



# **Internal Assessment Report 2010: SVQ Management (247)**

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

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)

## General comments

The format of Units in SVQ Management is well established. Candidates at most centres produce well organised portfolios which are of a good standard and are easy to match against the standards. This reflects a strength of SVQ Management, which is the quality of the systems developed by centres. The available evidence therefore suggests that, in general, centres are well aware of the requirements of the standards in management.

Centres often comment that the Outcomes and behaviours in the Units are well presented and easy to follow. A few items in the knowledge and understanding sections in some Units, especially at levels 4 and 5, can cause confusion, particularly for new Assessors. However, this does not occur frequently and can normally be resolved. SQA support materials have helped to clarify knowledge and understanding for the Units for which they are available. During 2009–10, support materials for three further Units (C4, C5 and C6) has been developed, which will help to provide further clarification.

Many of those involved in the assessment of SVQ Management are very experienced and have been involved with the awards for some time. As a result, they are familiar with the Unit specifications and the portfolio method of assessment normally used for SVQ Management. Most centres also make good arrangements for the induction of new Assessors, often in the form of a specific induction programme, which includes joint visits with experienced Assessors, as well as careful monitoring. This is more substantial than the performance review systems used for experienced Assessors.

Increasingly, centres are using SQA support materials, particularly for the knowledge and understanding sections of the standards. As noted above, this helps to make centres familiar with the Unit specifications and in particular, the knowledge and understanding requirements.

Pages 11–13 of SQA assessment guidance for SVQ Management summarise how to use the Evidence Requirements in Management SVQs. In order to successfully complete an SVQ Management Award, candidates must provide evidence of their current performance as managers. This Performance Evidence must cover all the Outcomes and behaviours of the Units in the award. Candidates must also demonstrate that they are aware of how the evidence they

submit proves that they work in accordance with the standards, and that they understand what the standards mean in terms of their work as managers.

Most centres understand these requirements, but there is some variation between centres in the implementation of this understanding. This can be seen particularly in the amount, quality and type of Performance Evidence, and in the way candidates demonstrate how the evidence proves that they meet the standards. It is a vital part of the SVQ in Management that candidates make this explicit link between the evidence they provide and the standards.

Candidates can do this by reflective accounts, professional discussion and annotation of items of evidence. Again, centres are well aware of these methods, but there is scope in many cases to make the link between evidence and the standards more explicit. Centres which do this successfully tend to ensure that candidates understand the Outcomes and behaviours in the standards, and that they select critical items of evidence which illustrate clearly that the standards are met. This makes it easier for candidates to explain how their evidence demonstrates that they are competent against the standards. Adapting a candidate-led approach to portfolio building also helps.

External verification during 2009–10 has indicated that many centres are working to improve practice in this aspect of the SVQ Management. Reflective accounts and professional discussion are becoming more focused on the standards and on how the Performance Evidence submitted proves that the candidate does manage in accordance with the standards. Increasingly, centres are also adopting a candidate-led approach by advising and guiding candidates in ways that can allow candidates to assume full responsibility for the presentation and content of their portfolios. This approach seems particularly suited to awards in management.

External verification during 2009–10 confirmed the experience of previous years, which is that most centres assess work accurately and in a valid way. Many EV reports referred to the good quality of candidate work which, again, continues the pattern of previous years. Comments like these were frequently accompanied by remarks on the commitment and enthusiasm of staff at centres, and there seems little doubt that this contributes significantly to the good standard of work which is achieved.

Overall, therefore, centres assess at the appropriate level. The main reason for this is that most centres have developed sound systems for portfolio building, which they have honed and refined over the years. Generally, these ensure that centres assess candidates at the appropriate level.

Factors which characterise effective systems include:

- ◆ Very good documentation: candidate action plans (and subsequent follow-up), assessment records/feedback and achievement recording documents are clear and well-organised. Some centres use an assessor statement (added when the portfolio is complete) at the front of the portfolio to summarise the assessment to highlight key aspects of the candidate's work.

This can be read in conjunction with the formal assessment interview carried out as part of the assessment strategy.

- ◆ Providing sample portfolios, all of which follow a standard format. This helps candidates follow a logical sequence of paperwork and gives them an understandable and workable system.
- ◆ The use of an introductory section setting the scene (which can include items such as a CV, a job description and an extract from an organisation chart). This can be useful in helping others get a clear idea of the candidate and their job role, which can greatly help others understand the evidence in the portfolio.
- ◆ Giving candidates information of what is expected of them within the recording process. This process allows individuals to take ownership of their claim for competence.
- ◆ Identifying the needs of individual candidates at the outset and following them through the delivery of the programme.
- ◆ Thorough screening of competence profiling, prior to the candidate being registered for the award, eg the Skills Scan procedure which involves an interview with the candidate and also one with his/her employer. This helps to ensure that candidates are placed at the correct level.
- ◆ Good emphasis on knowledge and understanding, especially at level 5 where this is particularly important. This can be done with specific questions but can also be incorporated into reflective accounts where it can enhance the quality of them (although it may make them longer).
- ◆ Discussions with candidates are uploaded within the IT system: they can then be used by candidates as a tool to claim competence for the evidence documents submitted in conjunction with the discussions.
- ◆ Effective methods to ensure information is effectively disseminated across all members of the Assessor/IV team: information disseminated is not signed off until each team member has formally indicated that s/he has read the information.
- ◆ Clear methods of tracking candidate progress, eg a Section Sheet which showed very clearly the progress of the candidate during each part of the SVQ.
- ◆ Detailed and thorough feedback from centre staff submitted at all stages, ie Assessor/candidate and IV/Assessor.
- ◆ Developing arrangements for feedback from the candidates on their experiences of, and learning from, the award; these occur during delivery as well as on completion of the award.

There are three other areas of general feedback worth mentioning:

### **Feedback from candidates**

This is overwhelmingly positive, which is a tribute to those involved in assessing the SVQ in Management. Comments from discussions with candidates include:

- ◆ ‘Getting real benefit from working through the SVQ in Management, illustrated by improvements in the workplace as a result of the candidate measuring current work practices against the standards and making appropriate changes.’
- ◆ ‘She has found the SVQ helpful with her role as a manager and has found that she has changed policies and procedures as a result of her personal development and learning from the award.’
- ◆ ‘She felt that the SVQ in Management had helped her validate and analyse a lot of what she does, which has encouraged her to do more reflective thinking and encourage her staff to do the same.’
- ◆ ‘The SVQ in Management had forced her to stand back and look at what her organisation was doing, and this had helped her save time in the long run.’
- ◆ ‘The award had boosted her confidence and she praised the support and encouragement of her Assessor.’

### **Continuous improvement by centres**

Many centres now make use of electronic systems. E-portfolios using a number of different systems are becoming much more common. They can greatly help to record and keep track of candidate progress, as well as providing a portfolio structure for candidates. They can also make the storage of items of evidence much more manageable.

Centres which do not use full e-portfolios are also developing new approaches to delivery. These include a blended approach (involving online methods, recording professional discussions electronically, maintaining e-mail contact but retaining hard copy folios) and making use of VLEs such as Blackboard to develop e-learning aspects to the SVQ in Management. These systems can also help candidates access useful learning material, as well as providing a medium for disseminating SQA support materials.

There have been some new developments in internal verification. One centre has developed a procedure where the IV visits the candidate onsite and completes an interview document. This can be an effective way to standardise candidate work and gain valuable feedback.

There are also developments in delivery. One particularly useful approach (especially where centres adopt a holistic delivery system involving several Units at once) is to get candidates to provide an overall summary account for each Unit. This seems particularly valuable at levels 4 and 5, but it can also encourage specific reflection on a Unit as a whole and show that the candidate has assimilated the good practice set out in the standards.

### **Motivating feedback to candidates**

The overall quality of feedback to candidates is improving. It is becoming much more supportive and motivational but also more focused and direct. It is clearly

being used as a way of helping candidates assume full responsibility for their own work.

## **Areas of good practice**

Many examples of good practice were observed during external verification in session 2009–10. Several, eg those relating to centre systems, motivational feedback to candidates, and innovative developments, have already been mentioned in this report. The following, therefore, looks at two additional aspects of good practice. As previously, some examples below illustrate practice at a particular centre. Others are more general factors which apply across several centres.

### **Delivery arrangements**

- ◆ Use of motivational techniques by Assessors to build confidence in candidates.
- ◆ Workshops to provide additional support to one-to-one interviews undertaken between Assessors and candidates.
- ◆ Flexible approach is taken across assessment and internal verification based on candidates' needs. This enables Assessors to consider the most appropriate approach to apply and can result in efficiencies in the delivery and final outcome.
- ◆ Development of support material by centres, eg cross-referencing of the knowledge requirements to the Outcomes of performance, which has helped develop Assessors and proved to be a considerable aid to candidates. Also, using techniques such as an 'inter relationship diagram' which can help the candidate think about stakeholders etc on commencement of their SVQ.

### **Internal verification and standardisation**

- ◆ Clear and transparent internal verification sampling plans, which ensure that suitable samples are taken from each completed portfolio. Some centres used a calendar showing everyone when the meetings were to be held.
- ◆ Lead IV actively involved in the development of Assessors, maintaining standard practice across the Assessor team.
- ◆ Strong feedback from the IV to include positive and encouraging feedback as well as addressing any issues which needed attention. Rolling internal verification of Units seems to promote this better than concentrating internal verification at the end of the portfolio.
- ◆ IV accompanying the Assessor on visits and interviewing the candidate and the employer when possible.
- ◆ Detailed, well formatted standardisation minutes which fully record issues arising, developments in delivery and the progress of candidates.

- ◆ Excellent procedures for meetings: the sharing of good and poor practice, dates agreed a year in advance, well kept minutes.
- ◆ Using standardisation meetings and IV comments to stress development points from EV visits. This can be a key way of developing centre practice: at least one centre has e-mailed development points to candidates when they directly apply to them.

It is perhaps worth repeating that much good practice stems from the high level of commitment shown by staff at centres. This, in itself, is good practice.

## **Areas for improvement**

Specific areas for improvement can be identified from development points highlighted in EV reports during 2009–10. To a considerable extent, development points follow from good practice in that good practice in some centres may trigger development activities in other centres as they seek to emulate, and better, what is being done elsewhere.

The following is a list of development points which have recurred in EV reports during 2009–10. Some, but not all, are directly linked to the good practice points identified above. A strong feature of the SVQ in Management is that centres act on developments, and the list below is intended to give an indication of aspects of the SVQ in Management on which all centres could reflect. To an extent, the developments and good practice are benchmarks against which centres can compare their activities. Again, the development points have been grouped into categories. In each case, the point states something on which centres could work.

### **Centre systems**

It is up to the centre to decide on a suitable tracking system, but in doing this it has a responsibility to ensure its chosen system is fully transparent and can readily be followed by others.

### **Preparation for EV visits**

Generally centres are well prepared for EV visits, but some points recur:

- ◆ CPD records for all current Assessors and IVs should be available for inspection at an EV visit (many centres now hold these electronically). The design of summary CPDs specifically relating to the SVQ in Management could capture and identify development points for the future. This could serve as a useful tracking document for self-assessment and for external SQA auditing.
- ◆ Where, for some reason, work from candidates in the EV sample is not available, centres should contact the EV before the visit to discuss alternative arrangements. It is not acceptable for the centre to decide unilaterally what adjustments should be made.

## **Portfolio building/delivery of SVQ Management**

Generally, the following points focus on ensuring that candidates select evidence which illustrates clearly exactly what s/he does as a manager and which is directly relevant to the Outcomes and behaviours set out in the standards. Ideally, candidates should try to select a relatively small number of critical items of evidence, rather than including evidence which is peripheral to the demands of the standards.

In reflective accounts/professional discussion, candidates should indicate how and why their evidence shows that they meet the standards. It can help if they are structured in a way that matches the Outcomes and behaviours as closely as possible (this can also help candidates demonstrate that they understand the standards).

Some specific development points in this area include:

- ◆ Policy and/or procedural and development materials are not generally acceptable as proof of performance, eg the use of a business plan, while useful information, often does not show the actual performance of a candidate. General policy documents are only acceptable as evidence where the candidate has had some input into them. This would be the case, for example, if a risk assessment document had been devised by the candidate, or an individual had had some strategic input to a policy.
- ◆ Blank documents do not generally count as proof of performance, unless it is a document prepared by the candidate. Otherwise documents should be completed and it should be made clear how the candidate is using the document as evidence to prove that s/he manages in accordance with the Outcomes and behaviours in the standards. Documents which contain sensitive information can be made anonymous. Completed forms for a hypothetical situation/person are simulated evidence which is unacceptable as it conflicts with the assessment strategy for the SVQ in Management.
- ◆ Personal statements do not represent proof of Performance Outcomes. They can be used, if cross-referenced, as proof of meeting the Knowledge Requirements. They can also serve as a claim for competence. Claims for competence should show where criteria are met, ie Outcomes, behaviours and Knowledge Requirements as appropriate.
- ◆ Evidence should be current (ie generated within the past two years) at the time the candidate claims competence. Where the candidate takes more than two years to complete the SVQ, evidence which becomes historical but was current at the time of assessment could be noted by the assessor with the date at which the document can no longer be cross-referenced. Where candidates encounter difficulties which result in their taking a long time to complete their SVQ, centres can assess work for individual Units which have been completed. This allows candidates, when they recommence, to use current evidence for outstanding Units.

- ◆ Outcomes can be claimed through a reflective account, professional discussion or annotation of evidence, but not through a knowledge statement, which is theoretical. Outcomes must only be claimed on proven performance. This reflective account method can identify the managerial activity and the relevant product document(s) which demonstrate that the candidate manages in accordance with a particular Outcome or behaviour.
- ◆ Professional discussions need to be transparent and ought to make use of a robust recording system, eg audio or text recordings. Subject headings are not normally proof of candidate input.
- ◆ Where observation is used, centres should ensure that records state what was viewed in actual performance and be based against the criteria.
- ◆ Where Performance Evidence is not included in the portfolio, it should be clearly signposted. Where this is the case, centres should develop and maintain a rigorous and comprehensive recording system. Tracking information needs to state the description, location and purpose of the evidence document(s). The criteria to which the document is intended to address should also be stated. Text should be signed and dated by the Assessor and candidate. Ideally, though, portfolios should include all necessary evidence. Where evidence is not included, there should be a clear indication that it has been internally verified.
- ◆ Centres should consider SCQF credits and levels for all management Units and take them into account when delivering them. The SCQF level can give a strong guide to the quality of evidence required for the Unit and to the depth of knowledge and understanding which a candidate should demonstrate.

### **Internal verification/standardisation**

- ◆ Systems can be developed to ensure that standardisation notes have been received and acted on where necessary by Assessors and IVs.
- ◆ The appointment of a lead IV can greatly help to introduce amendments in delivery and ensure that internal verification recommendations are acted on. Some centres ensure that the IV template form is not signed off until any action required by the IV has been implemented.
- ◆ Internal verification can play a key role in the continuing development of centre practice and it is important that it is not seen as a 'necessary evil' but a critical component of good practice.
- ◆ Even where centres hold regular ad hoc meetings between Assessors and IVs, formal standardisation meetings should be organised and minuted.