Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017
Hospitality and Professional Cookery

Introduction

During this session qualification verifiers received allocations to visit 64 centres, an additional 24 centres have been allocated for early visits in the following session, and 9 centres advised verifiers that they were not running.

The units verified this session came from the following group awards:

SCQF level 4
G9VV 21   Hospitality Services
G9V8 21   Accommodation Services
G9V9 21   Food & Beverage Services
G9VA 21   Professional Cookery

SCQF level 5
G9VP 22   Beverage Services
G9VM 22   Food Production
G9VL 22   Food & beverage Services
G9VN 22   Food Service
G9VR 22   Hospitality Services
G9VK 22   Front of House Reception
G9VJ 22   Housekeeping
G9VG 22   Kitchen Services
G9VH 22   Professional Cookery
G9VF 22   Professional Cookery (Preparation & Cooking)

SCQF level 6
G9VE 23   Professional Cookery
G9VC 23   Professional Cookery (Preparation & Cooking)
G9VD 23   Professional Cookery (Patisserie & Confectionery)

SCQF level 7
G9HH 23   Hospitality Supervision & Leadership

SCQF level 8
GG28 24   Hospitality Management Skills

Due to time constraints or location of candidates, only one qualification verifier (QV) was able to view a live assessment taking place. However, several QVs did report that they had the opportunity to speak with candidates during their visits. Although candidates were not being assessed at this time, it was noted that they were encouraged to gather and record evidence for their portfolios.

Observing and talking to candidates in a practical environment provides a good opportunity to view progress and gauge candidates' enjoyment of the awards.

It was positive to note that centres had taken on board the recommendations from previous sessions and actively moved forward to monitor systems and procedures accordingly.

Only two sanctions required action this year; these were due to inconsistencies in internal quality assurance processes and meeting the assessment strategy requirements for the awards. The advice and support provided by the QV, together with the commitment of centre staff, allowed the sanctions to be removed in a timely manner.

It was noted that information requested on visit plans had been provided by the majority of centres, although a few issues arose around accessing staff files.

Overall, centres appeared to have developed a systematic approach to assessment and verification and had robust quality assurance policies and procedures in place. There were a few issues relating to insufficient evidence and misinterpretation of standards when developing in-house recording documents; however, these were rectified within acceptable timescales.

It was evident that QVs were impressed with the assessment environments and opportunities made available to candidates. The use of modern equipment and methods of service reflected current industry trends. There were also many compliments relating to the industry links that centres had developed and the support being provided by industry staff.

It was encouraging to read that the majority of candidate feedback to QVs was highly complimentary of the support received from assessors. Candidates confirmed that their own progress had been enhanced by the knowledge of assessors and this was demonstrated through the work they produced for assessment. However, a small number of candidates highlighted that they were unaware of any observation having taken place or visits being made by their assessor, and this was discussed internally. It highlighted the importance of documenting assessment planning and ensuring that candidates are aware of when they are being assessed, by reading, reviewing, evaluating, signing and dating evidence as it is produced.

Assessors commented that they were grateful of the support provided by their internal verifiers and centre staff and they felt they had all the necessary resources to undertake their role competently. Some highlighted the frustrations of unstable ICT/networking facilities and the impact this could have on e-portfolio completion.

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.

It was apparent from all visiting verification reports that centre staff were occupationally competent, had relevant industry experience, and were qualified assessors and/or internal verifiers, or actively working towards the appropriate learning and development award.

A few centres advised QVs that access to staff files (CV, certificates and CPD records) was not available to them, and only designated personnel had access. It is important to remember that information requested on the visit plan must be made available to QVs in order to support the verification activity and therefore requests made within a suitable timescale on the visit plan should be met.

Some centre staff demonstrated that they had updated their knowledge to reflect the current assessor/verifier qualifications by completing the CPD toolkit from SQA's Learning and development webpage. This is good practice and helps to ensures that all staff are actively working to the current assessor/internal verifier standards.

CPD activity varied between centres. It was apparent that a good range of activity had taken place across the year, although in some cases it was not always appropriately documented. CPD is an important aspect of meeting the requirements of the assessment strategy and demonstrates a commitment to updating of knowledge and skills.

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

Qualification verification reports confirmed that appropriate site selection checklists were being completed for new assessment sites. This was generally in line with organisational health and safety policies and SDS requirements, where appropriate.

Internal systems demonstrated the use of standardisation meetings and candidate progress sheets to review assessment environments, equipment, reference and learning materials. Cyclical and current menus reflect industry trends. Candidates were supported by knowledgeable staff, and the use of websites, reference books, trade magazines, field trips, competition work, exhibitions and food fayres further enhanced their knowledge and understanding of the sector.

It was apparent that centres are continuing to keep up to date with industry trends and many reflected this in the purchase of new, modern equipment. Many centres that had financial limitations utilised local industry links for field trips, work placement (for staff and candidates), as well as job shadowing exercises.

It is positive to see that centre staff are actively reviewing their procedures and revising evidence gathering forms to maintain consistency and meet candidate needs.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

It was encouraging to see that it is common practice across most centres for key hospitality staff to have initial interviews with candidates. The feedback received from candidates and staff throughout the visits reflected that the interview stage is a vital factor in ensuring that the candidate is selected for a programme that not only meets their own learning needs but also matches the availability of resources in the workplace/college/assessment environment.

Full inductions occurred across the majority of centres visited and these were documented in quality assurance files or candidate portfolios/online systems.

Staff and candidates confirmed that previous knowledge was discussed, and in most cases SQA Navigator had been checked to identify prior achievement before commencing the programme of study.

Each centre demonstrated a clear system for identifying additional learning needs. Candidates were encouraged by the support they were being given. Some stated that they had concerns about completing the award, but they had built a solid rapport with the assessor and centre staff and felt fully supported at all times. One candidate stated that their confidence had grown so much that they were keen to progress to a higher level due to the support provided and the industry experience gained.

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

It was evident across all verification visits that regular contact with candidates by assessors was maintained. Frequency of visits ranged from weekly to monthly and very rarely exceeded more than once a month. Candidate assessment records detailed when visits had taken place and these were backed-up by review sheets in most cases.
Discussion with candidates during centre visits highlighted that some assessors work side-by-side with candidates on a regular basis and others visit them when on duty. These visits are generally planned at the previous visit and candidates and assessor keep in touch by text, messenger and e-mail.

In some centres, social media networks had been set up to provide group information, post reminders about events and assessments, and forward industry news. These were all seen as positive methods of communication and followed centres' data protection policies.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

In the majority of reports, QVs confirmed that centres were actively following their internal assessment and verification procedures to ensure standardisation of assessment.

It was apparent on a small number of occasions that assessors and/or internal verifiers had developed their own assessment/verification evidence gathering/recording documentation which did not conform to internal policy and needed to be revised. It was also clear in a small number of centres that insufficient evidence had been gathered; in particular, observations and underpinning knowledge questions were lacking and gaps in evidence were found by internal and/or qualification verifiers.

The majority of centres visited had evidence of internal verification taking place. However, on a few occasions the assessors and internal verifiers had signed off incomplete assessments. This was raised by the QV, as it did not demonstrate consistency, validity or fairness of assessment. Further evidence was therefore required to ensure that any gaps in evidence had been completed within an agreed timescale.

It was positive to see interim verification taking place in a small number of centres as this highlighted any inconsistencies of practice as assessment was taking place, rather than at the end, which could prove demotivating to both the candidate and assessor. A few centres demonstrated the use of a traffic light system to monitor verification activity and provide appropriate support in areas where it was needed.

However, where new assessors/internal verifiers had joined the assessment process there was a lack of evidence to demonstrate that counter-signing had taken place. This was particularly evident in online portfolios, even though there is a facility for this. Interim verification helps support this process and helps to ensure that provision is made to monitor the work of new assessors/internal verifiers.

Centres are reminded of the importance of ensuring that the qualification criteria and evidence requirements, as detailed in the SQA unit records, are accurately transferred to any in-house developed documentation. Failure to ensure accurate transfer of information could result in in-house documentation being deemed invalid.

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

SQA unit records were being used in the majority of centres verified this session.

It was evident that a small number used e-portfolios such as Learning Assistant, One File and Proof Positive.

A further small number of centres chose to use SQA unit records and upload assessment evidence to them online using cloud-based secure areas to avoid printing. Some QVs raised concern over the authenticity of the online portfolio methods; however, centres had actively generated signed and dated SQA disclaimer forms or ensured that the signature sheet for unit completion was actually signed and dated by all who were involved in the assessment process. It was also highlighted by centres that e-portfolios allow controlled access for each person in the assessment process, therefore limiting the opportunity to change work once it has been uploaded.

A few centres had devised their own assessment recording documentation as detailed in 4.2 and this raised concern over the validity, equitability and fairness of the assessments. However, the situation was resolved and gaps in assessment were addressed to ensure full completion of the unit requirements.

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

QVs consistently reported that centres had robust plagiarism policies in place, and whilst there were no apparent incidents of plagiarism, staff and candidates had been informed of the procedures to follow.

The majority of evidence seen during visits demonstrated that candidates had signed and dated the SQA disclaimer form, the unit record following completion, and any assessment evidence that had been gathered.

It was evident that candidates followed secure login procedures for the use of intranet and e-portfolio systems.

Observation by approved assessors was typically the main source of evidence gathering.

It was encouraging to read that digital voice recordings were being used where appropriate, and that these were authenticated by the candidate detailing their name, role and organisation, along with the assessor stating their name, position and the date of assessment.

Discussion with candidates confirmed that they were in appropriate employment or training facilities to complete the award, that induction had taken place, and that progress reviews were being completed.

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

In the majority of cases, SQA's questions had been used to assess underpinning knowledge and SQA's unit records had been used to record assessment against the criteria and evidence requirements for each unit.

Staff who were assessing and/or internally verifying the hospitality/professional cookery SVQs were appropriately qualified or working towards the appropriate assessor/verifier qualifications and reports demonstrated that sufficient support and monitoring was taking place.

Inconsistencies only arose in a small number of cases and these related to gaps in evidence as detailed in 4.2 and 4.3; however, these were rectified in a timely manner.

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

In all visits undertaken this year, the centres provided evidence to demonstrate that they were following SQA requirements for the retention of evidence. The majority of centres exceeded the SQA holding period to suit their own policies.

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

The dissemination of feedback from QVs was demonstrated through a number of methods. The main dissemination method was through standardisation meetings. Other methods included work diaries for small establishments, and these included daily input by all team members (online or paper), publications on the organisation's intranet, or delivery via email. The majority of evidence was available in centres' quality assurance manuals, through discussion with staff, and as reflected in CPD activity as action points.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

♦ Candidate logbooks allowed for self-evaluation and reflection on achievement and areas of improvement
♦ The production of learning resources such as PowerPoint presentations, video and audio greatly aided candidate understanding
♦ In one centre, use of red pen by assessor and green pen by internal verifier helped to distinguish their respective contributions
♦ Regular and detailed update and feedback sessions which bring all staff together (internal and peripatetic) greatly aided the motivation of staff
♦ Candidates benefited from supportive assessors and were greatly assisted by constructive feedback following assessment
♦ Maintenance and resource policies in place helped a centre manage its equipment budget throughout the year

Specific areas for development

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

♦ It was recommended that centres' plagiarism policies include a detailed statement of sanctions so that everyone involved in the assessment process is aware of the consequences of plagiarism.

♦ It is recommended that the assessors/internal verifiers who hold predecessor qualifications use the CPD Toolkit on SQA's Learning and development web page to ensure they are aware of the current standard required for workplace assessors/internal verifiers.

♦ It is recommended that formal assessment planning is carried out to ensure consistency over time.

♦ If SQA's questions are not used to assess underpinning knowledge, centres should ensure that appropriate alternative forms of assessment are used. For example: clearly mapped observations, reflective accounts, professional discussion, or questions/answers recorded on an audio device or by a scribe.

♦ Ensure that centre-devised assessment recording material meets the requirements of the award as detailed in SQA's unit records.

♦ Centres should use the most appropriate method of assessment for each unit and the candidates' circumstances. The assessor's guidelines document is a useful resource to help identify appropriate methods of assessment.

♦ Centres should ensure compliance with the assessment strategy.

♦ Ensure supplementary evidence is clearly mapped to unit criteria.

♦ The date provided on the assessment evidence should be the date the activity took place, not the date the assessor/candidate review was scheduled, as this can cause confusion if different assessments are being completed on the same day.

♦ Candidate work diaries would benefit from having a declaration to state the work is their own, and this should be supported by commentary from assessors or via witness testimony where appropriate, if the diaries are used as forms of assessment.

♦ Standardisation of assessment gathering/verification recording documents will enable a more consistent approach for the centre staff.