



Post-Recognition Monitoring Report

1st4sport Awarding Organisation

August 2010

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Introduction

Regulating qualifications

The responsibility for regulating qualifications lies jointly with three regulators respectively:

- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), the regulator for qualifications awarded in England and vocational qualifications awarded in Northern Ireland
- Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), the regulator for Wales
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), the regulator responsible for qualifications (other than vocational qualifications) for Northern Ireland.

We systematically monitor awarding organisations and their regulated qualifications 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 regulated qualifications.

Where an awarding organisation is found not to comply with relevant criteria, the regulators will identify areas of non-compliance that must be rectified within a certain period. 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.

Non-compliances 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 the non-compliances identified through monitoring activity. We will generally agree the action plan and monitor its implementation.

We will use the outcomes of monitoring and any subsequent action taken by awarding organisations to inform decisions as to future monitoring and/or the possible imposition of sanctions.

Banked documents

As part of their awarding organisation recognition processes, we 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 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 self-assessment return.

About this report

This report is the outcome of a monitoring activity on the 1st4sport awarding organisation and was carried out by us in August 2010. It draws together our findings on areas of:

- management and governance
- resources and expertise
- diversity and equality
- development of units and rules of combination (RoC) for qualifications
- unit/qualifications development – design and development of assessment
- delivery of assessment
- centre recognition
- awarding and certification.

This is the first post-recognition monitoring activity on 1st4sport in respect of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) since the awarding organisation received supplementary recognition in June 2010.

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by us, 1st4sport's supplementary recognition application and scrutiny of the

awarding organisation's website. We visited 1st4sport's head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation, we also attended an external verifier standardisation day and review meeting.

This report draws together our findings from these monitoring activities.

About 1st4sport

1st4sport offers a range of qualifications in the QCF. These are developed in collaboration with a variety of organisations to award qualifications for defined areas of the active leisure and learning industry. For more information on 1st4sport and the qualifications it offers, visit its website at www.1st4sportqualifications.com.

Management and governance

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), paragraphs 2.1–2.3, 5.1, 5.17

Findings

1. 1st4sport Qualifications is one of five established directorates within Coachwise Ltd, which assists organisations across the active leisure and learning industry by providing services in learning delivery, publishing, marketing, and the development and awarding of qualifications. The 1st4sport Qualifications directorate is an awarding organisation in its own right.
2. Coachwise Ltd was established in 1989. It is the trading arm of the National Coaching Federation (NCF), trading as sports coach UK (scUK), an educational charity. All monies generated by Coachwise Ltd are covenanted back to scUK to meet its primary objective to raise the standard of sports coaching in the UK.
3. Coachwise Ltd has a Board of directors and an executive management team (EMT), which reports directly to the board. The education director, also the accountable officer for 1st4sport, sits on the EMT and completes quarterly reports for the board. The reports include, for example, information on achievements and future challenges for the awarding organisation.
4. We asked how decisions relating to the awarding organisation's regulated functions were ratified given the structure of Coachwise Ltd. The education director of 1st4sport confirmed that he and the senior management team (SMT) were responsible for all awarding-organisation functions and decision making. The team looked at minutes from the SMT meetings and discussed the existing arrangements. We are satisfied that 1st4sport has suitable governance arrangements in place. However, the reporting lines between 1st4sport, Coachwise Ltd and scUK need to be explicitly documented, so that the relationship between each party is clear.
5. The day-to-day functions of 1st4sport are supported by a number of teams:
 - the qualifications development and management team (QDMT) manages the development of units and/or qualifications

- the centre support team (CST) deals with registration, certification and awarding
 - the quality management team (QMT) is responsible for maintaining awarding-organisation status and implementing the European foundation for quality management (EFQM) model.
6. 1st4sport measures the effectiveness of its regulated functions through this quality model. The heads of each team are also members of the SMT.
 7. An additional group, the provision advisory group (PAG), has been formed, which meets biannually. This group includes industry representatives, and it considers, for example, the quality standards, strategic direction and the plan of provision. The effectiveness and contribution of this group to the regulated functions could not be tested, as it has only met once.
 8. We asked 1st4sport what arrangements were in place to manage potential conflicts of interest with its regulated functions. 1st4sport explained that, initially, scUK had been a recognised centre for its qualifications, but recognition had been withdrawn. The awarding organisation approached the business development department within Coachwise Ltd to become a recognised centre, and recognises this as a potential conflict of interest.
 9. 1st4sport has strategies in place to manage this conflict, but these are not documented. They include, for example, restricted access to IT systems, and the centre can only view the relevant section of the web-based quality assurance system relating to its recognition and external verification. We are satisfied that the conflict of interest is suitably managed, but the arrangements need to be fully documented.

Non-compliances

1. 1st4sport must have a written policy and procedures for managing conflicts of interest (*Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, August 2008, paragraph 2.2).

Observations

1. 1st4sport should consider showing its positioning within Coachwise Ltd, including all committees and/or boards it reports to.

2. 1st4sport should consider amending the job description of the accountable officer, so that it is clear the job role includes overall responsibility for maintaining the quality of the regulated functions.

Resources and expertise

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), paragraphs 2.4–2.6, 3.1, 4.1, 5.2, 5.5 and 5.6e

Findings

1. 1st4sport has about 19 staff at its head office and 104 contracted external verifiers. Most of the head office posts are full time, and all awarding organisation staff are employed by Coachwise Ltd. They are subject to its policies such as equal opportunities and human resources. 1st4sport also shares finance and other IT functions with Coachwise Ltd.
2. All new staff have a formal induction process. The appraisal system includes annual and six-monthly performance reviews, which include identifying current and future training needs.
3. The awarding organisation does not employ experts to develop units and/or qualifications. Instead it works closely with partners who provide the relevant sector-specific expertise. Each qualification development partner organisation, which includes technical experts, and 1st4sport sign a qualification development and awarding partnership agreement. We looked at a sample of completed agreements, which clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of each partner, and are satisfied with the current arrangements. For example, it is clear that awarding is the responsibility of 1st4sport.
4. Qualification development managers (QDMs) lead on the development of qualifications. They ensure that individuals with the relevant sports-specific expertise are available when developing units, RoC and assessment methodologies. Most of the expertise comes from the National source group for each sport, supported by the QDM. In some cases qualifications are developed internally, but only if the QDM has the relevant expertise.
5. 1st4sport provides QDMs with training and opportunities for continuing professional development, so that their expertise in designing QCF units and/or qualifications is current. We looked at some of the activities QDMs are expected to complete and are satisfied that these staff are being trained and supported in understanding the requirements of the QCF.
6. As an existing awarding organisation, 1st4sport has robust arrangements for recruiting and training individuals in assessment and

awarding. All external verifiers attend an induction and go through a probationary period, shadowing experienced external verifiers. 1st4sport also uses its new web-based quality assurance system to monitor and track the progress of external verifiers.

7. We asked if 1st4sport had arrangements in place for business continuity and disaster recovery. The awarding organisation follows the *Business continuity planning and disaster management plan* developed by Coachwise Ltd. This includes a section relating specifically to the awarding organisation, which details how services will be restored and the timelines involved. As quality assurance is done exclusively online via the web-based quality assurance system, staff are able to work from home if the premises are not available. Staff confirmed that data is backed up daily.

Non-compliances

There are no non-compliances in relation to this section.

Observations

There are no observations in relation to this section.

Diversity and equality

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), paragraphs 2.11–2.14

Findings

1. 1st4sport regularly reviews equalities legislation to ensure it is compliant. The Head of Quality Management is responsible for ensuring that any changes in legislation are explained to staff through training, team meetings and re-publishing diversity and equality policies.
2. 1st4sport follows the Coachwise diversity and equality policy, as staff members have developed a separate diversity and equality policy for its regulated functions. Staff attend diversity and equality training during their induction, and all staff attend training when changes to policies have to be implemented.
3. Centres are required to have diversity and equality policies to become recognised. External verifiers monitor the centre's adherence to these policies and report any non-compliance to the QMT.
4. 1st4sport also has a complaints procedure through which diversity and equality issues can be raised. Centres have to record and manage any complaints made. Each complaint is submitted to the awarding organisation via the web-based quality assurance system. Data includes the action taken by 1st4sport to address the complaint, and may include a full investigation where necessary.
5. Reasonable adjustments are available to ensure learners can access learning. 1st4sport has a robust process for this. Centres complete an online form, stating the reason for and the type of adjustment required on behalf of the learner. Evidence is attached and submitted to the Quality Assurance Officer (QAO) at 1st4sport via the web-based quality assurance system. The QAO checks the form and supporting evidence before approving the reasonable adjustments requested.
6. 1st4sport also has a similar process for special considerations. Learners fill in a request form, which can be downloaded from the 1st4sport website. This is sent electronically to 1st4sport with supporting evidence, checked by the QAO. It is approved, or refused if it is deemed to disadvantage other learners. For example, in one sector area learners were having difficulty completing a level 3 qualification within the

registration end date and requested special consideration to extend the timeline. 1st4sport is aware of this issue and is reviewing its timelines.

7. If a candidate is refused reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations they can appeal against the decision. These arrangements could not be tested, as no appeals have been made.
8. 1st4sport has processes in place to consider diversity and equality at the very start of units and qualification development. Business cases have a specific section on diversity and equality, which is populated with information about possible barriers to learning, across the various groups. For example, some assessment criteria for a badminton qualification were changed, as learners with limited use of their arms could not access the unit. The amendment of the criteria removed this barrier from the unit.
9. QDMs are fully trained in analysing diversity and equality issues prior to unit and qualification development. It is their job to pick up on any possible barrier to learning and remove or reduce it wherever possible.
10. 1st4sport has had cases where barriers were not able to be overcome. Where such barriers exist, they are logged on the business case prior to unit or qualification development. One such example was related to health and safety. The learner was unable to access the unit, through their own choice of clothing, as it would have been unsafe for them to do so.
11. 1st4sport uses technical experts from national source groups, such as The Football Association, to gain information about groups of learners. The national source groups consult with groups of learners to gain information about potential barriers or other diversity and equality issues. This requirement is clearly stated in the qualification development and awarding partnership agreement signed by 1st4sport and the relevant partner.
12. 1st4sport uses the EFQM model to ensure equal opportunities are monitored and recorded. Learner statistics are collected via the self assessment, candidate evaluations, external verifier reports and surveys. This data is also reviewed over time. It showed that, recently, more females were taking units and qualifications. The data collected is used as part of the qualification performance and self-assessment review process and is checked against industry trends. All data collected is used to inform the unit and qualification development process.

Non-compliances

There are no non-compliances in relation to this section.

Observations

3. 1st4sport should consider making explicit in its documentation the mechanism it uses to consult with learners to identify barriers.

Development of units and RoC for qualifications

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), paragraphs 3.2, 4.2–4.3 a-f, 6.2a

Findings

1. The majority of qualifications awarded by 1st4sport are developed in collaboration with external stakeholders. Technical experts from National Governing Bodies (NGBs) or organisations complete the provision proposal form, which includes evidence of market research and target markets, and is reviewed by 1st4sport. We noted in the 1st4sport provision arrangements that sector qualification strategies (SQS) are also reviewed when amending the plan of provision. It is not clear if the review of SQS is part of the activities carried out when the provision proposal form is checked by 1st4sport.
2. If the provision proposal is accepted, a formal business case is completed by the QDM, which results in the rationale for the unit, qualification and RoC. Business cases are reviewed by the SMT, and agreed or rejected.
3. We asked 1st4sport to explain the procedures used to develop the 1st4sport level 2 Award in Leadership through football qualification. The discussions focused on developing the business case, market research and how the QDM took responsibility for organising the allocation of credit and level with technical experts. The awarding organisation has detailed qualification development and awarding partnership agreements with external organisations. These detail, for example, the role and responsibilities of 1st4sport and the technical experts for qualification development. We looked at two agreements and noted that the external partners take the lead role in providing the awarding organisation with information on market research, barriers to assessment and technical support.
4. 1st4sport has suitable systems in place to interrogate the databank for both units and RoC, and for assigning level and credit values. The QDM takes responsibility for these activities by completing the review template and following the *Unit Design and Review Arrangements*.
5. QDMs use the *Design Specification Checklists* for writing a qualification checklist, to ensure that the units and RoC comply with section 1 of the QCF arrangements. Each checklist is reviewed by another member of the QDMT to ensure compliance with the QCF arrangements.

6. The final quality check of completed units is done by the head of qualification development (HQD) or the education director before they are signed off and submitted to the unit databank.
7. There are documented procedures explaining the unit and RoC review process. 1st4sport intends to conduct biannual reviews to check the information in the databank and confirm the level of units. We could not test the effectiveness of these processes, as 1st4sport has not yet completed a full cycle for awarding QCF units and/or qualifications.
8. We asked 1st4sport how it tracked the overall process for developing units, RoC and qualifications. The awarding organisation is aware that it needs an overview of the process and is creating a spreadsheet to check that QDMs have completed all the relevant checklists with timelines.
9. We noted that all existing coaching qualifications for the different sports use four generic knowledge units developed by the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). Additional sports-specific units determine the pathway. Therefore, 1st4sport cannot change the content of the generic units but can influence the assessment methodology and course delivery for sports-specific units.
10. The QDM currently ensures that the RoC will use meaningful and coherent combinations of units. While this requirement is part of the business case it needs to be more explicit within the development arrangements, as it was not clear how 1st4sport tracked that this had been carried out.

Non-compliances

There are no non-compliances for this section.

Observations

4. 1st4sport should consider reviewing its provision proposal form so that it is clear what provision planning tools are used.
5. 1st4sport should consider developing arrangements so that it has an overview of all the separate procedures used to develop units, RoC and qualifications, and is confident that these have been met.
6. 1st4sport should consider reviewing how it checks and tracks that the RoC use meaningful and coherent combinations of units.

Design and development of assessment

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), paragraphs 5.3 a-g, 5.4, 5.16a

Findings

1. We asked how 1st4sport designs and develops assessment methods. The awarding organisation uses a variety of assessment methods, and the majority of these relate to internal assessment. Methods of assessment include portfolios, observation, projects and professional discussion. However, there is no procedure detailing how 1st4sport ensures that it complies with section 1 of the QCF arrangements when deciding on the appropriate assessment method/s to use for units.
2. 1st4sport has suitable procedures to ensure that units can be individually assessed through its unit development arrangements and the centre recognition process. QDMs also ensure that access arrangements are considered when developing assessment methods, and they use a template to check compliance.
3. Standardised mark schemes are in place to assess learning outcomes and assessment criteria. These are developed by the partner organisations with input from 1st4sport. A member of the monitoring team observed a review day for the levels 1 and 2 Certificate in coaching netball with sector experts. Activities included confirming assessment tasks for learning outcomes for individual units and ensuring that the tasks would generate sufficient evidence to meet the learning outcomes. 1st4sport issues guidance to organisations delivering its qualifications, so that assessors can apply the mark schemes.
4. QDMs ensure that exemplars are available when developing assessment methods. These include examples of multiple-choice question papers (MCQs), portfolios, professional discussion and practical assessments with checklists and detailed guidance.
5. 1st4sport consults with centres to ensure that new assessment methods are practicable.
6. Procedures are in place to review the design and development of assessment methods. However, this could not be tested as the QCF qualifications have not yet run a full cycle.

Non-compliances

2. 1st4sport must have procedures in place to check that assessment methods comply with paragraph 1 of the QCF arrangements (*Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (2008)*, paragraph 5.3(a)).

Observations

There are no observations in relation to this section.

Delivery of assessment

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008) paragraphs 5.5–5.6, 5.9, 5.10, 5.16b and 5.20–23

Findings

1. 1st4sport provides centres with all assessment instruments. If centres wish to devise or change assessment tasks, the changes are reviewed by 1st4sport and agreed by the relevant QDM. Where changes to assessment templates are requested, these can be altered through discussion with the external verifier. 1st4sport confirmed that no changes to assessment have been requested for QCF units/qualifications. However, there is no formal procedure to confirm how this will be done if it is requested.
2. Candidate work is authenticated. Assessors and learners sign a written declaration to confirm the authenticity of evidence. A sample declaration form was seen by the monitoring team.
3. There are systems to ensure the accuracy and consistency of standards over time. All centres have standardised paperwork, and standards are confirmed via internal and external verification. The QDM and external verifier for the relevant sector area are responsible for ensuring that standards are maintained across units and over time. All centres must keep assessment decisions for five years and assessment papers for two years.
4. 1st4sport has suitable procedures for ensuring that staff, delivering and monitoring assessment, have the required expertise and continuous professional development (CPD). Details for staff at 1st4sport are clearly recorded through the appraisal process. The CPD of contracted and centre assessment staff is checked by the QDM and external verifiers respectively.
5. All contracted staff attend training, and CPD records are updated. Centres are also offered training on the awarding organisation's systems and processes. The majority of this training for internal verifiers and assessors is provided by the external verifier and/or technical experts.
6. We asked how 1st4sport checks that staff in centres with assessment and quality assurance responsibilities do not have any personal interests. It was confirmed through demonstration of the centre recognition process that assessors complete a declaration. In addition all

external verifiers sign and confirm as part of their code of practice that they will declare any conflicts of interest.

7. There are suitable systems for quality assuring the assessment process. External verifiers conduct regular visits to check assessment decisions, and all reports are uploaded to the web-based system. This records all aspects of the external verification process and enables 1st4sport to track its centres' adherence to its requirements.
8. We asked 1st4sport how it monitors the effectiveness of its external verifiers. Evidence of a performance management system was seen, which is linked to risk management and the self-assessment process. There is a clear procedure to ensure that underperforming external verifiers are issued with an action plan to improve their performance. External verifiers are also required to attend standardisation meetings. A member of the team attended a meeting, and we are satisfied that the activities are suitable and also contribute to the development of units.
9. 1st4sport provides centres with guidance on recognition of prior learning (RPL) and exemptions. Currently, centres check RPL and/or exemptions at the beginning of a course. 1st4sport explained the new online system that will enable this information to be captured automatically, but it is still in the development stages and due to be completed this year. We recognise that 1st4sport is working hard to implement these new systems to meet the QCF arrangements.

Non-compliances

There are no non-compliances in relation to this section.

Observations

7. 1st4sport should consider formalising its procedure for agreeing changes to assessment instruments and methods at centre level.
8. 1st4sport should consider formalising the current requirements for capturing RPL and/or exemptions, until the new recording system is fully operational.

Centre recognition

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), paragraphs 5.11, 5.16b and 5.18

Findings

1. 1st4sport has suitable arrangements for recognising centres. All centres receive the document *Recognised Centre Requirements* to assist them with the centre recognition process. This document requires centres to provide evidence of how they meet the requirements, and is a sound model for centre recognition.
2. The centre recognition process is web-based. Centres complete an enquiry stage, which includes looking at the evidence requirements for centre recognition, and are allocated a 'super user'. The super user completes the centre recognition and approval application via the web-based system.
3. Part of the recognition process includes centres agreeing to specific conditions such as nominating a single named point of accountability and allowing access to their premises. This is automatically recorded as part of the web-based system.
4. The awarding organisation has built checks into the centre recognition process. All new centres are visited by an external verifier, and information on how centres meet the recognition requirements is manually input into the existing system. The intention is to input this through the web-based quality assurance system. All information is checked by the quality assurance team before centre recognition status is given. Centres cannot be fully recognised if they have an action plan.
5. 1st4sport is developing a separate web-based system to upload specific information from centres. For example, the accumulation of credits, staff resources to support the assessment of units and the unique learner number (ULN).
6. Staff stated that the new system should automatically validate the ULN at the touch of a button, and that RPL will be included. Currently, this and information on credit accumulation is held in the candidate's file. We were shown an example of how the database would work in practice but could not test the effectiveness of this system during the monitoring activity. 1st4sport recognises that the implementation of this database

will enable it to meet its obligations in terms of compliance with the QCF arrangements.

7. 1st4sport states in the qualification approval section that if a centre is in partnership with another organisation the roles and responsibilities of each partner must be documented. There are currently no partnership arrangements between recognised centres and other organisations.

Non-compliances

There are no non-compliances in relation to this section.

Observations

9. 1st4sport should consider having a process in place to record partnership arrangements between centres.

Awarding and certification

Subject to the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), paragraphs 5.12 – 5.15, 5.16 c-d and 5.19

Findings

1. The QCF arrangements require awarding organisations to have systems in place to determine when learners have achieved a credit or completed the RoC, so that a certificate can be issued. Currently, most certificates are awarded when the qualification is completed, although 1st4sport does have systems in place to award credit certificates if requested.
2. Centres use a secure online system to claim qualification or unit/credit certificates. The system has in-built checks, and centres can only see the qualifications they are approved to deliver. To claim a certificate nominated staff at centres click on the relevant qualification and tick candidate achievement against each unit. The Centre Support Administrators (CSAs) are responsible for checking that claims are authentic and certificates are issued. Staff stated that centres can use the post or email to request certificates and/or credits.
3. There are systems to review and adjust results if required, where MCQs are used. These are marked and moderated by centres, so errors can be adjusted at this point.
4. 1st4sport aims to issue certificates and/or credit certificates within 20 days. If centres use the online system this timeline is reduced considerably. The awarding organisation has run workshops for centres to explain the new online quality assurance system and online services. This is good practice.
5. There are suitable arrangements for issuing replacement certificates, which include, for example, checking candidate names and dates of birth against existing records. The whole process is completed via the online awarding service system.
6. We looked at the systems for claiming certificates, which are robust. 1st4sport offers centres direct claims status if they meet 1st4sport's centre recognition requirements and have positive external verification reports. However, the awarding organisation withdraws this status if centres fail to meet the qualification and centre recognition requirements.

7. 1st4sport has been building a new IT system to record candidate achievement, ULNs, exemptions, credit accumulation and the transfer of credits in readiness for the QCF.
8. The awarding organisation states in the *1st4sport Qualification Management Arrangements* that it will use external verification visits to ensure the comparability of standards over time across centres, units and qualifications at the same level with the same title and using different assessment methods. We are satisfied that the awarding organisation has systems in place but could not test the effectiveness of these systems, as 1st4sport has only been recently recognised as a QCF awarding organisation.

Non-compliances

There are no non-compliances in relation to this section..

Observations

10. 1st4sport should review the capabilities of its new database in recording and monitoring all aspects of paragraph 5.14 of the QCF arrangements.

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