

Sophie Azam

Quality & Regulatory Compliance Expert in Education

📍 Birmingham • ✉️ sophie@educationconsultancyservices.co.uk • 📞 07716 454 381 • in [LinkedIn](#)

Brings over ten years' experience providing subject-matter expertise on all aspects of legal, regulatory and compliance requirements on behalf of awarding organisations (AOs) and end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs). Shapes strategic direction and guides industry leaders on agile operations and good governance. Ensures sustainability of vocational education by influencing governing bodies, global professionals and Board members on the definition of standards and adaptation of assessment methodologies.

Combines creativity with critical thought in order to reconcile business strategy with quality, compliance and regulation. Positive and pragmatic, and builds trust-based relationships across professional and organisational boundaries to inform decision-making. Offers constructive challenge where required, and promotes an ethos of lifelong learning in order to harness individual and team potential, and optimise organisational performance. Places the highest value on integrity, scrutiny and personal accountability.

BOARD & PRO BONO ROLES

CHAIR, REGULATORY COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE	Chartered Management Institute (CMI)	2019 – date
SPECIALIST EXAMINATION TECHNIQUE MENTOR	Various	2019 – date

VALUE ADDED AS BOARD DIRECTOR

Corporate Governance | Quality Assurance

- Assure CMI compliance with regulatory requirements and define professional standards in regulated activity, to support submission of compliance statements to Ofqual, SQA, CCEA and Qualification Wales
- Design strategies and delivery models to deliver organisational compliance, quality assurance (QA), virtual moderation, EPA service, self-evaluation and self-monitoring on behalf of regulatory bodies

Strategic Vision | Organisational Growth

- Support strategic delivery of CMI vision as the EPA organisation of choice for the Leadership and Management Apprenticeship Standard
- Provide compliance expertise on how to enhance regulatory performance through effective commercial and business growth models and how to underpin quality in vocational qualifications through end-point assessment
- Advise new awarding organisations on routes to enter the regulated market
- Increase sustainability and financial viability through forging strategic alliances and partnerships, and overhauling organisational performance by introducing new policies and implementing improvement and efficiency measures

Thought Leadership

- Define standards of delivery, end-point assessment standards and teaching qualifications for professional bodies
- Oversee internal and external approval processes for qualifications and assures AO compliance with regulatory requirements
- Provide consultancy services on QA, including serving as Regional QA Specialist for the British Safety Council

EXECUTIVE CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Head of Quality Assurance & Customer Service | Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing 2019 – 2020

- As a member of the Extended Leadership Team, played a key role in transitioning the society to a stronger AO model by
 - defining the Quality Assurance Strategy and overseeing retention of Approved Dance Centres (ADC) delivery standards
 - regulating ISTD teaching qualifications, and supported the commercialisation of the ADC Model
 - leading development of market-driven qualifications
- Assured budgetary, strategic, operational and cross-business compliance by
 - developing the ISTD Compliance Strategy, ensuring alignment with the Business Plan
 - overseeing reflection of Statement of Compliance in organisational policies, processes and operations
 - training Directors on the new Self-Evaluation and Self-Monitoring Strategy for continuous compliance
 - collaborating with examiners and assessors on compliance and standardisation activities
 - managing operational activity of the Quality Assurance and Customer Service departments
- Played a key role in the organisational response to the COVID-19 pandemic through
 - advising on processes to implement remote assessment and invigilation
 - implementing a Virtual Moderation Strategy to meet COVID-19 restrictions
 - leading on the high-profile "Calculated Results Programme" under Covid-19 for graded and teaching qualifications
- Partnered with the Director of Examinations to manage relationships with regulators and stakeholders in the UK and overseas

Education Regulatory Compliance Consultant | Azam's Consulting Ltd 2019

- Provided consultancy advice to a range of AOs and qualifications bodies in relation to
 - routes to enter the regulated market
 - strategic changes required to meet standards and criteria of recognitions

- Provided senior-level business and regulatory advice on the Criteria of Recognition compliance requirements on how to become a robustly commercial and sustainable quality-regulated AO Model
- Served as a Regional EQA Specialist for the British Safety Council

Associate Director – Compliance & Standards | AoFA Qualifications

2018 – 2019

- Guided the organisation to meet the Ofqual and Awarding Organisation QA requirements by
 - providing strategic advice to the CEO and AoFAQ governing body on regulatory matters
 - managing internal and external approval processes for new and existing qualifications
 - leading external audits and investigations, post-audit action plans and quality improvement reports
 - embedding systems and processes governing organisational regulatory and compliance matters
- Increased financial viability by securing an AO partnership with the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport & Physical Activity
- Devised AoFAQ's Apprenticeship Agenda and compiled EPA standards for both AoFAQ and its sister company
- Secured a budget to introduce new Quality Management Systems and staff training

Head of Compliance, Assurance & Assessment | Swimming Teachers' Association

2018

- Served as the authority on awarding organisation compliance, regulatory requirements, qualification assessments and audits
- Established STA's new independent EPAO 'Safety Training Assess Ltd' and managed the company's registrations on the UK Register of Learning Providers and with Companies House
- Created the EPA service strategy and delivery model for Level 3 Leisure Duty Manager Standard, Level 3 Community Sport & Health Officer Standard, Level 2 Community Activator Coach Standard and Level 2 Adult Care Work
- Designed products that supported businesses, training providers and apprentices to understand the EPA process, post-gateway

End-point Assessment Manager (Development & Strategy) | FDQ

2017 – 2018

- Collaborated with the CEO to:
 - design and develop FDQ's delivery strategy policy and agenda for butchery, food operations and bakery sectors
 - widen the Apprenticeship AO Strategy for new food-specialist standards
- Enhanced FDQ's approved qualifications portfolio by creating proposals to add Level 2 Food Process Operator, Level 2 Fishmonger and Level 2 Baker qualifications
- Compiled all EPAO policies and procedures, and reviewed assessment instruments developed by subject-matter experts
- Ensured valid, consistent outcomes for apprentices by reviewing moderating assessments judgements

Education Consultant – Quality & Compliance | International Compliance Association

2017

- Provided subject-matter expertise on
 - national and international government regulations
 - accreditation standards for ICA qualifications (Researched the New York Legal Accreditation Board to seek approval for ICA qualification Units to become CPD programmes for lawyers requiring mandatory CPD annually)
 - developing strategic reports used by the ICA President, CEO and Director of Quality on SQAA regulatory requirements
 - designing the Independent EPA and employee engagement strategy for the ESFA application for EPAO approval
- supported on the development of the ICA's Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation for Level 3 and Level 6 Compliance

Quality & Compliance Officer | Skillsfirst Awards Ltd

2015 – 2017

- Oversaw all aspects of organisational-level compliance activities, including Statement of Compliance support including cross-functional policy reviews to ensure compliance across all Ofqual's Conditions of Recognition:
 - Shaping and designing the Apprenticeship Business Model for health and social care, customer service and management programmes through the ESFA Application for new EPAOs
 - Setting the EPAO QA process, strategy, employer engagement model and reporting accountability
 - Supporting the MD on external audit exercises
 - testing a new Quality Management Information System to facilitate self-regulation and improve regulatory compliance
 - mitigating adverse effects to learners as a result of malpractice and incidents during qualification delivery

EARLY CAREER ROLES

Education Consultant & Private Tutor | Azam's Consulting Ltd

2014 – 2015

Delivery Team Officer – Regulation Directorate | Ofqual

2009 – 2013

EDUCATION | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

PG.CERT.: PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES IN ASSESSMENT (UNIT A)

University of Cambridge

M.A.: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, PEACEKEEPING & LAW

University of Birmingham

B.A. (HONS): POLITICAL SCIENCE & HISTORY

University of Wolverhampton

MEMBER

Institute of Directors | InTouch Network of Non-Executive Directors