



# **Scottish Vocational Qualifications Internal Assessment Report 2013 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 2012–13 is the second year of operation. The 'new' awards are very similar in structure to their predecessors and as such the majority of centres delivering these awards are very familiar with the standards and the assessment strategy. New optional Units were added to the SVQ structures in April 2013 and it will be interesting in due course to see the take up of these new Units.

The support materials continue to be of great assistance, helping to clarify the knowledge and understanding for the Units for which they are available. Centres appear to be very positive regarding the support for these awards and all appear to be well aware of the requirements of the standards in Management.

It is also worth repeating that 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. An example of this was provided at the well-attended network meeting in April 2013.

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

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

As stated earlier, 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.

While there were very few new assessors appointed, most centres have clear recruitment and selection procedures and strong induction arrangements, with supporting documentation, should a new assessor be employed at the centre. 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. Internal verification sampling plans, in most cases, are designed to provide support to assessors. In a few cases centres are operating performance management systems that clearly support new assessors as well as supporting existing assessors.

The SQA support materials are well received and are viewed as particularly helpful for the general 'knowledge and understanding' sections of the Units. Centres frequently comment at External Verifiers' (EV) 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.

Again, 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 use the centre's e-portfolio platform, 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, and potential sources and types of evidence for a Unit.

### **Evidence Requirements**

Clear guidance is provided by SQA on how to use Evidence Requirements and this is largely unchanged from previous years. In essence, it is the candidate's responsibility to provide tangible evidence to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the awards. This is important as it encourages candidates to be familiar with the Management standards and how they relate to their current performance and the evidence that they provide. 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.

As noted earlier, and in previous reports, most centres do understand these requirements and work hard with their candidates to meet them. However, there is still 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 that candidates demonstrate how the evidence proves that the Management standards are being met.

Centres continue to work hard to ensure that the evidence provided does meet the requirements. However, there are areas raised in previous reports that continue to appear, albeit they are appearing with less frequency:

- ◆ the use of a personal report (sometimes referred to as a narrative or reflective account) as an item of evidence. It is a means by which candidates can show that they understand the standards and why their evidence demonstrates that they are competent against the standards.

- ◆ the use of blank documents, policies and procedures as an item of evidence. The evidence lies in how candidates use these documents and how that evidence supports their claim of competency.
- ◆ the way in which candidates demonstrate how the evidence proves that they meet the standards. A cross-referenced matrix is not sufficient and there should be an explicit link between the standards and the evidence provided.

There appears to be a general movement to holistic assessment using critical incidents/projects as a means of generating evidence across a number of Units. This is in the main good practice but there are one or two potential issues that centres may wish to give consideration to namely:

- ◆ that evidence has to be generated in the workplace and should be naturally occurring in the workplace. A 'created' project such as one undertaken by a college/undergraduate student is unlikely to meet the requirements of the Units.
- ◆ that the evidence presented is in the form of work-based evidence and not an academic submission, eg a 'masters' paper.

Overall, external verification during 2012–13 indicates that centres have been working hard to improve practice and there are strong signs of continuous improvement, which continues the trend of the last two sessions and is good to see. The main development is that assessors continue to 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.

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.

### **Administration of assessments**

External verification during 2012–13 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. In addition, the use of performance management systems for assessors/verifiers which dovetail with the delivery systems indicates that centres are taking their responsibility to deliver a high quality experience seriously.

In the main, centres have clear and transparent CPD (continuing professional development) systems which include CPD in relation to delivery, assessment and

verification systems and regular meetings. It is important to ensure that these are available at visits and that they show continuous CPD in relation to the subject. One centre has a standing item at assessor/verifier meetings of management development where an area of interest in the management field is considered across the team at each meeting.

Over the year, more and more centres are moving towards electronic methods in particular the use of e-portfolio systems. Candidates using these systems often comment on the advantages of being able to check-in as they wish, upload and submit evidence and receive feedback. As in conventional systems, candidates need to make the links between the evidence and the standards, which in most cases the e-portfolio does provide for. The key within any portfolio is that it is clearly structured and relatively easily followed.

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**

Centre systems should also include a 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.

### **Depth of comments**

The depth of IV comments varies between centres. In general, there is a need for IVs to make meaningful comment; a signature on its own or a signature accompanied by a statement of 'agreed' is rarely sufficient. The IV role is a critical one in maintaining standards and in aiding assessors to meet these standards and comments should reflect this.

### **Support for candidates**

With regard to candidates, there is clear evidence through external verification and through candidate feedback that candidates are well supported and think highly of their experience with centres. Clear candidate induction processes and matching exercises/diagnostics, to ensure that candidates are working at the appropriate level, all assist in making the award accessible to candidates and in achieving a successful outcome. The use of assessment plans and clear, agreed targets helps to ensure that the assessment process is administered well and assists in maintaining and checking candidate progress. In the main, the e-portfolio platforms give a clear indication of progress and candidates can clearly see their progress and whether submitted evidence has been accepted.

### **General feedback**

There are a number of areas that are worthy of mention.

#### **Feedback from candidates**

A key part of EV visits is speaking to candidates. Once again, the feedback received across all visits 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 continues to be 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.

#### **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. However, there are areas where this could be improved such as fuller recording of discussions with candidates eg telephone calls or e-mail discussions that have taken place outwith the portfolio environment whether that be electronic or otherwise.

There are obvious benefits of a formal record in 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. It also helps in evidence tracking, progress management and internal verification. The idea should 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. As discussed in previous reports, 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. These are working well and verification and discussions with candidates confirm this to be the case — and once again candidates are full of praise for their centre.

## **Continuous improvement by centres**

Many centres are continuing to refine, rework and continually improve their approach to the SVQ Management. While the obvious change is the increase in the use of e-portfolios there are a number of other improvements such as the provision of support materials online, the use of social media, refined forms and new portfolio models, candidate tracking and ongoing CPD. The opportunity for candidates to join the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) for free for 12 months is giving access to a large bank of other resources which is also a positive development.

Studying membership of the Institute enables access to a range of management information, tools and support, to help candidates to achieve their award and perform more effectively and efficiently within their management and leadership positions. Centres can also gain institutional membership giving them access to the resources, which will allow assessors to target the use of resources wherever necessary. To date the pick-up has been low but this may improve as centres realise some of the benefits.

## **Matching occupational role of candidates with SVQ Management**

As mentioned in previous reports, this continues to be a potential issue. 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.

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. In some cases it may be that candidates while unable to demonstrate competence across all the Units in an Award may be able to demonstrate competence in one of the areas covered by the PDAs and achieve the PDA. As before, if a candidate has achieved the SVQ at one level, or achieved a PDA, it is unlikely they can undertake the next level unless their job role has changed which would then allow them to demonstrate competence at the new level.

## **Areas of good practice**

The points made in this report so far indicate that there are many aspects of good practice that were apparent during external verification visits in 2012–13 and in previous years. Again, as mentioned already, this is confirmation of the high level of commitment shown by centres and their staff 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**

- ◆ candidate support and direction in building portfolios enabling them to take early ownership
- ◆ candidates explicitly linking evidence to standards
- ◆ wide range of performance evidence
- ◆ use of support material both general and Unit specific
- ◆ paying close attention to the knowledge requirements and encouraging candidates to link these to their work situation
- ◆ transparent portfolios which can be easily followed

### **Standardisation/internal verification**

- ◆ 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
- ◆ 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
- ◆ 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**

As identified earlier, communication with candidates is strong and feedback from candidates confirms this.

There are a number of further examples:

- ◆ 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
- ◆ good induction and selection programmes which work well in helping candidates choose optional Units and help plan their approach to the award
- ◆ clear plans with clear targets to ensure candidates can plan their way through the award

### **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 2012–13 indicate actions that centres could take to enhance the work they do.

There are areas mentioned earlier, eg IV feedback, CMI membership, recording discussions and holistic assessment, that all fall within this heading but again this varies from centre to centre and will fit with the centre action and/or development plans.

Overall, most centres have a strong commitment to continuous improvement and this is to be encouraged.