



Post-Recognition Monitoring Report

The Chartered Institute of IT (BCS)

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Introduction

Regulating qualifications

The responsibility for regulating qualifications lies jointly with three regulators:

- 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) awarded in 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 provide observations on ways in which the awarding organisation could change its systems and procedures to improve clarity or reduce bureaucracy.

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 to show how they will deal with any non-compliance issues identified. 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 on future monitoring and/or the possible imposition of sanctions.

Banked documents

As part of the awarding organisation recognition process, the regulators require awarding organisations to submit certain documents to Ofqual, to be held centrally.

Information from these 'banked' documents is used to inform monitoring activities and may also affect an awarding organisation's risk rating.

A suite of documents has been identified as suitable for banking, consisting of those items 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 BCS awarding organisation that was carried out by Ofqual in April 2011. It draws together the regulators' findings on areas of:

- management and governance
- resources and expertise
- diversity and equality
- development of units and rules of combination (RoC) for qualifications
- design and development of assessment
- delivery of assessment
- centre recognition

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

The monitoring activities included desk research of information already held by us, examination of BCS's QCF recognition application and scrutiny of the awarding organisation's website. We visited the head office to conduct interviews with staff and review documentation.

This report draws together the regulators' findings from these monitoring activities.

About BCS

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, promotes wider social and economic progress through the advancement of information technology science and practice. For further information please see www.bcs.org

Management and governance

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

Findings

1. BCS has undergone a significant transformation process over the past two years. It has been re-branded as BCS The Chartered Institute for IT and has invested in its future through restructuring and refocusing its operations.
2. In April 2010 the organisational structure was changed. BCS separated the practitioner side of its business that deals with non-regulated qualifications taken by IT professionals, including membership, from the delivery of regulated qualifications carried out by the awarding organisation part of the business. Business units were formed to provide more functionality within teams. It was recognised that BCS needed a product management unit and that it needed to create a more customer-focused culture to promote brand awareness.
3. BCS is overseen by a Trustee Board, the role of which is to support direction. Alongside the Trustee Board there is an Executive Board which is the main operational decision-making committee for the awarding organisation. It includes eight board directors who are each associated with different aspects of the business. The Products and Services Board, set up in March 2010, is the main business driver taking both an advisory role and providing strategic oversight of the products and services market. It is responsible for presenting evidence of business progress and developments to the Trustee Board.
4. The work of the awarding organisation sits within the Qualifications Business Unit. The Director of the Qualifications Business Unit is the single named point of accountability for the quality and standard of the qualifications. This is a change for BCS, as this role was formerly the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer. However, this change is not reflected in the job description for the Director of the Qualifications Business Unit, which should be amended.
5. The changes to the name of the organisation and to the single point of accountability also need to be reflected on the credit and qualification certificates issued by BCS. Scrutiny of the existing certificates showed that they did not fully meet the regulatory design requirements in this regard.

6. The Director of the Qualifications Business Unit is a member of the Executive Board and reports to the CEO. We were provided with copies of reports and Executive Board minutes.
7. There is a new management team in the restructured Qualifications Business Unit that works across four main areas. These include Sales and Marketing; Client Services; Channel and Relationships; and Product Development. The Sales and Marketing Team deals with schools and further education and is not part of the regulated function. The Client Services Team is the main customer-facing area and has been re-focused during the past six months. Time has been spent in developing and building on existing capability and engaging staff in a new culture. The Channel and Relationships Manager is a new role arising from the transformation process and the post holder is the main point of contact for external organisations such as regulators and sector skills councils (SSCs). Finally, the Group Product Manager is also new in post, with a remit to manage all areas of product development, including units and qualifications, and to provide strategic update reports to the Products and Services Board and Trustee Board.
8. A fifth element to the Qualifications Business Unit is a separate organisation that is a wholly owned subsidiary of BCS. This organisation is an e-learning and automated test provision company. Currently it is one of four providers approved to provide tests for the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) qualifications. BCS intends to utilise this organisation to expand on its capability by providing tests for other qualifications. Any potential for conflict of interest is minimised as the organisations have separate income streams.
9. BCS has an annual business planning cycle, working alongside a three-year projection plan and budget. There is an organisation-wide strategic vision with identified goals based on which each business unit develops its own strategic objectives for the year. We were able to review the strategic plans for each of the teams within the Qualifications Business Unit.
10. Underpinning the business planning process is a system for tracking all new ideas, projects and products, which is managed by the Group Product Manager. The system is broken down into business areas and BCS uses it to track projects and set budgets, providing a transparent and holistic view across the organisation. Business areas have annual 'road maps' for all projects. This business planning process is known as the 'Gateway' system.

Non-compliance

1. BCS must review and amend the job description for the Director of the Qualifications Business to reflect the role as single point of accountability for maintaining the quality assurance and standards of regulated qualifications.

(Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, 2008, paragraph 2.1b)

2. BCS must amend its credit and qualification certificates to ensure that they fully meet the design requirements set out in the regulatory arrangements.

(Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, 2008, paragraphs 5.13a and 5.15a)

Observations

There are no observations in relation to this section.

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. BCS has robust financial arrangements within its business planning processes. The business planning process (Gateway) system ensures that individual projects are financially viable prior to development and each business area's strategic plans include forecasts of income generation. There are monthly financial reviews with each business area director. We were satisfied that BCS has the financial capacity to support its current operations.
2. BCS has an organisational plan in place to deal with business continuity and this is owned by the facilities department. Each business unit also has its own documented business continuity requirements which feed into the organisational plan. We discussed the business continuity plan for client services, which focuses on the impact on centres. It is reviewed on a quarterly basis to check contact information is up to date and it is stored off site.
3. The organisational plan highlights the IT backup systems and the intended use of the London and Bedford offices should the head office be inaccessible. The system is backed up by an external organisation. In the event of a systems failure, BCS is assured that there is no impact on centres initially and there is a 24-hour window in which data is backed-up. Ultimately some learner registrations could be affected but assessments would continue, causing minimal disruption to learners and centres. As well as these plans the IT department carries out a routine programme of testing.
4. Following a recent incident where all power was lost and the building had to be evacuated, BCS put together a crisis management team so that it could deal with incidents as they occur. Planning for dealing with unexpected incidents includes reviewing resource implications, including financial implications, to ensure arrangements are in place to allow the business to continue; an emergency contact list; and staff escalation process. These plans are under constant review. For example, currently there is a four-hour maximum 'downtime' to wait for support. BCS is looking at the business implications of this and whether this time can be reduced.
5. BCS has procedures in place to ensure there is sufficient staffing to support both current and future demands. All staff members are subject to an annual appraisal process. Individual objective setting is linked to the BCS business strategy and staff objectives are formally reviewed every six months.

6. Training and individual personal development plans are put in place. Training needs are identified for teams and individuals, and are entered on a schedule of activity that is coordinated by the Human Resources Team. BCS values the skills of its existing staff and, where possible, knowledge and experience is shared across the organisation.
7. The new Client Services Team has had a programme of specific training and development to help staff gain new skills, specifically focusing on client support. All existing skills were reviewed to see what training would be of most benefit. The programme of training included sessions on learning styles and self-evaluation. Team members are now engaging with their new roles.
8. In relation to the QCF, staff from the Qualifications Business Unit attended briefing and training events provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB). Information and knowledge was then cascaded throughout the organisation as individuals became more experienced in the requirements for the QCF.
9. BCS ensures that there is subject expertise available for developing units and RoC, and designing and delivering assessment. Potential applicants submit their CVs and are screened against defined role descriptions. Suitable staff members are entered into a database of subject matter experts and are contracted for specific projects or pieces of work. The database is owned and managed by the Group Product Manager.
10. BCS have recently reviewed the work of its external verifiers, now referred to as qualifications consultants (QCs). BCS has implemented a new process for monitoring centres, which includes separating the processes of centre monitoring and the monitoring of quality assurance of assessment. QCs are now used in more of an advisory, consultative capacity, with the majority of sampling carried out remotely. Training and standardisation events have been provided to ensure QCs are confident in their roles as representatives of BCS in supporting and advising centres as well as carrying out quality assurance checks. There are currently 20 QCs.
11. The new QC role will be closely monitored and they will be subject to shadowed visits by BCS staff who will be using set performance criteria. The Client Services Manager will monitor QC performance using feedback from centres, shadow visits and assessment sampling reports.

Non-compliance

There are no instances of non-compliance 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. BCS has an Equal Opportunities Policy document which is reviewed annually by the Equality Team. The lead officer for this team is the Group Product Manager and this role is reflected in the job description. Other team members include a Product Development Manager and the Strategic Business Manager. The team is responsible for diversity and equality issues across the organisation, ensuring that staff members are updated on current and new legislation and that it is embedded into its qualifications provision.
2. BCS has sought guidance from the Human Rights Commission as to how legislation can be applied to qualifications. As a result an impact assessment checklist has been developed for use in unit and qualification development. The checklist includes coverage of the areas of ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and religious belief.
3. Diversity and equalities training is provided to all staff at BCS. Accessibility workshops have been offered to staff and have been well received. These were provided with the assistance of a nationwide charity and disability specialist organisation. BCS also uses the expertise of this organisation to ensure that diversity and equality issues are considered as part of unit and RoC development, and to mitigate potential barriers to learning.
4. Centre and learner representatives are involved in the initial consultation process used in line with the business case for new products. Further consultation is sought through the piloting of new products, including units and qualifications. BCS is currently piloting new qualifications with 40 centres. This work will include checking to ensure there are no barriers to learning.
5. The Business Analysis Team within Client Services collects and evaluates data from the use of any reasonable adjustments, appeals or complaints, which is used to inform unit/qualifications monitoring and review processes. Currently BCS only collects limited learner information. This includes name, date of birth and postcode, with gender as an optional field. This is insufficient to meet the regulatory requirements under which organisations must collect sufficient data to allow the monitoring of compliance against all aspects of diversity, for example, requesting learner information including details of racial groups, religious beliefs etc.

Non-compliance

3. BCS must ensure that it has procedures in place to collect sufficient data to allow it to monitor and evaluate compliance with the regulatory requirements.

(Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, 2008, paragraph 2.14)

Observations

There are no observations in relation to this section.

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 and 6.2a

Findings

1. Ideas for new products, including units and qualifications, can come to BCS through a variety of channels, for example internal staff or external stakeholders. All ideas are considered using the formalised Gateway business planning process, which is centrally managed by the Group Product Manager.
2. Gateway stage 0 is the Product Concept Form which is initiated at the outset and populated with basic information. This information includes an outline of the proposal, potential timescales and budget, target market, accessibility issues and potential resource requirements. Proposals also have to fit with the business unit's 'roadmap' for the year and show how they meet BCS strategic objectives. All new ideas have to have an owner, usually a programme manager, and must be sponsored by a director.
3. The Product Concept Form is logged onto the Gateway tracking system and is reviewed by the Group Product Manager who decides whether the proposal should go forward or be rejected.
4. Gateway stage 1 is the Business Case Form used to develop the proposal further. The business case includes more detailed review of the proposal and includes a more specific business plan with full market analysis, a detailed budget (covering potential income), a delivery plan and details of associated risks. It is shared with internal stakeholders, such as the Innovations Team, to gain a business perspective. In parallel to this, a second process initiates potential IT requirements.
5. When the Business Case Form is completed it goes to the Management Team and the Executive Team for approval. Once approved formal development proceeds.
6. For the development of units and qualifications, the Group Product Manager allocates a product developer to manage the individual development process. This developer selects appropriate subject matter experts from the database, including unit and RoC developers and assessment designers, to form a working group. CVs and key competencies are reviewed, and any training needs identified and addressed.

7. The product developer brings the working group together and creates a project plan for development, including key dates. All meetings are documented.
8. Since being recognised to operate within the QCF, BCS has only recently begun to develop a qualification independently. The majority of QCF qualifications it offers are developed collaboratively with relevant SSCs and other interested awarding organisations. The Relationship and Channel Manager is the contact person for external stakeholders. He attends awarding body forum meetings on behalf of BCS and is the person through which communication is made. Although not a sole developer, BCS actively contributes to collaborative unit and qualification development using the Product Development Team to review and comment on products under development. This was evidenced through a series of email communications which provided us with an audit trail of development.
9. Recently BCS has begun the process of developing a new qualification, and so has started to use some of the QCF systems and processes it has in place. An external organisation requested that BCS develop a low-level digital skills qualification consisting of seven units. The business case was made and approved. In this instance there was no requirement to consider the RoC as it is confined to seven mandatory units.
10. Mapping to existing units took place, although this was not formally documented. Three units were identified from the unit data bank. The remaining four units are currently being written. Members of the working group have been selected and provided with relevant guidance documents. The group, which provides suitable expertise, consists of two external verifiers and an SSC representative, as well as the unit writer and product developer. We saw the project plan for the development of the Entry Level Certificate in Digital Skills (iTQ) qualification which included key milestones such as development, pilot evaluation and launch. At the time of monitoring this was the only development work that had taken place and the remainder of the process could not be tested.
11. BCS has developed a Diversity and Equality Impact Assessment Form for new units and qualifications. We saw evidence that this was used to check the new Entry Level Award in Computer and On-line Basics (Entry 3) (iTQ) qualification.
12. Standard templates are in place to record how level is determined, and how credit is assigned. There is also a unit writing checklist. We were informed that once the unit/qualification is completed it is signed off by the Group Product Manager, although the procedure states that sign-off is the responsibility of the Product Development Manager. If the process has changed since the appointment of the Group Product Manager the procedures need to be reviewed and amended so that they accurately reflect what happens in practice.

13. While templates are available they do not provide for a clear review and sign-off mechanism. For example, the Unit Writing Checklist does not align to the *Qualification Development Procedure – Unit Writing flow chart and procedure*. The flowchart and procedure make reference to ensuring that the requirements of section 1 of the QCF regulatory arrangements have been adhered to, but this is not reflected in the checklist. BCS must ensure that the person signing off the units can see that regulations in relation to development have been met.
14. BCS has procedures in place for unit/qualifications review but it is too soon for these to be tested in relation to QCF qualifications.

Non-compliance

4. BCS must ensure that there is a clear audit trail for review and sign-off of units/qualifications that confirms all the regulatory requirements have been met.

(Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, 2008, paragraphs 3.2)

Observations

There are no observations in relation to this section.

Design and development of assessment

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

Findings

1. The design and development of assessment is incorporated within the whole development process and begins at the business case stage.
2. BCS has a documented process – the Assessment Development and Delivery Procedure – for developing assessment methods for individual units and groups of units. A variety of assessment methods are used across BCS qualifications, including multiple-choice tests and evidence-based assessments. However, the majority of qualifications offered by BCS are developed with SSCs and have to meet the specific requirements of a SSC’s assessment strategy.
3. BCS has not developed its own units or groups of units since being approved to offer QCF qualifications; therefore, the process for the development of assessment could not be fully tested.
4. Discussions with staff demonstrated an awareness of the considerations that would be necessary to select appropriate assessment methods. For example, with an e-safety qualification it was considered that the best assessment method would be multiple-choice questions as this qualification is knowledge-based. These considerations would usually be undertaken in consultation with subject matter experts in the development working groups.
5. Although it has not yet been used, we noted that the Assessment Development and Delivery Procedure includes a checklist. However, the checklist does not provide a mechanism to ensure that the selected assessment criteria can be checked against the design requirements stated in section 1 of the QCF regulatory requirements. As with the previous section of this report, this would assist the person signing off the process in ensuring that all regulatory requirements have been met.
6. BCS qualifications are achieved through a pass or fail system and its qualifications are not graded. There is an additional enhancement to the pass criteria for touch-typing qualifications. If a learner achieves a faster typing speed they are awarded either a silver or gold award.

7. BCS has a new internal strategy for annual product review as well as a documented procedure for reviewing its approach to assessment design and development for assessment methods. However, this review procedure could not be tested as it is too soon for BCS to have reviewed any of its assessment methods.

Non-compliance

There are no instances of non-compliance in relation to this section.

Observations

1. BCS should review the checklist for developing an assessment and include a mechanism to ensure adherence to the design features of section 1 of the QCF regulatory requirements.

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 5.20–5.23

Findings

1. BCS has defined roles for staff responsible for the delivery of assessments. The roles required for all BCS qualifications are clearly defined within the *Approved centre operations manual* (version 12). This document also provides details of how staff members at centres must register with BCS, and states that confirmation of registration must be received prior to delivery of any qualifications. Roles include internal verifier, assessor and marker.
2. BCS carries out regular checks on each of the centres. BCS ensures that people involved in the assessment process have the appropriate expertise, and are adequately informed and supported. The checks are conducted by periodic telephone calls from trained members of the Client Support Team using an audit script, as well as through visits to centres by QCs. One of the checks made, for QCF compliance, is to ensure that suitable training is provided to staff involved in the assessment process. Information is also gathered on performance management systems. This is logged onto the BCS IT system and any concerns are raised with the Client Support Manager.
3. QCs are required to declare any conflicts of interest on an annual basis. BCS checks these declarations before making any allocations.
4. The *Approved centre operations manual* provides details on the different forms of assessment task. Further information on specific qualifications is contained within the individual syllabuses available on the website.
5. For tested qualifications such as ECDL and iTQ, BCS uses two main types of testing – automated and manual. For the automated testing, tests are downloaded from an authorised test provider using a secure internet portal and results are also calculated automatically. Manual testing is for those centres that choose to download tests from test banks held on the Approved Centre Forum (ACF) – a secure area of the BCS website. These tests are marked internally and checked by internal verifiers.
6. Test questions are written by test developers using a standard template to ensure consistency and coverage of the syllabus. BCS provided a completed Characteristic Test Template (CTT) to demonstrate how this process is carried out.

7. There are four test papers for each unit in operation at any one time. These are numbered and distribution is tracked. Papers are reviewed on a rolling programme and new papers are usually produced within 18 months to 2 years.
8. For evidence-based qualifications, such as those in the suite of Digital Creator qualifications, learners build a portfolio. This can be paper-based or electronic. Portfolios can consist of projects, presentations and other tasks that can be measured against set assessment criteria. Learner progress is followed and assessed electronically throughout the course. Assessors for these qualifications are required to attend BCS training prior to commencing their role. The assessments are also subject to internal verification and remote external verification, and must be available for BCS to sample when required.
9. The *Approved centre operations manual* contains information on test regulations, test conditions and how to confirm learner identity. Learners must provide two pieces of ID evidence and this is recorded on a central system. Unique passwords are created for learners prior to assessments taking place and they are logged in by the invigilator.
10. Authentication of learners' work for evidenced-based qualification is carried out using the *Authentic and currency of assessment evidence learner statement*. BCS gave us with a copy of this statement, which is completed by the learner to confirm that the work is genuine.
11. Evidence was provided on the process that BCS uses when ensuring standardisation and quality assurance of assessment outcomes, across centres and awards. Guidance to centres is provided within the *Approved centre operations manual*. The guidance includes information on sampling ratios to be used by internal verifiers when checking marking and instructions to second mark all borderline results.
12. BCS has a team that is involved in statistical analysis. Part of this team's work is to ensure accuracy and consistency of the assessments of units across centres and over time. Their reports also highlight trends, so if there are issues with centres these can be identified. The work includes looking at pass rates for individual questions, and comparisons between automated and manual tests. This is a rolling review that feeds into the overall qualifications review.
13. There is an exemptions process in place where an SSC has identified where existing qualifications can be claimed for some BCS qualifications. Credit transfer is also explained on the SSC website. BCS also has a process and procedure to deal with the recognition of prior learning (RPL). However, at the time of monitoring there had been no requests for this.

14. BCS provides assessments in a number of languages, including Welsh and Irish (Gaelic). In ensuring that assessments are comparable, language specialists are employed as well as technical experts in translating assessment tasks and materials. BCS also employs bilingual QCs to ensure that quality assurance arrangements are comparable.
15. Staff members at BCS were able to explain the system used to review the delivery of assessments. There is an annual process which is highlighted in the 'Qualifications monitoring procedures' document. However, the systems could not be fully tested as QCF developments have only recently taken place and no reviews have had to be conducted in relation to units or qualifications.
16. There is no separate awarding process as the system is fully automated, with RoC built into the system for each qualification. RoCs are applied at the point of registration. Learners may change their options, but the system will not allow invalid RoC.
17. Once a learner has achieved the relevant RoC a certificate claim is triggered. BCS staff members check for claims on a daily basis and certificates are printed in-house.
18. BCS issues certificates to learners taking qualifications overseas. It must ensure that these learners are informed that the regulatory logos indicate that the qualification is accredited only for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Non-compliance

5. BCS must ensure that, for certificates issued outside of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, clients are informed that the regulatory logos indicate that the qualification is accredited only for these countries.

(Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, 2008, paragraphs 5.19b)

Observations

There are no observations in relation to this section.

Centre recognition

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

Findings

1. Potential centres are able to make an initial enquiry using the BCS website. Staff from the Client Support Team follow up online enquires with a telephone call using a set of pre-scripted questions. Initial information collected includes the amount of staff and resources at the centre and the potential number of learners. Information is collated using a score card and logged.
2. The telephone calls made by the Client Support Team cover a number of the QCF requirements and we were provided with completed centre recognition forms. We were also provided with the 'Centre approval scorecard' which provides the detail that client support staff gather during phone calls.
3. Centres then continue the approval process in one of two ways. If they are already a centre for another awarding organisation with a good track record, or are a centre with a satisfactory Ofsted report they can be fast-tracked. They are granted conditional approval until such time as the QC undertakes a monitoring visit (during the first year of activity) and samples their first assessments. New centres will have a visit from a QC prior to approval and a centre approval form will be completed. Centre approvals are overseen by the Service Delivery Team and are authorised by the Service Delivery Manager.
4. Following approval, centres are subject to an annual telephone audit as well as periodic telephone calls (two or three times a year) from the Client Support Team. These calls are used to update centres on BCS activities and for confirming centre information, such as details of any changes to a centre's assessment staff. QCs will visit all new centres to sample their first assessments and if there are no issues, a full audit visit from a QC is only required to take place within a three year period. Centres are monitored constantly using data from the Client Support Team as well as data from the tests and remote assessment verification activity.
5. As described in the resources and expertise section of this report, the Client Support Team has been intensively trained to carry out its work with centres. There are eight members of the team who respond to approximately 2000 BCS centres. Reports can be run on the amount of contact centres have and intelligence can be gathered from each contact, which can then be added to qualifications performance data to provide an overall picture and inform a level of risk.

6. In compliance with the QCF arrangements, BCS ensures that each centre has an accountable person or centre manager. This individual is responsible for signing and providing a declaration of compliance, and ensuring the provision of the appropriate number of assessment staff with the required expertise.
7. Centres are required to use the BCS IT system and secure web-portals to download tests and transfer assessment information. We were provided with a demonstration of this system. Guidance on how to obtain a Unique Learner Number (ULN) is provided within the *Approved centre operations manual*. The ACF secure area of the BCS website allows centres to obtain ULNs and to enter the details onto the system. Centres can track their learners' progress in the same way by using the ACF.
8. The new arrangements for centre approval with on-going monitoring using the Client Support Team and the new role of the QCs in providing support to centres have only recently been fully implemented. BCS piloted the system prior to wider roll-out to all centres and has taken all reasonable steps to ensure it is successful. However, it is currently too early to test the effectiveness of this new system.

Non-compliance

There are no instances of non-compliance in relation to this section.

Observations

There are no observations in relation to this section.

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