

Ofqual
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Awarding body monitoring report

Hospitality Awarding Body (HAB)

September 2008

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Introduction

Regulating external qualifications

Responsibility for regulating external qualifications lies jointly with three regulators:

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

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

Banked documents

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

A suite of documents has been identified as suitable for banking and are those that are considered to be the most crucial in supporting an awarding organisation's ability to operate effectively. To maintain the currency of the banked documents, awarding organisations 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 report is the outcome of a monitoring activity on the Hospitality Awarding Body (HAB) and was carried out by Ofqual on behalf of the regulators in June 2008. It draws together the regulator's findings on areas of:

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

This is the first post-accreditation monitoring activity on HAB's activities since it was purchased by the City & Guilds Group in 2006. An Awarding Body Recognition Update (ABRU) was completed in 2005 for which there are no outstanding accreditation conditions.

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by the regulators, the ABRU submission and scrutiny of the HAB website. The monitoring team visited HAB's head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation. They also visited centres, and observed an external verifier training day to check how the awarding organisation's quality assurance systems worked in practice.

About HAB

HAB provides access to a range of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hospitality and cleaning. The awarding organisation also offers keys skills and vocationally-related qualifications (VRQs). For more information on HAB and the qualifications it offers, visit the HAB website at www.hab.org.uk.

Corporate governance

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

Findings

1. HAB is operating under its own recognition as an awarding organisation. This recognition was completed prior to its purchase by the City & Guilds Group in 2006. This purchase has led to significant changes in HAB's governance arrangements. Currently, HAB's senior management team reports directly to the City & Guilds Group. The committee and reporting structures for the City & Guilds Group have been integrated into the HAB operating structures. In addition, the single named point of accountability identified in the ABRU has changed. There was some confusion as to who should have responsibility for this. This is an important issue, which HAB must clarify.
2. Both HAB and City & Guilds awards are working together to refine the existing qualifications offered by both organisations. A mapping exercise was completed and provided information on the overlaps and gaps in the coverage. The revised qualifications will become City & Guilds awards, but retain the HAB branding.
3. HAB's business strategy and objectives were included in the 2007 business plan for UK sales, which is part of the City & Guilds Group. Currently, role profiles are being re-aligned to the strategic and performance objectives in the draft functional and business plan. Further discussion revealed the intention for HAB to become the hospitality and cleaning arm of City & Guilds awards.
4. HAB provided the monitoring team with two organisational charts linked to the City & Guilds Group, but it is not clear who they report to. The national manager for HAB said that they report to the head of UK sales, but the positioning, lines of reporting and accountability are not suitably defined.
5. Scrutiny of the awarding organisation website revealed a number of documents for VRQs such as appeals, malpractice and moderation activities, which are HAB-specific. As HAB has devolved the moderation process for level 2 VRQs to City & Guilds awards, these should be reviewed in line with City & Guilds awards' policies to avoid confusion for centres and candidates.
6. The monitoring team was given full access to awarding organisation documentation, including the strategic plan, minutes of meetings and reports. They did not look at the banked documents as HAB is using City & Guilds awards' policies and procedures.

Accreditation conditions

1. HAB must confirm the name of the single, named point of accountability for maintaining the quality and standards of its qualifications (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraph 5b).
2. HAB must provide the regulators with a chart showing its position within City & Guilds awards with clear lines of reporting and accountability (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraph 5a).
3. HAB must inform the regulators the date that the ownership and legal identity of the awarding organisation has or will be formally changed (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraph 6a (i and iv)).
4. HAB should review all VRQ-related documents, policies and procedures on its website so that they are up to date and aligned with the policies adopted from City & Guilds awards to avoid confusion for centres and candidates (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraph 5b).

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

Resources and expertise

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QCA/04/1293)*, paragraphs 8 and 10, and the *NVQ code of practice (QCA/06/2888)*, paragraphs 4, 5, 19 and 71.

Findings

1. HAB has sufficient staff and technical resources to support its accredited qualifications. It uses technical systems developed by City & Guilds awards and has access to their contracted external verifiers or moderators if required. HAB is also taking advantage of City & Guilds awards' systems for recruiting and training VRQ moderators.
2. HAB has 19 staff, including five employed NVQ consultants (external verifiers). These consultants train and monitor contracted external verifiers. They also offer workshops to centres to promote consistency in assessment and verification.
3. The organisation has adopted City & Guilds' staff appraisal system for both employed and contracted staff. Employed staff are measured against individual performance objectives and competencies. Contracted external verifiers are reviewed annually.
4. There are suitable procedures for the recruitment, appointment, deployment and training of external verifiers. All potential external verifiers are recruited and appointed through City & Guilds awards. A specialist from HAB is involved in this process. The monitoring team noted that HAB had reviewed the expertise of its current external verifiers against the requirements of the assessment strategy for cleaning NVQs. This resulted in a loss of two external verifiers who did not meet the requirements.
5. HAB has adopted City & Guilds awards' procedures for training. This includes generic training across the group and qualification workshops offered by the NVQ consultants in the relevant sector area. New external verifiers attend the generic training programme and a qualification-specific workshop. External verifiers cannot begin verifying until they have attended this workshop. Training also includes shadow and accompanied visits with one of the NVQ consultants. A member of the monitoring team attended one of the generic sessions based on the completion of external verifier reports online and was satisfied with the activities presented.
6. There are suitable procedures to track the achievement of V2 and record external verifier information. All external verifiers attend standardisation days. The monitoring team viewed the agendas and content of these days and is satisfied that external verifiers are looking at candidate evidence.

7. The *NVQ code of practice* (QCA/06/2888) requires awarding organisations to provide a code of practice, which external verifiers must sign and agree to comply with. This must include for example, continuing professional development (CPD) requirements, external verifier roles and responsibilities and appeals against external verifier decisions. Currently, NVQ consultants have role profiles, but there is no clear definition of the roles and responsibilities for contracted external verifiers or any information on appeals against external verifier decisions. Contracts for NVQ consultants are generic. The monitoring team was impressed with the CPD activities undertaken with a range of companies. All external verifiers have to sign a conflict of interest declaration for each centre assigned to them. HAB will need to review and amend the existing arrangements or develop a separate code of practice to meet these requirements.

Accreditation condition

5. HAB must develop a code of practice for external verifiers, which includes roles and responsibilities, and appeals against external verifier decisions. External verifiers must agree to comply with this code (*NVQ code of practice* (QCA/06/2888), paragraph 4).

Observation

1. HAB should consider including the requirement to declare conflicts of interest in the code of practice so that external verifiers do not have to complete forms for each centre that they are allocated.

Quality assurance and control of internal assessment

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraphs 13, 36, 38–42, 56–57 and 59–62, and the *NVQ code of practice* (QCA/06/2888), paragraphs 18, 40–70 and 72.

Findings

1. The monitoring team looked at the quality assurance and control systems in place to support the assessment and verification of NVQs and VRQs.
2. HAB provides award-specific guidance to centres and candidates. Some of the documentation has been developed by City & Guilds awards. It is available from HAB via a link to the City & Guilds awards website. Centres have access to additional documents such as *Ensuring quality*, which details the responsibilities of assessors and internal verifiers, timescales for keeping assessment records and quality assurance arrangements.
3. The awarding organisation works across sectors with a variety of assessment strategies. These assessment strategies can be downloaded from the HAB website. Each strategy details the requirements for assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers. The monitoring team noted that the expertise of assessors and internal verifiers is checked both at approval and during external verification visits.
4. HAB provides guidance on internal verification activities and recommends the principles of 'CAMERA' for internal verification, which includes candidates, assessors, and methods of assessment, evidence, records and assessment locations. This is based on the City & Guilds awards' approach to internal verification. The awarding organisation said that they do not state percentages for sampling candidates, as a flexible approach is more suitable. The monitoring team considered that indicating a minimum sample size would be beneficial for new, inexperienced internal verifiers. The guidance states that internal verifiers must increase the sample size for unqualified assessors.
5. Candidates sign a *Unit record form* to confirm the authenticity of their work. Although the form includes a declaration by the candidate, it is not clear if the candidate is confirming that the evidence is authentic. HAB should consider reviewing the wording of the declaration.
6. NVQs in hospitality have a form of independent assessment where candidates must achieve 100 per cent overall. This includes a test taken under examination conditions either online or on paper. Candidates answer a question paper based on true or false answers. The pass mark is 70 per cent. Questions are

written by City & Guilds awards and approved by the relevant sector skills council (SSC).

7. The arrangements for downloading the online tests are suitable. Paper tests are downloaded by the centre from the secure part of the City & Guilds awards website. They are internally marked then internally and externally verified as required by the assessment strategy. If centres want to amend questions, they must agree this with the awarding organisation. The remaining 30 per cent or less of the knowledge requirements can be tested through observation and/or direct questioning.
8. HAB uses external verification as part of its quality assurance strategy to maintain standards. It has a risk management strategy for monitoring centres linked to a database. Centre data is stored in the database, which calculates the number of visits each centre needs per year based on the stored information.
9. The awarding organisation has suitable arrangements to manage the deployment of external verifiers and avoid any conflict of interest. Centres are visited a minimum of twice a year unless they offer e-portfolios, which is subject to remote monitoring and a visit.
10. External verification visits are suitably managed. This includes prior notification of the visit and confirmation of the candidate sample. External verifiers keep a list of assessors and internal verifiers at each centre to ensure that over time, they sample across the assessment team. Centres that cancel external verification visits at short notice or without good reason are liable to a penalty fee or the application of sanctions if appropriate.
11. HAB allows centres to have direct claims status if the external verification visit is positive and the sampling process has been completed over the year.
12. HAB is moving towards electronic reporting. A new quality management system has been developed by City & Guilds awards for completing and storing external verification reports. Data from this system can be used to run reports and check external verification activities. A member of the monitoring team observed a training event for this activity and is satisfied that the system is robust.
13. Reports can be completed on a laptop or on paper during the visit. All responses must be inputted into the electronic form, which is based on the *Approved centre criteria*. If an external verifier enters 'no' against a section, an action point is automatically generated with the suggested sanction. External verifiers can override these automatic updates provided that they input information in the 'Notes' section to support the decision. The next visit date is also agreed and inputted into the electronic form during the current visit.

14. External verifiers have *Ensuring quality* (March 2008) and the City & Guilds *External verifier's handbook* (February 2003) to assist them in their role. The latter document pre-dates the *NVQ code of practice* (QCA/06/2888), and neither includes any information on the requirement to take additional samples if standards are not being met. HAB confirmed that this requirement is covered during training days.
15. Paper reports and electronic reports are returned to the quality coordinator at HAB who carries out a series of checks before a copy is sent to the centre.
16. All contracted external verifiers have an annual review and their performance is graded. The review includes for example the checking of external verification reports, accompanied visits, self-review and feedback from centres. The NVQ consultant uses all the information to write a report and invites comments from the external verifiers about their performance. If the grading is less than satisfactory, external verifiers have an action plan or their contract is not renewed.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

2. HAB should consider documenting the information on minimum sampling for internal and external verifiers and confirm that external verifiers must increase their sampling size if there is evidence that standards are not being met.
3. HAB should consider reviewing the wording on the candidate declaration so it is clear that candidates are confirming that they have produced the evidence.

Quality assurance and control of independent assessment

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QCA/04/1293)*, paragraphs 13, 36, 38–42 and 56–58.

Findings

1. All level 1 VRQs are independently assessed. The tests are available on demand either online or on paper. Each test consists of 40 true/false questions. Candidates must answer a minimum of 32 questions correctly to pass. Level 2 VRQs are assessed by assignment, which is set by the awarding organisation, marked by an independent assessor then internally and externally moderated.
2. The awarding organisation has fully documented procedures for the development, evaluation and moderation of VRQs. The document *Moderation guide for HAB VRQs (2006)* gives comprehensive information on the procedures to be followed and includes exemplar materials.
3. A question bank was developed by three subject specialists about four years ago. It has sufficient questions available until July 2009. The questions were written by senior examiners and reviewed by the chief examiner and quality coordinator before going live. The monitoring team noted that no questions have been added to the bank since 2006.
4. Question bank performance was analysed by the HAB Exam Board and Assessment Committee. They looked at the pass/fail rates of questions and underperforming questions were investigated. In addition, questions papers were scrutinised to ensure consistency. It was not possible to test the robustness of this system as these meetings stopped in 2007. In addition, it is not clear who has responsibility for overseeing these activities now that HAB comes under City & Guilds awards.
5. Assessment records are retained indefinitely. Although the current awarding organisation documentation states that papers are destroyed one month after being marked, the quality manager stated that papers may be kept for longer periods. This is an area of concern as candidates and/or centres have 60 days to appeal against assessment decisions. HAB would have difficulty checking candidate scripts if papers were destroyed according to the operational guidelines. HAB should review its systems so that the timescales correlate and candidates are not disadvantaged if they appeal.
6. There are suitable arrangements to maintain security prior to and post assessment for tests and assignments. They include for example clear guidance on the timescales for downloading tests, the storage and return of

written papers, and checking candidate identity. Centres are required to complete a destruction form to indicate that they have destroyed all question papers after the assessment has taken place. HAB is able to retrieve any of the papers taken online in the case of a check or query.

Accreditation condition

6. HAB must have arrangements in place to evaluate assessment tasks and mark schemes for VRQs. If HAB has devolved this role to City & Guilds awards, this must be clearly explained and they must identify how HAB oversees the process (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraph 55d).

Observation

4. HAB should review its timescales for retaining marked scripts so that it does not conflict with the timescales for candidate appeals.

Determination and reporting of results

This is subject to *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QCA/04/1293)*, paragraphs 63–67.

Findings

1. HAB is undergoing many changes to its systems and procedures, including passing over the external moderation of level 2 VRQs to City & Guilds awards. Staff explained how the procedures worked prior to 2007 for both levels 1 and 2 VRQs. These procedures are fully explained in the *Moderation guide for HAB VRQs (2006)*. The main issue for HAB is to explain if it will be involved in or have an overview of the moderation process.
2. The pass mark for the level 1 VRQs is 32 out of 40. This pass mark was determined by subject experts when the question bank was initially devised. There is no grading of the qualifications. They are pass or fail only and this is clearly stated in the relevant specification.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observation

5. HAB should explain how results will be reported to them and what involvement, if any, it will have in the moderation process.

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