



Post-accreditation monitoring report

The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) Examinations

March 2010

Ofqual/10/4765

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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 their 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 London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) Examinations awarding organisation and was carried out by Ofqual in March 2010. It draws together Ofqual's findings on the following areas:

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

This is the second post-recognition monitoring activity on LAMDA Examination's activities. An Awarding Body Recognition Update (ABRU) and monitoring report 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 website. The monitoring team visited LAMDA Examinations' head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation.

About LAMDA Examinations

LAMDA Examinations provides access to a range of graded and other vocational qualifications in speech and drama. For more information on LAMDA Examinations and the qualifications offered, visit the website at www.lamda.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. There have been no significant changes to the governance of LAMDA Examinations since its accreditation in 2003. A new accountable officer was appointed in December 2006.
2. The governance arrangements are clear and transparent. LAMDA Examinations sits within LAMDA Ltd, which is a company limited by guarantee and a charity. LAMDA Ltd has three arms: LAMDA Examinations; LAMDA Drama School; and LAMDA Business Performance. Each reports to the LAMDA Executive Board (LEB), which meets six times per year, and work to LAMDA Ltd's overall mission statement. The monitoring team noted that this board is currently being re-structured.
3. All operational issues and changes to awarding organisation policies are agreed by the accountable officer who reports to the examinations sub-committee. This committee meets three times per year and reviews information on statutory issues, compliance, business strategy, and customer service. The monitoring team looked at the terms of reference for this committee, which are not clear. Staff from LAMDA Examinations explained the roles and responsibilities of the committee, but these need to be fully documented.
4. The head of examinations also presents a written report to the LEB about relevant awarding organisation activities, such as progress with its Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) application.
5. The head of examinations is the single named point of accountability for maintaining the quality and standards of all qualifications. However, the current job specification for this post does not specify this responsibility.
6. LAMDA Ltd publishes its strategic objectives for the organisation. From this, the head of examinations has developed a five-year business and marketing strategy and the business plan for 2008–13. This is a rolling plan that is updated every two years. It was presented to the board in March 2010 for approval.
7. There are documented policies and procedures for awarding organisation activities, which are controlled by version and date. These include, for example examiner disclosure procedures, banked documents and examiner monitoring.
8. The monitoring team discussed the banked documents and recommended that these were reviewed to meet current requirements.

9. The monitoring team was given full access to all available awarding organisation documentation, the business plan and minutes of meetings.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

1. LAMDA Examinations should amend the job specification for the head of examinations to include the role of single named point of accountability with responsibility for maintaining the quality and standards of all qualifications.
2. LAMDA Examinations is reminded to review and amend the banked documents as discussed.

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.

Findings

1. LAMDA Examinations has 19 full-time staff and 96 examiners, including nine team leaders to support the delivery of its accredited qualifications. Of these examiners, only 50 examine the LAMDA Diploma in speech and drama education (LSDE) teaching qualification. The chief examiner mentors the team leaders and has overall responsibility for all examiners.
2. The arrangements to recruit and train examiners are robust. The monitoring team looked at the recruitment and training process, which includes a formal application and interviews, attendance at standardisation events, co-examining and observation of performance. Staff stated that it took about six months before potential examiners were accepted onto the panel of examiners.
3. All potential examiners are allocated a team leader who also acts as a mentor and observes their performance. This is good practice.
4. On appointment, examiners sign and agree to the conditions stipulated in the document, *Standard conditions for examiners*. Conditions include, for example declaring conflicts of interest and attendance at two standardisation days per year. Attendance of examiners is monitored by operational staff. Examiners are also given the *Guidelines for examiners* to assist them in their role. The monitoring team looked at the content of this document and noted that there was limited reference to supporting the equality of opportunity. Staff confirmed that this was included during standardisation days.
5. LAMDA Examinations has a staff appraisal process in place. It is used to identify training needs linked to work and measures performance.
6. Staff at LAMDA Examinations described its technical resources and the need to upgrade the current systems to meet business needs. Currently, LAMDA Examinations is running two systems in parallel, which allows it to test one system without losing data.
7. The awarding organisation also has a *Disaster recovery plan* in place, which involves recreating data and information on new servers. The *Business continuity plan* applies to LAMDA as a whole.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observation

3. LAMDA Examinations should place more emphasis in its guidance documents and training activities for examiners on supporting the equality of opportunity.

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. The monitoring team looked at the quality assurance systems to support the qualifications accredited on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The methods of assessment include for example portfolio evidence, practical demonstrations, practical examinations/assignments and oral examinations. These are all examined by the awarding organisation. All assessment is in English.
2. LAMDA Examinations has suitable procedures to review and evaluate assessment materials. For example, the anthology committee meets about two years before the new syllabus is developed to review proposed texts for assessment purposes. The texts can be submitted by examiners or customers. An additional review of these assessment materials is carried out by the publishing manager and outside experts. Once agreed, the texts are included in a publication to be used for examination purposes. Specifications are also checked for bias at the design phase.
3. Mark schemes are in place for each unit. Both the marking criteria and assessment tasks are reviewed by the head of examinations for accuracy.
4. Qualifications are reviewed annually, incorporating feedback from customers and amended if applicable. For example, feedback from teachers resulted in a change to the ordering of units for one qualification.
5. Quality assurance arrangements for managing independent assessment are in place and include, for example the retention of candidate work, deployment of examiners, checking of results and monitoring examiner performance. However, the monitoring team noted that there is no declaration enabling candidates to confirm the authenticity of evidence for the written assignment.
6. The current systems and procedures produce reliable results. The results processing procedure includes a number of checks to ensure that results are accurate. For example, marks on the report card are checked against the comments on the summary sheet and the addition of marks is rechecked before results are issued.
7. LAMDA Examinations has detailed procedures to monitor the work of its examiners. The awarding organisation also looks at complaints against

examiners. If there are three substantiated claims about assessment, the examiner is called in to discuss the issues and may be monitored by the syllabus manager. The monitoring team looked at a sample of written reports on examiner performance and was satisfied with the activities undertaken. Marking during standardisation activities is also monitored and if examiners' marks are five or more outside of the correct mark, they are observed again and required to retrain.

8. Centres are provided with guidance on examination requirements, but this does not include information on checking candidate identity. Staff confirmed that candidate identity is checked by stewards or centre staff. This may not be an issue at private centres where candidates are known to centre staff. However, to eliminate candidate identity fraud, LAMDA Examinations should check the identity of all candidates age 16 or over, particularly at public centres.

Accreditation condition

1. LAMDA Examinations must ensure the authenticity of candidate evidence for written assignments (*The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA/04/1293), paragraph 57a).

Observation

4. LAMDA Examinations should require centres to check the identity of candidates age 16 or over.

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. LAMDA Examinations has pre-determined pass marks for all accredited qualifications. This is historical and was agreed with other graded awarding organisations in the sector. Candidates must complete all components to be awarded a qualification. The LSDE is a pass or fail only, but the Certificate in speech and drama: performance studies (PCertLAM) is aggregated across the three units to achieve the final result, which is graded either as pass, merit or distinction.
2. The pass mark for the PCertLAM is 50 per cent. LAMDA Examinations considers grade boundaries and results across centres and qualifications through the annual review process. Information on pass marks and grades is included in the relevant specification for each qualification.
3. LAMDA Examinations does have arrangements to review and amend results. The monitoring team saw evidence of marks awarded for an assignment and not agreed by the chief examiner. The assignment was sent for remarking by a different examiner and the new mark tallied with the chief examiner's mark.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

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