



# **SVQ Internal Assessment Report: Management**

Sector Panel or SSC:            Management Standards Centre (MSC)

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

# SVQ awards

## Titles/levels of SVQ awards verified

G81V 22: SVQ Team Leading (level 2)

G81T 23: SVQ Management (level 3)

G81R 24: SVQ Management (level 4)

G820 25: SVQ Management (level 5)

## Feedback to centres

### General comments

Changes in funding arrangements for Modern Apprenticeships led to a reduction in the number of candidates attempting SVQ Management awards and this, in turn, affected the amount of external verification undertaken in this subject area during 2008–2009. However, despite this difficult environment for centres, it is very encouraging that the main conclusion from external verification remains the same as it has been for some years. It is that most centres have sound systems and procedures for the delivery of SVQ Management. As a result, the awards are, in the vast majority of centres, delivered effectively and candidates produce work of a good standard which is presented in a clear, accessible format. Almost all EV reports commented on the high level of commitment and enthusiasm of staff at centres. It is encouraging that centres generally responded constructively to development points in EV reports and this also contributed to the good standard of delivery of the awards.

It is noteworthy also that, once again, candidates who participated in EV visits were highly supportive of the help that they had received from staff at centres. Many also commented that the SVQ Management had been of value to them both in terms of developing their capabilities as managers and in building self-confidence. The awards would seem, therefore, to be continuing to meet training and development needs among managers. There are encouraging signs too that, despite the economic climate, centres are able to recruit new candidates. All available evidence also confirms that centres continue to find the new standards easy to work with. The new Units which have been added to the awards have been welcomed. They enable centres to give more choice to candidates — more choice which helps to fit Units in an SVQ Management as closely as possible to the development needs and managerial responsibilities of each candidate.

The trend towards electronic systems of delivery has continued through e-portfolios and through other means such as virtual learning environments. Even where electronic systems are not used directly for delivery, considerable use is being made of electronic methods to record candidate progress and to facilitate communication between centre staff and between candidates and their assessors or advisers. There can be a danger in some cases that e-portfolios are not 'candidate led' in that responsibility for managing portfolios may rest too heavily with assessors or advisers so that control over the portfolio shifts away from the candidate. The responsibility for building a portfolio of evidence lies with the candidate, and candidates should be able to decide for themselves, with suitable advice, how best to use an e-portfolio to present their work.

Procedures for standardisation and internal verification seem to be working well also in the majority of centres. Most centres record standardisation properly with clear minutes and these formal meetings are often supplemented by ad hoc discussions between assessors and between assessors and internal verifiers. This helps to address any inconsistency between assessors which still sometimes arises. There have been improvements too in the way centres monitor feedback from IVs and ensure that recommendations from IVs are acted on. It is hoped that further progress can be made in this area as there is a danger that internal verification can become routine and be undertaken with the implicit intention of confirming assessor judgements as quickly as possible. This problem is sometimes intensified when internal verification is only carried out after all assessment has been undertaken. Interim internal verification can be a useful way of monitoring candidate work and centres which use this find it beneficial. As well as providing an 'early warning' system, it can make it easier for candidates and assessors to make changes in portfolios and to embed these changes in subsequent work.

Centres are also continuing to make good use of material to support the awards. The SQA support material continues to be well received and there are indications that centres would welcome additional material to support popular optional Units. Centres also make use of various web-based sources and material which they have generated themselves, another indication of the high levels of commitment of centre staff to the awards. Unit guides, which take candidates through the requirements of individual Units, have proved particularly effective. This material is often made available electronically, for example, as part of an e-portfolio system, through a VLE or intranet, or on a memory stick given to candidates. This provides a further illustration of how electronic methods can enhance the delivery of the SVQ Management.

Support materials also emphasise the importance of the knowledge and understanding requirements of the standards. Centres approach these in different ways but it is essential that candidates demonstrate that they are aware of this part of the standards. They are particularly important in ensuring that assessment is pitched at the right level. This is determined by the SCQF level of the Unit and centres may find it helpful to remind themselves of this. The situation in the SVQ Management is complicated by the fact that some Units which are optional at SVQ level 3 have a high SCQF level. It can be difficult for some candidates who can attain an SVQ at level 3 to reach the required level in some of these optional Units. This is something which centres may wish to consider when advising candidates on which optional Units to select.

The importance of pitching assessment at the right level highlights the critical role of product or performance evidence in candidate portfolios. This is evidence which is produced by the candidate in the workplace and shows that the candidate has met, in their work as a manager, the requirements of the standards. Other forms of evidence such as witness testimony can be used but product or performance evidence is generally the strongest form of evidence available. Observation can also be good evidence but it requires to be used judiciously to ensure that the observer does not influence the situation. It is also possible for candidates to make use of evidence which they did not generate but which relates to work which they do, eg replies to e-mails which the candidate has sent.

This leads to another issue which has been mentioned in previous reports. It, too, is also an aspect of ensuring that assessment is pitched at the right level. Candidates must show

clearly and unambiguously that they understand the requirements of the standards for each Unit in the SVQ Management, ie outcomes, behaviours and knowledge and understanding. This is also part of the need for portfolios to be candidate-led. Previous reports have drawn attention to page 12 of the *SQA Assessment Guidance for SVQ Management* which states that candidates must show how their evidence relates to all parts of the standards and that they must demonstrate that they are: 'aware of how the evidence submitted proves that s/he does work in accordance with the standards and understands why the standards represent good managerial practice'. A key part of the learning in the SVQ is that candidates explicitly recognise the standards as a framework for good managerial practice.

Each candidate should therefore show how the product/performance evidence of her/his work as a manager represents proof that s/he understands the standards and works in accordance with them. In other words, candidates must demonstrate that they have met the requirements of the standards. All centres seem to be well aware that this can be done in several different ways such as a narrative, reflective account, professional discussion, or annotation of items of evidence. There are occasions also when the performance evidence 'speaks for itself' and no further explanation is required. Sometimes, especially with professional discussion, the emphasis can move to a discussion of the evidence itself which, as a result, does not focus on how and why the evidence proves that the candidate meets the standards. There were a lot of examples also of evidence which was mentioned in narratives, professional discussion, etc but not included in the portfolio. Centres are reminded that all evidence to which a candidate refers should be included.

A number of points which have been mentioned in previous reports were also noted at EV visits. Each one only applies to a minority of centres but the same centres are not always involved. It is worth therefore listing them as a reminder of what is required in SVQ portfolios:

- ◆ Evidence not included in a portfolio — this may be for several reasons such as it is considered confidential, it is located elsewhere, it does not exist in an electronic format. The procedure for this has been outlined in previous reports also. Candidates must provide a clear and verifiable audit trail for the evidence. This must include a precise and accurate description of what the evidence is, and a precise statement of where it is located. This is necessary so that an assessor, IV and EV can make an initial judgement on the suitability of the evidence. Any definitive judgement can only be made if the evidence itself is seen. The SVQ Management requires that all evidence included in portfolios can, if necessary, be looked at by an assessor, IV or EV. This may mean that centres have to make arrangements for an EV to visit a candidate's place of work. In cases like this it would be helpful, before a visit, if centres could alert EVs to the fact that evidence will not be available at the centre's premises. Candidates can also be advised not to include evidence which may be confidential (unless it can be anonymised) and to seek alternative evidence of their work which will prove their competence.
- ◆ Use of policy documents — these are not usually attributable to the candidate and the general rule is that they do not need to be included in portfolios. Relevant evidence shows how the candidate implements organisational policy in a way that enables her/him to meet the standards.

- ◆ Blank forms — these fall into the same category as policy documents in that they do not demonstrate what the candidate actually does as a manager, unless they have been developed by the candidate. Again, they do not normally show how the candidate actually behaves as a manager or what outcomes s/he achieves.
- ◆ Currency of evidence — this applies particularly where candidates, usually for good reasons, take some time to complete their work. Normally evidence should not be more than two years old. One way to avoid this is to assess and sign off Units as they are completed.
- ◆ CPD records — these should be up to date and available for inspection at an EV visit, even for staff who may not be based at the centre and who keep their CPD records away from the centre's base; it is important also that CPD activities are relevant to the assessor/adviser or IV role in the SVQ Management.
- ◆ Portfolio sample — all portfolios selected by an EV for a sample must be available for the EV visit. If, for some reason, a portfolio cannot be made available, the EV should be informed prior to the visit; the EV can then select alternative portfolios if this is deemed necessary — it is not appropriate for the centre to substitute another portfolio and inform the EV on the day of the visit.

### **Advice on good practice**

Once again, it is good to be able to report that good practice from previous years is being maintained and developed. Most of the following points have been made in previous reports but all bear repetition not least because this reinforces the professional manner in which the majority of SVQ Management centres operate. Good practice which has been particularly evident this year includes:

- ◆ Regular, meaningful and effective communication between assessors and candidates — this is helped by the increased use of electronic methods mentioned earlier and supported by feedback from candidates. Many assessors give careful, detailed feedback which contributes substantially to the good work which candidates produce.
- ◆ Strong procedures and systems for delivering all aspects of the awards from assessment planning through the internal verification and recording and monitoring of candidate progress.
- ◆ Good use of web-based and other resources to support candidates, particularly ones developed by centres themselves.
- ◆ Short, sharp professional discussion focused on specific aspects of the standards.
- ◆ Emphasis on naturally occurring performance evidence — this continues to be the foundation of good portfolios for SVQ Management.
- ◆ Carefully planned systems for the induction of new assessors and IVs — this has been particularly apparent during this verification session.
- ◆ Carefully structured plans for internal verification, including interim verification, which ensure all Units and assessors are adequately sampled in the IV process.
- ◆ A willingness to respond to development points raised by EVs.

Overall, it is clear that centres continue to strive towards improving the way the SVQ Management is delivered. This illustrates once more the commitment of assessors, IVs and

others to the SVQ Management. This is perhaps the most important aspect of good practice and one for which those concerned deserve much credit.

## **Areas for further development**

Future development for the SVQ Management will come from the spread of the good practice above as well as new ideas developed in centres and the dissemination of these new approaches. There are also developments in SVQs as a whole which will impinge on the SVQ Management. Attention has already been drawn to many of these in previous reports but the following list highlights those factors which are most important at present. Some may apply more strongly to some centres than to others.

The main development points are:

- 1 Ensuring that assessment is pitched at the appropriate level — this will require that centres pay careful attention to the SCQF level of Units as well as to the level of the SVQ Management. Although SCQF levels for SVQ Management Units have been in existence for some time, they have not perhaps been given the attention which they deserve. Session 2009–2010 will see greater emphasis by EVs on ensuring that candidate work is pitched at the SCQF level of the Unit. This may mean some changes in practice in some centres. It may mean that knowledge and understanding become more important while the role of narratives/reflective accounts/professional discussion may become even more critical. The choice of optional Units may also become more important especially for those Units such as C5 and C6 which are optional in SVQ Management level 3 but levelled at SCQF level 10.
- 2 Making sure that candidates provide a clear link between their evidence and the standards — demonstrating an understanding of the standards is an important part of candidate learning in the SVQ Management as well as helping to show that candidates have reached the requisite SCQF level. The relevant sections of the SQA Assessment Guidance have been referred to above. They go on to point out the importance of doing this by providing a reflective account, annotation of evidence, or a professional discussion — or any combination of the three. Candidates should also make sure that pieces of evidence referred to in reflective accounts, professional discussion or observation are included in portfolios.
- 3 Ensuring that evidence submitted is attributable to the candidate and demonstrates what the candidate actually did in order to meet the standards — it is not sufficient for candidates to say what they might have done or intend to do; evidence must show what the candidate actually did. For this reason, company information and other procedural documents are not usually good evidence since they do not show how the candidate made use of them in order to meet the outcomes and behaviours in the standards. The inclusion of such documents does not, of itself, show knowledge and understanding.
- 4 Ensuring that a full audit trail is provided where evidence cannot be included in a portfolio — it is insufficient for assessors to say they have seen it. A full description of any such evidence should also be provided. Any evidence referred to in a portfolio must be available for inspection by an assessor, IV or EV — if this cannot be guaranteed, then the evidence cannot form part of a candidate's claim for competence.

- 5 Ensuring that candidates submit suitable product or performance evidence to demonstrate that in their work as managers they achieve the outcomes in the standards and behave in the way the standards demand. Product or performance evidence may also help candidates to meet the knowledge and understanding requirements of the standards.
- 6 Continuing to emphasise the importance of portfolios being 'candidate led'.
- 7 Making sure internal verification is effective — for example by the use of interim internal verification and by recording action taken in response to IV comments.

It is very encouraging indeed to be able to conclude this report by congratulating centres on the work they have done in the delivery of the SVQ Management. External verification has confirmed — again — that, with very few exceptions, the SVQ Management is being delivered in an effective and appropriate manner and that candidates benefit, as managers and as people, from the experience. The SVQ Management awards are fortunate to have the significant asset of the strong motivation of staff at centres.