

## Scottish Qualifications Authority

### Questions from delegates who attended the Quality Network Meetings for the A and V Units held on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2004

**Note: This paper is based on the original questions asked. Answers to questions have been scrutinised by a cross-section of SQA personnel and deemed to be correct at the time of print.**

#### Unit V1: Conduct Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process

**1. V1.1 (PCb) What does ‘consequences for internal auditing’ mean and how would a V1 candidate prove it?**

This is about applying the appropriate internal verification measures for the units/awards being verified. This will usually be determined to some degree by the specific IV Strategy for each award area. For example, in some occupational areas where assessor observation of craft skills makes up a large percentage of total evidence, then consequently observing assessors assessing would be an appropriate measure to include in verification activities.

**2. Clarification on wording of pc (g) in element V1.1, difficult language to interpret?**

This is referring to how centres can use internal measures of performance such as the outcomes of internal reviews and IV processes, and external procedures such as systems/external moderation visits as a source of information to enable subsequent amendments and updates to internal verification systems to improve overall effectiveness.

**3. V1.1 (h) if you already have established internal moderation policy what would you recommend for putting improvements in place?**

This criterion relates to quality assurance arrangements and not just policy. It relates to the continuous cycle of review, evaluation and improvement which could result from internal and/or external audits etc. Where centre policies and procedures are completely up to date, then it is understandable that this criterion may be more difficult to achieve, but improvements can always be made and an open culture should be encouraged - even if the IV-Candidate's recommendations cannot all be acted upon. Examples of recommendations; amending assessor feedback forms to enable better tracking of CPD, the development of an IV Strategy for a specific award area to include Assessment Strategy requirements.

**4. V1.2 Support assessors – 2 assessor standardisation meetings for assessors: covers one qualification over complete assessment period up to and including final assessment. Is it for one whole SVQ award? What if candidate leaves – meeting would be very long to cover whole VQ?**

The revised wording will be along the lines of: .... “one qualification over the complete assessment process for at least two units up to....”. This will be included in V1 guidance when it is updated early in 2005.

**5. V1.2 Personal development plans for 2 assessors – if assessors are not from the same organisation as the IV, what right would the IV have to ask for these?**

If the IV-Candidate is quality assuring the work of these assessors, then he/she should be in a position to meet all of the requirements as defined in the national standards and evidence requirements for V1. As part of the IV role, support is key in ensuring that assessors maintain their CPD and can in turn fulfil their job roles. The development plans as described in A1 should focus on the assessor role only and not on any other wider role being performed by the assessor within their company.

**6. V1.2 why does it state an observation is required by EV and then states the observation would be acceptable by qualified IV?**

This provides centres of varying sizes and structure with some flexibility in terms of how they wish to gather evidence. The majority of centres tend to use their subject specific IVs to carry out this observation.

**7. Approved centres, as part of their approval process, have quality systems. If they weren't following their organisations' procedures they would get the sack. What truth of V1.3?**

Yes, centre and awarding body quality assurance systems should be followed, the V1 Unit simply requires the IV-Candidate to provide evidence of their compliance with these systems. After initial approval, centres will naturally update and change their systems periodically. It is very much part of the IV-Candidate's role to keep up to date and comply with his/her centre's current policies and procedures.

**8. Element V1.3 Pc D safe? What kind of safe?**

PC D can be interpreted as "ensure assessors apply *sound* methods of assessing candidates' competence".

**9. V1.3 Clarify the total number of observations required?**

(a) The IV-Candidate should carry out one observation with each of their assessors (a total of two observations **by** the IV-Candidate).

(b) The IV-Candidate should be observed by another subject specific EV **or** IV monitoring the performance of one assessor (a total of one observation **of** the IV-Candidate).

This can be streamlined; if the IV-Candidate was observed by their subject specific IV observing one of the assessors in (a), they could also meet the requirements of (b).

**10. V1.3 (f) what is meant by sufficient number of assessors? Is 2 a sufficient number?**

The issue here is one of checking consistency. If the assessor and their IV-Candidate are satisfied that he/she only requires to check the work of two assessors in order to gauge consistency then this could be sufficient. The number should be based on how many assessors he/she naturally has responsibility for.

**11. V1.3 (g) What if centre only operates on one site would a 'what if' scenario be acceptable?**

Centres sometimes operate across a variety of assessment sites i.e. different workplace settings and/or approved Realistic Working Environments (RWEs). It is part of the IVs responsibility to ensure that assessment decisions are consistent regardless of where candidates are assessed. If centre only has one site, then 'what if' scenarios would be acceptable.

**12. V1.3 pc(i) What is meant by the term "Assessors apply environmental protection procedures"?**

The assessor should ensure that when they carry out assessments, the environment in which they assess meet all the appropriate health and safety requirements including where relevant, those specifically aimed at the protection of the environment. The level of health, safety and environmental protection will normally be dictated by and incorporated into the occupational standards that are being assessed.

**13. V1.3 pc (i), Is experience in health and safety a requirement for an IV?**

Some assessment strategies do specify particular health and safety requirements for assessors and internal verifiers, therefore this should be firstly checked.

In all cases, IVs require to be occupationally competent (and maintain their competence through CPD) in their subject area which should include knowledge/competence of the appropriate health and safety measures which should be applied during work/workplace assessment.

**14. V1.3 Evidence requirement of an observation of the IV candidate by an EV or other IV? Do EVs actually carry out observations?**

It is anticipated that in the vast majority of cases centres will opt to use a subject specific internal verifier to carry out this observation. However, SQA will accept requests from centres for an external moderator to carry out this observation. There would be a charge to centres for this additional visit.

Any requests for such a visit must be made by the SQA Coordinator to SQA's moderation section and not to individual external moderators.

**15. V1.3 If another IV does this, do they require to support this by a written report?**

Yes, a record of their observation would be required.

**16. V1.3 Would the writing of detailed comments on an observation checklist suffice?**

Yes this could be sufficient.

**A number of questions with a common theme were asked in relation to V1.4. These questions have been grouped together to allow a more contextualised answer to be given**

**17. What if you have lots of IV Candidates – do they all meet EV at once?**

**18. What needs to be clarified is the EV involvement with IV candidates. The problem is equal to five IV-Candidates and one EV per visit per annum?**

**19. What if the Candidate- IV cannot meet their EV on an external moderation visit? – must they wait another year?**

**20. Large Organisation has smaller centre with IV candidates – their IV candidates do not always meet the EV because materials are collected at a central point. (V1.4)**

**21. If you are not the SQA co-ordinator how do you meet pc(c) V1.4 on a continuing basis?**

External moderation visits for each occupational area normally take place once per year.

During external moderation visits, the subject specific external moderator (i.e. in Care, Agriculture, Hospitality) will naturally look at the work of qualified and/or unqualified internal verifiers (IV-Candidates coming under the category of unqualified internal verifiers).

If there are a number of unqualified internal verifiers in the same occupational area going through their V1 Unit at the same time, then they do not all have to meet the external moderator, as ‘meeting’ is not a mandatory requirement for IV-Candidates, although beneficial if they have the opportunity. Past external moderation reports can be used as long as the IV-Candidate’s work can be linked to the external moderation visit.

The IV-Candidate’s involvement at the preparation and post-visit stages of an external moderation visit are crucial in providing the necessary evidence for V1. To provide the appropriate evidence, each IV-Candidate could work with the person(s) responsible for the internal quality assurance of the award areas to be externally moderated. This could be achieved by the IV-Candidate:

- Agreeing mutually suitable arrangements such as dates and times.
- Collecting background information on assessment practice in their award area i.e. queries, problems, agreed solutions etc and establishing if any queries have been routed to the awarding body since the previous visit.
- Collating useful background information prior to a visit i.e. information on how previous development/action points set by the external moderator have been addressed.
- Responding appropriately to the issues raised by the external moderator. This could occur during or after their visit.

**22. V1.4 PC (c) How can multiple verifier-candidates in some centres provide evidence for this pc?**

It is accepted that this could be more difficult to manage were there are a number of IV-Candidates working within the same occupational area, although this is not common.

However, where this is the case, each verifier-candidate should be in a position to mutually agree convenient arrangements and date(s) with their colleagues and the SQA Centre Co-ordinator/person(s) responsible for quality assurance, who would make final arrangements with the external moderator.

**23. V1.4 Clarification on the use of a qualified independent IV in place of an EV where EV visits to satellite centres are difficult to arrange.**

There is no recognised independent IV role. In order for an IV-Candidate to achieve V1, their work must have been subject to external audit/moderation. Where centres have a number of sites, the external moderator can, where appropriate, arrange with the SQA Co-ordinator to have evidence from different sites brought to a centrally agreed location.

**24. V1.4 pc (g), is it enough for the IV candidate to be aware of what type of evidence would need to be presented?**

Centres do from time to time require guidance from their awarding body (this could come through an external moderator) on issues such as the interpretation of evidence or unit requirements. Centre queries often naturally emerge when new units/awards come on line or when there are changes in awarding body procedures etc. Queries or concerns may also result from i.e. internal verifier/assessor meetings or may come from individual assessors/verifiers. A log of minutes, emails, or conversations can therefore provide good evidence. If the IV-Candidate has had no reason to raise concerns/queries, then it would be acceptable for the assessor to ask them to describe the types of concerns/queries that could emerge and be able to explain their centre’s internal system for dealing with this eventuality.

- 25. V1.4, PC (g), can individual IV-Candidates refer queries/concerns directly to the awarding body?**  
Yes, but it is important that centre procedures are followed, for instance in some centres it may be that all queries/concerns must be routed through the SQA Centre Co-ordinator who in turn contacts the awarding body.
- 26. V1.4 Evidence requirement for EV witness testimony – is an EV report sufficient?**  
Yes, an External Moderator Report should be sufficient providing it makes reference to the work carried out by the V1-Candidate. The new External Moderator Report Form (to be launched August 2005) will allow for specific assessor/verifier sampling to be recorded.
- 27. Does the IV (of A1/2) need to be occupationally competent in the subject matter which the assessor-candidate or IV candidate is operating within?**  
No, if they are internally verifying A1/2, they should be competent and qualified in the occupational area of assessment and verification and have had specific experience of assessing D32 and D33 or A1 or similar units. If they are internally verifying V1, they should be competent and qualified in the occupational area of assessment and verification and have had specific experience of assessing D34 or V1 or similar units. The Assessment Strategy gives expanded guidance in terms of the technical competence of assessors and internal verifiers of the A and V Units.
- 28. Do internal verifiers have to observe assessors?**  
The observation of assessors is a requirement that has been written into the standards, scope and evidence requirements for V1. When the internal verifier qualification was reviewed, field practitioners etc generally concluded that observation had already proved to be an effective way of monitoring assessor practice. A significant number of centres already include observation in their IV procedures.
- 29. External audit requirements – who is this referring to?**  
In SQA quality assurance terms this is taken to mean external moderation activity. There are a number of SQA guidance documents on external moderation that centres can refer to. External audit has been used as an all encompassing term for external quality assurance activities covering more than the external moderation of SVQs.
- 30. A Non-SVQ question: - What happens if in-house standards are being assessed/verified but they are not awarded by an awarding body?**  
If centres wish to offer A1 using in-house standards then the standards must be subject to a suitable system of internal verification to allow assessor-candidates to achieve A1.  
If a centre wishes to offer V1 using the verification of in-house standards, then the assessment and internal quality assurance systems must be consistently checked by an appropriate external auditor (similar to the checks made by an awarding body external moderator).  
A self-check has been developed by SQA for centres to gauge their delivery against and will be made available via SQA's Website early in 2005.
- 31. How can IV for HNC/D be compatible with IV for SVQ?**  
It is accepted that each of these award groups require a slightly different approach in terms of how internal moderation activities are carried out. However, the internal quality assurance principles on which centres base their policies and procedures remain applicable to both.
- 32. Can CPD be carried out internally e.g. a large college sends one delegate to an event, they then feedback formally to an identified target group?**  
Internal dissemination of information through planned events is a perfectly acceptable form of CPD. It is important to bear in mind that CPD is not purely about attending an event; it is also about what the recipients do as a result of having the information. Provided all who claim CPD can show how it has affected their practice, then attending in-house training events where information is cascaded can provide good CPD opportunities.

- 33. Difference between (from evidence requirements):**  
**Quality Network Meeting?** A meeting run by SQA for practitioner assessors and verifiers for a specific occupational area such as Learning and Development, Care, Hospitality etc  
**Standardisation Meeting?** A centre meeting between assessors (who assess within the same occupational area) and their IV.  
**Feedback from an EV Meeting?** Feedback from an external moderation visit
- 34. How will the ratio of assessors to verifiers in centres be maintained when IV is so inaccessible, so exclusive?**  
 Internal verifiers should be given the support and resources necessary to enable them to perform the quality assurance activities as described in the V1 Standards, this is part of centre approval criteria. The IV should be a source of support and guidance to assessors and therefore should be accessible.
- 35. Where will the next wave of IVs for Higher English come from?**  
 There has never been a requirement for internal moderators/verifiers for Higher English to have D34 (now V1).
- 36. Explain “promptness” of assessor record keeping (evidence requirements)**  
 Examples; when assessors have conducted feedback, reviews or communicated assessment decisions - they should be recorded at that time or as soon after. As soon as units are deemed complete by the assessor, the assessment records should also be available for IV sampling.
- 37. Does there have to be induction packs, organisational systems and policies in the evidence portfolio or is it OK for a verifier-candidate to explain to his/her assessor where the evidence is?**  
 The IV-Candidate must be able to explain how policies and procedures affect what they do in their role as IV. These documents can be kept in situ as long as there is clear referencing in the portfolio as to their location. An induction checklist for example could be included in the IV-Candidate’s portfolio as well as a reference made to where within the centre the induction pack can be located.
- 38. Individual had been to the recent care launch and had been informed that verifiers can go straight to V1 without doing A1 units. Is this true?**  
 Yes, this is the case for the care sector awards as dictated in the Care Assessment Strategy. However, any award, whether in Care, Horticulture, Building etc that include the A and/or V Units, then the Learning and Development Strategy applies to the assessment and verification of these units in which case the internal verifier would firstly have to be a qualified practising assessor.
- 39. Personal development plans for assessors – What if the verifier-candidate is not the assessor’s line-manager, what type of evidence is acceptable?**  
 In these circumstances it is best that the IV agrees how this will be addressed ie IV may be able to submit the agreed plans to i.e. the assessor’s line manager or HR Department etc. Whatever the correct route for submitting plans, the content should take account of the principles of assessment, technical expertise and competence of each assessor – much of which could be benchmarked against already defined Assessment Strategy requirements. This essentially is part of the CPD process.
- 40. How does an EV visit work? If you operate a demand led programme, candidates will be starting and completing at various times throughout the year. I only have the portfolio when it is complete, will an IV with yards of tracking sheet?**  
 When conversations are being held with centres in relation to setting up external moderation visits, the aim is to identify an optimum time for a moderation visit to take place, this should naturally include when there is likely to be sufficient evidence available to enable informed judgements to be made in relation to the centre’s internal assessment and verification practices. Internal verifiers, qualified or not, should as best practice carry out interim as well as end verification. If this is the case, then there is always likely to be evidence of internal verification for the external moderator to sample.

**41. How can V1 candidates in brand new centres gain the experience to gain qualifications?**

It is important that the each centre's IV policies and procedures enable the natural achievement of V1 and may firstly need to be checked out.

Most subject specific assessment strategies will accept an action plan for the achievement of the award so the centre can operate as their unqualified IVs develop their competence. Creating a support network of qualified colleague IVs can help with standardisation issues and safeguard the assessment process.

Developing IV competence is all important prior to assessment taking place, therefore if IV only has a small number of assessors to work with then unit achievement may take more time (which should not be an issue as achievement should not be strictly time bound).

**42. What is the experience of EVs in relation to the existence of sampling strategies in centres?**

In order to answer this question fully, sampling strategies and their place within internal verification needs to be considered.

The meaning of sampling strategies varies between centres, many taking it to mean only the sampling % and/or the allocation of IVs to assessors. Sampling strategies can very often be dictated across all provision for the whole centre, but in V1 terms it should be taken to mean per SVQ award area.

The V1 Unit eludes to each award area having its own IV Strategy (which should conform with wider centre internal verification policy). A typical IV Strategy for an award area would set out the arrangements for:

- Meeting specific assessment strategy requirements
- Resourcing – names of team members i.e. deliverers, assessors, internal verifiers
- The assessment process, from induction and enrolment through to certification
- The IV process, including the **sampling strategy**. The strategy may take account of assessor experience, newness of awards, problematic units. Sampling may include observing assessors, sampling across different assessors, assessment methods, units, sites, candidate cohorts.
- Supporting and maintaining quality in delivery and assessment
- Recording documents to be used as part of the process

It is accepted that the requirements to have individual IV Strategies are not explicitly mentioned in V1. However, the above explanation provides the context of their meaning.

**43. The V1 standards set out the required standards? In another words, many IVs or candidate IVs do not operate within these kinds of systems?**

The V1 Unit was developed through an extensive consultation process with industry practitioners and includes proven best practice. However, it is accepted that there are other internal quality assurance systems in existence that only partially align themselves with the V1 standards. In this situation, the challenge presented to centres (and A and V Unit external moderators) is that IV-Candidates need to be able to use their centre's existing QA systems in order to provide evidence of their internal verification activity in relation to the V1 Unit standards. This makes the achievement of the V1 Unit valid.

Where differences are identified between the V1 Unit standard and what actually happens, it would be expected that discussions will take place at centre management level in order to identify how IV-Candidates will be able to achieve their V1 Unit. Learning and Development External Moderators can also be a source of advice and support.

**44. Is there a need for an IV to hold D32 or A1 in other areas apart from L & D?**

SQA's general requirements for internal verifiers are that they should hold or be working towards V1 (A1 is also desirable) or hold TQFE/TQSE. It is generally considered best practice for the IV to hold assessor qualifications, providing them with a recognised level of understanding of the assessor's role, enabling them to support this role more effectively. The relevant Assessment Strategy should be checked in relation to IV qualifications.

**45. Can EVs refuse to carry out observations of IV candidates?**

Observing IV-Candidates is not part of SQAs main stream external moderation activities. If a centre requires an EV to carry out an observation then they should firstly contact SQA and not individual external moderators. There would be a charge made for providing this service.

**46. Can you clarify the following; an IV-Candidate cannot achieve the V1 award until an EV has sampled the IVs work?**

That is correct, the emphasis being on providing evidence of the actual process i.e. how external moderation links to internal verification. The same situation exists for assessor-candidates in that the units they have assessed as evidence for A1 must have been subject to internal verification.

**47. If an EV visit is organised by an IV candidate, but doesn't have any work for the EV to look at, will this meet V1.4? Are V1 candidates encouraged to make reference to this and produce an audit trail of where it is?**

This could be used as supporting evidence, but essentially the EV must be in a position to sample enough of the IV-Candidate's work in order to make a valid decision, therefore in this case their work would have to be sampled at another time.

As part of the evidence requirements, the IV is required to explain their involvement in external moderation visits, therefore this evidence should be trackable.

**48. Are evidence requirements listed as the minimum, or is work evidence to be added?**

Yes, the evidence requirements state the minimum required. Other forms of performance evidence could also be valid and acceptable. It is important however to bear in mind that copious amounts of evidence do not necessarily mean that a better standard has been reached. There should naturally be evidence of working practice in any case as evidence should be in relation to the work activities of the IV.

**49. Do we need another QA system?**

Many centres have just one quality assurance system supporting a number of award areas such as SVQs and HNs, which from an operational point of view makes internal quality control easier.

Alternatively, a number of centres use one system with adapted procedures or have a distinct quality assurance system for SVQs.

The important point for centres when choosing a system is to ensure it adequately quality assures each award area.