

Government launches consultations to crack down on company fraud and improve corporate transparency

- Three new consultations will support reforms to clamp down on fraud and give businesses greater confidence in transactions
- further consultation on new powers for Companies House to query information and take steps to improve the quality and value of financial information it holds
- government to take forward plans to restrict the use of corporate directors on company boards, to stop criminals from hiding behind complex corporate structures

Plans to combat fraud and give businesses confidence in who they are working with have been announced by the Government today, with the launch of three consultations on reforms to the UK's register of company information.

Today's announcement follows the [publication](#) in September of the government's wider plan to reform the Companies House register.

Under the new proposals, directors cannot be appointed until their identity has been verified and the register's powers will be expanded so that it can query, investigate and remove false or inaccurate information.

Minister for Corporate Responsibility Lord Callanan said:

Today's proposals set out further detail on our far-reaching reforms to ensure the Companies House register is fit for the 21st century – allowing us to crack down on fraud and money laundering, while providing businesses with greater confidence in their transactions.

One of the consultations opened today will seek views on how the new discretionary power for the register to query new, submitted information will work in practice. The proposals will help close loopholes that lead to abuse of the register, facilitating a crack down on the misuse of corporate structures by criminals.

The proposals also look to reduce the administrative burden on businesses and boost the quality of data on the register by making the filing process more consistent, with one consultation exploring how the quality and value of accounts filings can be improved. The plans also propose making Companies House a fully digital organisation, with all companies required to submit accounts to the register online.

A further consultation on corporate directors will take forward plans to

restrict the use of opaque chains of corporate control. Under the plans, only companies whose boards comprise real people with verified identities will be allowed to act as corporate directors of other companies. The move will stop criminals from concealing their true identities behind complex corporate structures, while continuing to allow law-abiding companies to use corporate directors for legitimate purposes.

Where any new controls are introduced as part of the reforms, Companies House will keep the burden on business as low as possible and will continue to look for ways to make access to its services as smooth, quick and efficient as possible.

View the 3 consultations here:

World anti-corruption day newsletter: December 2020

This edition of the newsletter, to mark World anti-corruption day 2020, reflects anti-corruption work from the last year including:

- law enforcement activity
 - coronavirus and public procurement, including in local government
 - public integrity
 - beneficial ownership and corporate transparency
 - UN Convention Against Corruption engagement
 - evidence and international work
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Glenys Stacey's speech at Inside Government Apprenticeship Conference 2020

Hello, and thank you for inviting me to speak at this year's conference. It is such a pleasure to be here – even in digital form – and to have the chance to hear from you as well.

Can I thank you first of all for the enormous effort being put in to ensure high quality apprenticeship assessments can continue to be delivered to apprentices, in this exceptional year. Thank you.

I would like to thank all involved in ensuring we get the best possible outcomes for apprentices, in a safe and secure way. I've been back at Ofqual since August and I have been impressed by the focus and effort we and others are putting into this important area of work. For our part, you will know that we are working closely with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and ESFA to ensure that apprentices and employers benefit from regulated external quality assurance (EQA) of apprenticeship end-point assessments.

Today I will talk about five things: our role in EQA; the progress we are making with the transition of EQA to Ofqual; our approach to EQA; how we work with the Institute, and last but not least the importance of ensuring that the employer voice is embedded in our work.

Our role in EQA

Our role in EQA of apprenticeships started in 2016 when we accepted our first end-point assessments as an EQA provider. Over the last 4 years, we have been one of several EQA providers, and we've come a long way over this time. In February 2020, the Institute published its consultation on strengthening and simplifying the EQA landscape, with a proposal that EQA should be provided by Ofqual, for most standards, and the Office for Students, for integrated degrees. And in August 2020, the Institute published the outcomes of its consultation confirming that it planned to move forward with this proposal. We welcome this greater role for Ofqual in the EQA of apprenticeships and are working closely with the Institute to deliver the transition as smoothly as possible over the next 18 months.

Now on to my second point. On November 12th, we became the EQA provider for an additional 70 or so standards offered by 22 Ofqual regulated awarding organisations. This is an important milestone, but it will be the first of many as we transition over 500 standards in the next 18 months.

In year one, which began in August this year, we will transfer standards where the Institute is the current EQA provider. There are over 300 standards in scope for this year. In year two, we will focus on transferring standards from other EQA providers. Make no mistake, this is an important piece of work to deliver, but I am confident that we are putting in the necessary resources to do it successfully, so that we can all realise the benefit of a simplified and strengthened EQA system.

We have already engaged with over 80 new end-point assessment organisations since the announcement in August and we are starting to see applications come through. Out of those who have applied most recently, I know eight are currently being reviewed and two have recently been approved. Congratulations to Awarding UK – part of Bishop Grosseteste University – and Achieve and Partners, who have both been recognised in the last few weeks.

Our approach to EQA

Moving now to our approach to EQA: we are aiming a fair and consistent

approach to end-point assessment, regardless of which organisation is delivering it, and where and when it is carried out.

If you are an employer you can be confident that end-point assessments will be centred around the assessment of occupational competence, and that whichever end-point assessment organisation you choose will offer a high-quality regulated end-point assessment. And if you are an apprentice, you can have confidence that we can use our regulatory powers and act to put things right, if by any chance things do go wrong.

Our EQA approach aligns with the Institute's EQA framework, which includes upfront quality control mechanisms, ongoing quality assurance and continuous improvement. But you won't be surprised to hear that, as a regulator, we will use the regulatory tools and levers we have at our disposal to deliver EQA.

The Institute's EQA consultation response recognised that the ability of Ofqual to use regulatory powers was one of the key reasons that the proposed approach would strengthen and increase confidence in apprenticeship end-point assessments. We have a wide gamut of powers. We can for example direct an end-point assessment organisation to do something or stop doing something, and we can fine organisations if they are found to be in breach of our rules. Of course, we work with end-point assessment organisations to resolve problems in the first instance, but it is always useful to have powers to take further action if needed.

The first stage of our EQA approach is recognition of end-point assessment organisations. All end-point assessment organisations will need to be recognised by Ofqual to continue delivering end-point assessments once EQA transfers to Ofqual. Our recognition process sets a consistent bar for all organisations that want to deliver end-point assessments in the market. It seeks to ensure organisations have robust governance and financial resources in place, which are relevant to their scope of operation, and that they have the appropriate competencies needed to design and deliver assessment services in their chosen field. This process considers the diversity in the type of organisations we recognise, from professional bodies to niche, sector specific end-point assessment organisations and much larger organisations such as HEIs.

Once recognised, end-point assessment organisations can expect to be involved in quality assurance activities, from monitoring specific aspects of delivery, to evaluating assessment materials and increasingly observing end-point assessments in delivery. As a regulator we take a risk-based approach to regulation, and to EQA. We will target our EQA activities where we have greatest concern, or where our work will have greatest impact in preventing things from going wrong, and we have a range of expertise, tools and legal powers on which we can draw.

How we work with the Institute

Let me speak now about how we work with the Institute, as it is perhaps one of the most important ways to help secure quality in apprenticeships and their end-point assessments.

We are working closely with the Institute to deliver EQA. The Institute's role is to oversee the quality of apprenticeships. As the predominant EQA provider we work with them in a variety of ways, to enable them to do this. Our approach is collaborative and includes sharing information, and findings, particularly at points where we have concerns that the validity of end-point assessments or where the interests of apprentices are at risk.

We will share reports on EPAOs and their EPAs with the Institute, and we are also active members the Institute's Quality Alliance with ESFA, Ofsted, QAA and the Office for Students. Collaboration between us all is essential to ensure quality remains at the heart of the apprenticeship system.

And finally, one of the key areas we will work with the Institute over the coming months is the development of the Employer Directory. We already use occupational expertise in our work in several ways – for example to support with the review of assessment materials (which we call technical evaluation) and we hope to be able to use employer expertise in our monitoring approach as part of our field work in the future. We look forward to the Institute's development of an Employer Directory, from which we will draw, so that more employers and professional bodies can support and inform our work. It is crucial that we get this important piece of the EQA puzzle right to ensure that employers continue to play a pivotal role in the quality of apprenticeships.

Conclusion

I hope this has given you an overview of the transition of EQA to Ofqual and what to expect from our approach to EQA.

And that taking a regulated approach to EQA will ensure consistency and give confidence that we can achieve a better system of quality assurance for apprentices and employers. We will continue to work collaboratively with the Institute, ESFA, employers and end-point assessment organisations to make this happen. Thank you for listening.

Anti-Corruption Day 2020: celebrating the UK's partnership with Rwanda

Press release

UK partnership with Rwanda has enabled significant progress in tackling corruption, including through £19 million support to public sector reforms.



Over the last decade the UK has helped Rwanda to make significant progress in tackling corruption. This has included building effective institutions for accountability and strengthening financial controls. Since 2010, the UK has contributed £19 million to public sector reforms in Rwanda. Support from the UK and other development partners has enabled Rwanda to achieve the following results:

The UK provided £8.8 million to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning through two consecutive programmes from 2010 to 2017 which has: expanded reach and capability of the financial management information system, strengthened public procurement and developed the internal audit function. The quality of public financial management has steadily improved as suggested by successive international assessments.

The UK has been the leading development partner of the Office of the Auditor General since 2011, which has expanded coverage of expenditure, audit quality and ability to audit complex areas. The level of audit coverage of government's expenditure has increased from 75% in 2012-13 to 86.6% last year. The UK provided £6 million over ten years to finance the implementation of successive strategic plans.

The UK was a leading donor to the Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy programme, where state and non-state actors promoted citizen participation in the fight against corruption in public service delivery. This included the production of the Rwandan Bribery Index and other projects such as Access to Justice Information Centres and Access to Legal Aid Centres.

The UK is proud to have been a partner in the huge progress Rwanda has made to date and remains committed to working together in the future. Our cooperation increasingly includes peer-to-peer partnerships between Rwandan and British institutions such as the UK Office of National Statistics with the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, HM Revenue and Customs with the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA), as well as financial aid. This reflects the depth of the UK-Rwanda relationship in public sector governance and anti-corruption. The UK will continue to work with MINECOFIN and MINALOC to focus on improving anti-corruption and financial management at the local level delivering: stronger management and accounting of financial resources in districts, more effective budgeting and spending of public money and, ultimately, better public services for citizens.

JCB signs Memorandum of Understanding in Turkmenistan

World news story

JCB signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the State Water Management Committee of Turkmenistan.



On 8 December, JCB signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the State Water Management Committee of Turkmenistan for the supply of JCB equipment. The deal will potentially help the Turkmen government to effectively manage water use through the Karakum canal, one of the largest human-made canals in the world, and improve irrigation throughout the country.

This is the result of persistent efforts by HMA and the DIT team at the Embassy over the last 10 months. We have regularly lobbied various Turkmen ministries and agencies, involving PM Trade Envoy, Baroness Nicholson.

JCB has been active in the market since 2009, playing key role in the construction industry of Turkmenistan.