



**Higher National and Vocational Qualifications  
Internal Assessment Report 2015  
Core Skills: Communication (WA)**

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

# Workplace Assessed Units

F425 04 Workplace Core Skills: Communication (SCQF level 3)

F426 04 Workplace Core Skills: Communication (SCQF level 4)

F427 04 Workplace Core Skills: Communication (SCQF level 5)

F428 04 Workplace Core Skills: Communication (SCQF level 6)

## General comments

Most centres have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards in Workplace Assessed Communication.

In general, centres were well prepared for visiting verification. There is often good evidence of electronic record-keeping systems and portfolios, with effective cross-referencing and integration of Core Skills within the main award. The Reading task in Communication is the most difficult of the three skills to assess through naturally occurring evidence. Attention was drawn to the need to retain texts used for Reading assessment, as well as evidence of candidate responses, either orally recorded or noted down.

In verification reports, recommendations mainly focused on the need to integrate and/or contextualise the assessment of Core Skills within the main vocational award(s).

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Most centres are familiar with current Unit specifications and assessment support packs (ASPs). The assessment checklists from the ASPs are widely used to confirm achievement evidenced through main award activities or naturally occurring tasks. New assessors are generally well supported through induction and ongoing training. Continuing professional development (CPD) records are well maintained, though more evidence of dedicated Core Skills CPD is desirable. This might be provided by, for example, recording visits to SQA's website to read essential documents, such as internal assessment reports, updates, exemplar material.

## Evidence Requirements

Evidence for achievement of the Core Skills should be drawn from workplace tasks completed as part of the main award wherever possible. It should be possible to identify naturally occurring evidence of Speaking and Listening, and of Writing at the appropriate level.

Reading is more difficult and may, depending on the vocational area, require a dedicated assessment. Nevertheless, the text to be read should be vocationally relevant and matched to the candidate's real needs. It is essential to retain texts used to assess reading skill. Candidate responses to the text must also be

retained, either in written form (brief report or notes), or through responses to appropriate questions from the assessor. In the latter case, the assessor must write down or record both questions and responses. It is important for assessors to ensure Reading responses demonstrate both the ability to pick out main points in the text and the evaluative requirement. Assessors and internal verifiers should check reading material is at the right level for the Unit.

Some centres make good use of digital voice recording equipment to provide essential or additional evidence of achievement. A recorded sample of Speaking and Listening, with feedback comment from both assessor and internal verifier, is good practice for internal and external verification.

### **Administration of assessments**

Internal verification procedures are generally effective. Centres operating with a small number of assessors were able to provide evidence of regular standardisation discussion and appropriate internal verification procedures, with the proportion of sampling often exceeding SQA minimum requirements.

Standardisation and internal verification is more challenging in centres with several locations; here, the value of centralised record keeping is paramount. Occasionally there is over-reliance on observer accounts of achievement and insufficient evidence generated by the candidate. Reading, for example, should not be evidenced by observer account alone. The candidate's own responses to textual material (written or recorded) must be retained, together with the text itself.

### **General feedback**

Core Skills should be regarded as integral to the main award, not as add-on Units. Centres should feel confident in identifying engaging and stimulating Core Skill tasks, drawing on natural and meaningful material generated in the workplace.

It is not necessary to keep a separate portfolio of evidence for each Core Skill. It is, however, important that necessary evidence be clearly referenced within the main award portfolio (often a systematic matrix makes this straightforward) and that there is documentation recording Core Skill assessment decisions (the checklists from the ASPs can be useful here).

Scheduled reviews can allow assessors and verifiers to identify and update opportunities for meeting the standard. Learner motivation can and should be maximised by highlighting and drawing on the candidate's regular communication needs, rather than presenting them with what appears to be a sudden 'test'.

## **Areas of good practice**

Areas of good practice included:

- ◆ Close interaction between assessors and internal verifiers
- ◆ Action points from internal verifiers clearly flagged, with dated records of follow-up
- ◆ Internal verifier feedback to assessors with positive feedback when action completed
- ◆ Core Skills assessment integrated with the main award and drawing mainly on naturally occurring evidence
- ◆ Detailed records of standardisation meetings
- ◆ Effective data management and centralised records
- ◆ Candidates' development needs (and prior achievement where appropriate) accounted for in personal action and training plans
- ◆ Carefully planned induction and continuing support for new assessors and verifiers

## **Specific areas for improvement**

Some areas for improvement were highlighted. These included:

- ◆ Evidence of Core Skill achievement to be drawn from what is 'naturally occurring' across the main award wherever possible and not gathered from 'add-on' assessments
- ◆ Evidence of integrated achievement clearly and systematically referenced (a reference matrix is helpful)
- ◆ Where evidence is in the form of assessor observation, it must be precise, detailed, and closely matched to specification requirements
- ◆ To evidence the general skill of Writing, a sample of the learner's own writing (or wordprocessed work) must be provided
- ◆ Internal verification records should make specific reference to the Core Skill, not just to the general award, though a Core Skill 'box' could be included on an overall internal verification template
- ◆ Texts used for Reading assessment must be retained. If evidence of Reading is obtained by oral questioning, assessors must record both questions and responses. Such responses must demonstrate both the ability to pick out appropriate main points and the skill of evaluating the text
- ◆ A range of evidence is desirable: not solely assessor observations
- ◆ Some Core Skill-specific CPD should be recorded by assessors/verifiers (eg reviewing SQA Core Skill policy updates, and reading current IARs)
- ◆ Evidence supporting the achievement of a general skill (either Reading, Writing, or Speaking & Listening), and presented for internal or external verification, should be gathered from a single task