



Report on the monitoring of
**The Awarding Organisation for
Accredited Qualifications (AOFAQ)**

MAY 2018

The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

CONTENTS PAGE

About this report	3
About The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications	3
Section C: Third Parties	4
Condition C1 – Arrangements with Third Parties	4
Condition C2 – Arrangements with Centres	4
Non-compliances	6
Observations	6
Section G: Setting and delivering the assessment	7
Condition G1 – Setting the assessment	7
Condition G2 – Language of the assessment Non-compliances	8
Condition G3 – Use of language and stimulus materials	8
Condition G4 – Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials, including the conduct of specified training events	8
Condition G5 – Registration of learners	9
Condition G6 – Arrangements for reasonable adjustments	9
Condition G7 – Arrangements for special consideration	9
Condition G8 – Completion of the assessment under the required conditions	10
Condition G9 – Delivering the assessment	10
Non-compliances	10
Observations	10

Section H: From Marking to Issuing Results	12
Condition H1 – Marking the assessment	12
Condition H2 – Moderation where an assessment is marked by a centre	12
Condition H3 – Monitoring the specified levels of attainment for a qualification	13
Condition H5 – Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence	14
Condition H6 – Issuing results	14
Non-compliances	14
Observations	14
Section I: Appeals and Certificates	15
Condition I1 – Appeals process	15
Condition I3 – The design and content of certificates	15
Condition I4 – Issuing certificates and replacement certificates	16
Non-compliances	16
Observations	16

About this report

CCEA Regulation acts on behalf of the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for the Economy (DfE) to regulate the qualifications offered to learners in Northern Ireland (NI). These functions are enabled by the Education (NI) Order 1998. The scope of CCEA Regulation was extended to cover all qualifications in Northern Ireland from May 2016.

CCEA Regulation undertakes a range of assurance activities to ascertain compliance, or otherwise, with CCEA General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR). These activities are proportionate to the level of risk perceived to be associated with any awarding organisation, an individual qualification or a group of qualifications.

This report is the outcome of a monitoring activity on AOFAQ that CCEA Regulation carried out between January and March 2018. The report draws together findings on the following CCEA General Conditions of Recognition (2017):

GCoR Section C	Third Parties
GCoR Section G	Setting and Delivering the Assessment
GCoR Section H	From Marking to Issuing Results
GCoR Section I	Appeal and Certificates

Monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by CCEA Regulation, examination of AOFAQ documentation and scrutiny of the awarding organisation's website. CCEA Regulation's monitoring team visited the AOFAQ office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation. CCEA

Regulation also made visits to two centres in Northern Ireland – Harberry Training and NDFA (North Down First Aid) – offering a range of AOFAQ qualifications. This report draws together findings from all of these activities.

Instances of non-compliance 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 with timelines to show how they will deal with any non-compliances identified. CCEA Regulation will agree and monitor the resulting action plan.

About AOFAQ

The AOFAQ specialises in designing qualifications for Food Safety, Health and Safety, First Aid, Education and Quality Assurance, Health and Social Care and associated subjects. Qualifications are also offered for trainers, Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers. AOFAQ is recognised by CCEA Regulation, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales. It is also the recognised awarding arm of the Association of First Aiders. Currently there are four AOFAQ centres operating in Northern Ireland.

C

Findings GCoR Section C: Third Parties

Condition C1 Arrangements with Third Parties

- AOFAQ has links with third parties listed on their website. These include Education Partnership UK and Security Industry Authority (SIA). Qualifications that are provided through Education Partnership UK are not regulated by CCEA Regulation, for example Islamic qualifications. AOFAQ has signed a contract with SIA. SIA co-ordinates meetings for Awarding Organisations (AOs) offering security sector qualifications.
- AOs share units for security sector qualifications and SIA owns the qualifications. These are customised by AOs to include the AO name in the qualification title.
- AOFAQ attends meetings of the First Aid Forum. Attendance at such meetings is not mandatory but is good practice. There is no signed contract relating to links between AOs and the First Aid Forum. Some AOs do not disclose information relating to operational matters at these meetings, but AOFAQ and some other AOs do.

Condition C2 Arrangements with Centres

- Centres apply to become an AOFAQ centre by completing a C1 application form and sending the supporting documentation such as policies to AOFAQ. AOFAQ checks this and, where sufficient evidence has been provided,

approval is granted. This is a desktop approval process.

- Centres are given a D13 Centre Compliance Manual, providing details of procedures to be followed. AOFAQ provides a copy of the D13 Centre Compliance Manual. An addendum to the manual has been produced for SIA qualifications.
- The AOFAQ Training Manager online portal will show which qualifications the centre is approved to deliver. Centres use AOFAQ Training Manager to record learners on courses and to apply for certification for learners.
- The D13 manual includes sections relating to administering the qualification on Training Manager (the online AOFAQ portal for approved centres), including:
 - a. additions to the centre's bank of approved trainers, assessors or IQAs
 - b. changes to qualifications
 - c. when a centre is inactive
 - d. exam papers
 - e. direct claims process and
 - f. internal quality assurance.
- When AOFAQ grants centre approval, the centre signs a D13b contract and returns it to AOFAQ. AOFAQ provides a copy of the D13b centre agreement.
- Both of the centres visited stated that they did not have a copy of their D13b centre agreement.
- When first approved, the centre will be required to send the learners' assessment materials for the first two sets of learners taking assessment to

Report on the monitoring of The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

- AOFAQ to confirm the assessments are accurate.
- Both of the centres visited stated they did not send any first two sets of learners' papers to AOFAQ to confirm assessments are accurate.
- A range of videos is available on YouTube to support centres in areas such as conflict of interest and malpractice. Centres can participate in webinars covering areas such as delivering exams.
- The majority of centre provision is short courses ranging from 1 to 3 days. Centres tend not to de-register provision (stop the delivery of a course) mid-way through a course. There are usually only one or two units in a qualification, so it is unlikely that a learner will be unable to complete all of the units with the same centre.
- The agreement for centre approval lasts for three years. AOFAQ staff check to see if approved centres are active. A centre can be suspended if there is no activity on courses that the centre is approved for. There is an option to ask centres to re-register if they have been suspended due to not offering any courses.
- The certificate of approval for Harberry Training stated 'approved Sept 2009, expires Jan 2020', which is much more than three-year approval.
- Inactive centres sometimes do not respond to correspondence from AOFAQ regarding their operational status. In such cases, the centres will be blocked from accessing the AOFAQ Training Manager system. Centres will need to reapply to AOFAQ to become active and gain access to Training Manager.
- The list of Northern Ireland AOFAQ active centres provided to CCEA Regulation prior to the AO visit included centres that were not active. AOFAQ updated the list during the visit. One centre (NDFA) stated they had been inactive from 2013 to 2018, but continued to receive correspondence from AOFAQ.
- There is no evidence available to AOFAQ to suggest that learners have successfully completed courses and the centres delivering the assessment had not claimed their certification.
- The qualification specification identifies the resources and personnel required. It clearly states the requirements for centre personnel such as the assessor, so assessors and other personnel should be suitably qualified, reducing the likelihood of learners encountering staff that do not have appropriate knowledge of the qualification content.
- AOFAQ provides training material presentations, free of charge, to support centres delivering first aid short courses. The materials are mapped against the assessment criteria. For first aid qualifications, this mapping was produced by the First Aid Forum. Harberry Training stated that training materials or resources for FAW are free, whereas there is a charge of £250 for training slides for the First Person on Scene (FPOS) qualification.
- The use of AOFAQ presentations for the delivery of teaching content is

Report on the monitoring of The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

not mandatory. Centres can send their own presentations to AOFAQ for checking, but this is not mandatory. Non-approved AOFAQ centres may purchase AOFAQ presentations.

- AOFAQ does not use any endorsed publications, apart from in-house produced presentations.

Non-compliances

To be compliant, AOFAQ must:

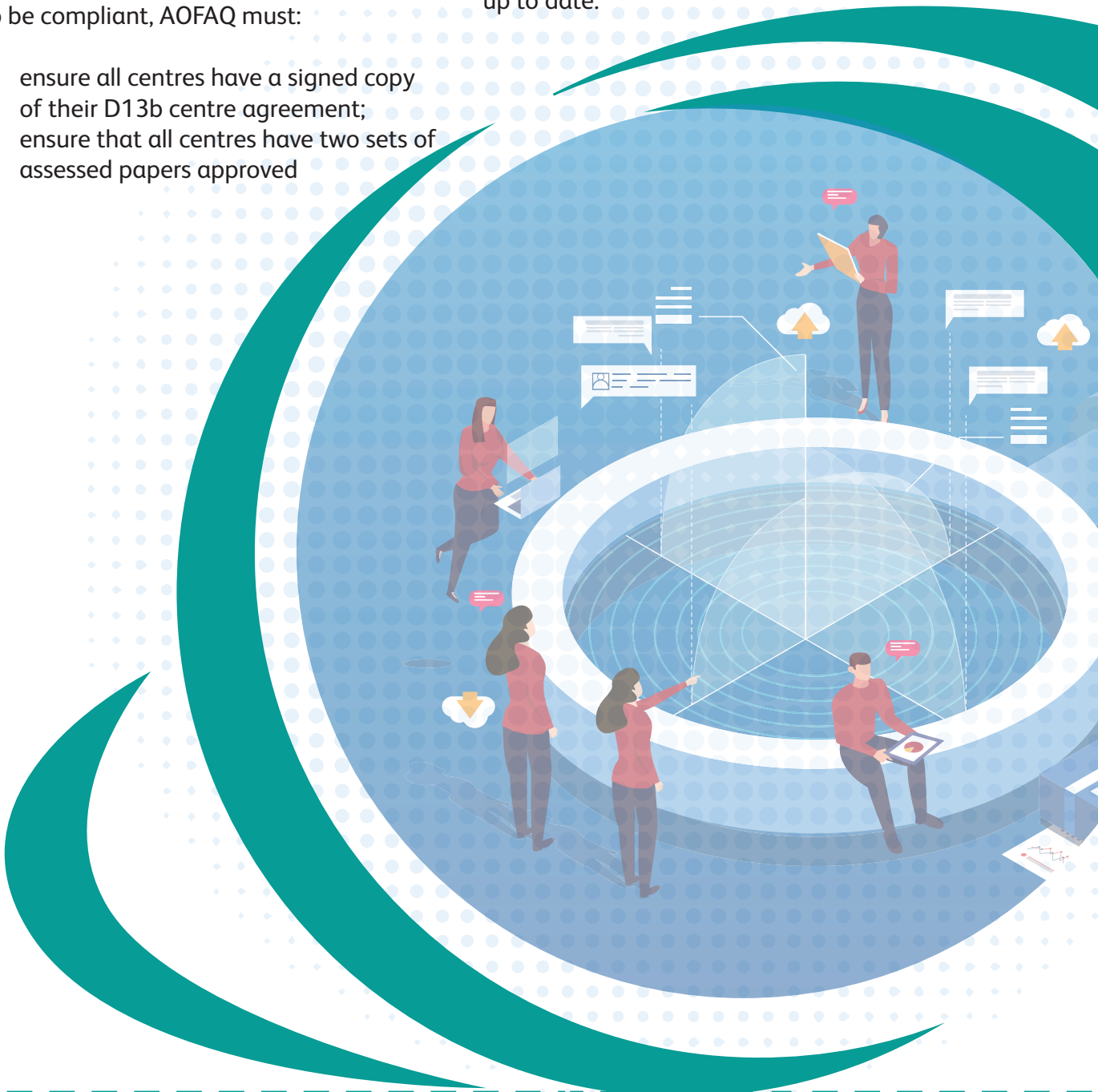
1. ensure all centres have a signed copy of their D13b centre agreement;
2. ensure that all centres have two sets of assessed papers approved

before it grants direct claims status; and

3. ensure that all approval certificates for centres correctly state a 3-year approval timeframe.

Observations

AOFAQ should ensure that all inactive centres are removed from correspondence lists, and that correspondence lists are kept up to date.



G

Findings GCoR Section G: Setting and delivering the assessment

Condition G1 Setting the assessment

- When a qualification is being developed a D45 Qualification Development form will be completed, for example AOFAQ Level 3 Award in the First Person on Scene Intermediate (RQF) Qualification No 601/8072/9 was provided during the visit. This document contains a section on assessment details.
- There are no optional units within qualifications offered by AOFAQ and the assessment methods used match the command verbs, for example demonstrate, in the assessment criteria.
- The Governing Board of AOFAQ has a representative who is the author of the multiple-choice questions (MCQs). This person is also involved in the development of qualifications.
- Harberry Training reported that the MCQs should have a more medical focus.
- The MCQs produced, as well as observation checklists for the practical assessments, are circulated between members of the Governing Board for checking. There is no formal documentary evidence of an audit trail for this process. The AO Responsible Officer signs off the assessment materials when it is agreed that these are fit for purpose.
- Over time, a pool of questions has been created. There are some instances where it is not possible to ask a question in more than one way and the pool may contain only one question for that assessment criterion. There is always one question per assessment criterion, unless the assessment criterion requires demonstration of a skill. Changes in legislation may result in a question being withdrawn from use in question papers. No sample assessment materials (SAMs) are available to centres. The MCQs are written to the level of demand of the verbs used in the assessment criteria.
- New question papers can be generated by using banked questions to create random questions and random distractors. New question papers are generated from time to time, for example on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis, depending on the uptake of the qualification. Some questions have changed over time due to qualifications being reviewed, for example First Aid at Work (FAW) and Emergency First Aid and Work (EFAW) qualifications level changed from Level 2 to Level 3.
- Centres are provided with the opportunity to feedback to AOFAQ on the MCQs by means of a D47B report form. This is sent to the centre with the question paper. Centres have reported perceived issues such as two correct answers to an MCQ.
- In general terms, the number of MCQs in a question paper is discussed at the First Aid Awarding Organisation Forum meetings. The number of questions is a recommendation and

Report on the monitoring of The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

not a requirement. The pass mark for a MCQ paper is set at 70 percent. This is derived from industry expectations. Observed criteria require 100 percent accuracy.

- If a learner does not pass the MCQ paper, verbal questioning may be used in the same session to confirm that the learner has sufficient knowledge to achieve a pass grade. This reassessment can take place on only one occasion. These questions are noted at the end of the question paper. Further questioning can be used with any learner who doesn't pass the MCQ paper.
- An assessment cover sheet indicates the pass mark for the component and records the assessor details. The learner result for a qualification is recorded as pass or fail. No other grades are used.

Condition G2 Language of the assessment

- All assessments are carried out in English.

Condition G3 use of language and stimulus materials

- Learners accessing AOFAQ assessments are usually adults. No stimulus materials are used in the AOFAQ assessments.
- The level of language used in assessments is monitored by the Responsible Officer. Centres have the opportunity to feedback on the D47B form, although no significant feedback has been received from centres.

- The language used in assessment materials is quite basic, apart from technical terminology relating to the qualification. If learners have difficulty with language, additional time is permitted. If a candidate does not pass the MCQ paper, verbal questioning is permitted.

Condition G4 Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials, including the conduct of specified training events

- The AOFAQ Statement of Compliance (SOC) 2017, detailed the following: 'To maintain confidentiality of assessment materials, including the conduct of specified training events as per Condition G4, AOFAQ ensures an assessment can be delivered efficiently through the appropriateness of our assessment methods and by reducing burden on centres. For example, our MCQ tests, which can be administered and marked efficiently, are provided on demand with password protection and printed off by centres. We have a bespoke in-house MCQ software which banks MCQ questions and creates question papers by randomising both the question (per AC) and the distractor sequence. This has been helpful in ensuring prompt delivery of assessments.'
- The D13 Centre Compliance Manual contains a section relating to confidentiality of exam papers. A Read Me document is emailed with each set of exam papers, reminding the centre of confidentiality of exam papers. The exam papers are emailed as a password-protected zip file and the password is sent in a separate email.

Report on the monitoring of The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

- NDFA centre confirmed it received the assessment materials from Training Manager, not by email.
- Webinars are available to centres to support them in the delivery of AOFAQ qualifications. Conferences have been offered by AOFAQ regarding specifications. Generic training is available via YouTube regarding understanding MCQs. Instructions for undertaking the MCQ test are written on the front of the paper.
- To date there has been no loss of assessment materials. There was one instance a number of years ago when a centre posted one MCQ on social media for learners to discuss. Ofqual was informed. CCEA Regulation did not regulate AOFAQ at that time.
- AOFAQ indicated that a system to log malpractice will be established. This log is not in place as no instances of malpractice have been reported. The AO has a Compliance Manager and centres are required to have a malpractice policy as part of the centre approval process. If a breach of confidentiality of assessment materials occurred, it would be treated as malpractice and AOFAQ malpractice procedures would be implemented, which have recently been revised following Ofqual Malpractice and Maladministration audit. AOFAQ confirmed that if AOFAQ employees were concerned about a breach of confidentiality, this would be dealt with by the Compliance Manager.
- All AOFAQ staff sign a confidentiality agreement when they commence employment, as part of their conditions of employment.

Condition G5 registration of learners

- Centres use the AOFAQ Training Manager to register learners on courses. It is the responsibility of centres to confirm the identity of learners. AOFAQ centres do not use Unique Learner Numbers when registering learners. This is not an available field on the registration online form. A brief demonstration of the back end of the process centres use to register learners was provided of Training Manager during our visit.

Condition G6 arrangements for reasonable adjustments

The D13 Centre Compliance Manual outlines the policy relating to reasonable adjustments. If centres are unsure about this, they will usually contact AOFAQ for advice. Centres are required to complete a C7 Application for Reasonable Adjustments Form.

Condition G7 arrangements for special consideration

- The D13 Centre Compliance Manual outlines the policy relating to special consideration. If centres are unsure about this, they will usually contact AOFAQ for advice. Centres are required to complete a C8 Special Consideration Request Form regarding this.
- Centres are permitted to make adjustments regarding training without seeking permission. However, assessment requirements must be complied with when conducting assessments. For example, training with a resuscitation mannequin as part of the FAW or EFAW qualification

Report on the monitoring of The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

may take place on a table if the learner has mobility issues, however the practical assessment must take place on the floor to meet the assessment requirements of the specification.

Condition G8 Completion of the assessment under the required conditions

- It is the centre assessor's responsibility to ensure that the assessment evidence produced is actually that of the registered learner. Learner identity is confirmed by methods such as a workplace identity card. The D13 addendum outlines further confirmation of identity checks that must be carried out for SIA qualifications.
- AOFAQ changes the MCQ papers used for live assessment. The AO maintains records of which MCQ paper was live at any point throughout the year, tracking this using the reference code for the paper.
- Harberry Training reported that AOFAQ does not monitor which paper the centre gives to learners.
- NDFA reported that it currently has only one paper to give to learners. The same paper has been used since 2017.
- Centres have the opportunity to feedback to AOFAQ any issues relating to assessments using the D47B feedback form. The First Aid Forum considers feedback from centres that could affect the delivery of the assessment within centres. There is scope for the EQA to question assessors and obtain feedback relating to the delivery of the assessment.
- The level of assessor competence required for observed assessment criteria is defined in the qualification specification. Observed assessment criteria may be observed by the IQA in the centre to ensure that they are being carried out correctly. This is not mandatory. There is no requirement for an EQA to observe an assessment taking place.
- The learner signs both the practical assessment record tick list and the MCQ paper.

Condition G9 delivering the assessment

- Documentation relating to the delivery of assessment can be found in the D13 Centre Compliance Manual, within the qualification specification, on the examination question paper and in the Read Me document that is sent with the question papers.

Non-compliances

To be compliant, AOFAQ must:

1. put in place a clear audit trail for the production and quality assurance of the MCQs;
2. provide sample assessment material to centres; and
3. provide centres with different MCQ papers over time with a clear audit trail or record per centre.

Observations

- AOFAQ should consider giving the MCQs more medical focus.

Report on the monitoring of The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

- AOFAQ should standardise its approach to sending assessment materials to centres – either by email or through Training Manager.
- AOFAQ should consider requiring centres to use the Unique Learner Number when registering learners.



H

Findings GCoR Section H: From Marking to Issuing Results

Condition H1 Marking the Assessment

- The majority of AOFAQ qualifications are assessed using MCQs. The MCQ paper is marked by the assessor and checked by another member of staff in the centre (second marker). The front cover of the MCQ paper indicates the minimum number of marks required to pass. 100 percent is required on the observed assessment.
- The NDFA centre states it is not using a second marker and has not been asked to send any marked scripts to AOFAQ.
- The IQA ensures consistency across assessors in the centre on observed assessment criteria. The IQA requirements are outlined in the qualification specification. The IQA is not required to have a formal IQA qualification for first aid qualifications, but must undertake a First Aid Forum CPD training day. However, AOFAQ now stipulates that the IQA must have an IQA qualification. The approval process for centre recognition (C1 form) requires the IQA details and a copy of the IQA qualification certificate.
- Assessor CPD training days are offered by AOFAQ.

Condition H2 Moderation where an assessment is marked by a centre

- The EQA monitors the MCQ assessments undertaken in centres as well as considering the capability of the trainer. The observed assessments follow well defined procedures.
- AOFAQ allocates centres to a bank of EQAs. Some EQA activity takes place remotely and some activity is through centre visits. AOFAQ decides which type of EQA activity is required by considering factors such as the number of certificates issued in the year and the number of courses offered by centres.
- The EQA is provided with details of the centres that need to be visited and any issues to be checked. The visit results in the EQA completing an EQA3 report form, which includes sections on governance, qualifications delivered, assessment arrangements and learner experience.
- Centres have Direct Claims (DCS) status after they have sent assessment documentation from two courses to AOFAQ and AOFAQ is satisfied that the centre has marked these courses accurately.
- The D13b contract is valid for three years after it is signed.
- An example of a completed EQA3 report was provided by AOFAQ. This is normally completed by the EQA, meeting with the Head of Centre. The EQA will view learner work, speak to candidates if they are available, and look at course evaluation forms completed by candidates to inform the

Report on the monitoring of The Awarding Organisation for Accredited Qualifications

- EQA report.
- AOFAQ will monitor EQA3 reports before these are sent to the centre. Any actions will be logged and target dates are monitored by the EQA.
 - EQAs will look for risks in centres such as a course being delivered to a single candidate.
 - AOFAQ confirmed that some centres may not have had a recent EQA centre visit. Currently records for all centres are being checked and AOFAQ is approximately 70 percent through this process.
 - The EQA confirms or disagrees with the centre's assessments. AOFAQ confirmed that the only learner certificates to be withdrawn related to malpractice rather than incorrect assessment decisions.
 - The D13 Centre Compliance Manual informs centres that AOFAQ can change the assessment decision made by the assessor. The risk of this happening is reduced due to the requirement to have a second marker for MCQ papers.
 - If incorrect results are issued, AOFAQ indicated that the relevant regulator(s) would be informed following the notifiable event procedure.
 - Both centres stated that they have had no EQA activity to date. NDFA has been approved as a centre since 2013. Both centres confirmed that they have DCS but have never sent the first two sets of assessments to AOFAQ to be awarded DCS.
 - Neither centre has any EQA3 forms completed by an EQA.

Condition H3 Monitoring the specified levels of attainment for a qualification

- The First Aid Forum discusses levels of attainment across all of the AOs offering first aid qualifications.
- In the development stage of qualifications, some AOs will discuss new qualifications and feedback to each other.
- All AOs should have the same start and end date for the same qualifications. These are agreed by the First Aid Forum, but are not mandatory.
- The D45 Qualification Development form reviews similar qualifications. This information can be used to consider content for the qualification and the assessment requirements.
- There are only four qualifications considered at the First Aid Forum and these relate to first aid at work and paediatric qualifications. Other qualifications are developed by individual AOs. SIAs sit on the panel for security qualifications and guide AOs on what needs to be included (the content) in these qualifications. AOs then use this SIA- approved qualification content to develop their own qualifications.

Condition H5 Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence

The assessments are marked by the assessor and monitored by AOFAQ through the EQA process. The pass mark is pre-set. SIA qualifications are all marked by AOFAQ before issuing awards.

Condition H6 Issuing results

- Where the centre has DCS, the centre representative enters the pass or fail decision for each candidate on AOFAQ Training Manager. A new centre will key in the decision for each learner, however the results are held until AOFAQ check learner assessment documentation for each of the first two courses.
- The Service Level Agreement (SLA) for issuing certificates is five working days. In reality, the turnaround is usually quicker than this. Details relating to the SLA are included in the D13 Centre Compliance Manual.
- Result slips are not issued. Certificates are issued and where there is more than one unit in a qualification, a certificate of units achieved is issued too.
- Units in the security sector require ongoing CPD. There is no cut-off date for aggregation of units to achieve a full qualification.
- Paper certificates are issued for all qualifications. Qualifications in the security sector are also issued in electronic format, and these are

verifiable. Centres do not make use of ULNs when registering learners, so achievements cannot be tracked in the learner's Personal Learning Record (PLR).

Non-compliances

To be compliant, AOFAQ must:

1. put in place arrangements to ensure marked scripts are scrutinised to check quality assurance arrangements;
2. put in place arrangements to ensure and record centres are using a second marker;
3. put in place arrangements for External Quality Assurance for initial approval of centres and for ongoing assurance of centre assessments; and
4. complete EQA3 forms for all centres.

Observations

- AOFAQ should consider requiring centres to use the Unique Learner Number when registering learners.

I

Findings GCoR Section I: Appeals and Certificates

Condition I1 Appeals process

- The D13 Centre Compliance Manual contains a section on the appeals process. AOFAQ has never had an appeal against the results of assessments. Learners do not have a direct relationship with AOFAQ. If a learner did contact AOFAQ, they would be directed to their centre in the first instance.
- Information relating to appeals is published in the D13 Centre Compliance Manual. Centres must provide learners with information relating to appeals when they take an AOFAQ course. The centre policies are provided when the centre seeks approval. Updated policies are not obtained and retained by AOFAQ.
- No appeals have been received by AOFAQ relating to reasonable adjustments or special consideration. AOFAQ procedures require that a log of any appeals to be completed, but as there have not been any appeals, a log does not exist.
- EQAs do not record details of the appeals policy on the EQA3 report, apart from a tick that AOFAQ policies are being adhered to (question 1.10).

Condition I3 The design and content of certificates

- AOFAQ outlined how certificates are

produced by applying the hologram in-house to the certificate. Certificates are stored securely. AOFAQ Training Manager produces a list of certificates to be printed. Copies of certificates and replacement certificates were provided to CCEA Regulation. CCEA Regulation updated AOFAQ on the requirements relating to CCEA logo, which was not included on the sample certificates seen.

- The process for despatching certificates from AOFAQ to centres was described. The process ensures that certificates are unlikely to get damaged in the postal system.
- Certificates produced by AOFAQ include a QR Code, and the associated hyperlink, allowing anyone with access to the certificate to access the certificate on the AOFAQ website to confirm the contents of the certificate and the identity of the learner.
- In the event that a certificate has to be reprinted due to an error on the certificate, the AOFAQ system maintains details of who printed the certificates and when they were printed. The original certificate with the error is destroyed either by AOFAQ or the EQA.
- When a certificate has been printed, all assessment records for the learner on that qualification are frozen so that no amendments can be made to the learner records by the centre.
- If a replacement certificate is issued at the request of a centre, this has the word replacement printed on the certificate.

Condition I4 Issuing certificates and replacement certificates

- This is addressed in the SLA between centres and AOFAQ. Details of the SLA are included in the D13 Centre Compliance Manual.
- AOFAQ maintains details of all certificates it issues.
- No certificates issued to learners in Northern Ireland have been revoked by AOFAQ to date.

Non-compliances

To be compliant, AOFAQ must ensure the CCEA Regulation logo is used on learner certificates as per the CCEA Logo Requirements. A copy of the requirements is available on request from CCEA Regulation.

Observations

There are no observations.

