



**Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2012
SVQ Management**

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

SVQ awards

General comments

This verification group covers the following awards:

SVQ 2 in Team Leading at SCQF Level 5	GC49 22
SVQ 3 in Management at SCQF Level 7	GC46 23
SVQ 4 in Management at SCQF Level 9	GC47 24
SVQ 5 in Management at SCQF Level 11	GC48 25

These awards replaced the previous SVQ awards in Team Leading and Management in June 2011, which means that this verification year 2011–12 was the first in which the new awards were verified. The new awards are very similar in structure to their predecessors but are more closely aligned to the relevant SCQF levels.

The Units which comprise the awards are essentially the same as those used in the previous awards. During 2010–11, many had been modified to reflect current managerial good practice but, while the amendments were important, they were small and did not result in substantive change in any Unit. Overall, therefore, the management standards on which the awards are based are fundamentally the same as they have been for some time.

As a result, centres offering the new awards were dealing with Units with which they were already familiar. Centres have, over the years, developed a good understanding of the Units and the standards which they express. As would be expected, the new awards do not seem to have caused any significant difficulties for centres.

This verification group also includes seven Professional Development Awards (PDAs), each of which consists of two Units drawn from the management standards. It is encouraging to see that these are becoming more widely used. In particular, they are being used by organisations as the basis for a specific development programme, often linked to leadership, for a group of managers in the organisation.

Some verification in the group was carried out under SQA's new quality assurance approach.

The author of the report is retiring after this session. This is a good opportunity to thank all those involved with SVQ Management who have helped to make the task of Senior EV such a pleasant and rewarding experience.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

A major reason for the straightforward transition to the new awards is the experience of centres and those who assess and verify the SVQ Management. Many assessors and Internal Verifiers have been involved with SVQ Management for some time and, as well as knowing the Unit specifications well, are also used to working with the portfolio method of assessment normally used for SVQ Management.

Although the number of new assessors at present is not large, most centres have good induction procedures that allow experienced assessors and Internal Verifiers to pass on their knowledge and expertise. Many of these induction programmes display good practice, such as new assessors being shadowed by existing assessors, allowing new assessors to make provisional assessment decisions which can then be formally discussed with experienced assessors and Internal Verifiers.

The SQA support materials cover all mandatory Units in SVQ Management 3 and SVQ Management 4. They are recognised as particularly helpful for the 'knowledge and understanding' sections of the Units and centres frequently comment at External Verifiers' visits on how valuable they are. Centres make use of them in different ways but one approach is to get candidates to work through a support pack as the first step in undertaking a Unit. The responses to the activities can then be used as evidence for knowledge and understanding.

Verification confirmed that a number of centres continue to develop their own support material to assist candidates. This includes generic material such as advice on portfolio building, how to write narrative/reflective accounts, how and when to use witness testimony, as well as specific guidance on particular Units such as knowledge questions, potential sources and types of evidence for a Unit.

Evidence Requirements

The [Assessment Strategy for the SVQs in Management](#) contains a section on the Evidence Requirements in the awards. These make it clear that it is the candidate's responsibility to provide tangible evidence to demonstrate that he or she can meet all aspects of each Unit in the award. In other words, candidates must, for every Unit, provide current evidence which shows that their performance as managers meets the Performance Criteria of the Unit, that their behaviour as managers matches the behaviours in the Unit, and that they possess the knowledge and understanding associated with the Unit.

The Assessment Strategy also includes guidance on how to use the Evidence Requirements. These stress that candidates must show that their evidence relates to all aspects of the standards. Also, candidates must demonstrate that they are aware of how the evidence they submit proves that they work in accordance with the standards and that they understand how the good managerial practice set out in the standards applies to their own work as managers.

Previous internal assessment reports have noted that most centres do understand these requirements. This continues to be the case although there is a common misunderstanding that a personal report (sometimes referred to as a narrative or reflective account) constitutes an item of evidence. It is, as discussed below, a means by which candidates can show that they understand the standards and why their evidence demonstrates that they are competent against the standards.

There remain, also, differences between centres in the way in which the Evidence Requirements are implemented. These concern two main aspects:

- ◆ the amount, quality and type of performance evidence supplied — this is the key to the SVQ Management and candidates should submit evidence that is directly attributable to the work that they have done as a manager; evidence such as policy documents is rarely relevant as it does not illustrate what the candidate actually does
- ◆ the way in which candidates demonstrate how the evidence proves that they meet the standards — this means that candidates must make an explicit link between the evidence they provide and the standards set out in the Units, eg through reflective accounts, professional discussion and/or annotation of items of evidence; it is not sufficient to provide only a cross-reference matrix linking items of evidence to the standards

External verification during 2011–12 indicates that centres have been working to improve practice in both of the above. This continues the trend of last session and is good to see. The main development is that assessors concentrate on providing advice and guidance that encourages candidates to take full responsibility for their portfolios as soon as possible in the portfolio building process.

This candidate-led approach focuses on getting candidates to understand the standards and what they entail in the candidates' particular work situation. Candidates can then identify critical items of evidence to demonstrate their performance as managers and how it meets the requirements of the standards. They are then in a position to explain how the evidence demonstrates that they are competent against the standards.

Another area in which improvements identified last session have continued relates to reflective accounts and professional discussion. There is evidence that centres have been working on ensuring that candidates focus on the standards and explain how the performance evidence submitted proves that they do manage in accordance with the standards.

Some centres use annotation of evidence to support reflective accounts and professional discussion, or as an alternative to them. This normally occurs where it is not immediately clear from the evidence just how the candidate has made use of it in their work as a manager, eg a team rota sheet developed by the candidate but which does not mention the candidate by name.

It is hoped that these improvements will continue as, while there are centres that exhibit excellent practice, there is still scope across centres as a whole to take them further. A particular concern during verification in 2011–12 has been the number of occasions in which general documents, such as ones on organisational policy, have been included in portfolios. While such documents set out what the candidate is expected to do they rarely, if ever, demonstrate what the candidate actually does. Unless they have been written by the candidate they do not provide evidence to prove that candidates' performance is in accordance with the management standards.

Administration of assessments

External verification during 2011–12 confirmed that, in general, the SVQ Management awards at all levels continue to be assessed appropriately. External Verifiers' reports regularly refer to the good quality of candidates' work and the commitment, enthusiasm and motivation of centre staff.

External verification highlighted once again that most centres have developed strong systems for the delivery of the awards which enable them to assess candidates at the appropriate level. A key aspect of strong systems is a commitment to continuous improvement, and many EV reports noted that delivery systems are continually being modified to enhance the delivery process.

The use of electronic methods in the delivery process has continued to increase as more centres make use of e-portfolio systems while other developments include videos of professional discussion. E-portfolio systems are often linked to ways by which candidates can access material online, such as through a VLE or a dedicated centre Academy.

The following points, all of which have been mentioned in previous reports, summarise the main factors that characterise effective systems:

- ◆ comprehensive documentation to manage delivery and assessment; these can include:
 - standardised layout for portfolios
 - templates for key parts of a portfolio, such as for reflective accounts and recording evidence
 - assessors' documentation, such as candidates' action/assessment plans (often with space for assessors' feedback)
 - tracking forms to record achievement of Units and progress through the award
 - specific observation forms (eg ones that highlight specific Performance Criteria which are to be the subject of observation)
- ◆ detailed approach to internal verification — this can cover forms that present detailed IV comments and allow recording of action as a result of IV comments; it also includes systems for ensuring that IVs play a key role in improving assessment practice, eg by ensuring that their comments reflect development points from EV visits and points agreed at standardisation meetings

- ◆ centre-devised support materials for candidates — increasingly these consist of general guidance to candidates, such as how to write reflective accounts/personal statements, as well as specific guidance on individual Units, eg web links to suitable documents such as learning styles questionnaires and other likely sources of suitable evidence. A key area of support relates to the knowledge requirements, where some centres supplement the SQA packs with their own material and questions. At least one centre has developed a way of linking the knowledge requirements to the Performance Criteria, which helps candidates to ensure that they have covered all knowledge aspects of the standards
- ◆ ensuring that candidates are placed on an award at the level appropriate to their current occupational situation — this is important as otherwise candidates may be unable to provide suitable performance evidence and find the knowledge requirements too demanding. Many centres have developed frameworks that assess the nature of a candidate's managerial role and provide a guide to what would be a suitable level of award for them. SQA has developed a diagnostic tool which may help centres that do not currently make use of such methods. External verification during 2011–12 has again shown that centres need to continue to be vigilant in ensuring that candidates embark on an SVQ Management award which is at a level that matches their current managerial position
- ◆ formal systems for monitoring candidates' progress and the work of assessors and IVs — methods of getting feedback from candidates (eg at the completion of the award) are well-established but a considerable number of centres now review the work of assessors (eg observations of assessors by IVs who shadow visits) and some monitor the work of IVs, eg by conducting a formal review of IV reports
- ◆ staff development — several centres have asked staff to complete the new assessor and IV awards to ensure that they remain up-to-date with current assessment and IV practice, even though staff already hold suitable qualifications
- ◆ job descriptions that set out clearly the responsibilities of assessors and IVs, eg declaration of vested interest

The above points stress that strong administration of assessment is associated with good, well-organised systems. However, it is also associated with flexibility as far as candidates are concerned, in the way that systems of delivery are operated. This allows candidates to work within the centre guidance and procedures but put their own individual stamp on their work.

General feedback

A number of areas deserve mention:

Feedback from candidates

A key part of EV visits is speaking to candidates. The feedback received is almost always very positive and complimentary. Often without prompting, candidates refer to how helpful centre staff have been, how easy it is to contact them and how quickly staff respond to queries. This is a great tribute to the

dedication of those involved with the award but it also reinforces the commitment of staff to the award, which is apparent from other aspects of delivery.

Candidates continue to find the SVQ Management useful. They frequently comment, for example, that they feel more confident about their role as a manager and have a greater appreciation of what is expected of them. Many make reference to specific improvements, such as in organising their work and that of others, and in being better able to communicate with others and to delegate work. One candidate, for example, who had recently been appointed to a senior management position, said she was finding the award very useful in helping her to write and develop policies and procedures for the organisation, as well as helping her to think about staffing issues and communication.

Feedback to candidates

As noted above, many centres have systems that encourage and record formal feedback to candidates, eg through diary systems in e-portfolios or by comprehensive assessment planning templates. The improvements noticed last year in the specific detail of this feedback appear to have been maintained — one benefit of a formal record is that it can help to structure subsequent discussions with candidates, as well as leaving candidates in no doubt as to what is expected of them. The trend continues to be to provide feedback in a way that makes the candidate decide how to react to it. This is good because it can encourage candidates to take full responsibility for their own work.

Management development programmes

One of the main purposes of the SVQ Management is to raise standards of management by ensuring that those who achieve an award have reached a nationally determined level of competence. A number of centres are involved in partnerships with organisations that have set up a development programme for a group or groups of managers based around the achievement of SVQ Management. All are intended to lead to specific improvements in the work of the managers concerned.

This is consistent with the trend from last year where, perhaps because of the current economic climate, there is a greater emphasis on the ways in which the SVQ Management can lead to clearly defined ways in which those achieving the award become more effective as managers. This is consistent with feedback from candidates but it also has implications for the way in which assessors give advice and guidance.

Matching occupational role of candidates with SVQ Management level

This continues to be an area of concern in some cases. As noted earlier, it is hoped that the SQA diagnostic tool will help centres which do not have a fully established and functioning system for screening new candidates. One aspect of this is ensuring that a candidate actually has ongoing managerial responsibilities over a reasonable period of time. The awards, even a Level 3, are not intended for those who work in what amounts to an administrative capacity or those who have limited managerial responsibility only occasionally, such as during a training or development programme.

The SVQ Management is specifically targeted at those who are currently working in a managerial post and is not appropriate for those who aspire to such posts but have not yet achieved them, even if they are highly likely to do so. A second aspect is that it is the level of managerial responsibility that determines the level of award and not the candidate's previous level of achievement or their perception of their status. Some candidates may, therefore, have to embark on an SVQ Management at a lower SCQF level than that which they may have attained through other qualifications.

Candidates who may feel that Level 5 would be good for them may not be in a position which has the level of management responsibility across their organisation that this level requires. Similarly, candidates who have achieved the SVQ Management at one level are unlikely to be able to progress to a higher level unless their managerial role changes.

Areas of good practice

The points made in this report so far indicate that many aspects of good practice were apparent during external verification visits in 2011–12. Again, as mentioned already, this is confirmation of the high level of commitment shown by centres as a whole. This is good practice in itself and can be seen as one of the most significant aspects of the assessment and verification of SVQ Management.

The following points, which have been grouped together for convenience, summarise some of the main aspects of good practice. There is some repetition of points made earlier in this report and of points that have been made in previous reports on external verification.

Portfolio development

- ◆ detail in personal statements which link directly to activities undertaken by the candidate and refer specifically to the standards and to the product evidence submitted
- ◆ wide range of performance evidence presented by candidates
- ◆ responsibility for cross-referencing matrix undertaken by candidates from outset
- ◆ range of support material, eg specific task templates for a Unit provided to candidates — often these supplemented SQA support packs
- ◆ paying close attention to the knowledge requirements and encouraging candidates to link these to their work situation
- ◆ strong systems that result in transparent portfolios which can be easily followed

Standardisation/internal verification

- ◆ logging notes of informal ad hoc discussions and bringing them to formal standardisation meetings
- ◆ using standardisation meetings as a part of management CPD for assessors and IVs, eg using self-assessment material on leadership which could be cascaded to candidates; researching new management techniques

- ◆ strong procedures for standardisation meetings, such as dates agreed well in advance; regular in-service days for assessors built around a standardisation meeting; detailed and comprehensive minutes clearly identifying key decisions for assessors
- ◆ formal review by an IV of a range of assessors' work, paying particular attention to application of decisions made at standardisation meetings — these are undertaken occasionally but enable discussion of work over a number of portfolios
- ◆ detailed IV reports which make specific comments on the assessor's work (including recognising good work) and which incorporate a system for ensuring that any corrective action is taken before a Unit is signed off (in some centres, for example, the final signing off of portfolios is done by the IV, who can check that candidates and assessors have responded to IV comments)
- ◆ interim and final internal verification, even with experienced assessors — this helps to highlight any issues at an early stage
- ◆ QA system which provides feedback to IVs
- ◆ basing some CPD objectives for assessors and IVs on development points from EV visits and to points identified in standardisation meetings — in this way they can be cascaded across the team
- ◆ using IV reports to develop and enhance centres' practice — on a number of occasions this year, EVs commented that issues which might otherwise have caused concern had already been identified by an IV and that this had prompted action by the centre

Communication with candidates

- ◆ learning contract for all candidates which clearly shows their responsibilities and commitment and the responsibility and commitment of the centre — contract also covers line manager involvement
- ◆ highlighting SCQF levels of Units to candidates at induction and using this to help candidates choose optional Units

Specific areas for improvement

To a considerable extent, specific areas for improvement with respect to SVQ Management depend on what takes place in each individual centre. The development or action points set out in the EV report for each centre during 2011–12 indicate actions that centres could take to enhance the work they do. They can be used to develop action plans directly related to a centre's particular circumstances and the issues it faces. During 2011–12 it was clear that most centres take suggestions for development seriously, and generally make determined efforts to act on them.

The following, therefore, is a list of development points which have recurred during 2011–12. Many are ones which have also appeared in previous internal assessment reports. There is a clear connection between them and the good practice identified above.

Centres may find it helpful to reflect on the points and compare their own situation with them, even if the development point has not been mentioned in their own EV report. In the spirit of continuous improvement which many centres embrace, this reflection may spark ideas for development and enhancement of the SVQ Management. As above, the points have been grouped into categories. They have been phrased in a way that suggests things that should be done as far as SVQ Management is concerned.

Performance/product evidence

The main source of evidence for SVQ Management is performance or product evidence of the candidate's own work as a manager. Other sources of evidence such as witness testimony are perfectly acceptable, but a useful general rule is to make use of these only when product or performance evidence is not available. A number of points arise from this:

- ◆ Performance evidence should be clearly attributable to the candidate and this is most apparent when it includes the candidate's name, eg an e-mail from the candidate, minutes of a meeting led by the candidate, or a form signed by the candidate, eg to confirm a risk assessment in her/his area of work.
- ◆ Policies and procedural information documents are not usually evidence of candidates' performance unless they have been written by the candidate or the candidate was involved in the consultation leading up to the document. As a result, such documents can be excluded from portfolios in favour of performance evidence which shows how the candidate makes use of them, eg minutes from a meeting or an e-mail which shows how a candidate has cascaded a new procedure to team members. Where the candidate has a good reason for including a policy or procedural document, it is usually helpful if the processes undertaken in its production are proven with working documentary evidences. These points have been made in internal assessment reports on a number of occasions, as well as earlier in this report. Despite this, verification in 2011–12 indicated that many centres continue to allow candidates to include policy documents. More worryingly, some assessors conclude that the fact that the candidate can access the policy and state that they follow it is enough to prove that they act in accordance with it. This is not the case and additional evidence, preferably of candidates' performance, is required.
- ◆ Wherever possible, candidates should include relevant performance evidence in their portfolios. If, for some reason this cannot be done, the portfolio should contain a statement of what the document is, where it was viewed, its present location, and how and why the document contributes to the portfolio, ie exactly how it enables the candidate to make a claim for competence against the standards. The statement should be signed and dated by both the assessor and candidate and included in the evidence file. This enables subsequent internal and external sampling to be conducted easily. Centres are reminded that External (and Internal) Verifiers must have access to all parts of a portfolio.

Claim for competence

A critical aspect of the SVQ Management is that candidates are aware of the standards and that they know the good managerial practice set out in the Performance Criteria and the behaviours. Candidates must, therefore, explicitly demonstrate that they understand the standards and that their evidence demonstrates they work in accordance with them (ie they know good managerial practice and how and why their work reflects this good practice).

In many respects this is the key learning that would be expected from an SVQ Management. This is the case even where a Unit confirms to the candidate that she/he is operating in accordance with the standards and is, therefore, managing in accordance with current good practice. This can be done in a number of ways, such as by a personal statement (also referred to as a reflective account or a narrative), by professional discussion and by annotating items of evidence. There are several points connected to this:

- ◆ The claim should cover all Performance Criteria and behaviours of all Units in an SVQ Management award. It can be presented on a Unit-by-Unit basis but does not have to be. However, centres that adopt a 'holistic' approach to assessment need to be vigilant to ensure that all Performance Criteria and behaviours are explicitly dealt with. Holistic assessment here refers to centres that build the SVQ Management around a small number of significant activities, sometimes known as projects, undertaken by the candidate.
- ◆ Personal reports and professional discussion should signpost relevant items of evidence, and this should be done as transparently and robustly as possible. Also, evidence that is referred to in reports etc should be included in the portfolio (unless, as noted above, there is a very sound reason for it to be stored elsewhere).
- ◆ Candidates should ensure that evidence is relevant to the Unit against which it is claimed — this difficulty can be avoided if the candidate makes a suitable claim for competence, but EV visits this year highlighted a number of cases where evidence was not suitable for the Unit concerned, eg Unit A2 is about the candidate's own personal development and not that of members of his/her team.
- ◆ A summary cross-reference matrix (which should if at all possible be completed by the candidate) is not, of itself, a sufficient claim for competence. It is a good way for candidates to think about what evidence they should use and to help them confirm that all aspects of the standards have been covered. It is also valuable for assessors and verifiers. It does not, however, show that the candidate understands why the evidence is relevant or demonstrate that she/he has met the standards.
- ◆ Personal reports are not performance evidence as they do not illustrate the performance of the candidate as a manager in the workplace; they (or professional discussion or annotation) are a way of bringing the performance and other evidence together and explaining why it has been included.
- ◆ Candidates should include sufficient evidence to ensure that all parts of the standards have been covered: ideally they should choose a relatively small

number of key items of evidence which illustrate their work as comprehensively as possible.

- ◆ Candidates can be encouraged to take responsibility for their own portfolios, eg deciding what evidence to include and the best way to make a claim for competence.

Knowledge and understanding

Candidates can meet the knowledge and understanding requirements in several different ways (eg by answers to questions/through professional discussion) but the knowledge and understanding sections of the standards should be covered and referenced in a similar way to the Performance Criteria and behaviours. Again, a cross-reference matrix may be a good starting point but may not be sufficient. Factors related to this include the following:

- ◆ Performance evidence is not required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, although it can be used if it is relevant — evidence from personal development reviews can, for example, often show that the candidate has grasped the underpinning knowledge. On the other hand, evidence which can be used as proof of knowledge requirements (eg development activities and exercises, responses to questions in support material) may not be suitable as performance evidence.
- ◆ The depth of knowledge required increases with the level of the SVQ Management — at Level 5, for example, the candidate should provide knowledge evidence which is commensurate with SCQF level 11. At both Levels 4 and 5, product evidence is unlikely to be widely used as a source of knowledge evidence.

CPD

Assessors and Internal Verifiers should maintain up-to-date CPD records which should cover development in assessment/internal verification in SVQ Management. The former is usually met very well but the latter is sometimes absent. Centres should ensure that staff undertake some development activities which relate directly to the capacity to deliver SVQ Management. One way to make this clear is to use a CPD table to illustrate the development activity and how it has benefited the assessor or IV.

Standardisation/internal verification

Although these are distinct topics, they are closely linked since both have the aim of ensuring consistency of judgement among assessors. IVs have a crucial role in ensuring that assessors implement decisions made at standardisation meetings which, in turn, provide a forum whereby assessors and IVs can together discuss and agree on how assessment should proceed. The main issues here are as follows:

- ◆ Standardisation refers specifically to assessment judgements for the SVQ Management. In a number of cases, assessor and IV meetings cover administrative arrangements, such as recruitment and assessor allocation, as

well as discussing particular awards, one of which may be SVQ Management. In these cases there may be very little, if any, discussion of SVQ Management as such. To avoid this problem, a lot of centres now have separate meetings for administrative matters and separate meetings for each award the centre offers. One consequence is that there are fewer meetings dedicated to SVQ Management but they are more focused.

- ◆ There is considerable merit in keeping a standardisation log of decisions made at standardisation meetings — clearly this provides a reference point for assessors and IVs but it is often more accessible than minutes of meetings. It can be particularly useful for new assessors and in centres where staff discuss assessment informally. Ad hoc discussions can be incorporated into the standardisation log and, if necessary, reviewed at the next formal standardisation meeting. Alternatively, ad hoc meetings could be bullet-pointed and used as agenda points for formal minuted meetings, as and when these are conducted.
- ◆ Standardisation meetings can be used to review the new awards, eg the Unit B5 has replaced B6 at level 3; for B5, candidates must demonstrate a lower level of autonomy than for B6, which requires discussion on how consistent judgements will be made across the team of assessors and IVs.
- ◆ IVs can, through their comments, ensure that development points from EV visits are acted on and that assessors follow the decisions at standardisation meetings.

Preparation for EV visits

Finally a reminder on preparation for EV visits. In the vast majority of cases, centres are very well prepared for EV visits, with the result that things usually go very smoothly. A few points are worth emphasising, however:

- ◆ Occasionally work from candidates chosen by the EV for the sample is not available: where this happens the centre should contact the EV as soon as possible. The EV will then determine the way forward: it is not up to centres to substitute other candidates.
- ◆ In cases where a volume of documents are left on site, the centre should inform the EV before the visit. This can help the EV decide whether to visit the site and give time to make any arrangements — this helps to eliminate the possibility of doubts about quality of evidence, appropriateness of assessors' judgements, and so on.
- ◆ It is also helpful to check that portfolios are 'user-friendly' and can easily be followed by a visitor, eg they contain basic information such as the candidate's name, level of award, start date, etc; the various sections can easily be distinguished; assessment planning and other assessor documents are available (even if they are removed when the portfolio is completed); recordings of professional discussion can be tracked and are of a suitable quality.
- ◆ Ensure that CPD records are available for all staff involved with the award, including part-time staff who may retain responsibility for maintaining their own CPD.