held infrequently. Two of the centres visited had incomplete assessment and verification records available at the centre. However, good practice was identified in that external verifiers attended centre team meetings.
7. There was no evidence of standardisation of assessment activities being carried out at any of the centres visited. Whilst this may be due, in part, to the longevity of the current CABWI qualifications, it is vital that there is a consistent interpretation of the new standards.
8. Internal verifiers are provided with a suite of documents, including the latest NVQ code of practice and the *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQS*. However, the internal verification activities in the centres visited are weak. Internal verifiers are aware that they have to sample a minimum of 10 per cent but actual sampling seen was either strictly 10 per cent or a full 100 per cent. At one centre the internal verifier selected a sample of 2 out of 14 completed portfolios. The chosen portfolios were then reviewed in their entirety. There was no evidence of sampling strategies in place to look at assessment across all assessors, candidates and methods of assessment. Further evidence seen in external verifier reports for centres not visited indicated that some did have an overall strategy in place but this should be the case for all centres.
9. External verifiers are required to provide CABWI with a timetable of their anticipated centre visits annually. This information is kept on the external verification record. CABWI staff inform centres of the proposed schedule of activities in advance of the external verifiers, confirming the final details directly with the centres. CABWI use this information to monitor the verification activity at centres.
10. Centres receive at least two external verifier visits a year. One visit confirms that the centre is maintaining the requirements of the approved assessment criteria and the other focuses more on verification activities.
11. The monitoring team identified that external verifier practice at some centres was inconsistent. At the centres visited staff stated that external verifiers were sampling from completed portfolios only, although further evidence from reports to centres not visited provided evidence that some incomplete work was reviewed. Some external verifiers are placing actions on centres without clear dates for completion.
12. External verifiers need to be reminded to check that centres are complying with all the requirements for internal verification, record keeping and standardisation.

13. CABWI external verifiers use the tariff of sanctions and impose sanctions where necessary. There was evidence of centres being suspended or withdrawn. For example, changes in organisational priorities have resulted in staff at two centres being moved, which has led to a lack of assessment staff. CABWI has suspended both centres pending investigation. The general manager is overseeing investigations.
14. Completed external verifier reports are scanned onto the CABWI computer system and are read by both the customer services manager and the general manager. The customer services manager takes note of the administrative information and records it on the external verification record and the database. The general manager reads the reports from a more strategic perspective looking for trends at centres. Although reports and verification activity are reviewed, CABWI do not have a risk management strategy for monitoring its centres.
15. External verifier performance is currently reviewed annually through their visit reports. This review should be made more formal and expanded to include the full range of external verifier activity such as accompanied visits.

Accreditation conditions

2. CABWI must ensure that centres appoint internal verifiers who are aware of and undertake their responsibilities including:
 - sampling evidence of assessment decisions made by all assessors across all aspects of NVQ assessment
 - maintaining records of internal verification and sampling activity
 - establishing procedures to ensure that all assessors interpret the national occupational standards in the same way (*NVQ Code of Practice (2006)*, paragraph 49).
3. CABWI must provide guidance that includes examples of:
 - procedures for standardising assessment
 - models for developing an internal verification sampling plan. Models must ensure that over time all assessors, all assessment methods and all candidate units are included in the sample
 - procedures for standardising the judgements and decisions of internal verifiers operating in a centre
 - the types of records a centre must keep to demonstrate the effectiveness of its internal verification procedures (*NVQ Code of Practice (2006)*, paragraph 56).

4. CABWI must put in place a risk management strategy for monitoring approved centres (*NVQ Code of Practice (2006)*, paragraph 59).
5. CABWI must ensure that external verifiers have an effective sampling strategy that includes, over time, the assessment decisions of all assessors, all assessment methods, all assessment locations, candidates at different stages in their awards, the decisions of all internal verifiers and the assessment records (*NVQ Code of Practice (2006)*, paragraph 65).

Observations

3. CABWI should include a requirement to have sight of the original certificates achieved by its assessors and verifiers when a licence is issued.
4. Although CABWI monitors its external verifier activities through reports and the external verification record it should consider how it reports feedback on performance to external verifiers.

Registration and certification

This is subject to The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004), paragraphs 11, 12, 21 and 22, and the NVQ Code of Practice (2006), paragraphs 6–18 and 20–30.

Findings

1. CABWI operates a clearly defined centre approval process, which requires any centre wishing to deliver CABWI qualifications to complete an *NVQ Centre Application Form* (CAB.1). Prospective centres must fully complete the form, which asks for evidence on how they will meet the approved centre criteria. This form is submitted to the CABWI office, where it is checked before an external verifier is allocated to the centre.
2. An external verifier will visit every centre that submits a request for centre approval to check that the centre fulfils all the necessary criteria. Two forms will be completed on this visit, the *NVQ Centre Checklist* (CAB.2) and the *External Verifier Visit Report* (CAB.3). If some element of the approved centre criteria is not present, the centre will be given an action plan to follow. Depending on the importance of the missing information, centre approval may be withheld pending completion of the action plan. If the external verifier feels that the missing information is not of such severity as to stop centre approval, the approval will go ahead, although the centre will not be able to claim any certification until the evidence to satisfy all the approved centre criteria has been provided.
3. Once the external verifier has completed the forms and confirmed centre approval, CABWI sends copies of the CAB.2 and CAB.3 forms to the centre and issues licenses for the centre itself, as well as for the assessors and internal verifiers.
4. Existing centres wishing to expand on their range of NVQ provision complete a separate shorter application form. Depending on the centre's track record, approval may be granted without the need for an additional external verifier visit.
5. Centres are re-approved annually following an external verifier visit to confirm their ongoing compliance with the approved centre criteria. Re-approval triggers the issue of new centre and assessment staff licenses.
6. Candidate registration occurs via an *NVQ Candidate Registration Form* (REG.1). Once candidate details have been entered onto the CABWI database a report listing the candidates and their registration numbers is sent to the centre. Centres are informed of their responsibility to pass on candidate registration details direct to the candidates themselves.

- 7 All candidate details are stored securely on the CABWI database, which incorporates various checks, for example to stop the certification of any candidate who has been enrolled on the qualification for fewer than 10 weeks.
8. CABWI has recently introduced electronic registration of candidates. This allows centres to submit a spreadsheet (from a pre-registered email address, including a pre-set password) containing all the information that was previously sent in hard copy. As of August 2007, all registration requests sent by centres must be in electronic format.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

- 5 Centres are now re-approved annually but it was noted that some CABWI documentation such as the *NVQ Guidance for External Verifiers (2004)* states that re-approval takes place every three years and requires updating.