



**Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2013
OPITO and Oil-Related Awards**

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

SVQ awards

General comments

Most of the centres verified are well experienced in running SVQs and so have a clear, accurate and common understanding of the requirements relating to the National Occupational Standards (NOS). The NOS relating to the SVQs for Processing Operations: Hydrocarbons Levels 1 to 3 (G8LY 21, G8M2 22 and G8M8 23 respectively) and the SVQ Level 2 for Offshore Deck Operations (G8M0 22) are undergoing a process of fundamental review. The working and consultation groups that are essential for carrying out these reviews are fully supported by discipline experts from the centres. This experience provides them with a unique insight into the NOS and the associated requirements. They feed back to the centres so that they remain well informed.

Several centres hold 'away days' for their assessment and verification teams and the External Verifiers are given full opportunity to participate in these. Broad ranging discussions and queries raised by centres with the External Verifiers provide a good insight into the level of understanding of the requirements.

The External Verifiers have commented on the effectiveness of the standardisation processes and this has led to a perceived incremental improvement in the quality of delivery on a year-by-year basis.

There has been much discussion in the sector regarding requirements relating to the technical expertise of assessors and Internal Verifiers of SVQs. OPITO has recognised this and has drafted an Assessment and Verification Strategy for Upstream Oil and Gas SVQs. This has undergone a full consultation process and is now with SQA Accreditation for consideration, approval and issue.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

It is still common practice across the centres that assessors are very much supported and encouraged to review the requirements of the overall SVQ provision and to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) relating to this. This is achieved through standardisation meetings, mailshots and one-to-one discussions with centre staff and, in some cases, dedicated lead verifiers and mentors. There is strong evidence of dedicated meetings for the purposes of standardisation and in order to establish and develop familiarity with the requirements amongst the delivery teams. Assessors, as subject-matter experts, continue to be invited onto industry working groups by OPITO for NOS review and development purposes, and one result of this has been the drafting of the Oil and Gas Industry Competence Assessment and Verification Guidelines. These will be issued in conjunction with the Assessment and Verification Strategy for Upstream Oil and Gas SVQs. The guidelines follow the accepted principle that the main instruments of assessment should be direct observation and questioning by the assessor. For those following the Upstream Oil and Gas Industry Technician Training Scheme (modern apprenticeship) there is clear

guidance and exemplification material available that have been devised by the scheme managers, OPITO. These are seen to represent industry good practice.

Evidence Requirements

The External Verifiers have commented upon the awareness and levels of understanding amongst centre staff relating to the Evidence Requirements specified within the Units. This is not so surprising given that industry experts and centre staff have contributed to the specification of these requirements during work group meetings.

Administration of assessments

Within the oil and gas sector, Duty Holders and their contractors have a legal responsibility to ensure that only competent people are assigned to carry out tasks. Given this, then the assessment and verification processes tend to be well managed and controlled in order to ensure that the assessment and verification processes are effective, robust and at the right level.

The sector recognised and was provided with guidance on the differences between assessment processes when applied to trainees and to that applied to experienced candidates, especially where the experienced candidates were already deemed to be competent in the job role. For instance, the assessment of experienced candidates for the Process Operations: Hydrocarbons Levels 2 and 3 SVQs was more integrated and reflected the processes and activities that took place in the oil and gas industry. Much guidance was provided for the Upstream Oil and Gas Industry Technician Training Scheme.

Internal verification is generally well considered as it forms the backbone of corporate processes that comprise internal audit and management review. These processes are widely adopted and provide senior management with the assurance that the processes in place are effective.

General feedback

The External Verifiers are able to interview candidates, assessors and Internal Verifiers at the majority of centres. The feedback provided to candidates by assessors, and additionally by Internal Verifiers, is effective and well recorded. This was confirmed by the candidates interviewed. Due to the offshore working environment, the opportunities for contacts between assessors and candidates are generally high and there is evidence of regular feedback being provided. Candidates are regularly asked for their feedback and this is normally recorded on assessment documentation.

Candidate appeals procedures are closely scrutinised during external verification; however, it still remains that there hasn't been an instance of an appeal against any assessment decision made.

Candidates enrolled on the OPITO Managed Upstream Oil and Gas Industry Technician Training Scheme are interviewed every three months by OPITO

Reviewers and provided with feedback in order to ensure quality is being maintained.

It should be noted that interviews with candidates continue to provide positive responses relating to the SVQ provision.

Competence assurance is an ongoing priority for the sector and Duty Holders have to demonstrate that their workforce, whether own staff or contractor staff, are trained and competent to perform their tasks. SVQ programmes provide a means of demonstrating workforce competence and capability. Access to assessment opportunities is therefore made available.

The issues relating to the lack of focused and centralised guidance and strategy for assessment and internal verification remains; however, these issues will be resolved when the Assessment and Verification Strategy for Upstream Oil and Gas SVQs and, the Oil and the Gas Industry Competence Assessment and Verification Guidelines are published.

Areas of good practice

The External Verifiers continue to record examples of good practice for the majority of centres. Good practice is considered to be that normally applied on a day-to-day basis and only examples where centres exceed this or demonstrate innovation are recorded.

Good practice within centres generally emanates from the values placed on the delivery of SVQs by all and the commitment shown to the processes.

Internal audit and management review of the systems are seen more regularly and these add to the controls placed on the systems. Feedback to the SVQ delivery teams is seen to be effective.

There is certainly a move towards the use of electronic portfolios of evidence and these, in several cases, are sophisticated and represent a considerable investment and undertaking by the centres.

The SVQ Level 1 for Process Operations: Hydrocarbons (G8LY 21) is delivered by several colleges for the benefit of the Upstream Oil and Gas Industry Technician Training Scheme. Process simulators are used and these can represent a considerable investment on the part of the centres. It is clear that the simulators are being updated to reflect changes in technology and to the working environments and practices seen offshore.

Centres have also seen benefits brought about by employing dedicated resources for their competence management systems, and this again represents a considerable investment in people.

There have been logistical problems due to helicopter operational issues and this potentially means that trainees such as those enrolled on the Upstream Oil and

Gas Industry Technician Training Scheme cannot travel offshore. At least two centres have taken the opportunity to temporarily transfer candidates to onshore sites so that the assessment process can continue.

Specific areas for improvement

Although centres understand that internal verification should occur before, during and after assessment, the work patterns and working environment of those involved in the SVQ delivery programmes are not always conducive to achieving this. Logistical problems caused by further helicopter operational issues are going to exacerbate the problem. Centres need to consider ways in which Internal Verifiers can access assessment materials on a regular and ongoing basis.

In the interests of expediency, several centres have implemented assessor's checklists in a tick-box format that can lead to a lack of cross-referencing of evidence. The External Verifiers have, in all cases, asked for cross-referencing to be robustly applied.

Many of the development points identified by the External Verifiers continue to be of a minor nature and so do not impact on the overall quality of the SVQ provision. There is little evidence of adverse trending patterns occurring.