



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications  
Internal Assessment Report 2014  
OPITO and Oil Related Awards**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Higher National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications in this subject.

# Higher National Units

## General comments

The Units are delivered by colleges approved to deliver the onshore training phase of the OPITO managed Upstream Oil and Gas Industry Technician Training Scheme (UOGITTS) which is a modern apprenticeship programme. To fulfil this role OPITO is in partnership with Oil & Gas UK, the Offshore Contractors Association and ECITB.

During this phase the candidates achieve:

- ◆ SVQ Level 1 in Processing Operations: Hydrocarbons
- ◆ SVQ Level 2 in Performing Engineering Operations
- ◆ National Certificate (mixed disciplines)
- ◆ Higher National Certificate (specific discipline in processing operations or engineering maintenance)

The approved centres normally contribute to, and support, the development and review of the Units and therefore have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

The number of assessors involved in delivering the Units is relatively small and it is evident from their participation in industry work groups and in discussions during qualification verification that they have a good grasp of the Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and relevant reference and supporting materials.

## Evidence Requirements

It is evident that the training providers have a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the Units. This is brought about, not only by their participation in the determination of the content and scope of the Units, but also by their contribution to the review of the delivery mechanism for the UOGITTS. This has also been influenced by the development of the Global Qualification Framework that has been developed by the SQA/OPITO partnership.

## Administration of assessments

The session for 2013–14 was the first one where the qualification verification team for group 52 OPITO and Oil Related Awards had been involved in the verification of HN Units. Although there were no historical records to hand it was evident that assessments by centres were appropriate to the award. There was a mixture of paper-based and electronic testing processes that were sound and these were monitored through effective internal verification processes.

**General feedback**

Many candidates were interviewed during qualification verification and all comments were very positive about the content of training and support they had received both from the colleges and OPITO.

**Areas of good practice**

This was the first year that the QV team had been involved in HN provision. Because of this, there were no benchmarks on which to base decisions relating to good practice. This is considered to be that in excess of normal good practice.

**Specific areas for improvement**

There were no major areas for improvement identified by the QV team.

# SVQ awards

## General comments

The candidates were either trainees following the modern apprenticeship scheme or technicians whose competence needed to be assured for regulatory and/or business needs.

The typical candidate was following the OPITO managed Upstream Oil and Gas Industry Technician Training Scheme (UOGITTS) which is a modern apprenticeship programme. To fulfil this role OPITO is in partnership with Oil & Gas UK, the Offshore Contractors Association and ECITB.

During the 21-month college-based phase the candidates achieve:

- ◆ SVQ Level 1 in Processing Operations: Hydrocarbons
- ◆ SVQ Level 2 in Performing Engineering Operations
- ◆ National Certificate (mixed disciplines)
- ◆ Higher National Certificate (specific discipline in processing operations or engineering maintenance)

The next phase of two years duration consists of on-the-job training with a sponsoring offshore operator. During this period the candidate gains a Level 3 SVQ in their discipline of either hydrocarbon processing operations or engineering maintenance operations.

The approved centres normally contribute to, and support, the development and review of the Units on industry work groups and therefore have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements.

Most of the centres verified are well experienced in running SVQs and so have a clear, accurate and common understanding of the requirements relating to the National Occupational Standards (NOS). The NOS relating to the SVQs for Processing Operations: Hydrocarbons Levels 1 to 3 (G8LY 21, G8M2 22 and G8M8 23 respectively) and the SVQ Level 2 for Offshore Deck Operations (G8M0 22) have undergone a partial process of fundamental review. Due to pressing global priorities the reviews have been put on hold and the awards extended until July 2015. The review process is imminently due to be continued and this will also include the suite of engineering maintenance SVQs. Several centres hold 'away days' for their assessment and verification teams and the qualification verifiers are given full opportunity to participate in these.

Broad ranging discussions and queries raised by centres with the qualification verifiers provide a good insight into the level of understanding of the requirements.

The qualification verifiers have commented on the effectiveness of the standardisation processes and this has led to a perceived incremental improvement in the quality of delivery on a year-by-year basis.

All centres were subject to QAMS, SQA's new approach to quality assurance. This has generally been welcomed although there has been comment about the interpretation of some of the criteria. SQA is aware of the concerns and these will be considered and the criteria reviewed and amended where necessary.

Centres now better understand the requirements relating to the technical expertise of assessors and internal verifiers of SVQs. This has been helped by the publication of the OPITO Assessment and Verification Strategy for Upstream Oil and Gas SVQs that now sits on SQA's website.

## **Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials**

With many centres having multiple assessments sites that are mainly offshore and so, remote by nature, then standardisation and the assessors' familiarity with Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification is critical to the assessment process. Assessors achieve a good common understanding of the requirements in several ways that may include, but are not be limited to:

- ◆ Continuing professional development (CPD) activities that may involve individuals, centre staff, mentors and external bodies
- ◆ Standardisation meetings that take many forms. They may involve all assessors and internal verifiers at 'away days'; face-to-face meetings with mentors, lead verifiers or individuals dedicated to the competence management system; video conferences; and mailshots
- ◆ In-house intranets
- ◆ Websites (SQA and OPITO)
- ◆ Participating in industry work groups reviewing NOS and qualification frameworks
- ◆ Formal training to the latest assessor qualifications
- ◆ Guidance issued by the centre, SQA and OPITO
- ◆ Case studies

Many centres have been accessing the SVQs for a considerable period of time and this has provided the opportunity for assessors to gain a great deal of experience. Also, it is not unusual for assessors to work with SVQs, customised awards and approved competence management systems (CMS). This provides them with additional experience that is broad based.

## **Evidence Requirements**

There is generally a good common understanding of the Evidence Requirements amongst centres. The Evidence Requirements for the SVQs for Processing Operations: Hydrocarbons are not as transparent as they could be as the

standards are described as functions and not as tasks. With functions applied to a considerable number of hydrocarbon processes and systems, some centres have been concerned about the best way of undertaking and recording these. The NOS review process that is currently on hold has resulted in standards being task based and this has clarified the Evidence Requirements as Units describe the operation of named pieces of plant and equipment. The sector has strongly supported this approach.

### **Administration of assessments**

By law, duty holders and employers are ultimately responsible for ensuring all members of the offshore workforce are adequately trained and competent. The methodology is not prescriptive and the delivery of SVQs is seen to be one way of assuring workforce competence. To this end, assessment and internal verification processes tend to be robust and well recorded. As competence assurance relates to both trainees and deemed competent people then routes to qualifications have been developed to cater for this. Centres have also been aided by the guidance provided by SQA and OPITO.

Internal verification is robustly undertaken as it is seen to be akin to internal audit and management review that form essential components of a quality management system.

### **General feedback**

The QVs (Qualification Verifiers) are normally able to interview candidates, assessors and internal verifiers at the centres. This is dependent on operational considerations and work patterns. Except for the college-based candidates, others work in an offshore environment and may reside well away from the centre. Often the centre Co-ordinator is an active assessor and/or internal verifier so feedback at this level can be taken from one person.

Candidates are always provided with feedback. This is not universally well recorded and appears as an action point regularly. It is often because of the offshore working environment where the candidate and assessor work closely together and oral feedback is provided continuously throughout the assessment process.

Candidates interviewed are predominantly those enrolled on the UOGITTS modern apprentice programme. They usually provide positive feedback on the provision and the support received from the training providers and OPITO. They regularly receive feedback from college staff and from OPITO during the three monthly progress review process.

It should be noted that the feedback QVs receive about the SQA provision is generally positive. The review of the Process Operations: Hydrocarbons NOS prompts discussions as the centres are keen to progress the review process and implement the new standards.

The candidate appeals procedure and registers are closely monitored during qualification verification, however, it still remains the case that there have been no instances of appeals being made.

## **Areas of good practice**

The QVs have cited examples of good practice for the majority of centres and this is indicative of the continuing improvements that are taking place.

The use of electronic portfolios is gaining pace and some of these are sophisticated and allow for online internal verification and qualification verification. In some instances the majority of evidence is available online and include full product evidence, details of assessors' and internal verifiers' experience and qualifications, and the system procedures and processes. It gives access to all recorded information in one location. This is most useful where centres have global assessment sites. Provision has also been made for video recording.

Another example of good practice has been the employment of dedicated personnel for the competence management system. These visit sites regularly to support assessors and candidates alike. They mentor assessors and candidates and therefore contribute to the overall standardisation processes.

The level of investment by the colleges on their processes simulators used to deliver the Level 1 SVQ for Process Operations: Hydrocarbons that supports the UOGITTS continues to grow and there have been innovative approaches to using chemicals rather than water. These closer reflect the properties of hydrocarbons but without the inherent risks.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

Cross-referencing assessment evidence to the performance and knowledge criteria has been an issue on a few occasions. This has resulted in the need for evidence to be more closely scrutinised by internal verifiers and qualification verifiers. In all cases the centres have readily accepted the request for evidence to be more closely cross-referenced to the standards and criteria. Again, the issue has been seen to be caused by multiple assessment sites, some of which might not have the same heritage.