

3 December 2015

Our Ref: RO42/2015

Dear Responsible Officer

Regulatory report: Spring audits 2015

Today we have published a regulatory report that sets out our conclusions following the first substantial audits of awarding organisations carried out under our new regulatory approach. These audits tested awarding organisations' compliance with the General Conditions of Recognition, focussing on their resources and arrangements for the design and development of vocational qualifications.

These audits, and other regulatory activity, should be viewed in the context of Ofqual's Regulatory approach, which is set out in the first part of this report. We have given each awarding organisation audited on this occasion its individual findings.

All awarding organisations, whether or not they were audited on this particular occasion, should have due regard to the findings of this report that suggest that a particular approach gives rise to risks to future compliance. We strongly advise all awarding organisations to consider both the regulatory context of the report and the audit findings, and whether there are lessons for their approaches, systems and qualifications.

We want awarding organisations to produce good qualifications that are valid and that meet user needs. This is the objective of our regulatory requirements and approach. We set Conditions that we judge will tend to lead to the award of sufficiently valid qualifications. But we hope awarding organisations see the Conditions as a starting point, not a destination. Good awarding organisations focus on developing and awarding valid qualifications, and make sure in doing so that they comply with the Conditions. It will often be appropriate for them to go beyond the requirements in our Conditions to produce particularly effective qualifications, and we welcome and encourage that.

As regulator, we have a role to help awarding organisations to understand what compliance looks like, in particular by publishing guidance. Beyond that, we will encourage them to identify and follow good practice. By good practice, we mean

examples of ways of meeting the Conditions that the evidence suggests are particularly effective.

Where we identify what we consider to be good practice as part of an audit or other work, we propose to highlight this in the report on our regulatory findings, and may consult on including it in guidance. If we incorporate good practice in guidance it will be necessary for all awarding organisations to have regard to it.

If we judge that our requirements are insufficiently stretching or not specific enough to secure our objectives, and that the good practice we have found should become an expectation, we will consider whether we should consult on amending the Conditions themselves.

The report closes with an invitation for awarding organisations to contact us about whether there would be benefit in developing guidance on any of the Conditions tested in this audit series. Please contact the Regulatory Relationships team at regulatory.relationships@ofqual.gov.uk to do so, or if you have any questions about the contents of the report.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the Ofqual conference on 8 December.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Benson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Jeremy Benson

Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications