Scottish Vocational Qualifications and Professional Development Awards

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2018
Stonemasonry Occupations

Introduction

Once again there was extensive qualification verification activity throughout 2017–18 for qualification GF21 23/GM80 23 SVQ 3 Stonemasonry (Construction). Almost all qualification verification reports were positive and there was clear evidence that these qualifications are being delivered in a professional and effective manner at almost all centres.

GF21 23/GM80 23 SVQ 3 Stonemasonry (Construction)
Units verified:

H0RT 12	Build Semi-circular Arch
H0RX 12	Prepare Templates and Moulds
H0TW 12	Produce Complex Mouldings to Mitre and Ashlar Stop
F8PR 34	Circle on Circle
F8PW 34	Cutting Wrought Stone
F8PX 34	Machine Production of Stone and Bay Window Construction
F6PB 12	Cuttings Mouldings on a Radius
HA1J 04	Fix and Secure Memorial Masonry
H106 012	Conform to General Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare
H107 12	Conform to Productive Working Practices
H10E 12	Move, Handle or Store Resources
H10A 12	CREWS

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.

Qualification verification reports for the SVQs and PDAs in stonemasonry confirmed that assessors and internal verifiers at all centres were competent, well-qualified, or working towards qualifications for their vocation. All staff also had extensive industry experience. All staff at centres verified undertook and recorded appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) activity to ensure they maintained academic and occupational currency and complied fully with the requirements of the assessment strategy. More than a few centres received recommendations because both assessors still have to complete their internal verification qualifications, but they hope to do so before next April.

For one centre it was recommended that both the internal verifier (IV) and assessor should attend more industry-relevant CPD on a regular basis to align with sector assessment strategy. Also, one assessor needs to obtain his L&D11. Good practice was also noted at one centre as the assessor went out of his way to help and assist his candidates.

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

All centres visited for the SVQs and PDAs in stonemasonry have effective ongoing processes and procedures in place to review accommodation, assessment procedures, equipment, learning resources and assessment materials. These processes and procedures were being implemented effectively in all centres visited by qualification verifiers. Due to changes within the qualification, most centres had to remodel/restructure practical workshop areas, and the qualification verifiers commented on the improvements which had been or were being undertaken. It was recommended to one centre that feedback comments on written assessments, although excellent, needed to be more student-centred, rather than phrased in the third person.

Qualification verifiers noted good practice at the centre producing its own excellent matrix mapping tool, which allows mapping of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) to the units within SVQ level 3 Stonemasonry. This is a valuable tool for both assessor and candidate.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

At all centres evidence was provided to show that staff are effectively implementing the correct procedures in identifying candidates' development and support needs. Most centres undertake diagnostic testing within the first 3 weeks, and the results enable the centres to decide when and where additional support is required. Through use of the Training and Assessment Programme (TAP) and candidates working on their PDA, any skills development required for candidates will be identified.

Additionally, for pre 2017–18 SVQ candidates, the effective use of Candidate Record of Evidence from the Workplace (CREWs) ensured that candidates' experience and learning from the workplace was matched to unit requirements at all centres.

Through professional discussions with their assessor/lecturer candidates could identify and discuss areas of the qualification that they needed to improve and develop on.

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

At all centres visited candidates received well-structured, purposeful feedback and support on how they were progressing with both the SVQ and PDA qualification. Qualification verifiers found almost all centres' feedback to candidates was positive and constructive, with some centres encouraging candidates to write their own feedback on completed assessments.

Assessors were clear in their feedback on what had been achieved, and where necessary identified areas for improvement or skills development. Feedback related to both specialist and generic unit competences. Qualification verifiers recommended that assessors try to ensure that student assessments are completed as per timetable and within the teaching year — again there are difficulties with one or two regular absentees which need to be addressed.

It was suggested that employers should be informed of candidates' progress after each block through the CITB reports, rather than the stated 'twice a year', to keep them up to speed on where the apprentices are at.

Good practice was also recognised by qualification verifiers where the assessor ensured that the candidate received all help and information on a regular basis.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres that undertook the qualification verification process had well-established assessment and verification processes and procedures in place.

Qualification verifiers' reports stated that the assessors and internal verifiers at all centres implemented their centres' assessment and verification procedures effectively.

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

All centres visited continue to use SQA's most up to date TAP (Training and Assessment Programme) CREWs to carry out assessments for the stonemason apprentices registered on the group award GF21 23. The use of the TAP ensures validity, equitability and fairness in assessment.

Candidates registered on group award GM80 23 have been working towards collating workplace evidence for their portfolios. Qualification verifiers have indicated good progress has been made by assessors in guiding and supporting candidates in generating their evidence. Qualification verifier recommended that one centre's drawings need to be 'neat and proportional' for Year 2 written assessments, and be better annotated.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) should to be further 'risk assessed' for hewing stone, and the use of disposable boiler suits was suggested.

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

Centres continue to use SQA's TAP framework to document and record candidate evidence, the TAP ensures the evidence is the candidate's own work as a signature from the candidate, assessor, and on occasion the internal verifier, is required on the feedback sheets.

In almost all centres, before, during and after assessment, photographic evidence is taken to further authenticate the candidate's work.

Centres have been using evidence generated from the workplace, and the use of CREWs with industry experts and supervisors to sign off candidates' industrial competence for the SVQ.

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

Assessment judgements were reported as being both accurate and consistent at most centres delivering the SVQ and PDA which undertook the verification process. Both practical and knowledge-based evidence confirmed that candidates were meeting the requirements of units and were achieving the national standards.

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

Qualification verifiers reported that all centres continue to retain candidate evidence and assessment records in line with SQA requirements. In all centres retention policy exceeded SQA requirements. All centres complied fully with qualification verification visit plan requirements in relation to candidate evidence being sampled.

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

All centres had clear policies and procedures in place for the dissemination of information from qualification verifiers to assessors and internal verifiers. Staff at all centres implemented centre procedures effectively and there was good evidence of improvements and enhancements being made to develop assessment practice.

At one centre teaching staff had missed the recent meetings arranged by SQA to review the implementation of candidates' gathering of on-site evidence. A qualification verifier recommended that, as candidates and assessors had made little or no progress in addressing this situation, the centre should arrange a meeting at the Elgin Training Centre to discuss the gathering of evidence, as that training centre had made significant progress that answered most of the questions that arise from this exercise.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

♦ 2.1 The assessor went out of his way to help and assist his candidate

♦ 2.4 The centre has produced their own excellent matrix mapping tool which allows the mapping of the NOS to the units within SVQ level 3 stonemasonry, and is a valuable tool for both assessor and candidate.

♦ 3.3 The assessor ensured that the candidate received all help and information on a regular basis.

♦ 4.4 There is clear indication from the assessments sampled that the candidates' work is indeed their own. This is demonstrated through the holistic nature of teaching and assessment delivery.

♦ 4.6 Very comprehensive digital portfolio, which is easily accessible to look at required evidence.

♦ 4.6 Good recording of the candidates' work in both paper and digital format.

♦ 4.9 The training team at one college hold regular standardisation meetings to check on students' progress, and to reflect on what went well, along with what can be improved, in the courses they run. The lecturers have also raised the standard of the courses they run, and have shown real commitment to carrying out good practice.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2017–18:

♦ 2.1 It was recommended that both IV and assessor attended more industry-relevant CPD on a regular basis to align with sector assessment strategy. Also one assessor requires to gain L&D11.

♦ 2.1 Both assessors still have to complete their internal verification qualifications, which they hope to do before next April.

♦ 2.4 It was recommended that feedback comments for the written assessments, although excellent, required to be more student-focused, rather than phrased in the third person.

♦ 3.3 Try to ensure that student assessments are completed as per timetable and within the teaching year - again there were difficulties with one or two regular absentees, which needs to be addressed. It was suggested that employers should be informed of candidates' progress after each block through the CITB reports, rather than the stated 'twice a year', to keep them up to speed on where the apprentices are at.

♦ 4.3 Drawings need to be 'neat and proportional' for Year 2 written assessments, and be better annotated. Personal protective equipment (PPE) should to be further 'risk assessed' for hewing stone, and the use of disposable boiler suits was suggested.

♦ 4.9 Teaching staff at one centre have missed the recent meeting arranged by SQA to review the implementation of candidates' on-site evidence mapped to the NOS, and have made little progress to address this situation.