



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cymuned Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Rewarding Learning

Post-accreditation monitoring report: ISTD

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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 action plan will be agreed with the regulators and its implementation monitored.

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' 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 that are 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 as part of the annual self-assessment return.

About this report

This report is the outcome of a monitoring activity on the ISTD awarding body and was carried out by QCA on behalf of the regulators in October 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
- quality assurance and control of independent assessment
- determination and reporting of results
- registration.

This is the second post-accreditation monitoring activity on ISTD's activities. 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 previous monitoring report, ABRU submission and scrutiny of the ISTD website. The monitoring team visited ISTD's head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation. The regulators observed an examination and training session for examiner marking to check how the awarding body's quality assurance systems worked in practice.

About ISTD

ISTD provides access to a range of graded and vocationally related qualifications (VRQs) in different dance genres. Graded qualifications are assessed through practical examinations only. The assessment methods for both the foundation in dance instruction (FDI) and the certificate in dance education (CDE) include short-answer question papers, a practical examination, assignment and portfolio. For more information on ISTD and the qualifications it offers visit the ISTD website at www.istd.org.

Corporate governance

This is subject to The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England in Wales and Northern Ireland (2004), paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

Findings

1. The awarding body's corporate governance arrangements have not changed since the ABRU was completed in 2005. However, the chief executive stated that these arrangements are under review with a report due to the ISTD Council in December 2007. The chief executive has delayed the revision of ISTD's strategic plan until the outcome of the governance review is known.
2. The customer services and quality assurance department (CSQA), the examinations department and the education and training department are responsible for all awarding body functions. The examinations department takes responsibility for graded and vocational qualifications, with the education and training department focusing on teaching qualifications.
3. Senior staff are responsible for sharing the aims and objectives of the organisation with their teams. The monitoring team noted that the CSQA department explained the structure of the organisation and the relationship between the different dance faculties. This is good practice.
4. The monitoring team were given full access to awarding body documentation, including the strategic plan, minutes and reports.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

1. ISTD must update the regulators if the governance review results in any changes to the existing governance arrangements.

Resources and expertise

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

Findings

1. ISTD allocates responsibility for the quality assurance of its accredited qualifications to the CSQA, examinations, and education and training departments. There are two systems in place for registering and certifying candidates. Each system is administered by these departments, enabling the awarding body to manage the delivery and assessment of the graded, vocational and teaching qualifications. The monitoring team noted that the awarding body monitors business requirements during busy periods, employing temporary staff if necessary to meet its targets for certification.
2. The chief executive has introduced a formal appraisal process for staff at head office. All human resources activities have been outsourced to a specialist company, who trained awarding body staff during the introduction of the appraisal system. A further training need was identified for all staff relating to the introduction of new information technology systems, including databases.
3. The monitoring team noted that the teaching qualifications were developed in conjunction with other dance-awarding bodies in the sector.
4. There are suitable documented procedures for recruiting and training examiners for the graded and vocational qualifications. The arrangements specify the expertise and qualification requirements for each role. Attendance at training days is mandatory. ISTD employs two full-time examiners and has approximately 191 contracted examiners across the genres. Of these, 34 examine the FDI and CDE, and 26 examine the FDI. ISTD has 13 assessors for module 1 of the CDE and 12 markers for the written examinations.
5. There are discrete differences in the training of examiners for graded and teaching qualifications. The assessment methodology for the teaching qualifications varies according to the assessment component. Training is therefore specific to the component being assessed. For example, markers have specialist knowledge in health and safety, lifespan development and learning or the background to the dance genre, examiners examine dance practice, and assessors check the portfolio and complete the final teaching assessment. The monitoring team is confident that the procedures for recruiting and training examiners, markers and assessors as explained by ISTD staff are suitable but are not fully documented.

As the teaching qualifications include a variety of assessment roles they need to be clearly explained and documented.

6. Examiner attendance at standardisation and training days is monitored and non-attendance without good reason affects examiner status. The monitoring team considers that examiners for practical examinations are given opportunities for standardisation and to share good practice during these sessions.
7. ISTD uses tutors to internally assess the module 1 of the FDI. Tutors are trained by the awarding body and cannot assess until the two day training has been satisfactorily completed. All tutors have to meet the awarding body's requirements for expertise, training and qualifications. They are provided with written guidance and exemplar materials to assist them in their role.
8. ISTD has a new database called Faim. This is being upgraded to meet the awarding body's requirements and incorporate the teaching qualifications.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

2. ISTD should document its procedures for training examiners, markers and assessors for the teaching qualifications.

The quality assurance and control of internal and 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 56–62.

Findings

1. The monitoring team looked at the quality assurance and control systems in place to support the assessment of VRQs, focusing discussions on the teaching qualifications, which are relatively new.
2. ISTD uses a mixture of internal and independent assessment depending on the type of qualification. Graded examinations are based on performance. They are independently assessed by examiners appointed by the awarding body. The systems used to support these qualifications are well developed and fit for purpose. They include, for example, annual standardisation days to ensure that marking is accurate across examiners and over time, and candidate assessment records are kept indefinitely.
3. There are quality assurance arrangements in place for managing internal and independent assessment for the teaching qualifications. They include, for example, the retention of candidate work, managing conflicts of interest between examiners, markers, assessors and centres, and the re-allocation of examiner work if assessment decisions are incorrect. There is a system for retraining examiners if errors are found. The monitoring team were provided with evidence of an examiner being withdrawn from the active list. They had been retrained but the errors in marking were not rectified.
4. The teaching qualifications have internal and independent assessment components, which are compiled into a final portfolio. These include written and practical examinations, an internally assessed module for the FDI and an assignment. The CDE includes a module based on internally and externally assessed teaching practice evidence.
5. To promote reliable assessments the awarding body provides approved tutors and centres with suitable guidance, including the qualification specifications, tutor training notes and exemplar materials. There is no internal moderation as this is a practical module and completed portfolios are moderated and/or standardised by ISTD.
6. Module 1 of the FDI is internally assessed by approved tutors. It is based on how the candidate learns by observing teaching practice. Approved tutors have to be satisfied that 75 per cent of the learning outcomes have been met from the observation and understanding of

learning techniques (OULT) form. Completed OULT forms were sampled and the monitoring team is satisfied with the methodology used but noted that some observations were completed in four weeks with different classes. The awarding body recommends that candidates should use the same class at least twice but does not give a minimum or maximum timeframe for observations. Tutors are advised as part of tutor training that a term of observations is recommended. The monitoring team is not confident that candidates will have seen sufficient progression using different classes in such a short time span.

7. For module 1 of the CDE candidates have to complete a minimum of ten hours of supervised teaching practice, and an interim and final teaching practice. A member of the monitoring team observed an examination and the verification of portfolios for CDE candidates. The regulators are satisfied that the arrangements are robust. The checks included scrutiny of the interim teaching practice reports and knowledge requirements.
8. There are arrangements for setting and examination questions for the teaching qualifications but these are not formalised. The chief examiner writes the questions and mark schemes for each examination paper, which is made up of short-answer questions. These questions and a sample of recent examination papers are independently reviewed by markers at training sessions but records are not kept. A member of the monitoring team observed a marker training session and was satisfied with the process for evaluating questions and mark schemes.
9. The assessment criteria for assignments were initially developed by a working party. ISTD were concerned about standardisation of the assignment across the FDI and CDE, and are trialling a new marking system using standard categorised comments matched to assessment criteria with set marks. The awarding body did look at alternative approaches for assessing this module but the assignment was agreed as the preferred option.
10. Assignments are marked by ISTD markers and returned to candidates with comments and a written report detailing the overall result. Candidates sign to confirm the assignment is their own work and ISTD carries out additional checks. All assignments are scanned onto a computer and checked against previous submissions to avoid plagiarism. This is good practice.
11. Report sheets on dance practice are scrutinised in-house to check addition of marks. In addition, staff sample examination papers with a range of marks from poor fail to high pass. Pass/fail boundaries for the assignments are not heavily sampled and the awarding body recognises this as an issue.

12. Standardisation of examination scripts and assignments is done by post. A minimum ten per cent sample of scripts and assignments are sent to the chief examiner, who re-marks and alters marks if required. Changes to marks and the recall of scripts for erratic marking were evident. ISTD confirmed that markers are retrained if marking is inconsistent. The monitoring team noted the variances in marking and considers an eight per cent up lift to be a high margin. ISTD may wish to introduce an annual review of scripts and assignments to improve consistency in marking.
13. ISTD has procedures in place to monitor the work of examiners, markers and assessors. The arrangements for monitoring examiners for the graded examinations are well established and include accompanied visits. Arrangements for checking consistency in marking examinations and assignments are in place, but accompanied visits for examiners of the teaching qualifications and assessors have not been fully implemented.
14. The monitoring team spoke to a full-time examiner who confirmed that standardisation exercises, training and accompanied visits every three years for graded and vocational graded examiners are in place.
15. Centres are sent instructions for the security of examination papers prior to the examination. This includes information on the invigilation requirements and security of papers prior to and post examination.
16. Most examinations for the teaching qualifications are taken at approved centres. In addition, vocational candidates can take examinations at head office. The awarding body makes provision for some teaching candidates with accreditation of prior learning (APL) to take the examinations at head office but does not check their identity prior to the examination.
17. All specifications are written in English. ISTD has arrangements in place to translate examination papers if assessment is requested in Welsh, Gaelige or other languages. The awarding body translates examination papers but candidates pay a fee for the translation of scripts into English. ISTD is considering employing bilingual markers to reduce costs.

Accreditation conditions

1. ISTD must have written procedures explaining how examiners, markers and assessors are monitored for the teaching qualifications (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England in Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 36 part).

2. ISTD must check the identity of candidates for the teaching and vocational qualifications prior to examinations (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England in Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraph 58f).

Observations

3. ISTD should document its arrangements for evaluating examination questions and keep suitable records.
4. ISTD should provide markers with standardisation opportunities to improve consistency in marking.

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. ISTD has pre-determined pass marks for all accredited qualifications with no aggregation of marks across components or modules. Candidates must achieve a minimum mark in each component and the percentage required varies according to the qualification.
2. The pass marks for graded and vocational qualifications are 40 and 50 per cent respectively. The pass marks for the modules of the FDI and CDE are different. A working party was set up to develop the teaching qualifications across awarding bodies in the sector. All participating awarding bodies agreed that overall competence in the qualification had to be demonstrated. The ISTD set its own individual unit criteria in order to ensure competence. For example, in module one FDI candidates must achieve 75 per cent of the assessment criteria at least two to three times. The pass mark for the written exam is 40 per cent and grade C for the assignment. CDE candidates must pass the final teaching assessment; achieve 50 per cent in the written exam and a grade C for the assignment. Information on pass marks and grades are included in the relevant specification for each qualification as well as the tutor handbook and administration manual for centres.
3. There are written procedures detailing the processing of results for each module of the FDI and CDE, and the portfolio. These include arrangements prior to and post standardisation. Candidates receive a completion slip for each unit. When all modules have been completed, the portfolio for FDI candidates is sent to the education and training department. The teaching modules' administrator and professional qualifications officer check that portfolios are complete before submission to the panel for moderation and standardisation. Module 1 for CDE candidates is moderated by the assessor immediately after the final teaching practice. The complete portfolio is sent to ISTD for standardisation. Individual module results for both qualifications are recorded and issued to the panel.
4. The moderation panel is made up of assessors who have no direct involvement with these candidates. The panel are allocated portfolios and given a checklist; they also have access to information on pass marks and other examination data to assist them in the moderation process. For example, the panel had concerns that the FDI pass rate had increased considerably. Further investigation revealed that the teaching of the qualification had improved.

5. The awarding body has detailed and robust APL procedures in place for the teaching qualifications. Applications are made direct to the education and training department with supporting evidence. Exemption can be given for any of the units of the qualifications dependent on a candidate's existing qualifications and experiential learning. Candidates exempted from module 1 do not have to complete a portfolio.
6. ISTD issues its centres with guidance and feedback on the moderation and standardisation of portfolios, written examinations and APL candidates. This guidance is based on information collected from the panel of assessors, and feedback from markers and tutors. The guidance for 2006 specified areas for improvement in completing the OULT forms, general feedback and issues about task completion for APL candidates. This is a useful tool for centres. Underperforming centres are given support and re-approval may be limited until improvements are made.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

Registration

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

Findings

1. Due to the nature of the graded qualifications there are no approved centres. Graded exams are held at venues which have to comply with ISTD requirements in terms of equipment, and health and safety.
2. ISTD has suitable arrangements for approving its centres for the teaching qualifications. All centres complete an application form and are visited before approval is confirmed. The form does not include a single point of accountability for the quality assurance and management of qualifications or access to the premises for the regulators.
3. Tutors are approved by ISTD and issued with a tutor number on satisfactory completion of the training. The monitoring team noted that candidates cannot be registered unless tutors meet the awarding body's requirements.
4. There are suitable arrangements to register candidates. All candidates are issued with a unique number (pin) by the database, which is checked when candidates are entered for different qualifications. The awarding body is working towards on-line registration. ISTD collects data about its candidates, including ethnic origin and any reasonable adjustments required.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

5. ISTD should amend its centre approval form to include a named person as the single point of accountability for the quality assurance and control of its accredited qualifications. In addition, the form should state that the regulators are given access to premises, people and records.