



Awarding body monitoring report for: ITEC

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Introduction

Regulating external qualifications

Responsibility for regulating external qualifications lies jointly with three regulators:

- the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual)
- 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 Ofqual for the purposes of 'banking' 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 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 ITEC and was carried out by Ofqual on behalf of the regulators in April and October 2008. The October date was to facilitate the observation of the ITEC Quality Assurance Panel, an independent body responsible for providing a systems and procedures oversight function for ITEC's operations.

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

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

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by the regulators, including the previous monitoring report and/or most recent Awarding Body Recognition Update (ABRU) submission, visits to six centres in England and Northern Ireland, attendance at the ITEC quality assurance panel meetings and scrutiny of ITEC's website. The monitoring team visited ITEC's head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation.

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

About ITEC

ITEC is an autonomous operating division of Education & Media Services Ltd and is accredited to offer vocational qualifications in beauty therapies, complementary therapies along with sport and fitness. ITEC offers these qualifications in the United Kingdom and in over 30 countries worldwide. At the time of the post accreditation monitoring activity ITEC had 35 Vocationally related qualifications and one higher level qualification on the National Qualifications Framework.

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. An awarding body recognition extension application (ABREA) was submitted by ITEC in November 2005 and was recognised with conditions, which were all met by March 2006. The director of ITEC confirmed that no changes to its corporate governance arrangements, organisational structure and the lines of accountability have taken place and they remain exactly the same as those described in the 2005 ABREA submission. A name change has occurred in relation to the post of system manager, which has now been redesignated to administration manager. The functions of this post remain the same. The director remains the single named point of accountability who has full and overall responsibility for maintaining quality and standards.
2. A Quality Assurance Panel (QAP) is made up of independent industry personnel and is serviced by awarding body staff. It serves to provide a systems and procedures oversight across a number of operational areas, for example the tracking of candidates, reviewing of centres' and examiners' operations, monitoring the timescales specified in its customer service statement and reviewing ITEC's self-assessment procedure. It was noted that the QAP meets three times per year. This is different to the four times per year cited in the ABREA submission. According to the director this reduction has not decreased or lessened the performance of this group. Minutes of these meetings, which outlined the content followed, were provided for review. The monitoring team felt that this additional quality assurance function could be augmented by the QAP having defined terms of reference to guide its conduct and function.
3. No changes have occurred to the awarding body's governance arrangements. The monitoring team focused on the sections of malpractice, equality of opportunity, reasonable adjustments and special consideration, customer service statements and enquiries and appeals as part of this corporate governance section and reported by exception only. Most of ITEC's documents relating to these sections currently banked at Ofqual do not require updating. The exceptions to these relate to malpractice and enquiries and appeals procedures.

4. The malpractice procedure clearly requires centres to report to ITEC any suspected malpractice. However, it is not clear in this procedure that failure to cooperate can lead to certificates not being issued and future entries and/or registrations not being accepted. The monitoring team did note that ITEC had listed examples of malpractice resulting from registered centres, candidates and ITEC itself. This was considered good practice in enabling its customers to identify possible instances of suspected malpractice.
5. The ITEC enquiries and appeals procedure for VRQs details a three-stage process. The second stage of this directs that if a college/candidate is not satisfied with the decision at stage one it can request a re-examination. The third stage is activated only when a candidate is unhappy about the assessment decision of the re-examination, not the assessment decision relating to the initial disagreement. The monitoring team felt that candidates should be able to pursue an appeal against a primary assessment decision through to stage three without being required to be re-examined at stage two.
6. Also, the preamble to the enquiries and appeals procedure states that it 'should be used for any disagreement regarding ITEC assessment decisions'. This does not cater for those centres wishing to seek a check on assessment decisions affecting candidates' results or other decisions affecting centres and candidates outside of any actual disagreement.
7. The awarding body reviews its qualifications fees and associated costs on an annual basis. This *Schedule of Fees: UK and Northern Ireland Colleges* is published across paper and electronic media on an October to September basis each year.

Accreditation conditions

1. ITEC must document in its malpractice procedure that failure to cooperate with a malpractice investigation by a centre can lead to certificates not being issued and future entries and/or registrations not being accepted (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 29).
2. The enquiries and appeals procedure must be rewritten to provide for centres the opportunity to also seek a check on assessment and other decisions affecting candidates' results (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 24).

Observations

1. ITEC should document the terms of reference of its QAP.

2. ITEC is reminded to review its submission of its banked documents with Ofqual as it amends its procedures and to provide the most up-to-date version. This could be accomplished as part of its annual self assessment process.
3. The enquiries and appeals procedure should be rewritten to advise that a college/candidate could access stage three of the process without the requirement to undertake a re-examination at stage two.

Resources and expertise

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

Findings

1. The ITEC awarding body comprises of nine full time office based staff led by the director supported by a senior management team comprising of an administration manager and an education manager. The administration manager is responsible for all matters relating to the delivery of qualifications. The education manager is responsible for the development of qualifications and also manages the assessment team. Both these members of staff are further deputised to ensure that work can continue when they are unavailable. The awarding body also encourages cross training of staff to cover other duties.
2. At the time of appointment, each newly recruited member of staff goes through an induction process. This involves being briefed on the ITEC staff handbook and the regulations and procedures relating to the administration and delivery of qualifications. The functionality of databases relating to these also forms part of the induction. Staff are subject to annual appraisals at which agreed performance and delivery objectives are set.
3. The assessment team is made up of around 45 individuals who can cover one or more posts including subject experts, item editors, practical examiners and chief examiners. Potential candidates for these roles may contact ITEC directly, can be recommended by a member of the current assessment team or individually respond to advertisements.
4. Individuals who wish to apply for a post in the assessment team must submit a curriculum vitae (CV) and be interviewed by the director and the education manager and if applicable, the chief examiner for the subject. Successful candidates undertake an induction during which they are informed about ITEC procedures and its administration systems. Newly appointed practical examiners will first accompany and observe a chief examiner or other colleague conducting an examination on three occasions. Following this, they will themselves be observed conducting a practical examination on another three occasions. At the end of these six centre visits the chief examiner will complete a report on the conduct of the new examiner. In addition to this, the education manager conducts verification visits every three years, as part of which they observe each practical examiner conduct an examination. Newly appointed examiners will be verified in their first year.

5. The subject experts who write examination questions for ITEC multiple choice examinations are trained via an external consultant. This training is updated on a two yearly basis.
6. ITEC operates in a number of overseas locations, with roughly 800 centres in total. Within England, Wales and Northern Ireland there are 250 centres. The director confirmed that the current numbers of the assessment team were enough to cope with visits to centres for practical examinations and centre approval purposes. This is reviewed on an annual basis.
7. All new centres are given guidance documentation. The centre approval visit incorporates training for the administrative and teaching staff in terms of the awarding body requirements. Centres are required to submit CVs of teaching staff to show that they are competent enough to be able to carry out independent assessment.
8. The database used by ITEC is accessed through an internet browser via a password protected page. The fact that the system can be accessed securely through the internet allows the externally based assessment team to remotely access and input data directly to the database, which makes the whole process more efficient. Various user rights apply depending on who is accessing the system. The server itself is backed up in the office and two servers are also kept offsite. During a problem with telephone lines two years ago, the second server was successfully used.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

Application of assessment methods: 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 and 59–62.

Findings

1. Case studies are used as the internal assessment model for the majority of ITEC qualifications (with the exception of the Diploma in Anatomy & Physiology, which is independently assessed) and form one third of a whole qualification along with the independent assessments of a practical examination component and a theory examination.
2. With case studies, candidates produce a series of written reports of various treatments they perform on clients. These are either completed under the supervision of a tutor or in the candidate's own time and the tutor is required to assess each case study and allocate either a pass or fail grade.
3. ITEC has provided clear guidance to centres and candidates on the conduct and marking of case studies. Candidates are provided with guidance on how to construct and present case studies and how many case studies are required per qualification. Internal assessors are presented with the ITEC requirements for practical assessments and case studies, which stipulate the qualifications and industry experience they must have to conduct internal assessment. They are also issued with guidance notes for each qualification that details general advice and specifics relating to delivery of the qualification, including case study requirements. Each case study written account is supported by a study guidance sheet which is used by the assessor to record the assessment of the case study work of the candidate.
4. Internal assessors are also required to conduct pre-assessment of candidates in preparation for the practical exam, which is conducted by ITEC practical examiners as part of the independent assessment component of qualifications. Internal assessors are required to use ITEC pre-assessment forms and marking criteria prior to ITEC practical examinations. All pre-assessment marks and case study assessments are required to be available on the day of the ITEC practical examination.
5. Where more than one assessor is assessing case studies and pre-assessments within a centre, ITEC requires that these assessment decisions are internally verified by a qualified and experienced internal verifier. Advice and direction are provided to internal verifiers to ensure consistency between internal assessors.

6. All of the centre staff interviewed confirmed both the guidance given to them to organise and mark case studies and the process followed by practical examiners in sampling them.
7. ITEC has produced clear procedures for operating practical examinations (for independent assessment), which include direction on what must be done with the internal pre-assessment forms, the required number of case studies to be sampled and what actions are to be taken where there are inconsistencies discovered in internal assessment.
8. Practical examiners are required to review the pre-assessment forms prior to conducting the practical examination and review the case study assessment forms to ensure completion and sample the candidates' case studies. If it is found that case studies have not been assessed or are not available for verification then candidates are not permitted to take the practical examination.
9. Any case studies that do not meet the required standard will be referred by the practical examiner and a case study referral report will be issued by ITEC and produced by the practical examiner, detailing the requirements for the candidate to achieve a pass grade. Resubmitted case studies are to be forwarded directly to ITEC to be marked.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

4. Given that all case studies presented to the practical examiner have been passed by the internal assessor, unless borderline passes form part of the natural sample selected by the practical examiner, then these may go unverified. ITEC should require centres to submit internally assessed borderline pass case studies to practical examiners as a matter of course to be certain that internal assessors are consistent in their marking of case studies.

Application of assessment methods: 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 and 56–58.

Findings

1. Independent assessment takes the form of a practical examination of a candidate's performance, which is conducted by a practical examiner and a theory examination based on the syllabus for each qualification, which is marked by an ITEC examiner. Both are on-demand examinations. ITEC provides clear instructions for centres on how to make bookings and enrolments for ITEC examinations. The centre staff interviewed confirmed the usefulness of this document and were satisfied with the process of making bookings and enrolments. The internal *Staff Handbook* provides clear and detailed instructions to staff for processing bookings and enrolments and monitor the progress of these. This includes the sending, receipt and scanning of theory papers and the processing of examination results.
2. Clear precise guidelines and instructions are provided to centres detailing the ITEC regulations and procedures for operating practical examinations and the specific responsibilities placed on centres for holding practical examinations. These detail comprehensive guidelines cover all aspects of a centre's responsibility to prepare candidates and the environment for independent assessment, the documentation (including case studies) to be provided to the practical examiner and guidance on particular requirements and special consideration. All centre staff interviewed expressed how helpful and thorough these instructions are.
3. The *ITEC Examiner's Handbook* provides guidance and advice to practical examiners on their role and function, which covers the conduct, practice, marking and administration relating to practical examinations. Practical examiners are required to give oral feedback on the day of the practical examination and generate a centre report to be sent to ITEC. Internal checks are in place to monitor and report on the centre reports received.
4. The ITEC education manager has the responsibility of monitoring the work of the practical examiners. This is managed on a regional basis by a team of chief examiners who hold regular regional meetings. These are also attended by the ITEC director and education manager. The education manager also observes the practice of practical examiners on a rolling three year basis.

5. ITEC has produced clear and detailed regulations and procedures for operating theory examinations for centres, examiners and internal administrative staff.
6. Each theory test is based on the syllabus for each qualification for which the learning outcomes form the basis for the examination. All theory examinations are multiple choice. ITEC uses a standardised format for the writing and production of examination papers. Subject experts write items (individual questions) to fulfil the test specification criteria. These are then sent to item editors who are responsible for formatting them into multiple choice examination papers. The question papers are subject to a triple-checking process between subject experts and item editors with the final sign-off being undertaken by item editors. The papers are then uploaded to a database. As the theory examinations are on an on-demand basis there are suitable procedures in place to ensure correct and appropriate allocation to centres. Each year past papers are reviewed to check for sufficiency and coverage of questions for the current year. If additional or new questions are required item writers request these from the subject experts. Statistics are produced on an annual basis to check if adjustments are required.
7. There are clear instructions for centres on the holding and conduct of theory examinations. These involve the receipt and storage of papers, a check for the correct distribution of theory papers along with the designated list of candidates' names that are to take the examination, invigilation procedures and the collection and return of papers to ITEC. Centre staff interviewed found these to be both straightforward and helpful. ITEC also conducts spot checks on centres holding theory exams with a frequency of one per month per region. These are reported in regional meetings.
8. Once completed papers are received by ITEC, they are logged, bar coded and electronically marked. Results are then recorded against individual candidates. All procedures for the receipt, scanning and processing of examination results are contained in the *ITEC Staff Handbook*.
9. The quality assurance panel reviews the ITEC process and documentation relating to examinations of 10 centres.

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. Examiners input practical examination marks directly into the database and send in a signed sheet as confirmation of these marks. Theory marks are uploaded to the database automatically on scanning of the multiple choice answer papers. Candidates receive a pass or fail mark for each case study. This does not go towards the overall mark, but must be successfully completed in order to complete the qualifications. The database then calculates the overall result.
2. The theory and practical examination marks are expressed numerically and the overall grade is given in the format of fail/pass/credit/distinction, which is also displayed on the certificate. A candidate must have achieved 60% in each unit in order to pass that unit. When the marks from the theory and the practical are combined, 60% equates to a pass, 75% to a credit and 90% and above to a distinction. These grade boundaries have been set historically and compared against other awarding bodies to gauge what is normal practice.
3. Results are issued to centres in two formats. The first is a centre report that details the results of all candidates attached to the centre. The second is the candidate slip that centres must disseminate to their candidates. The certificates are also issued alongside the results.
4. ITEC also offers accreditation of prior learning (APL) against individual units, or in order to gain access to higher level qualifications. Candidates must provide proof of qualifications and in cases where these are qualifications that are not currently recognised by ITEC, the onus is on the candidate to map the qualification to the appropriate ITEC units by completing a template that the awarding body provides. If the APL is accepted, the candidate will be given a pass at 60% for the relevant unit.
5. A statistical review of results is carried out on an annual basis, which involves looking at the overall spread of results, as well as a comparison with that of previous years in order to check for any anomalies and ensure that standards are being maintained.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

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.

Findings

1. ITEC requires all centres to successfully complete a centre approval process. The application form is available from the website. The form must be completed to the full satisfaction of the examinations booking officer before a subject matter expert is allocated to the centre for an approval visit. The application form requests a main contact. However, it is not clear from the application form that the main contact should be the person who is accountable for the quality assurance and management of the qualifications. ITEC advised that this requirement is checked at the centre visit.
2. The application form is also accompanied by evidence of the requirements for centres, such as tutor CVs, photographs of training facilities and lists of equipment. The subject matter expert conducting the visit then checks that all criteria are fulfilled and confirms this via a report to the exam bookings officer. If the centre wishes to provide their own scheme of work as opposed to the one that ITEC offers, they must submit this to the awarding body where it is checked by the examinations manager. The confirmation of this is also sent back to the exam booking officer who then issues a letter of approval. Each centre is allocated a unique centre number.
3. Candidates cannot enrol directly with ITEC. Centres must complete an enrolment form to confirm that they want to enrol a certain number of candidates for a suite of examinations, known as a package. Candidates must be enrolled a minimum of 12 weeks before sitting the examination. The examinations themselves are on demand. This means that the centre submits a booking request form with the names of candidates and agrees a date with the awarding body for the examination. A practical examiner is then notified of the exam date and will contact the centre directly to confirm details.
4. Certificates are produced in house for candidates who complete the full qualifications. Unit certificates are available by request and carry an additional fee. Each certificate issued to a candidate carries a unique tracking number that is also stored on the database. If a duplicate certificate needs to be issued this has a different number to the original certificate. Duplicate certificates are only issued once information has been supplied to satisfy ITEC of the authenticity of the request.

5. ITEC provides qualifications abroad to the same specification as those provided within England, Wales and Northern Ireland and so issues the same certificates with the regulators logos on to these countries. The director advised that all centres outside of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are verbally advised that the regulatory logos indicate that the qualifications are not accredited outside of these countries.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

5. ITEC should look into clarifying the fact that the main contact for each centre should be the person accountable for the quality assurance and management of the qualification within the centre.