



Internal Assessment Report (2009): Brickwork and Construction and Civil Engineering

Sector Panel or SSC:

ConstructionSkills

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

Higher National Units

General comments

Advanced Craft/Higher National Units in Brickwork

This award continues to prove to be very challenging as it reflects the very highest of craft practical skills to be attained by candidates. There had been an improvement in recent years in the uptake of this award, but the construction recession has had a negative effect on candidate registrations. External verification was undertaken on a very limited basis last session.

The external verification was limited to a sample of only one participating centre. Therefore, any comments require to be tempered with some caution owing to this very limited sample of external verification. However, there was some evidence that the overall high standards continue to be maintained.

Once again, the timescales set for the completion of the various brickwork practical assessments are proving to be very challenging. This is intended to reflect the realities of the industry requirements and targets to be met by craftsmen.

The award continues to be highly respected in the sector and is currently under review, with the reviewed award planned to be available for session 2010–11. It is anticipated that this review will introduce a strong dimension of environmental awareness to the award, including areas such as eco construction methods, sustainability and conservation.

Advice on good practice

Evidence of good practice included: candidates demonstrating excellent building skills, drawings and sketches that were very good in many of those sampled, and candidates demonstrating the correct attitudes towards their work and operating in a professional manner.

Areas for further development

Although a significant minority of candidates were not yet achieving the high industrial tolerances set for the award, the majority of the candidates were demonstrating their ability to achieve these standards.

This minority of candidates who are having difficulty in meeting the tolerances set may benefit by additional training sessions being provided in the college, or alternatively by gaining further industrial experience in the workplace, prior to embarking on the award.

Sample answers for the subjective questions and assignments need to be developed in some centres in order to ensure standardisation of assessment decisions.

SVQ Awards

Titles/levels of SVQ Awards verified

Brickwork (171) SVQ at levels 2 and 3

Construction and Civil Engineering (352) SVQ at levels 1 and 2

Brickwork (171) SVQ at levels 2 and 3

General comments

Once again, the standard of work which was sampled during external verification visits this session remains at a consistently high level, with a number of centres producing excellent work. The Training and Assessment Programmes (TAP) development has ensured a standardised method of assessment being implemented across all centres, and there is clear evidence that this is bringing about quality assurance improvements in the Bricklaying SVQ.

There continues to be a significant reduction in the number of holds for this award (only one hold in 24 reports reviewed) in relation to the pre-TAP period, with most centres now very confident in the TAP methodology of award delivery. The TAP also appears to be meeting industry needs in terms of contributing towards a high-quality modern apprenticeship programme.

Advice on good practice

There continues to be a range of best practices being established. Feedback from the 26 EV reports reviewed included the following:

- ◆ Candidates are continuing to receive relevant written feedback for their work and progress on an ongoing basis.
- ◆ Sensible and practical methods of remediation for performance evidence are being implemented in most centres.
- ◆ Sensible and practical methods of remediation for knowledge evidence are being implemented in most centres.
- ◆ Personal protective equipment (PPE) is being implemented in many workshops in line with industrial practices and current best practice.
- ◆ Health and Safety is being implemented in many workshops in line with industrial practices and the assessment strategy.
- ◆ Good working relationships are being established between Assessors, Internal Verifiers, External Verifiers and candidates.
- ◆ There continues to be a wide range of excellent practical work in evidence, with very high skill levels being demonstrated during EV visits.

- ◆ Candidate written guidance is being provided by Assessors, with advice on the details and information required to be written by the candidate when answering level 3 subjective questions.

Areas for further development

- ◆ The approach to generating evidence for the generic Units needs to be further standardised across centres.
- ◆ The subjective questions at level 3 of the Brickwork SVQ continue to cause some centres difficulty in accurate assessment, with overgenerous marking being the main issue.
- ◆ Candidates' drawings and sketches were disappointing in a significant amount of assessment work sampled. Many candidates did not appear to possess the basic drawing/sketching skills required to produce clear and proportional sketched answers to assessments.
- ◆ A review is required of the internal verification of practical evidence which is dismantled and removed soon after it has been formally assessed. There is strong evidence that the National Occupation Standards (NOS) of the practical work tests may not always be subject to actual verification, and that only a checklist check is being conducted in some centres.
- ◆ The wearing of PPE in workshops, in compliance with the assessment strategy and the assessment methodology, requires a continued EV focus.

Other matters which were raised in External Verifiers' reports included:

- ◆ workplace evidence reports not being made available
- ◆ workshop attendant support not being available to support candidates
- ◆ Internal Verifiers not being available for discussions
- ◆ lack of evidence of standardisation meetings being held
- ◆ insufficient realistic working materials being used (sand lime bricks only, to the exclusion of clay facings)
- ◆ completed test pieces not available for EV visits (predominately tasks instead)
- ◆ PPE being worn inappropriately (eg hard hats being worn back to front)
- ◆ too much complex technical drawing being taught, rather than practical construction brickwork-related drawings, as required for the TAP assessments

Construction and Civil Engineering (352) SVQ at levels 1 and 2

General comments

This award is now being delivered mainly by the challenging OSAT (On Site Assessment and Training) mode. There is strong evidence that this is a high risk mode of delivery. This is because of the dynamics of the construction site context in which the candidate evidence for the award is being generated, and the genuine difficulties in authenticating evidence as the work of each individual candidate. Plagiarism of candidate practical evidence continues to be a challenge in OSAT.

Certification holds and return visits continue to remain significantly higher in the OSAT mode, in comparison to the traditional college-based delivery of Construction SVQs.

Advice on good practice

Authenticity – confirming that the workplace evidence being presented is the work of each individual candidate – remains a major challenge in OSAT. Here are some examples of good practice which can help authenticate this evidence:

- ◆ Standardisation meetings and events being recorded and formally minuted.
- ◆ Candidate portfolio evidence being presented in a manner which is easy to track and follow.
- ◆ Well written and evaluative direct observations of candidate performances being recorded as the primary evidence.
- ◆ Direct observations to include employer's name, location of site, date of observation, duration of observation and the exact location of the observation where the evidence is being generated (eg 'drain laying at rear of house plot no. 135').
- ◆ Direct observations need to be easily cross referenced to the performance criteria in each Unit.
- ◆ A strong IV focus on the verification of direct observations on sites.
- ◆ Passport-type photos to be included at the start of each portfolio.
- ◆ Secondary evidence, including photographic sequences of the direct observations of the candidate operating in the workplace. Whenever possible, the candidate should be identifiable in these photographs.
- ◆ Secondary evidence, with witness statements from employers confirming the candidate's relevant track record over a period of time in the workplace.
- ◆ A clear set of reasons and body of evidence to be recorded in portfolios, which supports and confirms the Assessor's decision that a candidate has been declared competent.
- ◆ Underpinning Knowledge Questions being conducted at a series of sittings rather than a single sitting for all Units. This should be conducted to suit each individual candidate's assessment needs.
- ◆ Underpinning Knowledge Questions being conducted in a controlled, supervised environment, with the Assessor and IV present.

- ◆ The use of a clear index of evidence in portfolios has excellent potential to assist an effective and efficient internal verification and external verification process.
- ◆ A quiet room being made available where the external verification process can be conducted without interruption.
- ◆ All evidence-related documentation being available and laid out in an organised manner.
- ◆ All of the candidate portfolios being available for random sampling on the day.
- ◆ Support and advice being provided by centre staff on IT matters when required.
- ◆ The direct observations being clearly referenced to the standards of the Units.
- ◆ Daily evidence diary logs being maintained by candidates. This evidence is invaluable in demonstrating competence over a period of time.
- ◆ Well structured and uncomplicated portfolio building being established as best practice.

There were examples of excellent direct observations being recorded in an informative and evaluative manner in every portfolio sampled.

Areas for further development

- ◆ Standardisation meetings and events to be held regularly, and minutes of these to be formally recorded.
- ◆ Candidate portfolio evidence to be presented in a manner by which it is possible to track the evidence to the standards of the Units.
- ◆ Direct observations of candidate performances to be written in an evaluative manner which clearly provides evidence of the competences being demonstrated by the candidate.
- ◆ Direct observations to be authenticated by including the employer's name, location of site, date of observation, duration of observation and the exact location of the observation where the evidence is being generated (eg 'concrete foundation being laid at house plot no. 192').
- ◆ Direct observations to be cross referenced and easily tracked to the performance criteria for each Unit.
- ◆ Multiple-choice questions to be worded in a user-friendly manner which meets the context of OSAT and the needs of the candidates.
- ◆ Photographic evidence to include the candidate participating in generating the secondary evidence being used. It is accepted that photos of product evidence have very limited value as authentic candidate evidence.
- ◆ Underpinning Knowledge Questions being conducted in a controlled, supervised environment, with the Assessor and IV present.
- ◆ Underpinning Knowledge Questions being conducted at a single sitting for all Units in the award (there were examples of some OSAT candidates sitting over 100 questions at one session). These assessment sessions should be conducted to suit each individual candidate's assessment needs.