

Case Study: The A and V Units: practical approaches to evidence referencing

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Introduction

This document contains two case studies, from two separate SQA approved centres, highlighting the work they have carried out in streamlining the evidence recording process for the Assessor and Verifier Units (A1 and V1).

The first case study provides a summary of the steps a college took on its journey towards introducing a 'home-grown' electronic recording format for the Internal Verifier qualification (V1), and using this and other evidence recording systems to make the process of evidence recording more practicable.

The second case study provides an outline of the work carried out by an in-house training provider in response to the barriers they had previously identified whilst working alongside Assessor-candidates wishing to gain Unit A1.

We hope these case studies will provide you with practical guidance and support.

Case Study 1: Moray College

Rationale for a different approach

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirement for all SVQ Assessors and Verifiers to provide evidence that they are working to A and V Unit standards, regardless of when they qualified, triggered us to also look at the wider picture of how assessment and verification practice was evidenced in the first instance for the A and V Units.

We concluded that a more streamlined approach to evidence would help Assessor and Verifier candidates, and experienced and qualified practitioners generating CPD evidence of working in line with the A and V Unit standards.

The following issues were identified as relevant in helping to shape improvements to the existing system:

- ◆ Too much time was needed for staff/candidates to put together paper-based portfolios.
- ◆ Most supporting policies and procedures relating to the V1 Unit could already be located on the college's intranet — so it seemed sensible to leave them there rather than create or copy documents across to portfolios!
- ◆ Most documents associated with support, assessment and internal verification of candidates are word processed and stored electronically, so copying and printing to a portfolio appeared unnecessary.

In identifying these issues, we did not have to conduct any specific quantitative research as we knew that the same issues kept re-emerging from the contact with Assessor and Internal Verifier-candidates and feedback from external CPD events and contact with SQA's External Verifier for the A and V Units.

The actions we took to improve our current system

We decided to hold an initial meeting with colleagues who are currently involved in delivering and assessing the A and V Units, and the IT department.

Meeting 1

28 May 2009

Discussions:

Candidate

Agreed a V1 candidate from Beauty Department to focus case study on.
Candidate agreed.

V1 portfolio index

It was agreed that there was a need to create an evidence index with a column for evidence description and a column for evidence location (being a very important aspect of this award). This would allow all parties involved to identify where evidence is located, ie portfolio, college intranet or computer file. This would also allow for individualised gathering of evidence as is occurring within the collation of V1 evidence. **Refer to extract Annex 1.**

V1 evidence matrix

Agreed the best format of matrix to use which will provide a summary for the candidate. We will also include the SQA original within the portfolio for reference. **Refer to extract Annex 3.**

Evidence in situ

Some time was spent discussing our options for keeping evidence in situ. It was agreed that our options were to:

- ◆ Create a 'guest' log in so that the External Verifier (EV) can access documentation required when visiting.

Issues: This would have to be agreed by college staff (Quality and IT). This may have confidentiality implications relating to other departments' documentation being viewed.

- ◆ Transfer central Internal Verification (IV) documentation onto a pen drive and all candidate evidence onto another pen drive.

Issues: This does not fully meet the criteria of keeping evidence in situ.

- ◆ Allow EV access via staff log in.

Issues: Again this could have confidentiality issues.

- ◆ Make use of Blackboard.

Issues: Although this seems a good option, staff involved with A/V Awards have limited experience of using Blackboard which could cause some difficulties.

IT discussion

In a discussion with the IT Learning Support Assistant, it was deemed that confidentiality is a potential concern. It was agreed that allowing access to staff

files/drives is risky due to the potential altering/deleting of important master documents. He agreed with the possible alternative options as outlined above, however, all would require permission from management.

Action:

Speak with all staff involved including Quality and IT department.

Check candidates' availability for the EVs return visit so candidate can give her perspective.

Complete index and matrix.

Reflection on the meeting held on 28 May 2009

The meeting was highly productive. An agreement was reached to incorporate an evidence location column into the V1 evidence recording index (see Annex 1). This would allow evidence to be left in situ whilst at the same time remaining traceable and part of the audit trail — ensuring all evidence remained accessible to Assessors and Verifiers.

The evidence locations we identified were restricted to three main sources:

- ◆ the intranet
- ◆ online portfolio
- ◆ candidate portfolio

Decisions on evidence location

The word processed information was already stored on computers and e-mailed from the candidate to the Assessor, so we felt that a computer-based file would be the appropriate place for this to be held. We felt that the centrally held policy documents should, as much as possible, be left in the original location (the staff intranet) and accessed if possible through EV log in.

The candidate portfolio would contain any hand-written documentation and copies of CPD certificates and profiles, keeping it to a minimum.

It was crucial to discuss electronic evidence access with the IT systems department to enable us to discuss the risks and identify feasible options to reduce the obvious risks such as breaching data protection rules and staff security.

Meeting 2

8 July 2009

Discussions:

Action from last meeting

- ◆ Candidate available for EV return visit.
- ◆ Index now complete — this will be kept blank for candidates to complete dependent on evidence gathered and also to encourage monitoring of evidence.
- ◆ Evidence matrix developed (see item later).
- ◆ Discussions have taken place with various college staff relating to the access of candidate evidence online. This proved very successful. The IT technician detailed the best option of creating a new log-in and password for visiting EV. This will allow access in any area of the college and can be tailored to suit our needs so no confidentiality issues remain a concern.

Evidence matrix

- ◆ The matrix was analysed in practice and agreed possible prompts for candidates relating to performance criterion. Minor changes were made and shaded areas created.

Interestingly, this highlighted an area within our personal practice that requires some adjustments (sampling plan process).

Candidate evidence claims were then transferred into the new matrix.

Candidate portfolio

- ◆ The selected candidate portfolio has been handed in, although not fully complete, it is not far off. Candidate e-mailed all evidence to Assessor and filed into a named folder for easy access. Evidence index was updated.

Next meeting 16 July 2009.

A reflection on progress

The evidence items in the matrix were written in 'centre terms' to help with interpretation of the Unit requirements. The original V1 Unit specification, however, was included in the Verifier-candidate's portfolio so she could refer to the full requirements. This is important from an awarding body perspective.

As there are clear Evidence Requirements within the V1 portfolio, it was decided that these would be pre-printed on the matrix as guidance for candidates. The shaded areas were added to give candidates direction on the Performance Criteria each of the Evidence Requirements could cover. As each candidate's work will be different, the shading is a guide only. During the process more criteria were covered than had been shaded for V1.1 in the candidates' written report. The plan is to review this and make alterations to the matrix once it has been in use for a period of time with several candidates.

The evidence index (Annex 1) was linked to the evidence recording system (Annex 2) to enable the evidence locations to be tracked easily.

The log-in and password for visiting EVs would be a major benefit. This will allow access in any area of the college, and can be tailored to suit our needs so confidentiality issues are not a concern.

Conclusions

The Verifier-candidate appeared to find the collection and referencing of evidence much less labour intensive than building a traditional portfolio. This was partly due to the assistance from the Assessor in referencing the evidence. (The Assessor gave extra assistance because the system was new to the centre). A shared and defined responsibility for referencing would probably remain the best way forward.

There would be some disadvantages in using this system. For instance, if the evidence locations on the intranet changed, the evidence would lose its traceability. There would have to be a policy to accommodate movement of evidence sources, otherwise this may impact negatively on tracking evidence, especially during external verification visits.

External Verifiers will require some instruction in locating all of the evidence electronically. Longer term, it will probably be worth developing a short guidance note to assist with navigation.

Where the Assessor and Verifier Units are being assessed in-house, there are a number of benefits that can be derived from tapping into documents (evidence) that already exist.

- ◆ The majority of documentation completed by staff is word processed, so no printing and copying is required.
- ◆ Sources of evidence can be pre-signposted in the index/evidence matrix, making evidence collection more transparent and cross-referencing less labour intensive.
- ◆ Using in situ evidence encourages real practice to be put forward rather than developing evidence to support competence claims. This system could actually encourage continual good practice.

- ◆ Expensive electronic portfolios are not needed to record evidence for the A and V Units. As long as the assessment decisions and supporting evidence can be tracked, that remains the most important factor.

Reflection from the A/V Programme Leader

By utilising evidence in original locations and building an online portfolio, new Assessors/Verifiers can achieve their Units without the added bureaucracy of building large portfolios — the role of Internal Verifier is demanding enough as it is.

This system demonstrated that the candidate was familiar with not only the system in place, but also with the actual location of significant documentation, providing more confirmation to the Assessor that the IV is proactive.

This has certainly demonstrated to us as a team, that online portfolio building is much more easily achieved than previously thought — and with no investment required in expensive packages.

In the future we will build on the knowledge gained and consider new directions for the learning and development awards.

Moray College will be happy to share any associated documentation with interested centres and SQA.

CANDIDATE NAME:			
Evidence number	Description of evidence	Evidence Requirements, PCs and Knowledge	Location of evidence
1	RA — Internal Verification	V1.1 ER A 1, 2, 6 V1.1 PC'S A, B, C, D (PART) V1.2 PC F V1.3 PC B, C, D, M KU'S 1, 7, 10, 11, 15, 20, 24, 30, 31, 33	Online portfolio
	Appendix 1: IV Request slip		Candidate portfolio
	Appendix 2: Record of sampling		Online portfolio — Appendixes
2	DO — Induction and support materials	V1.2 ER B, C KU'S 22, 25 (PART)	Online portfolio
3	P — Assessor personal development plan	V1.2 ER F	Online portfolio (candidate signed version in candidate portfolio)
4	P — Assessor personal development plan	V1.2 ER F	Online portfolio (candidate signed version in candidate portfolio)
5	P — Assessor list	V1.2 A	Online portfolio
6	RA – Personal development	V1.1 ER A 7 (V/QA) KU'S 10, 31, 32, 40	Online portfolio
	Appendix 3: IV1 Review and plan		http://INTRANET (Select Verification)
	Appendix 4: 1V2 IV Plan and checklist		As above
	Appendix 5: IV3 Assessment and Verification issues arising		As above
	Appendix 6: IV4 Pre-delivery checklist and sample selection		As above
	Appendix 7: IV5 - Record of sampling		As above
	Appendix 8: IV6 – EV Report — Points raised	Three main evidence locations identified	As above
7	P — Sampling plan	V1.3 ER C 3, 4, 5	http://INTRANET
8	P — IV schedule	V1.3 ER C 2 (PART)	Candidate portfolio
9	P — EV report	V1.1 ER B V1.1 PC C (PART)	Online portfolio

Annex 2: Evidence recording

ELEMENT V1.2 — Support Assessors

I confirm that the candidate has demonstrated competence in this element by meeting the requirements of the Performance Criteria within the scope, and that the candidate has the necessary knowledge/understanding.

Candidate's Signature _____ Assessor's Signature _____ Date _____

V1.2 Detail of Evidence Requirements

- 2.1 A list of Assessors used by centre clarifying their vocational experience.
- 2.2 Assessment information and support materials provided to Assessors and an explanation of how Assessors are supported in their use.
- 2.3 Copies of all documentation included in Assessor induction process.
- 2.4 Record of Assessor standardisation meetings led by IV candidate (you) and standardisation activities for at least two Assessors over the complete assessment process (this should include assessment planning, reviewing plans and progress, assessing candidate evidence using different methods, making a judgment, making decisions as to candidate competence, providing feedback and recording the assessment process. A minimum of two whole Units should be covered over the course of these meetings).
- 2.5 Description of how standardisation arrangements ensure consistency between Assessors over time and across candidates.
- 2.6 Personal development plans developed by you for two Assessors identifying agreed training relating to assessment.
- 2.7 Evidence of actions taken by you to address the identified needs of Assessors involving others as appropriate.

Index	Evidence Reference		Performance Criteria						
			a	b	c	d	e	f	
5	2.1	List of Assessors							
2	2.2	Assessment information and support materials							
2	2.3	Copies of induction materials							
11	2.4	Record of standardisation							
1, 16	2.2, 2.5	Written description covering assessment information and standardisation							
3, 4	2.6	Personal development plans							
3, 4	2.7	Evidence of actions taken (V1.2g)							

Performance Criteria

You must be able to demonstrate the following:

- a Ensure Assessors have appropriate technical and vocational experience.
- b Ensure Assessors are familiar with and carry out the specific assessment and follow the recording and internal audit procedures.
- c Identify the development needs of Assessors in line with:
 - ◆ Principles of assessment
 - ◆ The needs of candidates
 - ◆ Their technical expertise and competence
- d Give Assessors the chance to develop their assessment experience and competence; and monitor their progress.
- e Ensure Assessors have regular opportunities to standardise assessment decisions.

Evidence is pre-typed and shaded. This is often referred to as 'profiling'. The Assessor must still check accuracy of referencing and make appropriate adjustments.

Fitting Performance Criteria, Evidence Requirements and evidence referencing onto one page reduces paperwork significantly and allows easier access to the complete standard.

f Monitor how Assessors are capable of maintaining standards.

Case Study 2: Edinburgh Training Centre

For some time our centre has witnessed the slow progress of Assessor-candidates once they had completed their initial Assessor training. Feedback gathered from experienced and qualified colleagues, new Assessors in training, and those who have recently completed their Assessor qualifications, highlighted similar issues — the amount of information new Assessors were faced with during their initial training, the short timescale during which knowledge was imparted, and the jargonised language used. Paper volume — and in particular portfolio building and referencing of evidence — were the other main areas of concern.

In agreeing to be involved in this pilot, we were aware that we could not eradicate all these issues, but we were optimistic that we could improve on issues relating to the initial training given, portfolio building and referencing.

Initial training

We had incrementally changed the way we delivered Assessor training, as many centres do when they carry out periodic reviews. We found that providing too much information up front resulted in ‘turning off’ Assessor-candidates. Some reported feelings of being overwhelmed, which resulted in them blocking out important learning points as the course progressed.

The feedback also confirmed that we had in fact made a fairly straightforward process (workplace assessment) more complex and academic than it needed to be.

We didn’t change anything too radically in terms of the information new Assessors were given — just the pace and timing, and how it was given. Instead of giving all the technical information relating to the Assessors’ role in the initial stages of learning, we provided it in bite-sized pieces, at times when new Assessors were in a better position to receive and make sense of it.

We place a lot of importance on providing regular one-to-one support during the initial training period. This allows Assessors to discuss aspects of the assessment process they are unsure of, and helps them to reflect on how they can improve their practice in the future.

Workplace assessment at a practical skills level also requires a practical approach. We still provided tutor input, but allowed more time for Assessor-candidate practice, feedback and reflection — all part of the experiential learning process.

Reducing the paper trail

There is so much information about the Assessor and Verifier role that is available and updated centrally, eg assessment and internal verification procedures. Awarding body information, too, can be accessed more easily than in the past. Rather than make hard copies of this information and include it in the portfolio, Assessor-candidates are now encouraged to access this documentation at source. This familiarises new Assessors with the sources of information they need to access regularly, and with how they should access it.

In the past, Assessor-candidates were presented with huge lever-arch portfolios. This did not help to convey the practical nature of the Assessor role, nor did it inspire new Assessors to start assessing!

Our focus was to de-clutter the information provided to new Assessors, allowing them to focus first of all on their Assessor role rather than paper evidence gathering.

The A1 Portfolio

We looked closely at the A1 standard and its associated evidence requirements, and considered ways of reducing the amount of time and effort required to copy evidence into a portfolio and reference it. We came up with a system that uses a signposting system showing the location of evidence in a variety of natural locations instead of being transferred into one portfolio (see Annex 3).

The index was divided in two types of evidence:

- ◆ The evidence generated by the Assessor-candidate as a result of undertaking A1.
- ◆ The records generated during natural assessment activities of candidates, ie assessment plans, assessment records, reviews and feedback etc.

Apart from the assessment evidence remaining in its natural location (candidate portfolios), other evidence, such as records from standardisation meetings, remained in the centre's organisational files.

The jargon used in the Assessor/Verifier Units can put new Assessors off, but this is part of 'SVQ-speak' and so is important for Assessors to come to terms with and learn. In the new index and matrix, we aimed to create a 'bridge' between the terms we use in our centre (see the 'Reference' column in Annex 4) and the official Evidence Requirements and Performance Criteria of the Unit by linking them through the upfront referencing system.

Reflections of Centre Manager

Assessors who produce volumes of evidence to satisfy Unit requirements sometimes pass this mindset on to candidates, and so the paper cycle continues. We are not against providing an audit trail — this is necessary for all concerned

— but we would like to place the emphasis on what it means to be a work-based Assessor, the skills and knowledge, and less on portfolio construction.

We set out to reduce paperwork, and we quickly saw some benefits. Assessors appeared to gain clarity more quickly in terms of their Assessor practice, and the practical approach of leaving evidence in situ gave the whole process a more grounded and practical feel.

The index and matrix documents in the annexes were born from trial and error. We intend to run with this final version for some time, and then carry out another review.

The Edinburgh Training Centre will be happy to share any associated documentation with interested centres and SQA.

Index is split into two:
 ♦ Assessor–candidate evidence
 ♦ Candidate evidence

Annex 3 A1 portfolio construction guide/index

Candidate: work location:

Assessor:

Evidence reference	Description of evidence	Evidence location
Assessor-candidate evidence		
CP01	Assessor-candidate personal profile	Portfolio
CF01	Assessor-candidate appeals & special needs	Centre files & quality assurance manual
CF02	Assessor-candidate record of achievement	Centre files
CF03	Assessor-candidate contact/support	Centre files — internal verification process
CP02	Assessor-candidate’s work base assessment	Portfolio
CP03	Independent assessor report	Portfolio
CP04	Unit standards	Portfolio
CP05-07	Witness testimonies	Portfolio
CP08	Written reports of four methods of assessment	Portfolio
CP09	Written reports of methods not selected	Portfolio
CF04	Standardisation meetings	Centre files — verification group 242
CP10	Participation in quality assurance procedures	Portfolio
CP11	Knowledge questions/professional discussion	Portfolio
Candidate evidence		
CP12-14	Candidates’ profiles	Portfolio
CF05	Appeals & special needs	Centre files & quality assurance manual
CF06	Candidate records of achievement	Centre’s main database (electronic)
CP15-17	Action plans	Portfolio
CP18-25	Assessment plans	Portfolio
CP26-31	Feedback and outcomes	Portfolio
CP32	Unit standards	Portfolio
CP33-42	Observation checklists	Portfolio
CP43-49	Supplementary questions	Portfolio
CP50-55	Knowledge test	Portfolio
CP56-59	Personal statements	Portfolio
CP60-70	Personal logs	Portfolio
CP71-73	Witness testimonies	Portfolio
CP74-81	Product evidence	Portfolio
CP82-84	Verification records	Portfolio

CP Candidate Portfolio Assessor–
CF Centre Files Assessor–Assessor

Where index is coded F, this signifies evidence is kept in centre files.

Annex 4 Element 2 (A1.2) judge evidence against criteria to make assessment decisions

Evidence Requirements:

Assessment evidence showing the Assessor-candidate's decision for the three assessment plans generated for A1.1

A record of written or oral explanation where the Assessor has:

Used four different types of evidence (including observation) to demonstrate achievement of the standards.
Explained how the assessment methods were implemented.
Evaluated the effectiveness of the assessment methods in the light of assessing candidates.
Demonstrated his or her competence in relation to criteria – c), d), and g) for Element A1.2

Evidence has been summarised and put into 'centre speak'. The full Evidence Requirements however are included on this page and a reference bridge provided.

Portfolio Ref:

Candidate evidence CP 12 - 81 + CF06

Boxes are shaded to profile where evidence could potentially meet criteria. A1 Assessor will check accuracy of referencing and make adjustments on an individual Assessor-candidate basis.

Portfolio Ref:
CP08, CP11

*Methods not used (ref knowledge evidence): CP09

Performance Criteria:

- Use the agreed assessment methods to assess competence in appropriate situations.
- Use the past experience and achievements of candidates as part of the assessment of their current competence.
- Ensure that the evidence comes from the candidates' own work.
- Make safe, fair, valid and reliable decisions about the competence of candidates, only on the agreed standard.
- Collect evidence from other people involved in the assessment process.
- Apply any agreed special arrangements to make sure the assessment is fair.
- Base your decisions on all the relevant evidence of candidates' performance and knowledge, take this evidence from as many places as possible.
- Explain and resolve any inconsistencies in the evidence.
- Make records of the outcomes of assessments by using the agreed recording system.
- Speak to the appropriate person if you and the candidate cannot agree on your assessment of their performance.

REFERENCE		PERFORMANCE CRITERIA									
No	Description of Evidence	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
CP32	UNIT SPECIFICATION										
CP 33-42	OBSERVATION CHECKLISTS										
CP 74-81	PRODUCT EVIDENCE										
CP 71-73	WITNESS TESTIMONY										
CP 43-49	SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION										
CP 50-55	KNOWLEDGE TEST										
CP 56-70	CANDIDATE LOGS/STATEMENTS										
CF06	CANDIDATE RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT										
CP08	EXPLANATION OF METHODS USED										
CP09	*EXPLANATION OF METHODS NOT USED										
CP11	KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS/ PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION										

Annex 4 (continued)

Internal guidance

The shaded boxes in the matrix are only an indication of where evidence items in the left-hand column may meet specific Performance Criteria. It is up to the A1 Assessor to ensure evidence covers all Performance Criteria and is accurately referenced.

*Evidence must be provided for the explanation covering the methods you have not used (CP09). The following are all of the methods listed in A1. Tick the ones you have used and have already provided an explanation for, and then provide an explanation for the remaining methods and how they might be used. In your explanation, weigh up the fairness, access, validity and reliability of using each method.

Observation

Questioning

APL

Tests

Projects and tasks

Simulations

Candidate reports

Witness testimony

The awarding body perspective

One of the issues common to both case studies was the desire to leave evidence in situ. This has become increasingly popular with the emergence of electronic evidence storage systems, and there's a general wish in most centres to reduce the need for copying evidence into portfolios.

SQA is in favour of centres being able to offer their candidates options for recording evidence electronically, and is generally in agreement with reducing the burden on referencing.

To assist External Verifiers, when your centre wants to leave evidence in a location other than the candidates' portfolio, please adhere to the following points:

- ◆ The location of evidence must be referenced to the qualification under assessment, and must be referenced to the appropriate parts of the qualification, such as the Performance Criteria, or Knowledge and Evidence Requirements. This allows evidence to be tracked and sampled more easily during verification.
- ◆ When contacted by an External Verifier planning an external verification visit, you must let the External Verifier know at that time if evidence is being stored in situ, and where it is. If the External Verifier wishes to sample candidate evidence stored in this way, you must ensure he or she has complete access.
- ◆ The places where evidence is stored in situ must be recognised as official evidence storage locations, and must have the same level of security as evidence in a candidate portfolio. We strongly recommended that you 'tag' your secure locations to warn users of their secure status and to prevent files from being moved or discontinued—which could jeopardise evidence claims.
- ◆ The nature and type of evidence that can be stored in situ will depend on the candidates' occupational area. The Assessor and Verifier Units, for example, lend themselves well to this type of evidence storage as the very nature of assessment and verification is linked to standardisation and following organisational procedures. In other occupational areas, storing evidence in this format may be less appropriate, so you should seek advice from your SQA contact(s).