



Higher National Qualifications

And

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Internal Assessment Report

2008

Subject: SVQ Management (VG 247)

Date: 29 July 2008

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

SVQ AWARDS

TITLES/LEVELS OF SVQ AWARDS VERIFIED

Insert details below

G81T 23 SVQ Management Level 3

G81R 24 SVQ Management Level 4

G820 25 SVQ Management Level 5

G47B 23 SVQ Management Level 3 (old standards)

G4GB 24 SVQ Management Level 4 (old standards)

G4L4 25 SVQ Strategic Management Level 5 (old standards)

FEEDBACK TO CENTRES

Insert details relating to specific guidance which should be offered to centres based on the verification of centres.

Include:

- *General comments*
- *Areas of good practice*
- *Areas for further development*

General comments:

Verification during this session included some work completed under the old standards for SVQ Management although this was confined to candidates who had been enrolled for some time. Most of the verification activity covered the new standards which by now have become well established. It continues to be the case that centres find the new standards easy to work with and are comfortable with them. It is encouraging too that centres are incorporating the new Units into their programmes which helps to give candidates more choice and to enable them to tailor the awards more closely to their particular managerial responsibilities.

It is very pleasing to be able to report that external verification this session leads to the same conclusion as in previous years. Centres in general have procedures and systems which enable them to deliver the awards effectively. This, in turn, means that candidates produce work of a good standard. The awards seem to be meeting a training and development need among managers and it is to be hoped that, despite the current financial climate, this need continues to be met. It is very encouraging to see that in almost every case candidates who participated in EV visits were highly supportive of the help that they had received from centres and commented favourably on the value of the award, particularly in terms of boosting their confidence as managers.

This session has seen a continuation of patterns which have been apparent over the last few years. Most centres now have well established and effective systems and procedures for the delivery of the awards using the new standards. Many now make use of electronic methods either directly through e-portfolios or through other means such as virtual learning environments. The use of e-portfolios continues to increase and there are a number of different systems in use for SVQ Management. E-portfolios normally include arrangements for communication among the various people involved in the award and for recording progress. However, even where they are not used, electronic communication between assessors and candidates, between different assessors and between assessors and IVs is now common and there are a range of electronic based systems for recording candidate progress.

E-portfolios and ICT in general can be very effective ways to deliver the SVQ Management at all levels. One obvious example is the ease with which professional discussion can be incorporated into an e-portfolio. Another aspect is the availability of material to support the awards. Some centres, for example, provide links to the SQA support material (and other web based sources) to help candidates meet the knowledge and understanding requirements of the standards while others make this and other material available on a memory stick or through a VLE. However, it is important to remember that e-portfolios and other electronic

approaches are a means by which the awards can be delivered and they do not alter the fundamental requirements of the awards as far as candidates are concerned.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this is that the SVQ Management is an award which should be 'candidate led'. A significant element of this is that candidates should take ownership of their portfolios. Verification this session has confirmed that the quality of support given to candidates by centres is high but the ultimate responsibility for building a portfolio of evidence rests with the candidate. One danger with e-portfolios is that the assessor can take control of the portfolio building process from the candidate.

The importance of portfolios being candidate-led is linked to the need in the SVQ Management for candidates to show that they understand the requirements of the standards. A key part of the learning in the SVQ is that candidates recognise a framework for good managerial practice. Last year's report quoted from page 12 of the SQA Assessment Guidance for SVQ Management and it is worth repeating this year. This 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."

Evidence of how the candidate performs as a manager remains critical to the SVQ Management. The increased use of professional discussion as part of the technological developments noted above can bring a temptation to shift the emphasis to general discussions about what the candidate does and question and answer sessions. These can be very effective for the knowledge and understanding components of the standards but are less suitable for the outcomes and behaviours. To meet the outcomes and behaviours, candidates need to demonstrate that they know what the standards require and show that they can prove this with evidence of their work as a manager.

There are occasions also where it is not easy to include performance evidence in an electronic portfolio (e.g. it does not exist in an electronic format; it is confidential). In situations like this, 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 judgment 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.

Candidates may, of course, not rely entirely on performance evidence. Witness testimony and observation are also suitable sources of evidence. However, there is no need to provide other evidence if the performance evidence 'speaks for itself'. There have been examples this year of situations where evidence, particularly witness testimony, had been collected but where it did not add to the evidence already available in terms of demonstrating how the candidate had met the standards.

There are several other points which have arisen during external verification this session, several of which have been mentioned in previous reports. There have been a number of instances this year where CPD records were not available for all active assessors and IVs. Centres are reminded that these should be 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. In a similar vein, all portfolios selected by an EV for the sample must be available for the EV Visit. In cases, where a portfolio cannot be made available, the EV should be informed in advance so that the EV can choose work from another candidate if this is deemed necessary. It is not sufficient to wait until the visit and substitute work from another candidate on the day.

There were also examples of portfolios containing blank forms and general organisational documents. Evidence, as noted above, should be included as proof that the candidate meets the requirements of the standards and should, therefore, be directly attributable to the candidate. Blank forms and organisational documents do not normally enable these conditions to be fulfilled.

The final point concerns internal verification. Most centres do this thoroughly. However, there have been instances where internal verification has become routine and perfunctory. Also, while many centres have

good forms for recording IV activity, there are fewer which provide a clear record of action taken as a result of comments made by an IV.

Advice on good practice and areas for further development:

It is very encouraging to be able to report once again that the good practice which has been apparent in previous years has continued. The following are all points which have been made in previous reports but it seems worth repeating them. Among other things it helps to show that the delivery of the SVQ Management is in general carried out in a very professional manner. Good practice which has been particularly evident this year includes:

- Transparent and clear systems for delivering all aspects of the awards from assessment planning through the internal verification
- Regular, meaningful and effective communication between assessors and candidates – this is helped by the increased use of electronic methods mentioned earlier. The quality of feedback by assessors is often detailed and, as it should be, closely linked to helping candidates present their work in a way which shows that they meet the requirements of the standards
- Use of web based and other resources to support candidates
- Improved methods to monitor candidate progress – these often go hand in hand with e-portfolios but, among other things, they help to highlight when internal verification may be required.
- Developments in the conduct of professional discussion – as centres become more experienced in this, practice is improving. There were many instances this year of short, sharp professional discussion focused on specific aspects of the standards.
- An emphasis on naturally occurring performance evidence – this continues to be the foundation of good portfolios for SVQ Management.
- A wish to continuously improve the way the SVQ Management is delivered – it was noticeable again in verification visits that many centres had made changes in their practice since the last EV Visit. Sometimes this was in response to development points but it also reflected a wish to try to make things better.

Perhaps the key aspect of good practice and one which underlies all the points above, is commitment of assessors, IVs and others to the SVQ Management. Many EV reports refer specifically to this. It is this above all which helps to ensure that the awards are delivered in the effective way in which they are.

Further development

Future development for the SVQ Management will come from further new ideas from centres as well as from the spread of good practice and from dissemination of the improvements which centres make. The following list highlights those areas which seem most important at the moment. Most have been referred to already in this and previous reports. They may apply more strongly to some centres than to others.

The main development points are:

1. Making sure that candidates provide a clear link between their evidence and the standards – this enables portfolios to be candidate led. 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.
2. 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.

3. Professional discussion should be aimed at enabling candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the standards and explain why the evidence they have submitted shows that they have met the standards. Progress in this has been specifically mentioned above but there is scope to extend this further. Particular pitfalls to be avoided are where the candidates just describe evidence they have submitted without linking it to the standards and where the assessor makes use of leading questions which effectively do the work of candidates for them. Professional discussion as noted above is one of the ways by which candidates can show that they understand the standards and can provide evidence to prove that they work in accordance with them.
4. Where evidence cannot be included for confidentiality reasons, it is insufficient for assessors to say they have seen it. This has been mentioned earlier also – a full audit trail of the evidence is required. Whatever the evidence it must be available for inspection by an assessor, IV or EV – if this cannot be guaranteed, assessors should advise candidates to find alternative evidence.
5. Holding regular standardisation meetings specifically focused on SVQ Management – while many centres do this, there is sometimes a tendency to incorporate standardisation as part of general assessor meetings during which issues of assessment, candidate recruitment etc. are also covered. Strictly, these are not standardisation meetings unless they involve a discussion of the implementation and interpretation of the standards for the SVQ Management. In this way they help to ensure that all assessors and IVs for the award follow a common approach.
6. Making sure internal verification is effective – internal verification is a key aspect of quality assurance procedures in centres but it is also an excellent way of ensuring that decisions made at standardisation meetings are translated into assessor practice. Encouragingly, many centres undertake interim internal verification. This makes it easier to take any corrective action which may be needed. As remarked earlier in this report, it is also important to ensure that action taken in response to IV comments is fully recorded.

Overall, once again, external verification has confirmed that, for the most part, the SVQ Management is being delivered in an effective and appropriate manner which benefits candidates. It is a great pleasure to once again end by praising centres for their effort and commitment.