



Internal Assessment Report 2010: Highways Maintenance and Road- building (349)

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

SVQ Awards

Titles/levels of SVQ Awards verified

G88T 22: Highways Maintenance (level 2)

G89C 22: Road-building (level 2)

General comments

Across centres, it was noted that the Highways Maintenance and Road-building trainers and Assessors are very experienced, occupationally competent, and quite aware of Sector Skills Council (SSC) assessment strategies. They have been well inducted and practised over time, to such an extent that they have a clear understanding of the national standards requirements.

Centres have made good use of SQA assessor guidance and candidate portfolio guidance documents to influence their assessment devices and recording intentions, in line with a detailed understanding of the Units. In this way, centres consistently meet and show a mature understanding of the national standards requirements.

When the present suite of Highways Maintenance and Road-building Units were first introduced, centres requested in-house training and development visits to fully understand the new national standards. This has resulted in a very high level of understanding of the requirements of the national standards by centres and staff.

A good indication that Unit specifications and instruments of assessment requirements are understood can be gained from assessment devices and approaches adopted by the Assessor/centre. This has been confirmed this session by IV and EV reports.

There has been high investment (at the initial stage of the award's availability) in time and resources on the development of candidate assessment evidence portfolios, assessment devices, and assessment strategies, in the frequently consulted SQA assessor guidance and candidate portfolio guidance documents. This has heavily influenced the instruments of assessment, which have been used to good effect.

Good internal and external verification has included reporting on the extent to which centre staff understand Unit assessment requirements.

Some centres have made good use of the knowledge question bank for each Unit of the award area purchased from the SSC.

How candidate assessment evidence is gathered, recorded, referenced by a matrix, and presented is a very good measure of how well centre staff understand the complexity of the Evidence Requirements. This is the case for both the extensive 'Knowledge and Understanding relating to Performance Criteria' and 'Scope of Knowledge and Understanding' sections of the Unit. EV

reports indicate a good level of understanding of this somewhat complex assessment area between 'Knowledge and Understanding relating to Performance Criteria' and 'Scope of Knowledge and Understanding'.

The 'Performance Criteria' and 'Scope of Performance' sections of the Unit standard generally require the Assessor to observe performance tasks taking place, and report and record back in narrative form the candidate 'Performance Criteria' and 'Scope of Performance' abilities. IV and EV reports indicate that Assessors this session have reached a much improved level of narrative reporting and recording.

Centre staff have the ability, at the initial candidate needs analysis stage, to place a candidate on an experienced or inexperienced assessment gathering route. This is probably the greatest factor in confirming that Unit evidence understanding and requirements have been applied by centres and staff.

Centre staff who conduct the correct needs analysis, at an early stage of candidate enrolment, lay down a good foundation for monitoring whether the correct assessment procedures are being applied. This determines the most appropriate form of assessment, gathering devices and approaches to be taken for these awards.

Centres in this awards sector are very good at securing the best assessment opportunities for their candidates. This is due to the robust shared agreements they have with their roads authority and contractor clients to gain access to real working sites. This ensures a realistic working environment (RWE) for candidate assessments, and ensures that all the Unit assessment needs have been met in full.

Centres have constantly monitored whether all candidate assessment outcomes are of the correct level and fully meet the Unit requirement. Benchmarking assessment decisions made against other Assessors, Assessor review meetings, and robust internal verification have also been effective in confirming that the proper administration and assessment decisions have been made.

Assessment outcome feedback to candidates is, in the main, given formally at the end of the Unit/Unit element stages, and again at the end of the Unit/award stage. On the whole, the level of such feedback is adequate.

Feedback from the candidates interviewed is very positive in terms of their training and assessment experience. They are also usually very complimentary about how they are treated and helped by a wide cross-section of centre staff.

To date, the 349 group have not reported or dealt with any issues concerning access to assessment.

There is a need for a good understanding of the contextual differences between the same Unit titles and numbers in the 352 Construction awards and the 349 Highways awards. Where candidates are crossing over from one award area to another, this must be considered carefully.

Areas of good practice

Analysis of the 2009/10 EV8a report forms indicates that centres continue to meet the SSC assessment strategy requirements in full.

Centre teaching and assessment staff have shown themselves to be occupationally skilled, dedicated and motivated. This has ensured an enriching learning and skills experience for the candidate, and a sound quality assurance base for the Highways Maintenance and Road-building awards. There have been instances where the extra work that Assessors have spent on candidates has contributed to those candidates securing full-time employment after completing their award.

Centres constantly review and adapt systems, methods and approaches, where necessary.

Centres have a good history of participating in RWE assessment gathering events that have to take place out of normal working hours, especially in the winter maintenance Unit.

Centres have used on-the-job work experience diaries to confirm that candidates' overall development needs are being met, and to confirm readiness for assessment.

Easy-to-follow candidate evidence portfolios, and other related centre-generated documentation trails, are much in evidence.

Good participation in meaningful CPD by centre staff has helped keep them motivated, competent, and aware of the award area.

Good robust internal verification, with a high rate of self-imposed candidate assessment sampled, facilitates good quality assurance checks.

Areas for improvement

Centres, and their Highways Maintenance and Road-building awards staff, could be more active in influencing their roads authority and contractor clients to report Unit and award structure improvements to the SSC. These improvements could be made at incremental or total review stages.

The present IV focus on sampling Assessors' narrative reports of candidate assessment should continue. This confirms that the levels of assessment decisions, Unit performance and knowledge elements, and cross referencing of Unit assessment requirements, have been met in full.