



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2012**

**Carpentry and Joinery
(incorporating Formwork and
Shopfitting)**

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

SVQ awards

General comments

All of the centres visited for the SVQ Level 3 Carpentry and Joinery award had a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards.

Unfortunately the one centre which offered the SVQ Level 3 Shopfitting had no candidates registered this session, which is a reflection of the current economic climate in the construction industry. However, the centres offering the Carpentry and Joinery award were all using the most current version of the nationally-devised assessment instruments and Unit specifications effectively (TAP and PDA Level 6).

Centre staff were recording candidates' achievements by means of an individual portfolio system, as well as appropriate documentation to support the process. There were instances in a few centres of candidates' signatures missing from portfolios at the time of EV visits; however, this was easily rectified by centre staff and candidates. The portfolio system dovetailed with Construction Skills recording/reporting mechanisms and was proving, in the main, to be very effective.

Discussions with assessors and Internal Verifiers confirmed that centres were very conversant with the requirements of the award, and any development points noted were more about fine tuning as opposed to a significant lack of knowledge.

Comments from the EVs regarding the quality of the work presented for sampling also confirmed that centres were almost all fully conversant with the requirements of the award. It was pleasing to note that the standard of work presented has improved overall, ranging from good to exceptional.

It is also encouraging to note that centres have acknowledged the importance of concentrating on the quality of the finish of the practical work in the early stages of the award. The need to fully develop candidates' skills at this stage is critical, as it prepares candidates for the more demanding criteria at later stages in the Course.

An essential part of this process, which has been highlighted in almost all the reports, is the need for timely and constructive feedback to be given to candidates. This allows the assessor to set standards early on in the formative assessment process, and will undoubtedly help candidates achieve the required summative standards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Of the centres visited, all the assessment teams were familiar with the Course structure and documentation. Centre staff are much clearer on the requirements of the TAP Unit 1 covering the Scaffolding Appreciation and this is operating well.

The revised approach to meeting the requirements for scaffolding within the award has removed some considerable burden from centres in terms of staff qualifications requirements and also resources. It is seen by all to be a positive move from the previous requirements.

All the centres were delivering the award, to satisfy the requirements of the Unit specifications, in a range of different ways which were maximising the candidates' experience. In more and more centres there was a distinct move towards more student-centred learning and a more flexible, blended approach. In an ever-increasing number of centres, candidates were accessing centre-developed learning materials remotely through VLEs/Moodle.

Evidence from a range of activities and experiences is being used to satisfy the requirements of the generic Units. This in itself demonstrates a great depth of knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the award from the assessors to be able to track candidates' progress across a range of disciplines.

Almost all centres have now developed a tracker system to ensure that opportunities are not lost in recording evidence for the generic Units. An ever-increasing number of centres are putting the responsibility onto the learner to gather and record this type of evidence.

In the continuing climate of falling numbers and composite groups, it is essential that centres ensure all of the Course content is fully covered. To maintain viability, more than a few centres are continually developing learning materials that are more student-centred (rather than all lecturer-led) to assist in joint delivery using intranet and VLE-based learning materials.

All centres continue to demonstrate a vast and innovative range of approaches to gather evidence for this award. Centres are able to create an assessment environment conducive to gathering the required evidence in terms of standard, amount, relevance and reliability.

Assessment teams should be proud of their continuing ability to create a positive learning environment and to provide the opportunity for their candidates to generate evidence in increasingly challenging situations.

Centres were all keen to find out as much as possible about the new Course framework and the intended delivery patterns. There were some concerns expressed by centres as to whether they would be in receipt of the revised TAP in sufficient time for delivery to learners at the start of the academic session. EVs advised centres that everything possible was being done to have the materials available on time, but that it was important that the materials had been through the normal rigorous vetting stages before their release.

Evidence Requirements

All of the centres are using the SQA-devised Training and Assessment Programme (TAP) which contains very comprehensive details on the Evidence Requirements for the award. The programme covers both practical skills and knowledge and understanding.

The practical activities are split into a series of tasks and tests which learners undertake either individually or as part of a team. The criteria for these activities are fully explained within the TAP, and learners receive written feedback either during or after completion of the exercise.

The knowledge and understanding elements of the award are assessed using either multi-choice or short answer questions. The criteria for passing each assessment are clearly stated on each individual assessment, and there is a set of model answers for every assessment.

All centres are administering the programme effectively and efficiently, and across the sample of centres there were no holds placed on certification.

Administration of assessments

All of the centres visited were using the nationally-devised assessment materials, which ensured the assessments were at the appropriate level and met all the Performance Criteria for each Unit.

Through discussions with candidates, EVs confirmed that in all cases candidates felt assessments were being administered at an appropriate time during the delivery of the Course. There were some good examples of an integrated approach being adopted for the more generic-type Units/assessments.

In almost all cases, candidates were given responsibility for tracking their own progress through a portfolio approach.

In almost all instances, candidates were being provided with good clear constructive feedback on an ongoing basis, which helped them develop confidence.

In all cases, the assessors were making fair, reliable and consistent decisions across the range of Units being delivered.

Internal verification was taking place in all centres and was proving to be reliable and effective. In more than a few centres, specific mention was made of the excellent systems in place, which mostly included electronic documentation and recording systems. Centre staff were all working to the V1 standards and either held the appropriate award or, in the remaining cases, were working towards it within a specified timescale.

General feedback

Feedback to candidates

From all the centres sampled, there was only one mention of where feedback to candidates could be improved on. Otherwise EVs commented very positively on the quality of feedback given to candidates.

In two instances, EVs recommended that feedback be written directly onto candidates' drawings rather than in isolation in the portfolio. This would help in carrying remediation forward to the next drawing, and the candidate would be fully aware of the assessor's expectations.

As mentioned in previous reports, centres have acknowledged the importance of feedback in the formative and summative assessment process and are using it to good effect.

Feedback from candidates interviewed

In all cases, discussions with candidates confirmed that feedback was very beneficial to them and had formed an important part of their Course. They commented on how feedback was seen as a positive element of their Course and that the support they received from their lecturer(s) was very good.

In almost all cases, candidates felt that the structure of the Course was good and well managed. The Course content was very relevant to their activities in the workplace and they had opportunities to attempt certain aspects of their craft in college, which they may otherwise not have been able to do in the workplace (depending on the specialism and size of company by whom they were employed).

The knowledge and understanding element of a Course such as this can sometimes prove to be a challenge for some candidates, but almost all of the candidates interviewed could see the relevance and future benefits of core skills.

Access to assessment

In all cases there were no barriers to assessment, and under the continuing difficult economic climate centres were demonstrating an even greater than usual amount of flexibility to ensure candidates were not disadvantaged in any way.

To accommodate employers' and managing agents' requirements centres were amending attendance patterns and continuing to provide, in some instances, additional time outwith the normal working day to allow candidates to prepare for or attempt assessments. Candidates in this situation were very appreciative of this approach, which allowed them to keep on-track with their studies as well as satisfying their employers' demands.

In more than a few cases there were examples of additional support being provided for candidates with additional needs, which ensured they had fair access to assessment.

Other points which are recurring and considered significant

There has been a significant increase in the number of 'work-based evidence reports', from first through to fourth year, available for External Verifiers to countersign.

Areas of good practice

Sustainability awareness and recycling of materials

This continued to be evident in centres, which is very encouraging and is an important part of the responsibility of staff delivering this award.

Electronic technology for teaching and assessing

It is encouraging to continue to report that centres are being equipped with the technology for enhancing the candidate's experience, which also includes workshops. This technology will play a very important role in the viability and sustainability of this award in the future.

Flexible blended delivery/student-centred learning

This was becoming more and more evident in centres where candidates were being given an increasing level of responsibility for their own learning. In more than a few centres learners were accessing learning materials remotely, with lecturers' support via e-mail and other electronic media.

Personal learning plans

One centre was adopting this approach where each learner completed a centre-devised personal learning and support plan. The plan sets out some of their personal background and also lists goals and aspirations and allows them to set personal and social — as well as academic — development targets. The plan is reviewed on an ongoing basis in three distinct blocks in each of the two years, and sits very well with developing 'soft' skills and with beginning to meet some of the requirements of Curriculum for Excellence.

Learner's diary/log

A few centres were demonstrating the continued use of student logs/diaries which had been desktop-published and included graphics to support the activity. This is an excellent example of the opportunities available to develop and record ITC skills within the normal delivery of the award.

Specific areas for improvement

Thirty centres were visited for this award, and no holds were placed on certification. Three of these visits were carried out using the new quality assurance approach and were well received by the centres, with no specific issues raised by the External Verifier.

The areas for improvement from last session had been, in almost all instances, fully addressed with no major development points coming through for this session.

Centres will be offering the revised award this coming session, and EVs will play a major role in supporting centres through the transition period and helping the new award bed in.

Centres are continually improving through self-evaluation, and it is encouraging to note that for another year no holds have been placed on certification for this award.

The industry is still in serious recession and centres continually have to review their delivery patterns and styles to keep abreast of change. It is also very encouraging to note that the Curriculum for Excellence agenda is being fully embraced and in most centres included as a standard approach.

In spite of the ongoing challenges facing most centres regarding viability and multi-level teaching, it is pleasing to note that the standard of the work is being maintained and in more than a few instances improved on. This is very encouraging, and Course teams across the sector should again be very proud of their achievements over the past academic session.