



**Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Workplace Core Skills: Problem
Solving and Working with Others**

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

Workplace-assessed units

Titles/levels of NQ units verified:

F42H 04 Problem Solving SCQF level 3

F42J 04 Problem Solving SCQF level 4

F42K 04 Problem Solving SCQF level 5

F42M 04 Working with Others SCQF level 3

F42N 04 Working with Others SCQF level 4

F42P 04 Working with Others SCQF level 5

General comments

Workplace Core Skills verification reports confirmed that centres do have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national and occupational standards. Centres continue to meet the requirements of the national standards and external verifiers' reports highlighted the excellent workplace standards and the effectiveness of assessment methods in the judgement of candidate evidence, eg direct observation and performance evidence. High standards are being maintained in the delivery of Workplace Core Skills.

Centres were well organised for external visiting verification events and EV reports indicated that centre systems and procedures fully met the requirements of the national standards. External verification reports clearly indicate that the level of risk associated with the delivery of Workplace Core Skills is very low.

Verification reports revealed that centres, assessors and internal verifiers were maintaining high standards in course frameworks and units in Workplace Core Skills Problem Solving and Working with Others.

Internal quality assurance systems and procedures are well established within centres. Core Skills units are delivered as part of a high quality learning experience in SVQ course frameworks. Learning and teaching materials provide a rich breadth of evidence and underpin the delivery of robust assessment instruments using SQA exemplification materials.

External verifiers continue to highlight how centres are well prepared and provide easily accessible documentation for the external verifier visit which includes:

- ◆ staff qualifications documentation and records of CPD
- ◆ candidate recruitment, induction policy and procedures
- ◆ internal support systems, including individual learning plans
- ◆ assessment frameworks/ assessment evidence, marking guidelines and results matrices
- ◆ learning and teaching materials including course frameworks and assessment schedules

- ◆ internal quality assurance documentation, eg policy and procedures, minutes of meetings, standardisation events, sampling and internal verification records
- ◆ internal decision records and action points relating to Workplace Skills qualification requirements and external communications with SQA and other relevant funding/awarding bodies

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Assessors and internal verifiers are very familiar with the unit specifications, instruments of assessment and SQA exemplification materials. Centres continue to make good use of SQA exemplification materials and exemplar tasks. Workplace Core Skills are routinely contextualised within the delivery of SVQ programmes.

External visiting verification was very successful and continues to highlight how centres are extremely well organised providing robust assessment materials, appropriate assessment tasks, and current unit checklists and internal verification documentation. There was consistency in the support provided for new assessors in the delivery of assessment through the induction stage, in-house training and work-shadowing.

Assessor/verifier meetings and standardisation activities are scheduled and support the assessment process and the exemplification of national standards in Workplace Core Skills Problem Solving and Working with Others.

Centre evidence was extremely well organised and contained current unit specifications, exemplification materials, instruments of assessment and learning and teaching materials. Workplace Core Skills delivery is embedded into SVQ programmes and learners understand the importance of these qualifications within the framework of the SVQ.

SQA continues to support the prior verification of centre-devised assessment instruments. Prior verification supports the use of internal assessment approaches and the assessment instrument is verified by a subject specialist external verifier. The prior verification application form is available on the SQA website.

Workplace Core Skills assessment approaches tend to be contextualised within the programme delivery where appropriate tasks are used to evidence the Core Skills. In some instances, evidence is gathered on a unit by unit basis and on other occasions the SVQ framework is used to identify relevant tasks where the Core Skill can be developed.

- ◆ Assessors are familiar with the unit specifications, assessment instruments and exemplification materials and evidence was consistently of a high standard.

- ◆ Master teaching packs were made available during visits, complete with current unit specifications, exemplification materials, instruments of assessment, learning and teaching resources, assessment schedules and internal verification checklists.
- ◆ Assessors are very familiar with exemplification materials and instruments of assessments and are confident in their use. There was a rich source of centre-initiated tasks, eg naturally occurring tasks to develop the Core Skills delivery. This was particularly relevant to the learner on Modern Apprenticeship programmes.
- ◆ SQA continues to support the prior verification of centre-devised assessment instruments. Centres can submit their own assessment instruments which can support the internal assessment delivery of Core Skills units. This will help centres to move away from SQA exemplification materials especially where there is a real opportunity to create centre-devised assessment instruments to support SVQ programme delivery.

Evidence requirements

Verification activity in 2015–16 re-affirmed that centres continue to have a very good understanding of the evidence requirements and are very successful in the delivery of SVQ programme frameworks.

Centres were fully compliant with external visiting verification visits especially in the preparation and lead up to the activity itself. External verifiers were extremely praiseworthy of documentation including master teaching packs, assessment and internal verification documentation, learning and teaching resource materials and documented minutes of meetings.

SQA exemplification and work-based assessment activities were in use and it was clear that centres are comfortable with the interpretation of workplace Core Skills standards. Further exemplification of the national standards was evident using programme assessments, assignments and excellent course design. SVQ programmes are well structured and provide a wealth of opportunities to generate folio evidence, eg real work based activities, practical projects/assignments, placement and/or simulated work environments, team building and group work activities.

SQA continues to provide support in the form of development visits to centres and to provide information as centres seek advice by e-mail and phone calls.

In centres where the evidence met the standard, internal quality assurance systems and procedures were exemplary. The judgement of candidate evidence was clear, accurate and robust.

There were excellent examples of centre induction programmes and procedures to support new and existing assessors, internal verifiers and candidates. Centre documentation revealed a wealth of programmed activities and CPD opportunities.

Standardisation activities are taking place but assessors and internal verifiers need to provide more robust feedback and not use a tick-box approach. More frequent internal sampling and cross-sampling should be undertaken to standardise the assessment decisions taken by assessors across units and within the centre.

Administration of assessments

The administration of assessments is at the appropriate level and these are generally well executed. Schedules are provided and the candidate is aware of the cycle of assessment activity. This usually forms part of the induction process where information is provided for candidates on the delivery of the programme itself so they know exactly what to expect. Yearly reviews support the course evaluation process where the course programme design can be adapted to ensure currency with the occupational standards and to ensure current assessment methods support industry standards.

Assessment is structured according to the assessment instrument, eg closed/open book/ project/ assignments/ practical. Many centres continue to use the Core Skills exemplar worksheets but some are beginning to utilise electronic secure systems, eg Moodle, as it suits the candidates and can be more flexible.

Internal verification procedures are well organised, robust and fit for purpose.

SVQ programmes are well organised and well established in centres where assessment schedules and week-to-week lesson plans provide an excellent framework for the delivery of Core Skills.

The national frameworks and occupational standards determine the level of mandatory and optional units that can be delivered. Centres do comply with SVQ framework principles and guidelines and assessments are at the appropriate level.

Assessor judgements across the external verification sample were consistent, fair, valid and reliable. It was evident throughout external sampling that assessor advice, guidance, support and direct feedback contributed greatly to successful achievements and Core Skills outcomes.

General feedback

Assessor feedback was consistent and supportive throughout the assessment process. Candidates excel in the work-based environment where the assessor has a 'hands-on approach' and where real work based skills are being taught to industry standards.

External verification was consistently praiseworthy of the high standards of candidate evidence and the internal systems and procedures which are available to support candidates, eg candidate induction, pre-entry interviews, course guidance reviews, candidate feedback, and evaluations.

Centres are encouraged to use a front page candidate feedback sheet for unit assessment evidence as this provides an excellent tool for the assessor to provide direct feedback on assessment tasks. This should be signed and dated by the assessor as tasks are completed.

Candidates interviewed during the external verification activity events clearly had a very positive learning experience and were full of praise for their assessor and the work skills development they were gaining.

Candidates were motivated in the pursuit of their own vocational development objectives and in many centres were encouraged and supported in the attainment of their individual goals, eg apprenticeships and other vocational opportunities.

Candidates had completed disclaimer forms and had been made aware of the malpractice and plagiarism policy and procedures. Assessment folio evidence was mainly paper based and held in secure storage.

Centres had robust systems in place to assess candidate Core Skills and prior learning experiences. Induction programmes were highly relevant and aimed at supporting pre-entry and access to appropriate levels of SVQ vocational programmes.

Areas of good practice

In general, good practice was highlighted in external reports regarding centre systems and procedures. External verifiers were very impressed with the good practice in relation to the following:

- ◆ Candidate pre-entry interviews and identified support issues.
- ◆ Scheduled one-to-one initial and on-going reviews of candidate progress.
- ◆ The effective delivery of SQA assessment instruments.
- ◆ The reliable and consistent judgement of candidate evidence.
- ◆ Proactive internal quality assurance systems and procedures.
- ◆ The dissemination of information following external quality assurance activities and the recording of appropriate developments and action planning.

Further good practice was highlighted in relation to the following:

- ◆ Holistic assessment approaches and cross-referencing of folio evidence.
- ◆ The development of naturally occurring workplace Core Skills evidence and how this was embedded into targeted projects as part of the course design.
- ◆ There was good evidence of signposting of Core Skills evidence.
- ◆ The general level of training competency of staff was excellent and this was further supported by current up to date CPD activities.
- ◆ The level of individual support, extended support and specialist training given to candidates in the development of Workplace Core Skills was exemplary.

Specific areas for improvement

Specific areas for improvement relate to the findings in the external verification reporting activities and to specific criteria within the report. Compliance levels were generally high and indicated a sufficient level of confidence in systems, procedures and verification activity. In a small number of centres there was reason to indicate that there was insufficient evidence and some non-compliance, but this was very minimal.

- ◆ Where there was an element of non-compliance this was linked to insufficient candidate evidence for the Core Skills activity and/or inappropriate assessment tasks for the development of the Core Skills at different levels.
- ◆ In general, assessors were making good use of assessment checklists and providing appropriate candidate feedback. Where this was effective there was a good standardisation and internal verification process in place.
- ◆ Report criterion 2.8 states the following: '*There must be evidence of initial and on-going reviews of assessment environment(s); assessment procedures, equipment, learning and assessment materials.*' It is important that centres understand the need to provide evidence for this which provides good coverage of the whole criterion, eg initial and on-going reviews of learning and assessment materials and procedures can be evidenced through minutes of meetings, teaching pack checklists, standardisation activities, and agreed assessment procedures signed and dated for the current activity. The initial and on-going reviews of the assessment environments and equipment might be documented in health and safety and risk assessment procedures.
- ◆ Report criterion 4.3 states '*Evidence of candidates' work must be consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements*' — there were one or two examples where there was inconsistent marking of assessment evidence. This arises mainly due to poor and inconsistent assessor judgements/feedback, a shortfall in candidate evidence, and inconsistent feedback from internal verification.
- ◆ Some assessors and internal verifiers have old qualifications, eg D units. Centres need to take steps to address this in annual CPD activities. This can be achieved using the SQA CPD toolkit and/or re-registering to complete the new Assessor/Verifier qualifications.