Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2018

Management

Introduction

This verification group covers the following awards:

GM28 22   SVQ in Team Leading at SCQF level 6
GM26 23   SVQ in Management at SCQF level 7
GM27 24   SVQ in Management at SCQF level 9
GM25 25   SVQ in Management at SCQF level 11

plus several Professional Development Awards, each of which consists of two units drawn from the Management standards.

The awards were revised and have now been in place since the beginning of May 2017. Overall, the changes were slight and have not created any difficulties for centres. The majority of centres are very comfortable with the awards, the standards and the assessment strategy. The previous awards are now in the lapsing period. The work to update the web page, assessment guidance, reporting documentation and support materials has been completed and appears to be working well.

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.

As stated above, the majority of centres are comfortable with the awards and the same can be said about the delivery teams involved. Overall, assessors and internal verifiers have a strong working knowledge of the standards, evidence-gathering approaches, assessment and verification process.

Visit reports indicate that the occupational competence of all centre teams verified fully met the requirements of the assessment strategy as did their assessment and verification competences. The majority of centre teams delivering these awards have been relatively stable but where changes have occurred new assessors and internal verifiers have been well supported in their new role through approaches such as shadowing, observation, assessment decisions reviewed/discussed with experienced assessors/verifiers, risk management strategies to ensure increased sampling of work, and performance management approaches.

Continuous personal development (CPD) records in the main are well maintained, however, the records tend to be stronger with regard to demonstrating assessment and verification practice rather than development of Management knowledge and skills. Centres are reminded that a minimum of three entries demonstrating development of subject skill and knowledge are required alongside assessment and verification development.

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

As in previous years, it is encouraging to note that the majority of centres continue to refine, re-work and continually improve their approach to the delivery of the SVQ Management awards. Centres continue to develop their own systems, documentation, learning resources, induction materials and handbooks, and the majority show significant evidence of ongoing review. This is evidenced through a range of processes, for example standardisation meetings, team meetings, quality team meetings and candidate feedback mechanisms.

Centres use site selection checklists, many use the SQA pro forma, to ensure that the assessment environment is safe and appropriate to the delivery of the awards. A key driver for change is technology and the use of e-portfolios to support delivery of the awards is now a key feature of the Management SVQs. Each year more and more centres are using e-portfolio platforms and last year demonstrated the same trend.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

All centres have in place arrangements to ensure that candidates' needs and achievements are appropriately matched. Interview and selection procedures followed by clear and robust induction arrangements ensure that needs and achievements are identified and, where required, appropriate arrangements put in place. The majority of centres utilise the SQA diagnostic to aid the selection process in order to ensure that the candidate is matched to the correct award. Where centres are working closely with client organisations candidate line managers are more often than not involved in the process. This helps to ensure a good match to the award but also ensures help within the candidate's workplace and the authenticity of any evidence provided.

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

Qualification verification reports continue to confirm that candidates are very positive about their experience reflecting the hard work being carried out in centres by internal assessors and verifiers. As stated in previous reports, the majority of centres demonstrate robust systems that ensure candidates are appropriately supported through, for example, clear assessment planning, regular meetings, e-mail, telephone and Skype. Nearly all e-portfolios provide good tracking of contact with candidates, and of any dialogue between assessors and internal verifiers which helps both the centre and the candidate to manage progress through the award. A number of e-portfolio platforms have a dashboard which provides headline information to enable strong management of candidate progress. There are still occasions where assessment planning records and contact arrangements could be more rigorously maintained especially for those queries/discussions managed outwith the e-portfolio system.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All reports confirm that centres have strong and robust assessment and verification procedures in place and these are fully implemented in the main. Standardisation minutes, notes, assessor/internal verifier dialogue and decisions are the prime source of evidence of this. There are occasions when these are not as well completed as should be and qualification verifiers have commented to this effect. It is important that all assessors/internal verifiers are involved in the standardisation process and the majority of centres do ensure that this is the case. Where standardisation meetings cover a range of SVQ subjects it is important that agendas and meetings allow for sufficient space for the Management awards, however, it is appreciated that in some centres there may only be a few candidates undertaking the Management awards.

The e-portfolio systems being used by many centres provide a track of the assessment plans, assessor decisions, assessor and internal verifier feedback, performance monitoring and sampling which all help to demonstrate a high level of compliance with this criterion. Likewise, standardised templates, for example witness testimony, observation reports and storyboards, are also helpful in demonstrating robust processes The majority of centres have strong sampling arrangements when it comes to new assessors but there is still a need to ensure appropriate sampling of the less well-chosen/specialist units and/or those units that may be new to the centre or that assessor. A few centres are undertaking skills analysis with assessors to ensure and understand who may be best suited to certain units within the award frameworks.

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

All centres are fully aware of the assessment strategy and the feedback received from qualification verifiers indicates that compliance with this aspect is generally high. The majority of centres have a strong understanding of how to build and reference work in candidate portfolios and, in the main, this is reflected well in the candidate evidence sampled. However, there is a need to ensure that candidates do signpost their work and while the majority of systems, whether they be electronic or 'paper' driven, do this there are occasions where this could be much stronger.

Centres should encourage candidates to use a range of assessment-gathering approaches to evidence their work. Not only is this good practice it also enriches the portfolios for both the candidate and the assessment and verification team.

As in previous reports, it is felt necessary to mention the standing on reflective accounts. The position regarding these has not changed over the years yet qualification verifiers continue to comment on their incorrect use as performance evidence in qualification verification reports. Reflective accounts are not performance evidence. However, they may provide strong support for performance evidence and may refer to performance evidence in the portfolio. They may be used as evidence of knowledge and understanding and may provide a useful narrative which

enables the assessor's or verifier's understanding of the performance evidence provided, but they are not evidence in their own right.

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

No evidence of malpractice was identified during visits and there is solid evidence to indicate that staff and candidates are well aware of the requirements and standards here. All reports confirm that centres have in place appropriate malpractice procedures which help to ensure that the work is indeed that of the candidate. The nature of the SVQ and the one-to-one relationship between the candidate and the assessor also helps to ensure the authenticity of any evidence provided.

As discussed earlier, using a range of evidence-gathering approaches ensures the quality and authenticity of candidate portfolios. Reports suggest that there is still a need on occasion to reinforce the message regarding authenticity of evidence. Candidates need to be able to show that any evidence provided can be directly attributed to them and can be aligned with the appropriate standard. For example, blank pro formas and/or other organisational documents such as policy documents are generally not demonstrations of competence.

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

There is a little bit of a repeat here from previous years as overall, qualification verifier reports confirm that the majority of centres are accurately and consistently judging candidate work. There are areas that require attention but these have been discussed before and, while improving, still merit attention.

♦ Sufficiency — While this has only arisen on a few occasions it is still worthy of mention. On all occasions there must be sufficient robust evidence to show that the standards are met in their entirety. At times the understanding here has been a little stretched as centres pursue a holistic and perhaps a light touch approach at times. A holistic approach is to be encouraged but it still requires an appropriate level of evidence to demonstrate competence across all the standards being claimed.

♦ Signposting — This continues to be an issue especially with regard to some e-portfolios. It is important that qualification verifiers are able to see how candidates show how the evidence that they submit meets the standards against which proficiency is claimed. This may be through statements, annotation, professional discussion, or witness evidence. This is particularly important where evidence is claimed against more than one unit.

♦ Knowledge and understanding — It is important that candidates demonstrate an underpinning knowledge which reflects the requirements of the standard and the level of the award being undertaken. It is felt that over the last few years the knowledge element in some centres is not as strong as it could be. In some instances the knowledge and understanding may be self-evident from the evidence but this is not always the case and while some centres adopt a question bank approach the answers provided can often be light. It is reasonable to expect that candidates should evidence some reading or

background but this is not always the case and on more than a few occasions candidates appear to have done little reading and confirm this in their discussions with verifiers. Centres are reminded of the importance of the need for candidates to show that they have the knowledge to support their practice.

♦ Specialised units — As stated last year, the principles underpinning specialised units, for example Manage Budgets, Manage Projects and Manage Knowledge in Your Area of Responsibility, are no different from the other units within the awards. However, it is important that centres ensure that the depth of the specialism as outlined in the standards is fully met. Once again, on a few occasions, this has not been the case and it has not been clear whether the assessor or internal verifier is sufficiently comfortable with these 'less travelled' units. Centres must ensure that assessors are fully conversant with all the units for which they have responsibility.

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

Centres on the whole are compliant with the requirements here in terms of the length of time evidence must be held and the requirements for security and data protection. Where centres are using e-portfolios these requirements are, in the main, relatively easily overtaken.

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

Nearly all centres visited this year were experienced and all had appropriate arrangements in place for the management and dissemination of qualification feedback. These arrangements are confirmed in their assessment and verification procedures and are more often than not managed by their SQA co-ordinator and the standardisation meetings.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2017–18:

♦ Centres linking standardisation practice to CPD activity by, for example, providing direct links between standardisation and CPD recording, or including subject development ideas as a standing item on a regular standardisation agenda or team agendas.

♦ Conducting skills analysis of assessors derived from the standards in order to identify the skill set of assessors and how it matches across the units within the award.

♦ Strong individual assessment planning and support to assist candidates to achieve.

♦ Continued development of portfolio models designed to support candidates and delivery staff.

Specific areas for development

A number of centres have indicated that they would like to see examples of evidence including personal statements and work evidence as a basis of a learning and development session in order to further their understanding of what is required.