

# **Monitoring Interventions**

Information for Awarding Organisations



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## **Introduction**

Each awarding organisation, is in charge of, and responsible for, its own qualifications. It is responsible for complying with each Condition of Recognition that applies to it.

There are a number of actions we can take to provide us with assurance, or not, that an awarding organisation is compliant with its Conditions of Recognition. These are our Monitoring Interventions.

This document sets out why and how we use Monitoring Interventions. It also provides information on the interventions that we may use. If we find that an awarding organisation is not compliant with Conditions and this has resulted in, or is likely to result in, a specific problem with the design, delivery and award of its qualifications, we will consider taking regulatory action (as detailed in *Taking Regulatory Action Version 2<sup>1</sup>*).

### **Why do we monitor?**

Monitoring:

- helps us to spot where there is a risk to the standards of qualifications or to the way they are delivered. We can then intervene to stop or reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring
- helps us to understand how an individual awarding organisation or a group of awarding organisations is performing
- helps us to understand whether a qualification or a group of qualifications is fit for purpose
- allows us to gather evidence to inform our regulatory decisions.

We may choose to monitor each awarding organisation in a different way. This is determined by our assessment of the likelihood of the awarding organisation being responsible for something going wrong with its qualifications, and the impact if something does go wrong.

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<sup>1</sup> *Taking Regulatory Action Version 2* (Ofqual, 2012), [www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/35-economic-regulation?download=1392%3Ataking-regulatory-action-version-2-may-2012](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/35-economic-regulation?download=1392%3Ataking-regulatory-action-version-2-may-2012)

## **How do we monitor?**

The way we monitor is targeted and proportionate to the questions we are seeking to answer. We expect an awarding organisation to co-operate with us on any intervention involving it.

We use six types of intervention:

- Routine Monitoring
- Self-investigation
- Thematic Review
- Investigating Concerns
- End-to-End Compliance Investigation
- Forensic Investigation.

## **Routine Monitoring**

### **What is Routine Monitoring?**

Routine Monitoring is the minimum level of day-to-day monitoring and reviewing that we undertake throughout the year on an awarding organisation.

We use it to help inform:

- our decisions about the need for further monitoring of each awarding organisation
- our understanding of both individual awarding organisations and of the sector as a whole.

There are many aspects to Routine Monitoring, for example:

- each year we review information we have about an awarding organisation, such as its statements of compliance, complaints we have received about it, publically available information about the awarding organisation and data returns we have asked for
- we monitor the events we have been formally notified of that have the potential to cause problems
- we can also ask for further data or information to help us to understand better whether there is a need for further investigation.

This monitoring could, but would not normally, include a site visit.

### **What happens?**

Every year we tell each awarding organisation the information it needs to give us, including its statement of compliance.

We let each awarding organisation know if we need further information from it.

### **Outcome**

Routine Monitoring helps us to decide whether we need to look more closely at an awarding organisation. We use it to inform our view on the likelihood of the awarding organisation being responsible for something going wrong with the way it designs, delivers or awards qualifications, and the impact if something does go wrong.

In many cases, we will not actively set out to monitor an awarding organisation further during the year. However, our Routine Monitoring might raise questions, for example, about an awarding organisation's performance, or its willingness to address shortcomings, or its capacity to respond to a rapid increase in demand for its

qualifications. We may follow these up using one of our other Monitoring Interventions.

## **Self-investigation**

### **What is Self-investigation?**

Sometimes an awarding organisation may accept that something has gone wrong, and we may ask for it, or it might offer, to investigate the matter directly. We then decide whether we should investigate the matter ourselves or whether we can use the awarding organisation's own investigation to inform any action we take.

When we decide to use the awarding organisation's own investigation, we describe this as Self-investigation.

### **What happens?**

We only use Self-investigation when we are confident that the approach will be thorough and objective. We normally expect that the investigation will be carried out by an external body, or with external input.

We agree the terms of reference for the investigation with the awarding organisation. This will include key dates, such as the dates for interim and final reporting. We will normally wish to have direct access to those undertaking the investigation, and we have the right to observe any aspect of the investigation. Publication arrangements for the reporting of any findings will be included in the terms of reference.

Investigations must happen in a way that enables us to use their findings, and evidence that has informed those findings, in any enforcement we initiate.



## **Thematic Review**

### **What is a Thematic Review?**

We use Thematic Reviews to look at a specific issue across a number of awarding organisations. Thematic Reviews help us to understand how different awarding organisations manage an aspect of the development, delivery or awarding of their qualifications.

We select a sample of awarding organisations to be involved with the Thematic Review, and gather information and evidence from the awarding organisations on the specific issue we are considering.

All awarding organisations will be included from time to time in Thematic Reviews, regardless of our assessment of the likelihood of them being responsible for a failure, or the impact if they are.

### **What happens?**

We do a number of Thematic Reviews each year. We tailor each Thematic Review to the question(s) we want to answer. A Thematic Review, typically, takes about three months to complete, although the amount of time we spend with each awarding organisation will be limited.

We collect information and evidence using desk-based methods and visits to awarding organisations, schools or colleges, employers and/or students, according to the issues we are covering.

We write to an awarding organisation, selecting it to take part and outlining the nature of the Thematic Review and the part it will play in it.

We may ask an awarding organisation to:

- give us information
- answer a questionnaire or survey
- attend a stakeholder or focus group
- talk to us and/or allow us to see documents on site
- help us to contact schools or colleges, or students so we can invite them to contribute to the Thematic Review.

If, during the Thematic Review, we have concerns about an individual awarding organisation, we may monitor it further and take regulatory action, if appropriate.

## **Outcome**

We will report our findings to those awarding organisations involved in the Thematic Review. We may publish some of our findings more widely, to include awarding organisations not involved in the Thematic Review that would benefit from an understanding of the outcome. Some reports may be published publically.

The outcome of a Thematic Review may lead to changes in our Conditions, the publication of guidance and, in some cases, regulatory action.

## Investigating Concerns

### When do we investigate concerns?

We investigate concerns when we are worried about an aspect of an awarding organisation's practice, particularly where we have evidence to suggest an awarding organisation has breached, or is likely to breach, its Conditions.

### What happens?

We tell the awarding organisation we are going to undertake such an investigation and our reasons for doing so. We will normally give it notice, but the amount of notice will be determined by the urgency of the need to investigate. We will tell it who will be undertaking the investigation and when they will visit, and provide an indication of the people they will see and the information they will ask for.

We gather evidence by talking to staff and reviewing documents and processes. Separately, we may also visit schools or colleges and speak to, or seek information from, users of the awarding organisation's qualifications.

After the investigation we will report on our findings. This will include any recommendations for taking regulatory action.

If at any stage of the investigation our concerns about the awarding organisation widen, we may change our monitoring plan so we can investigate as necessary.

### Outcome

We will decide if we need to take regulatory action. If we do decide that this is necessary, we will inform the awarding organisation, following the provisions in our *Taking Regulatory Action* policy.

We may publish the outcome of our investigation (as detailed in *Taking Regulatory Action Version 2*<sup>2</sup>) and include it in our regular monitoring reports.

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<sup>2</sup> *Taking Regulatory Action Version 2* (Ofqual, 2012), [www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/35-economic-regulation?download=1392%3Ataking-regulatory-action-version-2-may-2012](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/35-economic-regulation?download=1392%3Ataking-regulatory-action-version-2-may-2012)

## End-to-End Compliance Investigation

### What is an End-to-End Compliance Investigation?

We use an End-to-End Compliance Investigation to check an awarding organisation's compliance with its full range of Conditions.

We will use this investigation if we have serious concerns about an awarding organisation's ability to develop, deliver or award qualifications.

### What happens?

We tell the awarding organisation that we are carrying out such an investigation, and why. We will normally give the awarding organisation notice of our visit and say how long we expect it will take. We say whom we will need to interview and indicate the type of information we will ask for.

During the visit, we will gather evidence by, for example, interviewing staff and reviewing documents and processes. We may also visit schools or colleges and gather information from users of the awarding organisation's qualifications.

After the visit we will report on our findings. This will include any recommendations for taking regulatory action. If at this stage we decide that further regulatory action is necessary, we will inform the awarding organisation, following the procedure in our *Taking Regulatory Action* policy.

### Outcome

We may publish our findings (as detailed in *Taking Regulatory Action Version 2<sup>3</sup>*) and include them in our regular monitoring reports.

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<sup>3</sup> *Taking Regulatory Action* (Ofqual, 2012), [www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/35-economic-regulation?download=1392%3Ataking-regulatory-action-version-2-may-2012](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/35-economic-regulation?download=1392%3Ataking-regulatory-action-version-2-may-2012)

## **Forensic Investigation**

### **What is a Forensic Investigation?**

We use Forensic Investigation exceptionally, when we have the most serious concerns about an awarding organisation's suitability to be recognised, or to investigate serious concerns about malpractice or fraudulent behaviour.

We may instruct external experts to assist us with the investigation.

We will tell an awarding organisation that it is to be subject to such an investigation and outline what course the investigation will take. The investigation may include schools or colleges, assessors, employers or other parties involved.

### **Outcome**

The timing and nature of our feedback to the awarding organisation will be determined by our findings. If we decide to take action we will follow the procedures in our *Taking Regulatory Action* policy. We may refer the matter to another agency such as the police, the UK Border Agency or the Charity Commission.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	
Spring Place	2nd Floor
Coventry Business Park	Glendinning House
Herald Avenue	6 Murray Street
Coventry CV5 6UB	Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346