

5 September 2017

Our ref: RO57/2017

Dear Responsible Officer

Event notifications for vocational and technical qualifications

1. As part of our continual review of vocational and technical qualifications, we have considered the event notifications that we received in 2016 and 2017. Our analysis reflects that a number of awarding organisations have not submitted any event notifications over this period. In addition, in some cases where an event notification was submitted, the information provided was either incomplete or not sufficiently timely.
2. In this context, I thought it would be timely to provide a brief reminder of how the event notification system and the management of incidents is designed to operate. The design, delivery and award of qualifications is a complex process and is not without risk. When these risks materialise, it is important to notify us as soon as possible.
3. You will be familiar with the conditions that relate to the management of incidents and associated risks. In summary:
 - Condition A6 sets a number of requirements around identifying and managing risks of incidents which could have an Adverse Effect;
 - Condition A7 requires you to take all reasonable steps to prevent (or, where prevention is not possible, mitigate as far as possible) any Adverse Effect that might result from an incident. This obligation applies whether or not the incident was one you had previously identified through your risk management activities; and
 - Condition B3 requires you to notify Ofqual promptly when an incident occurs that has (or could have) an Adverse Effect. It also requires you to notify us promptly if you believe such an incident is likely to occur.

Which events do you need to notify us about and when?

4. The decision about what to report to us and when to do so, requires an element of judgement on your behalf. Condition B3.2 provides some specific examples of events that could have an Adverse Effect, but it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list. You need to notify us of any incident which has (or could have) an Adverse Effect, whether or not it is

one of the examples listed in Condition B3.2. It also applies when you believe such an incident is likely to occur.

5. The requirement to notify us 'promptly' means you must notify us as soon as possible. There will be some situations where the immediate actions you need to take in response to an incident must take priority. However, we would normally expect to be notified as soon as you are aware that such an incident has occurred (or is likely to occur).
6. To help you in your judgement on what to report and when to do so, our [guidance on Condition B3](#) sets out 'positive' and 'negative' indicators for reporting events. You may also wish to re-familiarise yourself with the [guidance on Condition A6](#), which is relevant to the identification and management of risks.
7. Event notifications should be sent to: EventNotification@ofqual.gov.uk

What information do you need to provide when notifying us?

8. The information you provide when notifying us about an event must include the steps you have taken (or intend to take) to prevent, correct or mitigate any actual or potential Adverse Effect. The 'positive indicators' in the guidance on Condition B3 describe the range of information that would help us understand the nature of the event and the actions you have taken. You should give particular regard to the list of the typical information we require. Where possible, you should try to provide us with as much information as possible at the outset. This will help minimise the need for us to ask you for further information about how you are dealing with the event.
9. We recognise that there will be some cases where you do not have all this information at the time an event occurs. In these situations, you should provide all of the information you have at the time of notification and provide further updates as soon as information becomes available.

Our approach to event notifications

10. We will acknowledge and monitor the notifications that you send us. We receive many notifications each month and our aim is to gain a sufficient understanding of each issue to assure ourselves that it is being handled appropriately. Most of the notifications that we receive do not result in any regulatory action. However, if the information you provide does not allow us to assess the incident fully, we will ask you for specific additional information. Moreover, if we believe your approach to the management of an incident is inadequate or inappropriate, and likely to lead to a breach of your Conditions of Recognition, we will inform you of this as soon as possible.
11. I hope that this letter provides a useful reminder of how the event notification and incident management system works. Please contact my Standards team if you wish to discuss this letter or need any further clarification.

Yours sincerely



Phil Beach

Executive Director for Vocational and Technical Qualifications