Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017

SVQ Core Skills

Problem Solving & Working with Others (342)

Introduction

SVQ Core Skills verification reports continue to reaffirm that almost all centres do have a clear and accurate understanding of the requirements of the national standards. Centres continue to meet the qualification requirements where the core skills of problem solving and working with others are embedded in modern apprenticeship programmes. Workplace settings provide the ideal opportunity to gather naturally-occurring evidence of core skills using direct observation and a range of performance evidence.

SQA qualification verifiers routinely commented that centres were very well organised for external visiting verification events and external verifier (EV) reports indicated that centre systems and procedures fully met the requirements of the national standards. Internal quality assurance systems and procedures are well established within centres. Core Skills units are delivered as part of a high-quality learning experience, often alongside SVQs. Learning and teaching materials are of a good quality and they help underpin the delivery of robust assessment instruments using SQA exemplification materials.

EV reports indicated that almost all centres continue to provide robust information on internal policy and procedures, including:

- Staff qualifications; occupational experience 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 assessed qualification requirements and external communications with SQA and other relevant funding/awarding bodies

SVQ Core Skills
Problem Solving
F42H 04   Problem Solving SCQF level 3
F42J 04   Problem Solving SCQF level 4
F42K 04   Problem Solving SCQF level 5

Working with others
F42M 04   Working with Others SCQF level 3
F42N 04   Working with Others SCQF level 4
F42P 04   Working with Others SCQF level 5

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.

(This criterion should be completed for regulated qualifications only.)

Staff at almost all centres met this criterion. Almost all staff are appropriately professionally competent and qualified to deliver workplace core skills. Almost all also hold the relevant assessor/verifier qualifications. Staff information, including evidence of occupational/subject-based competence and qualifications, was made available for EVs to review. CPD records were also available showing recent and relevant activity.

One example of good practice highlighted that the centre had 'a comprehensive and heavily planned CPD calendar which all staff attend'. The verifier commented that 'it was great to see how full the CPD calendar was and how much CPD staff undertook'.

More than a few centres need to consider the use of the CPD toolkit which supports assessors and internal verifiers to show how they are working to and understand the current national standards of assessment/verification (L&D9Di/L&D 11).

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

EV reports routinely indicated: '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 assessor as part of the induction to the programme, and every 4 weeks thereafter.   Reviews are carried out where both candidates and assessors discuss progression. All candidates' information is stored in a locked filing cabinet. The centre gave free access to all materials during the visit'.

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 which include reference, learning and assessment materials. There was good evidence of initial and ongoing assessment checks being carried out and recorded using internal audit documentation, e.g. 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 workplace qualifications in use, e.g. electronic portfolios; use of iPads and tablets to record evidence; photographic and recorded evidence.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Almost all centres utilise SQA Connect to establish candidate prior achievements and to assess candidate development needs. Centres routinely use SQA Connect to 'identify the levels of core skills gained to match with requirements of a Modern Apprenticeship (MA), and core skills programme, and the individual candidate'.

Verification reports indicate that SQA Connect helps to identify candidate prior achievements and centres can then 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) assessment 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 into 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.

Verification reports indicate that almost all centres have procedures in place for assessors and candidates to meet on a regular basis. Scheduled contact arrangements were in place and centre records revealed 'detailed assessment plans indicating the purpose of the review meeting, progress to date and overall outcomes of units including the candidate's next steps'.

Most training college providers embed scheduled assessor contact into their MA programmes and this includes workplace assessor observations and activities related to generating performance evidence. 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.

Qualification verifiers continue to systematically view 'centre assessment and verification policy and procedures', and to discuss the actual process with staff, especially assessors and internal verifiers. There was consistent evidence to show that 'policies and procedures are reviewed annually.'

Verification reports clearly indicate that almost all centres have robust internal assessment and verification procedures in place to ensure the standardisation of assessment. Assessment decisions are consistent with workplace core skills standards. Almost all centres are proactive where the standard has not been met, and records of standardisation meetings and internal sampling support this.

Assessment is flexible to fit into workplace activities and there were good examples of schedules being adjusted to capture naturally-occurring evidence in the work-based environment. For example, workplace core skills folio evidence is completed as and when candidates complete the planning stage, and 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.

Verification reports indicate that many centres deliver workplace core skills 'using a holistic approach, using instruments of assessment: observation, witness testimony, photos and questions'. Centres use 'appropriate assessment methods for the core skills, mainly work products, professional discussion, observation of the candidates, photos and questions'.

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

contextualised to suit different MA awards, and tasks for problem solving and working with others were mapped to different units within the award.

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.

EV reports indicated that 'IV records, assessors' reports and standardisation minutes of meetings' all confirmed that an 'IV procedure is in place'. Centres complied with the criteria and all records were accurate and up to date. Candidates' evidence was well organised and there was 'consistency and accuracy in the assessment judgements'. There was evidence of 'a holistic approach to core skills whereby SVQ evidence is cross-referenced to the assessment support packs'.

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

More than a few centres had difficulty with the tracking of folio evidence, especially where there was too much cross-referencing to whole or part units in the MA awards.

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 3 years.

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

All centres keep staff up to date using standardisation team meetings at which action points are recorded in formal minutes and are used to inform assessment practice. There is consistent evidence to support the view that centre staff have scheduled meetings and discussions regarding external verifiers' reports. Verifiers indicated that 'EV reports are stored electronically, thus giving free access for assessors, verifiers and all staff'. Verifiers consistently reported that 'staff have an opportunity to discuss the report with the internal verifier at team/standardisation meetings'.

All centres comply with this criterion. Visiting verification reports reveal that centres routinely disseminate reports to staff and 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 reported by qualification verifiers

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

♦ CPD was planned using a staff calendar whereby mandatory attendance and events were recorded for all staff.
♦ Holistic assessment across units and MA awards supported naturally-occurring evidence of the core skills of problem solving and working with others.
♦ Standardisation and internal verification systems are working well, especially across different sites.
♦ Internal and verification sampling is highly supportive, and contributes greatly to the standardisation of workplace core skills delivery across centres.
♦ Good practice was identified in the integrated delivery of problem solving and working with others across units in a range of MA programmes, eg hairdressing; health and social care; customer services and hospitality.

Specific areas for development

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

♦ More than a few centres had difficulty with the tracking of core skills evidence, as this was matched to too many units within the MA programme.
♦ 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's 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.