**Scottish Vocational Qualifications 2011
Internal Assessment Report**

Management

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

SVQ awards

Titles/levels of SVQ awards verified

G81V 22: SVQ Team Leading Level 2
G81T 23: SVQ Management Level 3
G81R 24: SVQ Management Level 4
G820 25: SVQ Management Level 5

General comments

The Units which set out the standards for the SVQs in Team Leading and Management are well established. Over the years, centres have, in general, developed good systems for guiding candidates and for assessment and verification. As a result, they have demonstrated through the work produced by candidates that they are aware of the requirements of the standards and that they can communicate these requirements to candidates. As noted in last year's report, the situation has been further helped by the support materials developed by SQA which have, in particular, helped to clarify knowledge and understanding for the Units for which they are available. The available evidence, therefore, suggests that, in general, centres are well aware of the requirements of the standards in management. In fact, centres often comment that the SVQ Management Units are clearly presented and easy to follow.

During this session, some Units have been slightly modified. In most cases, this has been done in order to take account of environmental factors and of developments in diversity and inclusion. Towards the end of the session, the composition of the awards themselves was altered to reflect a review undertaken by the Council for Administration which now has responsibility for the management and leadership standards. Again, the changes are not significant but have improved the alignment between the demands of the awards and the levels of the SCQF. As could be expected, these relatively minor changes do not seem to have caused any difficulties for centres, which provides further confirmation that the standards are well understood. A new support pack, for Unit B1, has been produced by SQA to ensure that support packs continue to be available for all mandatory Units at SVQ Management Levels 3 and 4.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Many of those involved in the assessment of SVQ Management are experienced assessors who have been involved with the awards for some time. They are, as a consequence, highly familiar with the Unit specifications and with the portfolio method of assessment normally used for SVQ Management. In addition, most centres have comprehensive induction arrangements for new assessors which normally include shadowing existing assessors as well as a gradual lead-in to full assessor responsibilities. In this way, new assessors can benefit from experienced assessors and become familiar with the operation of SVQ Management.

The SQA support materials also help to enable assessors to become familiar with the Unit specifications, particularly for the knowledge and understanding sections of the mandatory Units. Centres frequently comment on the value of this resource.

Evidence Requirements

The Assessment Guidance issued by SQA for SVQ Management summarises how to use the Evidence Requirements in Management SVQs. The essential parts of this are the same for the revised awards as for the previous awards. In order to successfully complete an SVQ Management award, candidates must provide evidence of their current performance as managers. This performance evidence must be sufficient to cover all the Outcomes and performance criteria of each Unit in the award. Candidates must also demonstrate that they are aware of how the evidence they submit proves that they work in accordance with the standards. In addition, they must show that they understand the management process set out in the standards and how this applies to their work as managers.

As noted in previous internal assessment reports, most centres do understand these requirements. There is, however, some variation between centres in the way in which this understanding is implemented. This applies particularly to the amount, quality and type of performance evidence, and in the way candidates demonstrate how the evidence proves that they meet the standards. It is a vital part of SVQ Management that candidates provide sufficient evidence of their work as managers and that they make an explicit link between the evidence they provide and the standards set out in the Units.

Candidates can make this explicit link in several ways of which the most common are reflective accounts, professional discussion and the annotation of items of evidence.

As noted in previous reports, there remains scope for further development to ensure that candidates at all centres provide sufficient, suitable performance evidence and relate it to the standards in a way which demonstrates that they understand the management process in the standards. External verification during 2010–11 indicates that many centres are working to improve practice in this aspect of SVQ Management and it is hoped that this trend will continue. Best practice seems to involve assessors adopting a 'candidate led' approach in which candidates are given advice and guidance which enables them to assume full responsibility for the presentation and content of their portfolios. Candidates can then use their understanding of the standards to choose critical items of evidence to demonstrate their performance as managers and how it meets the requirements of the standards. This, in turn, makes it easier for candidates to explain how their evidence demonstrates that they are competent against the standards.

As noted in last year's report, reflective accounts and professional discussion are becoming more focused on the standards and how the performance evidence submitted proves that the candidate does manage in accordance with the standards. Annotation of evidence is often used to complement reflective accounts and professional discussion especially where the evidence requires some further elucidation, eg when it may not be clear exactly how the candidate has made use of it in their work as a manager.

Instances where centre assessments are at the appropriate level (eg the way they administer assessments, in the assessments they use, in the way they assess them, their internal verification procedures.)

In general, the SVQ Management awards at all levels continue to be assessed appropriately, as has been the case for some time. This is confirmed by external verification during 2010–11. Many External Verifier (EV) reports referred to the good quality of candidate work and to the commitment and enthusiasm of staff at centres.

EV reports also refer regularly to the good delivery systems which most centres have developed. Often, these have been refined and improved over time and many centres rightly

take pride in the continuous development of their systems. The strength of these systems helps to ensure that centres assess candidates at the appropriate level.

There are a number of factors which characterise effective systems. Most have been mentioned in previous reports, but it is worth highlighting the main ones again. Many of the points that follow are inter-related and/or overlap with each other.

♦ Clear documentation to support delivery. These can include: candidate action plans or assessment plans (which generally also record how actions were followed up); records of achievement (for individual Units and to track progress in the award); feedback forms for candidates; final assessor statements used when the portfolio is complete to highlight key aspects of the candidate's work; and records of the formal assessment interview carried out as part of the assessment strategy.

♦ A transparent system for internal verification. This can be considered as part of the documentation to support delivery but it is sufficiently important to deserve mention in its own right: strong systems have forms which present detailed Internal Verifier (IV) comments and which allow recording of action as a result of IV comments. These forms can also be used as a control to make sure assessors have acted on IV recommendations.

♦ Development of materials to support portfolio building and provide candidates with a framework to work to. These include pre-prepared support materials guiding candidates to write personal statements, answer knowledge requirements, and complete relevant tasks, eg the leadership audit document. Some centres use colour-coding systems in reflective accounts to differentiate between different Units; another uses specially developed templates for recording observations to ensure that an observer focuses on the specific requirements of the standards in situations where observation will result in suitable evidence of candidate competence.

♦ Comprehensive induction material for candidates which ensures that they know what is expected of them.

♦ Screening of candidates prior to starting the award to identify their current situation and the training and development needs they have. This not only helps to ensure that candidates are equipped to undertake the SVQ Management but also helps ensure that they are placed at the correct level of the award: one centre, for example, uses a skills analysis which combines the work which the candidates are involved in with the key competences, which must be demonstrated within SVQ Management. Potential candidates who do not meet the required competence levels are not accepted on the SVQ Management, although the centre makes every effort to place them on an alternative programme.

♦ Paying attention to the knowledge and understanding aspects of the standards especially at Level 5 where this is particularly important in ensuring that candidates achieve the appropriate level. Centres increasingly use SQA support packs where they are available but supplement this with other SQA management notes and good references particularly to web-based material.

♦ Formal systems for providing feedback to candidates (and monitoring candidate response) throughout the progress of the award. These can be aligned with the regular meetings between assessors and candidates which form the basis of most systems used to deliver SVQ Management.

Many centres now make use of electronic methods of delivery such as e-portfolios and using virtual learning environments (VLEs). One great benefit is that they facilitate the recording of

assessor–candidate interactions and the monitoring of candidate progress. Accessing relevant documents can also be more straightforward. This can help assessors to check that candidates are at the right level as well as giving a sharper focus to IV activity. This can confirm that candidates are able to provide work of standard appropriate to the Units being undertaken.

Further general feedback

Five areas in particular are worth mentioning:

1 Feedback from candidates

This is overwhelmingly positive, which is a tribute to those involved in assessing SVQ Management. Speaking to candidates is often one of the highlights of an EV visit as it demonstrates directly the effectiveness and commitment of those involved in assessing the awards. Comments from reports on discussions with candidates include:

♦ She explained the benefits that she had gained. They were: better understanding of leadership styles and hence she now leads with more confidence. She added that she now involves staff in consultation and that her delegation skills have improved. Prior to her undertaking the SVQ, she stated that she did not delegate. She went on to explain that the experience of addressing the standards had encouraged her to become more involved in the assessment of residents within the care home. She added that she now had a better understanding of the criteria and management of care planning.

♦ The feedback from the two candidates was highly complimentary of the support they had received from this centre. It was clear that they each held a good knowledge of the processes which they had followed. Both candidates explained that they had benefited from the SVQ as they had addressed their management practices, and had realised that improvements could be made. They also felt more confident in the knowledge that they were working to national requirements.

♦ The system used is electronic and candidates can log on when they have the time, and when they identify and source the appropriate evidence. The comments highly praised the mentor support provide by their assessor.

♦ One candidate spoke about how she had had no formal management training when she found herself in a management role. The SVQ had helped her think about her job and how to carry out her duties in a more effective manner. She had been apprehensive at first but was now enjoying the experience and thought her assessor was 'great'.

♦ He was very positive about the support he had received. He said his assessor talked through Units with him, set targets and provided guidance on reading and research he should do within each Unit. He confirmed that he got feedback on any submission quite quickly to allow him to keep progressing.

2 Feedback to candidates

During this session there have been further improvements in the amount and detail of feedback given to candidates by assessors. It is noticeable — and very encouraging — that the trend is to provide feedback, but in a way that makes the candidate responsible for deciding how to react to the feedback. This helps to make portfolios 'candidate led' and is something which can be taken further forward in the future.

3 Links to overall management development

A key purpose of SVQ Management is to enhance management practice and enable candidates to become more effective and efficient in their work as managers. It was noticeable during this session that a number of centres are placing much more emphasis on finding ways in which SVQ Management can enable managers to make specific, measurable improvements in their work. This is particularly so among centres which deliver the award 'in-house' and where all candidates work for the organisation in which the centre is based. One candidate, for example, had made identifiable improvements in health and safety as a result of undertaking E6. Other centres have developed ways of involving people in the candidate's organisation, eg through formal mentoring systems which often culminate in a final review meeting between the candidate and the mentor.

4 Continuous improvement by centres

A strong feature of SVQ Management is that many centres are keen to keep improving what they do, and this too has continued. Reference has already been made to electronic methods of delivery but these are often supported by techniques such as candidate forums which, in turn, often link in to VLEs. These can help candidates bounce ideas off each other as well as giving them access to learning materials. One centre taps into social networking sites to enable candidates in similar work roles, but geographically dispersed, to keep in contact with each other.

Mention has also been made of materials generated by centres to support delivery. These are often 'tweaked' from year to year to make them more useful. As already noted, many of these are associated with more 'candidate led' approaches and are often designed to help candidates decide for themselves how to proceed, eg what items of evidence would be most appropriate in a particular case. In other cases they are aimed at enhancing candidate reflection, which is particularly important at the higher levels of SVQ Management. An increasingly popular method is to encourage candidates to provide an overall summary account for each Unit which can highlight how the candidate has met the good practice set out in the standards.

5 Matching occupational role of candidates with SVQ Management level

A key aspect of SVQ Management is that the level of the award which candidates can attempt is determined by the managerial role which they fulfil. This has two main consequences. Firstly, centres must ensure that candidates undertake the level of award suited to the management tasks they perform. Secondly, progression from one level of SVQ Management to another does not depend on success at the previous level. Candidates cannot move from one level to another unless their job role changes, regardless of how well they complete the lower level award. Matching the level of SVQ Management with the candidate's occupational role has always been an issue for centres. During 2010–11, it arose particularly at Level 3 and Level 5. There is a danger that candidates are entered for SVQ Management Level 3 while they hold a predominantly administrative job role and/or where they are following a development programme. In both cases, candidates may not undertake sufficient activities on a permanent or regular basis to complete all parts of SVQ Management Level 3. They may also lack the degree of managerial responsibility required. At Level 5, candidates may not have a sufficient range of managerial responsibility nor operate at a sufficiently high level within an organisation.

Areas of good practice

Much good practice was observed during external verification visits in session 2010–11. Some aspects of this have already been mentioned in this report: such as strong and transparent centre systems, feedback to candidates and continuous improvement. The following, therefore, highlights some further aspects of good practice. Some apply to particular centres while others are more general and apply across several centres. For convenience they have been grouped under separate headings.

1 Internal verification

♦ Development of an internal verification process which enables judgements and decisions of assessment to be discussed and agreed prior to, and within, the team. This allowed the IV to acknowledge the assessors' work positively.

♦ Using internal verification comments as a means of cascading development points from EV visits.

♦ Carrying out interim and final internal verification even with experienced assessors.

♦ Clear and transparent internal verification (often electronically recorded) sampling plans which ensure that suitable samples are taken from each completed portfolio and across assessors.

2 Standardisation

♦ Logging standardisation decisions in a dedicated book. This provides ease of reference when needed. As it can be accessed electronically by all assessors/IVs when required.

♦ Incorporating development activities for assessors/IVs in standardisation meetings. These can be based on material such as questionnaires, eg learning style and other self-assessment material or on new management techniques which can then be used with candidates.

♦ Using a calendar system to flag-up standardisation meetings well in advance.

3 Induction of new assessors

♦ Shadowing of new assessors by experienced assessors and/or IVs as part of a planned programme to cover all aspects of the assessor's role.

♦ Using interim internal verification as a formal part of the induction programme. The results of this are discussed by the assessor and the IV. Full progress to the assessor role depends on a positive outcome from these discussions

4 Communication with candidates

♦ Learner questionnaire which is completed by candidates after the first Unit and later in the programme. Results are reviewed and discussed at standardisation meetings.

♦ E-mailing EV development points to candidates when these apply specifically to the work candidates are doing.

It is perhaps worth repeating that the above represent some examples of good practice not mentioned elsewhere in the report. Much of this good practice stems from the high level of commitment shown by staff at centres which, in itself, is good practice.

Specific areas for improvement

Specific areas for improvement can be identified from development points highlighted in EV reports during 2010–11. To a considerable extent, development points follow from good practice in that good practice in some centres may trigger development activities in other centres as a means of encouraging them to emulate, and better, what is being done elsewhere. The following is a list of development points which have recurred in EV reports during 2010–11. Some, but not all, are directly linked to the good practice points identified above. A very encouraging aspect of SVQ Management is that centres take EV suggestions for development seriously. The list below, therefore, is intended to give an indication of aspects of SVQ Management on which all centres could reflect. It is helpful to read it in conjunction with the previous section on good practice as together the sections provide benchmarks against which centres can compare their activities. Again, the points have been grouped into categories. In each case the point states something on which centres could work. Several of the points have been made in previous internal assessment reports also.

1 Evidence and claiming competence against the standards

The submission of product evidence of the candidate's own work as a manager is the main source of evidence for these awards. Candidates should provide sufficient evidence and ensure that it covers all Outcomes and performance criteria in the Units which they have attempted. Ideally, they should try to select a relatively small number of critical items of evidence rather than including evidence which is peripheral to the demands of the standards. Candidates should signpost their evidence to indicate how and why it shows that they meet the standards. This can usually be done by reflective accounts/narratives, professional discussion or annotation of items of evidence — either singly or in any combination. In this way candidates can show that they have understood the management process set out in the standards. A matrix cross-referencing items of evidence to the standards in a Unit may not, of itself, be sufficient for a full claim of competence.

Some specific development points in this area include:

♦ Personal statements (including professional discussion) do not normally count as proof of performance — they are usually a claim for competence against the standards and hence they need to be supported by actual performance evidence to which they should refer. They can be used, however, if suitably cross-referenced, to demonstrate that knowledge requirements have been met. To emphasise the fact that they are not proof of managerial performance many centres advise candidates not to include them in cross-reference matrices — this also applies to professional discussion.

♦ Evidence should be directly attributable to the candidate and demonstrate how she or he acts as a manager. As a result, policy and/or procedural and development materials (eg desk instructions or a job description) are not generally acceptable as proof of performance since, while they may provide useful background information, they do not normally show the actual performance of a candidate. Policy or procedural documents are only acceptable as evidence where the candidate has had some input into them, eg by being involved in their writing or development. Similarly, blank documents do not generally count as proof of performance — unless it is a document prepared by the candidate: otherwise documents should be complete and cover an actual (not a hypothetical) situation. It should be made clear how the candidate is using the document as evidence to prove that she or he manages in accordance with the Outcomes and performance criteria in the standards. There is a tendency also for some candidates to include other forms of non-attributable evidence such as notes of meetings which they

- Where observation is used, centres should ensure that records state what actual performance was observed and be directly related to criteria in the standards — ideally it should be accompanied by relevant performance evidence, eg records of a meeting chaired by the candidate when her/his behaviour was being observed

- Wherever possible, relevant performance evidence should be included in a portfolio. If this cannot be done (eg because of the sensitivity of the document), it should be clearly 'signposted' and a valid audit trail provided. This should give the description, location and purpose of the evidence document(s). The criteria which the document is intended to address should also be stated and there should be a clear indication that it has been internally verified. If this situation arises, it is often possible to encourage candidates to make use of alternative evidence that is less sensitive.

- There can be a danger that some knowledge requirements may be missed and assessors should be vigilant to confirm that no criteria have been missed.

2 Internal verification

Some form of interim internal verification is excellent practice. Otherwise there is danger that relevant issues may not be addressed. It also enables any development points for assessors to be identified at a much earlier stage and not all left till the award is completed.

- Centres should have a clear documented policy for IV sampling.

- Where the IV reports require action, this should be signed off as completed and further feedback given to the assessor. IV forms should be structured in such a way as to ensure this is accurately recorded.

3 Standardisation

- Where informal, 'ad hoc' meetings take place between assessors and IVs, a record should be kept of any substantive decisions affecting assessor/IV judgements. One way of doing this is to raise any issues at a formal meeting.

- Standardisation meetings should focus on specific issues relating to SVQ Management. They can be combined with administrative matters and with discussion of other awards but they are not valid for SVQ Management unless assessor judgements relating to these awards are directly examined.

- Systems can be developed to ensure that standardisation 'notes' have been received and acted on, where necessary by assessors and IVs.

4 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- CPD records for all current assessors and IVs should be available for inspection at an EV visit (many centres now hold these electronically).

- CPD records should include activities which are specifically related to SVQ Management — a rule of thumb is three distinct CPD events.

- Centres should have a documented policy for staff development of assessors and IVs associated with SVQ Management.

5 Portfolio building

♦ Encourage candidates to take responsibility for their own portfolios, eg selection of evidence; mix of reflective accounts and annotation.

♦ Development exercises can be included in portfolios as proof of knowledge requirements, but are not generally suitable as performance evidence.

♦ Encourage candidates to take a reflective approach to their work and explore how the evidence chosen enables them to demonstrate competence against the standards.

6 Preparation for EV visits

Generally, centres are well prepared for EV visits but it is worth repeating that if, for some reason, work from candidates in the EV sample is not available, centres should contact the EV prior to the visit to discuss alternative arrangements. It is not acceptable for the centre to decide unilaterally what adjustments should be made.