



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



Post-accreditation monitoring report: The British Horseracing Education and Standards Trust (BHEST)

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Introduction

Regulating external qualifications

Responsibility for regulating external qualifications lies jointly with three regulatory authorities:

- the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the authority for England
- the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS), 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 regulatory authorities 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 regulatory authorities 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 by the regulatory authorities and its implementation monitored.

The regulatory authorities 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.

About this report

This report is the outcome of a monitoring activity of the British Horseracing Education and Standards Trust (BHEST) awarding body and was carried out by QCA on behalf of the regulatory authorities in January 2007. It is focused on the sections of the regulatory criteria not previously covered by the Awarding Body Recognition Update (ABRU) for which there were no outstanding accreditation conditions.

It draws together the regulatory authorities' findings on areas of corporate governance, resources and expertise, quality assurance and control of assessment, and registration.

This is the second post-accreditation monitoring activity on BHEST's National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) activities but is the first monitoring of its delivery of Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs).

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by the regulatory authorities, including the previous monitoring report and ABRU submission, visits to two NVQ centres, observation of internal verification training and scrutiny of BHEST's website. The monitoring team visited BHEST's head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation.

About the British Horseracing Education and Standards Trust (BHEST)

BHEST awards a range of qualifications in the racing, breeding, equine and farriery industries. It aims to raise standards in the racing and thoroughbred breeding industries through training, education and qualifications.

BHEST also manages racing's Education Programme, a scheme developed to open horse racing to a new, young audience through the use of exciting and informative educational activities based on the national curriculum.

For more information on BHEST and the qualifications it offers visit the BHEST website at www.bhest.co.uk.

Corporate governance

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

Findings

1. The executive director provided the monitoring team with an overview of the organisation and its structure. The work of BHEST is divided into two areas, the first deals with the education programme that focuses on delivering education activities for schools and the second is the administration of its accredited qualifications.
2. The executive director manages the day-to-day work of BHEST and presents quarterly reports to a board of trustees. This board oversees the strategic direction and work of the organisation.
3. Since completing the ABRU, a member of BHEST staff had left which provided an opportunity to review job titles and roles. For instance, the records administrator is now called the qualifications administrator which more accurately reflects the job role. These changes mean that the organisation chart currently banked at QCA is out of date.
4. It was also noted that the banked job descriptions make no mention of qualifications other than NVQs. They should mention all the qualification types awarded by BHEST where applicable in the job role. The job descriptions should be resubmitted for banking once BHEST has completed its review.
5. The executive director reviews qualification fees annually and makes recommendations to the board of trustees for authorisation.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section.

Observations

1. BHEST are reminded to provide QCA with a revised organisation chart and job descriptions (for staff and for external verifiers) once the review is complete.

Resources and expertise

This is subject to the *NVQ code of practice (2001)*, paragraphs 35, 52 (part), 53, 54 (part), 55 and 57; and *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 8, 10, 97e and 98.

Findings

1. There are five staff positions at BHEST, one of which was vacant at the time of the monitoring activity. The positions include the executive director and the qualifications and finance officer who is also the lead external verifier. There is a qualifications administrator who deals with registration and certification for all qualifications and a part time accounts and education officer. BHEST intends that the vacant position, previously called secretary, will be renamed executive assistant. The role is to be enhanced to include representing BHEST at national events such as regulatory body forums.
2. BHEST has gained Investors in People (IiP) status and staff receive annual appraisals and development as needed.
3. BHEST staff meets together at monthly quality assurance meetings where all aspects of the administration and delivery of the qualifications are discussed and staff are informed of any relevant national initiatives. These meetings also review statistics such as take up and achievement of qualifications to identify any emerging trends or patterns. The inclusion of all staff at these meetings ensures that everyone is kept up to date and informed of current and emerging issues.
4. The IT systems at BHEST adequately support the qualifications delivery and the data is backed up offsite by the system originators. BHEST also has a website that includes a secure area for centres to view candidate information. Centres are invited to qualifications seminars, held when considered necessary, and are otherwise kept up to date by regular briefing notes that are published as and when issues arise.
5. BHEST is currently developing systems for online delivery of the VRQs, which is due to be piloted in the spring of 2007. Online systems to manage candidate registration may also follow at a later date.

6. The Lantra (Sector Skills Council for the Environment and Land-based Sector) assessment strategy and the BHEST operations manuals state the criteria for assessment staff including assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers.
7. BHEST employs a team of six external verifiers, one of whom focuses solely on the quality assurance of key skills qualifications. Some external verifiers are also used as examiners to mark the technical certificates (VRQs) but this is not reflected in their job descriptions.
8. The roles and responsibilities of external verifiers are clearly laid out in the operations manuals and they sign an annual contract of work. However there is no formal code of practice that external verifiers can sign to confirm their commitment to all aspects of the role including professional conduct and probity and declaring potential conflicts of interest.
9. Continuous professional development (CPD) requirements are reviewed annually along with individual external verifier work allocations. The monitoring team saw a selection of CPD records. There was also evidence of rotation of external verifiers around centres which is in line with the Lantra assessment strategy.
10. All new external verifiers are required to attend a BHEST induction programme and are shadowed for at least one year. There were no unqualified external verifiers at the time of the monitoring activity. Evidence was seen of regular external verifier meetings that include different types of standardisation exercises covering, for example, the use of witness testimony and assessment of particular units.
11. To ensure occupational expertise in the farriery qualifications, a BHEST external verifier works with a technical expert. BHEST uses two farriers in this capacity and they take part in external verifier training to provide them with an understanding of the requirements. Lantra supports this system in the assessment strategy.

Accreditation conditions

1. BHEST must produce an external verifier code of practice that meets the regulatory criteria. *NVQ code of practice 2001*, paragraph 55

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

The quality assurance and control of internal assessment

This is subject to the *NVQ code of practice (2001)*, paragraphs 22-33, 36-51, 52(part), 54(part), 56, 58(part), 59-65, 66(part), 67-69 and *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 13, 36, 56, 57 and 59-62.

Findings

1. The specifications for BHEST qualifications are available on their website. Centres receive an operational handbook relevant to the qualifications they deliver. The operational handbooks contain comprehensive guidance and information on all quality assurance aspects of delivering the specific qualification and include generic information on customer service, appeals and malpractice.
2. The criteria for appointing assessors and internal verifiers are specified in the Lantra assessment strategy and are also laid out in the BHEST operational handbooks. Assessment staff interviewed at centres had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
3. BHEST is approved to deliver assessor and verifier qualifications and carries out training and induction events according to the level of demand. All newly appointed assessors and verifiers are required to attend BHEST induction days, even if they are already qualified, to ensure that they become familiar with the specific assessment practices and procedures. The monitoring team considers this to be good practice.
4. A member of the monitoring team observed part of a two-day internal verifier induction course that was delivered from a detailed standard format developed by BHEST. A similar one-day event is also available for assessor induction days. This results in standard training provision that can be delivered by external verifiers. Further training for individuals can be provided if a need for further support is identified.
5. Visits to centres confirmed that the majority of quality assurance procedures are effective within centres including evidence of standardisation of assessment staff,

sampling strategies and countersigning arrangements. However, scrutiny of candidate portfolios seen at centres indicates that BHEST do not require centres to confirm that assessment evidence has been authenticated. No written declaration is required from assessors and candidates.

6. The Lantra assessment strategy defines the acceptable arrangements for realistic working environments for assessments such as those for Level 3 NVQ in Farriery. This qualification is administered through one main centre but is assessed at four colleges (assessment sites) that have appropriate resources for forging and shoeing horses.
7. However, there is an issue as one of these assessment sites is in Scotland. BHEST staff stated that this was raised with QCA staff a number of years ago and it has now become accepted practice for the centre to extend its operations to Scotland due to the legislative requirement for farriers to be licensed. However this does not comply with the requirements of the *NVQ code of practice (2001)*.
8. Most assessments for racehorse care qualifications take place at centres although candidates are placed in individual assessment locations. Location staff provide candidates with additional evidence such as witness testimonies. All BHEST qualifications have very stringent health and safety requirements to protect the candidates and the horses and all assessment locations have to be approved by BHEST.
9. External verifiers visit centres to confirm their continuing compliance with assessment arrangements and they also sample portfolios. They carry out a minimum of 20 per cent sampling of completed portfolios plus sampling of incomplete work in line with the Lantra assessment strategy.
10. The number of visits is determined annually using a risk strategy that takes into account the number of candidates and the number of assessment locations or sites.
11. Visit reports are provided to centres two weeks after an external verifier visit and centres are able to agree the factual accuracy of the report before it becomes final, which is good practice.
12. The executive director and the qualifications and finance officer monitor the performance of external verifiers using information from centre visit reports and centre feedback.

Accreditation conditions

2. BHEST must require confirmation that evidence provided by candidates for assessment has been produced and authenticated in accordance with the assessment specification and this must be in the form of a written declaration signed by the assessor and candidate. (*NVQ code of practice (2001), criteria 29*).

3. BHEST must ensure that its centres do not extend their operations beyond England, Wales and Northern Ireland and that centres operating outside of this are approved in their own right. (*NVQ code of practice (2001), criteria 9*).

Observations

There are no observations for this section.

The quality assurance and control of independent assessment

This is subject to the *NVQ code of practice (2001)*, paragraph 43 and *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 13, 36, 38-42, 56-58.

Findings

1. The technical certificates (VRQs) are assessed by examination. There are two qualifications, the Intermediate Certificate in Horse Care and the Advanced Certificate in Horse Care.
2. The original questions were produced in 2003 by BHEST staff and a team of external verifiers. Questions were tested at pony clubs and the results reviewed. A meeting was held to review all the answers that had been given to ensure candidates were interpreting the questions as expected, to consider alternative answers and to withdraw questions that did not work well.
3. The questions were placed in a question bank and there are sufficient questions to make up a significant number of examination papers per qualification. BHEST staff sat the examinations to check the time provisions and mark schemes. BHEST staff put the papers together, checking for consistency of layout and language. The executive director approves them.
4. The performance of all the questions was reviewed at the end of the first year they were introduced. A second review has also taken place. Currently a report is generated after each examination to check the performance of individual questions.
5. The examination is taken on demand and centres are required to request papers three weeks prior to the examination date. The papers are clearly numbered and are rotated to ensure that centres do not receive the same papers twice.
6. Papers are despatched to centres three days prior to the examination in sealed envelopes with examination and invigilation instructions. BHEST have criteria for the

appointment of invigilators one of which is that they must hold an assessor qualification. The monitoring team saw evidence that monitoring of examinations takes place to ensure examination guidelines are adhered to.

7. All test papers have 25 questions of two marks per question and there is a set pass rate of 70 per cent.
8. Completed answer papers are returned to BHEST and are logged before being sent to an external verifier for marking. Currently, one external verifier carries out the majority of marking. If the mark is three marks either side of the 70 per cent pass mark the paper is sent to a second person for confirmation. If there remains a discrepancy the paper will be reviewed by the executive director and qualifications and finance officer who make a judgement. This process is documented in the BHEST *Qualifications Procedures Handbook*.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section

Observations

There are no accreditation conditions for this section

Registration

This is subject to *The NVQ code of practice (2001)*, paragraphs 4–21 and *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*, paragraphs 11 and 12.

Findings

1. BHEST has systems and procedures in place for centre approval. All centres complete a formal application form and are subject to approval visits by an external verifier, who checks staff competence, systems and resources. Applications from potential centres wishing to deliver the technical certificates have a shorter application process. BHEST staff making approval visits check the availability of examination resources. Approval decisions are authorised by the executive director. Centres receive an approval certificate and written acknowledgement of the qualifications that they are approved to deliver.
2. Centres complete candidate registration forms shortly after the start of the course, which are sent to BHEST. Candidate details are entered onto the awarding body's database. An initial check is done by searching for the candidate's date of birth and national insurance number. If they are not already registered the database creates a unique identification number that the candidate keeps for life. Candidates are informed of their registration number, which is written on their record of achievement and on the front cover of their portfolio.
3. Candidate records are kept for a minimum of three years at the centres in line with the *NVQ code of practice (2001)*.
4. Certification is triggered by receipt of a *Candidate Record of Achievement*, which is in effect a copy of the candidate's assessment record. It includes the date elements and units were achieved and the candidate and assessor signatures. The record of achievement is seen and signed by the centre's external verifier who authorises the production of a certificate.

Accreditation conditions

There are no accreditation conditions for this section

Observations

There are no observations for this section