



Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017

NQ Core Skills

**Problem Solving & Working with Others
(342)**

Introduction

Centres continue to incorporate core skills units into specialised subject areas.

NQ verification activity revealed contextualised learning and assessment materials adapted to suit the needs of candidates. Almost all centres deliver NQ core skills using project-based topics suited to the subject area that the candidate has chosen to study. Verification reports revealed some excellent examples, eg:

- a fund raising project involving a charity football match
- an art project involving prisoners
- a visit to a Fire Rescue and Training centre and associated project

NQ Core Skills: Problem Solving and Working with Others verification activity was successful as verification reports revealed a consistent application of qualification standards. Centres continue to deliver a variety of National Certificates and National Qualifications where core skills form part of the qualifications. Assessors and internal verifiers continue to support candidates and to provide scheduled standardisation activities with recorded actions to ensure the integrated delivery of NQ Core Skills as part of NQ qualifications.

NQ Core Skills

F3GD 08 Problem Solving

F3GD 09 Problem Solving

F3GD 10 Problem Solving

F3GD 11 Problem Solving

F3GD 12 problem Solving

F3GE 08 Working with Others

F3GE 09 Working with Others

F3GE 10 Working with Others

F3GE 11 Working with Others

F3GE 12 Working with Others

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

'Staff records show that an initial assessment of the candidates takes place as part of the recruitment process. All candidates have an initial review with their tutor as part of their induction to the unit. Reviews are carried out where candidates and tutors discuss progression route for the candidates.'

All centres provided comprehensive evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of the assessment environments and equipment. Risk assessment strategies were in place as well as regular

testing of equipment. Annual checks and periodic checks of assessment environments were scheduled and teaching staff routinely commented on the assessment environment, especially where it may affect the learning and teaching delivery.

SQA assessment support materials were routinely in use as centres continue to have confidence in their delivery. Almost all centres create master teaching packs which contain a bank of resources including reference, learning and assessment materials. There was good evidence of initial and ongoing assessment checks being carried out and recorded using internal audit documentation, eg current unit specification; current assessment instruments; checking for any SQA updates and changes to the qualification; standardisation minutes and action points.

More than a few centres are aware of the SQA three-stage model of verification and are in the process of developing systems and procedures to incorporate this into the reviewing process.

Almost all centres were well resourced with up-to-date technology and equipment suitable for the delivery of SQA qualifications e.g. Smartboard technology; access to ICT; WiFi; internet and intranet resources. Learning resources were current and provided a wealth of customised formative worksheets and project activities to support the delivery of NQ Core Skills: Problem Solving and Working with Others.

Category 3: Candidate support

Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.

'The centre recruitment process includes looking at the candidate's prior achievements, such as in an SQA Connect report, to identify development needs and so ensure a more structured approach is taken to developing the candidate. The centre uses SQA Connect to identify the levels of core skills gained to match with the requirements for each individual candidate.'

Verification reports indicate that all centres utilise SQA Connect to identify a candidate's prior achievements and to match these against the requirements of the award. Most centres identify candidate development needs at the pre-entry/induction stage and create an individual (paper-based or electronic) learning plan which follows the learner throughout their learning journey.

Some centres have advanced systems in place to record candidate development needs, which are well supported through robust guidance and learner support systems and procedures. There was a good range of evidence of support being put in place for candidates, for example: assistive technologies for dyslexia; target skills to support the development of core skills; personal and academic support.

Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.

Candidates do have regular contact with their assessor to review their progress. Almost all centres had a programme schedule which highlighted where regular reviews were being undertaken. This was further evidenced using an individual learning plan (ILP) which was part of an electronic and/or paper-based system within a centre. There was good evidence to show how the ILP was being used to track candidate progress and to identify development needs across the learner journey. Most centres have well developed internal systems and procedures to review candidate progress and to revise assessment plans accordingly.

Assessment plans vary to suit the needs of the candidate and the programme of learning, eg from a one page ILP to a complex range of information that documents the entire learner journey (initial enrolment/induction stage; details of the programme of study; the support provided; referral for a specific need; candidate achievements, including special achievements and post destinations).

Most training/college providers embed scheduled assessor contact into their programmes of study and it is easy to see how the candidate is being supported from the induction stage through to the completion of their programme.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

Criterion 4.2: Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.

Verification reports indicate that almost all centres have robust internal assessment and verification procedures in place to ensure the standardisation of assessment. Assessment is being carried out on an ongoing basis as core skills folio evidence is completed, eg as and when candidates complete the planning stage; the implementation and evaluation stages. This is a continuous assessment cycle as the current IV process supports remediation and re-assessment opportunities.

Most assessment and internal verification procedures are well documented prior to external visiting verification activity. SQA qualification verifiers are aware that a centre may have a schedule of verification activity across a three-year cycle and that they cannot expect that verification has been carried out prior to a visit. Centre assessment and internal verification procedures and policy documents were made available, and qualification verifiers were able to see the cycle of verification activity within a centre.

There was consistent evidence of scheduled standardisation meetings with the use of decision logs to record decisions made.

Criterion 4.3: Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

'The centre uses appropriate assessment methods for the core skills, a project and questions which are recorded in a written statement'.

Qualification verifiers routinely sampled assessment instruments that were developed by SQA, as centres were confident in their selection and use. SQA assessment support packs were in use across a range of centres, eg Further Education colleges; training providers and community-based organisations. Almost all centres had contextualised assessment support materials to fit into programme delivery.

Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.

Qualification verifiers routinely commented that centres 'ensure that all the work that the candidates produce is their own as the candidates sign a declaration disclaimer form to confirm such during their induction'.

Almost all centres had candidate disclaimers completed while most understood the requirement to ensure that candidates adhered to the assessment conditions. Centre policies and

procedures supported the quality assurance requirement to ensure candidate work was not compromised by plagiarism and malpractice. Assessors and internal verifiers were fully aware of policies and procedures to ensure candidate evidence was their own work and were vigilant in this respect.

Criterion 4.6: Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.

'Candidate evidence viewed was found to be consistent and accurate in the assessment judgement'.

Almost all centres consistently and accurately judged candidate performance to SQA's requirements. The standard of candidate work at NQ level was consistent and met core skills qualification standards.

Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.

Almost all centres retain candidate evidence in line with SQA requirements and longer if necessary. Candidate evidence may be retained for longer periods by some centres due to other awarding bodies and/or funding requirements. This can vary from the minimum requirement of three weeks to as much as three years.

Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.

'Centre staff have discussions on external verifier's reports and also store this information electronically, thus giving free access to reports for all assessors and staff.'

Centres upload verification reports to an intranet which keeps staff up to date with external verification activities. Staff then have an opportunity to discuss the report within course teams and at regular standardisation meetings.

All centres comply with this criterion. Visiting verification reports reveal that centres routinely disseminate reports to staff, and that these are used to inform assessment practice.

Standardisation meetings and decision logs were routinely in use and highlight areas for improvement as well as good practice.

Areas of good practice report by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ Joint teaching staff delivery enabled one centre to allow staff to develop and share subject knowledge and expertise in core skills.
- ◆ Standardisation and internal verification systems are working well especially across different sites.
- ◆ A wide range of project-based activities were contextualised to the needs of candidates and specific programme delivery, eg creative arts; charity sponsored events; care; sport and fitness.
- ◆ Internal and verification sampling is supporting the standardisation of core skills delivery across centres.
- ◆ Good practice was identified in the integrated delivery of Problem Solving and Working with Others through a project-based activity and employer engagement.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ Initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments and equipment should be recorded in standardisation meeting minutes and records.
- ◆ Initial and ongoing reviews of reference, learning and assessment materials should be recorded using internal audit documentation.
- ◆ An exemplar Assessment Plan should be made available to centres.
- ◆ Good practice should be recorded in standardisation minutes and be more widely recognised within centres.
- ◆ Most centres adopt the SQA preferred model of verification known as the three-stage model. A specific area for development is in the consistency and standardisation of how it is actually implemented.