Scottish Vocational Qualifications 2014
Internal Assessment Report

Core Skills: Communication (WA)

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

SVQ awards

Communication:

F425 04 (SCQF level 3)
F426 04 (SCQF level 4)
F427 04 (SCQF level 5)
F428 04 (SCQF level 6)

General comments

Most centres are generating appropriate evidence of assessment according to national standards in Workplace Core Skills Communication.

In general, centres were well prepared for visiting verification. There is wide-spread 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 to assess Reading skill, as well as documented evidence of candidate Reading responses, either recorded or noted down.

Development points mainly focused on the need to integrate and/or contextualise the assessment of Core Skills with the main award(s) being offered.

Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Most centres are familiar with current Unit specifications and national Assessment Support Pack (ASP) exemplification. The assessment checklists from the ASPs are widely used to confirm achievement evidenced through main award activities. New assessors are generally well supported through induction and ongoing support and training. CPD records are well maintained, though more evidence of dedicated Core Skill CPD might be provided by, for example, recording visits to SQA's website to read essential documents, such as Internal Assessment Reports, Updates, exemplar material, etc.

Evidence Requirements

Evidence for achievement of the Core Skills should be drawn from 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 task. Nevertheless, the text that has been read should be vocationally relevant. Reading texts must be retained, and candidate responses to the text must be evidenced, either in writing or by recording oral responses. It is important

for assessors to check that Reading responses cover in full not only the ability to to pick out main points but also the evaluative requirement. Internal verifiers should check that reading texts have been selected at the right level.

Some centres make good use of digital voice recording equipment to provide essential or additional evidence. A recorded sample of Speaking and Listening is extremely useful for internal and external verification.

Administration of assessments

Internal verification procedures are generally effective. Centres operating with a small number of assessors were routinely commended for close interaction, regular standardisation discussion and internal verification. Standardisation and internal verification has proved more challenging in centres with several locations. This has highlighted the value of centralised record keeping. Appropriate evidence of achievement is, for the most part, combined with accurate assessor comment and internal verifier cross-checking. There are, however, instances in which essential signatures may be over-looked.

Areas of good practice

Many aspects of good practice were identified. These included:

♦ robust anti-plagiarism policies, clearly documented
♦ close interaction between assessors and verifiers
♦ Core Skills assessment integrated with the main award
♦ a wide variety of appropriate evidence gathered from across the main award(s), including reflective accounts, voice recording, work products, projects and observation of candidates
♦ effective data management and centralised records
♦ high quality candidate induction, with candidates' development needs (and prior achievement where appropriate) accounted for in personal action and training plans
♦ thorough induction and continuing support for new assessors and verifiers
♦ candidate evidence retained in excess of SQA minimum requirement of three weeks after completion: useful for EV overview and for internal standardisation discussion

Specific areas for improvement

Some areas for improvement were highlighted. These included:

♦ Training centres should match evidence for Core Skill assessment from what is 'naturally occurring' across the main award wherever possible. A good cross-referencing system or matrix is helpful in doing this. Checklists from the Communication ASPs can be used to confirm achievement.
♦ Assessment of general and specific skills must be closely matched to the specifications. Using the ASP checklists should help here.

- Where evidence is in the form of assessor observation, it must be detailed and matched to specification requirements.
- To evidence the general skill of Writing, samples of the learner's own writing (or word-processed work) must be provided.
- Texts used for Reading assessment must be retained. If evidence of Reading is obtained by oral questioning, assessors must record responses. Such responses must demonstrate both the ability to pick out appropriate main points and the skill of evaluating the text.
- Where centres operate across different locations, consistency of record keeping and approach is essential.
- Staff CPD records should be held centrally.
- The Core Skill of Communication requires summative evidence for three tasks only (three pieces of evidence in total). Evidence supporting the achievement of any one of the three general skills (Reading; Writing; Speaking and Listening) should be gathered from a single event.