

Research and Information Services

MONITORING STANDARDS REPORT



**SVQ Management Level 4
(old standards) (G4GB 24) and
SVQ Management Level 4
(new standards) (G81R 24)**

Findings

A Scrutiny Panel, consisting of two SQA External Verifiers and a specialist subject expert, judged candidate evidence against the relevant standards for the level 4 SVQ in Management. Centres were asked to provide evidence for two candidates for each of the following units:

G4GB 24

- ◆ B4PW Contribute to Improvements at Work
- ◆ B6KF Develop your own Resources
- ◆ B4SM Develop Productive Working Relationships
- ◆ B6K1 Provide Information to Support Decision Making
- ◆ B7TA Manage Activities to Meet Requirements

G81R 24

- ◆ DR52: Ensure Health and Safety Requirements are met in your area of Responsibility
- ◆ DR47: Develop and Implement Operational Plans for your Area of Responsibility
- ◆ DR4N: Encourage Innovation in your Area of Responsibility
- ◆ DR4F: Develop Productive Working Relationships with Colleagues and Stakeholders
- ◆ DR5M: Manage Business Processes

In most cases the evidence consisted of appropriate extracts from candidate portfolios.

1 Quality of collected material

The quality of the material varied between centres which largely reflected the assessment practice of the centre. This varied from a 'mixture of good and bad practice' to 'excellent practice'. There were very few examples of 'excellent practice' and the other centres split almost equally between 'generally good practice' and 'a mixture of good and bad practice.'

2 Assessment instruments

All centres used portfolios as the instrument of assessment. The format and style varied between centres. While most were paper based, there were examples of electronic portfolios. Some centres adopt a more rigid approach to the presentation and organisation of portfolios than others. Some for example, made use of standard forms for things like witness testimony, reflective accounts (sometimes referred to as storyboard or narratives), master list of all items of evidence while others did not. Where forms were used there were variations between them. Some centres encouraged candidates to refer to numbered items of evidence in reflective accounts while others did not. Reflective accounts where this was done were generally considered to be more effective than where this was not apparent.

Only a very small number of the centres in the sample made use of professional discussion, and there was limited annotation of evidence.

The use of questioning to gather evidence for knowledge requirements also varied. There was one example of a centre requiring all candidates to answer a prescribed set of knowledge questions. Other centres made explicit use of additional questions to plug gaps in knowledge requirements while some relied on reflective accounts and on the product evidence submitted by candidates.

The scrutiny confirmed that the portfolio remains the main instrument of assessment for the SVQ Management. It continues to develop and electronic versions are now much more common. Candidates from centres which appeared to operate clear systems and procedures generally provided better quality portfolios than those from other centres.

3 Evidence of candidate performance

This reflected standards of assessment practice. The quality of evidence submitted was higher among centres which exhibited 'generally good practice' or 'excellent practice'. The quantity of evidence submitted also varied between centres, and there were some examples of very bulky portfolios. Overall, the evidence did indicate that candidates were working in managerial positions suitable for a level 4 SVQ in Management.

The range of evidence submitted was wide. Clearly the type of evidence available depends on the particular circumstances of each candidate but, in general, centres do seem able to tap into all available sources including reports from internal and external agencies or individuals which indicate what the candidate and her/his team have achieved.

There were examples of inappropriate evidence. This included evidence which could not easily be attributed to the candidate (eg it did not include a name which linked it to the candidate or had been produced by someone else). It was not clear in these cases how the candidate had made use of the evidence in her/his work as a manager. Other examples were company policies or procedures. The implication was that candidates followed these but often there was no evidence to show that this actually was the case. It is this evidence that is required rather than general policies or procedures which may or may not be followed by the candidate. Candidates from centres which displayed 'generally good practice' or better tended to have evidence which was appropriate and which appeared to have been selected to demonstrate specific aspects of the standards as closely as possible.

The scrutiny panel felt, however, that the link between the evidence submitted and the standards was not as clear as it could be, even in portfolios from centres which had 'generally good practice'. There were few examples of good reflective accounts which showed that the candidate fully understood what the standards entailed and how and why their evidence illustrated that, as managers, they were able to meet the standards. Reflective accounts were often brief and descriptive and contained no indication of which items of evidence were relevant to them.

In the new standards, evidence on the knowledge requirements was often limited. There is some indication from the evidence available that centres are not entirely clear what candidates should do in order to demonstrate that they have met the knowledge requirements in the new standards.

4 Assessment decisions

In general, assessors did seem to have tried to apply the standards appropriately. The approach to recording assessment decisions was something else which varied between centres. Most used the traditional matrix although this was not universal. A matrix has the merit that it can show that all aspects of the standards have been met.

There did seem to be cases where candidates had been assessed as competent against the standards but there was no obvious or explicit basis for the decision. It was sometimes possible to work out what the reasoning for the assessment decision may have been but there were occasions where this was not always easy to see.

The Scrutiny Panel did get the impression that assessment decisions often involved some inference from the assessor. There were cases where it was not possible to be fully confident that candidates had met all the requirements of the standards even though they had been assessed as competent. This was especially so for the knowledge requirements of the new standards.

There would seem to be a tendency for assessors in some cases to 'do the work' of candidates and assume that a candidate has demonstrated competence against the standards. Similarly, there did seem to be examples of assessors 'leading' candidates to a greater extent than is appropriate.

5 Comparing standards over time

The available evidence suggests that standards are similar to those viewed in 2000. This is encouraging and indicates that requirements on candidates have remained constant. There have been some developments in the way portfolios are constructed to make them more candidate friendly which is a positive and welcome development.

The previous evidence relates to the old standards. However, the similarity of approach between the old and the new standards suggests that any changes in requirements are due to changes in the new standards and not to any changes in assessment practice in centres.

6 General comments

The general impression of the scrutiny panel is that centres do take their obligations seriously and do try to meet the requirements of the standards both old and new. The new standards have only been in operation for a relatively short time and centres are still coming to grips with all aspects.

There was some evidence that, for the old standards, greater familiarity with the standards fed through into stronger portfolios. This suggests that, for the new standards, portfolios will improve as centres gain experience of working with the new standards.

7 Conclusions

The main conclusions are:

- ◆ All centres display some aspects of good practice although just over half the sample seen by the scrutiny panel show 'generally good practice' or better.
- ◆ There is considerable variation between centres in presentation and layout of portfolios and in the recording of assessment decisions.
- ◆ In general portfolios contain suitable and sufficient performance evidence supplemented by witness testimony and other evidence.
- ◆ Candidates do not generally make an explicit link between the evidence submitted and the standards – there is limited evidence that candidates understand the requirements of good managerial practice as set out in the standards. This is reflected in the quality of reflective accounts/professional discussion which is not perhaps as high as it could be.
- ◆ There is a danger that assessors may be 'leading' candidates and taking a more active role than is warranted in a level 4 SVQ.

8 Recommendations

The members of the Scrutiny Panel agreed that SQA should consider:

- ◆ Emphasising the importance to centres of getting candidates to show how the evidence they submit enables them to meet the requirements of the standards – this means stressing the importance of reflective accounts, professional discussion and annotation of evidence. Reflective accounts and professional discussion should refer directly to relevant items of evidence while annotations should indicate the relevant parts of the standards to which the item of evidence relates.
- ◆ emphasising that candidates take 'ownership' of their own portfolios and that, at level 4, assessors should avoid 'leading' candidates to the extent that the assessor may be doing work which should really be done by the candidate. If the above developments are carried out, greater candidate ownership should follow directly.
- ◆ Providing guidance on the interpretation of the knowledge requirements of the new standards.

All of this could be achieved by advice from external verifiers during EV visits, and by Quality Network and other meetings of centre representatives.