



Taking stock – managing risk

When the General Conditions were introduced by Ofqual there was a lot of fizz about what risk management was and what this could mean for AOs?

Ofqual's 'positive indicators' on the subject don't give us a lot to go on, other than we should be doing it. But are we?

I always look for risk to be assessed and monitored at two levels:

- Strategic – that the AO's governing body is aware and through executive reporting monitoring strategic risks; and
- Operational – teams and individuals responsible for certain functions or activities are assessing risk on an on-going basis. That risks are put onto an operational risk register where appropriate and team leaders/management are monitoring those risks.

Organisations often have overly complicated systems for risk assessment and management that shut people out. By this I mean the approach is cumbersome, not understood, too involved.. a turn-off to use.

Where operational risk management was lacking - for me a recent public example of an organisation not being risk aware and not seeing operational risks was the case of a prominent UK University that received an Undertaking from the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) after sending a spreadsheet that included personal and exam information of 1831 students to a group of 22 students.

The Undertaking mentions there were no procedures for sending personal information to students and no mandatory data protection training. These are obvious risks to data protection compliance. In a system where people understand risk this should not happen. However, in busy work environments things get overlooked. To avoid the problem in the first place some basic risk awareness training would reinforce the importance of data protection protocols.

See the case here <https://ico.org.uk/action-weve-taken/enforcement/kings-college-london/>

For strategic level risks Ofqual has recently listed its 12 strategic risks in their recent annual report, they include:

- Validity of qualifications
- Malpractice
- Market instability as a result of reform
- People (i.e. capability and capacity)
- Information management
- Delivery risks
- Standards risks.

These seem to have some resonance with risks that might also feature in any AO's strategic risk register.

Finally we all know that risk isn't just about making a list. It is also about how we treat those risks – what you can do about them and managing the risk to get the 'risk rating' down.

Risk management needs to be appropriately scaled to match the size, nature of the business and exposure to risk across the whole organisation. Ideally there should be different teams working together to identify and manage risks across the whole organisation.

It's also important to remember that risk management is about seeing and managing opportunities as well as potential adverse effects.

Give me a call, or drop me an email

- For staff training in 'Getting risk aware' or 'Assessing and managing risk'.
- To help review or set up a risk management system that the organisation can use and individuals can understand and participate in.

Heather works with Awarding Organisations to support qualification development, compliance and other projects. If you would like a quote or to talk through what needs doing..

Please call Heather on 0789 479 6262, or email Heather@awardingfirst.co.uk