



Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2019

Business and Administration

Verification group 397

Introduction

Business and Administration SVQ

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This year we have seen a continuation of the good practice that has been adopted by centres over the last five years. Network Events have been welcomed by centres and well attended.

We have also seen a big increase in the use of e-portfolios.

Many centres are encouraging their candidates to write reflective accounts/storyboards to place evidence in context and they are embedding the work product evidence in the reflective account/storyboard.

Centres are also continuing to track evidence against PIs and K & U.

The Foundation Apprenticeship in Business Skills has been introduced in a number of centres.

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.

In all centres, assessors and internal verifiers were occupationally competent and held, or were working towards, appropriate assessor and/or verifier awards. If assessors were working towards their assessor award, they were very well supported by a more experienced assessor.

Staff were experienced in the delivery of work based qualifications and had a comprehensive understanding of the requirements of the awards.

Informative and up-to-date CPD records were being maintained in all centres for members of the assessment/verification team. In almost all centres, CPD records showed not only the course/training undertaken but also the impact of the learning on the assessment process.

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

In all centres, policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and are updated as and when required. Policies and procedures within centres were robust, and support the ongoing assessment/verification of the qualification being offered. Centres made these policies readably available (easily accessible).

Almost all centres used a workplace checklist (site selection checklist) to ensure workplaces are appropriate in relation to accommodation, equipment, reference and learning material. Health and Safety issues are also addressed at this point.

The time taken at this stage ensures that assessors become very familiar with the candidate's workplace. This familiarity and knowledge will help later when discussions relate to the choice of level and appropriate units.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

In all centres, prior achievement is reviewed during the recruitment\induction process. A comprehensive initial assessment of each candidate was conducted at this stage.

The core skills profile, previous certificates and candidate job roles were all reviewed and aligned with the requirements of the SVQ, and the appropriate units and level of award were chosen. This is where knowledge of the candidate's work role is crucial. All centres check that any new candidate is in the correct environment to gather evidence towards these awards. The job role of the candidate is the key determining factor on deciding the units to be undertaken.

Any development needs and special assessment needs were identified at this time or within the first couple of weeks, and these are taken into account when planning assessment in terms of timing, assessment methods, etc.

The time taken at this stage ensured that the correct units and level of award were chosen.

At the last major update of these awards, the choice of units available for each level increased. This has made it far easier for candidates to choose units that directly match their work role. In the past, some candidates found it difficult to find units that specifically matched their work role (we used to call this 'square pegs in round holes'). This is no longer is the case. The 'square pegs in round holes' scenario has disappeared.

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

In all centres there was good evidence of assessment planning. There was also very good documentation to support the assessment planning process.

In almost all centres, qualification verifiers found the assessment decisions consistent and accurately judged against the standards and in a fair manner. Candidates were well prepared prior to assessment.

In all centres there was regular face-to-face contact, plus there was an openness by assessors to encourage additional contact with candidates via email, telephone etc.

The increased use of e-portfolios allows for almost constant contact between assessor and candidate.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres had comprehensive policies covering assessment and internal verification. Assessment and internal verification policies were very well documented. These policies were implemented consistently across the centre and updated regularly to ensure best practice. The processes within the centres were robust and supported the ongoing assessment/verification of the qualification being offered.

In all centres there were formal standardisation meetings, and minutes were available. These formal meetings take place on a regular basis. In addition there were also many opportunities for informal discussions.

All centres had a robust internal verification policy. Internal verification was carried out on a sampling basis and was very well documented, providing good feedback to both assessor and candidate. However, if there was a new assessor or an assessor working towards their assessor award, then sampling would be 100%.

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

In almost all centres, candidate evidence was of a good quality and the evidence was appropriate to the level being assessed.

In all centres there was a good range of assessment methods being used — this led to good triangulation of evidence.

In almost all centres there was good variety of evidence — storyboards/reflective accounts, work product, observations, professional discussions, witness testimony, use of questions — there was a good balance of performance evidence and supporting evidence. In almost all centres, observations and work product evidence was well tracked against PIs and K & U. In all centres, work product evidence was well annotated to place it in context.

Almost all centres who adopt an e-portfolio platform use storyboards/reflective accounts to place the evidence in context. In addition, they embed work product evidence into the storyboard/reflective account. They also track the evidence against the PIs and K & U.

Many centres who did not use an e-portfolio platform were also adopting the approach of embedding work product into the storyboard/reflective account.

In all centres there was good cross-referencing from optional units into mandatory units and between optional units.

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

In all centres, assessors know their candidates well and this excellent candidate support helps to ensure the authenticity of evidence.

In all centres, plagiarism and malpractice were fully covered during the induction process. In almost all centres, candidates were asked to sign a disclaimer indicating that they will comply with these policies.

In all centres, candidates were routinely observed by their assessor, who gets to know how candidates express themselves so any evidence not fitting into the pattern would be easily identified and investigated.

Good assessment planning and robust internal verification systems also help to ensure authenticity.

The use of witness testimonies also helped support authenticity.

The increased use of e-portfolios also helped, as candidates must use unique usernames and passwords to access the system. In all centres, candidates are encouraged to keep usernames and passwords private at all times.

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

In all centres there were regular formal meetings to support standardisation across assessors. Minutes of these meetings were available. There were also many informal opportunities for standardisation discussions.

All centres had a robust internal verification system in place. Centres adopted different sampling strategies to support assessors and candidates: 100% internal verification if this was the first time this award was being offered or if new, inexperienced assessors were being used; dropping to 20/25% as the assessor/verifier team gain experience. These systems play a major part in ensuring the accurate and consistent judgement of assessor decisions.

All of this helped ensure consistent judgement of assessment decisions.

All centres made very good use of their regular standardisation meetings to disseminate information to the team.

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

In all centres, staff were well aware of the retention requirements set by SQA. Some centres retain candidate evidence in excess of SQA requirements. No centre held evidence for less than required.

SQA's retention rules are that candidate evidence is retained for at least three weeks after the completion date held by SQA, unless the centre has been contacted by an SQA external verifier to say that a visit is due, in which case they keep the evidence until after the EV visit.

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

All centres have a procedure in place to disseminate feedback to staff.

Example 1: The SQA co-ordinator meets with relevant staff after the EV visit to discuss feedback from the visit. If there are any action points, these are discussed and remedial action is put in place within the timeframe agreed.

Example 2: Upon receipt of the external verifier's report, the SQA co-ordinator emails it to all relevant staff and the content forms the basis of discussion at the next standardisation meeting. Minutes of standardisation and IV reports confirm that the content is discussed and action points are monitored.

These are just two examples of how centres disseminate information to staff.

Areas of good practice report by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2018–19:

- ◆ The use of E Portfolios.
- ◆ The variety of evidence included in the candidate portfolios — good balance between performance evidence and supporting evidence.
- ◆ The tracking of evidence against PIs and K & U.
- ◆ Very good evidence of assessment planning.
- ◆ The continued use of formal (minuted) and informal standardisation discussions to ensure accuracy and consistency across assessors.
- ◆ Up-to-date CPD records incorporating the impact of the CPD undertaken on the assessment process.
- ◆ The choice of units for each candidate reflected their work role, and this makes it easier to gather evidence towards their SVQ. Centres are aware that the time taken at this stage will pay dividends later on with quality evidence submitted.
- ◆ Good candidate support — comprehensive assessment planning.
- ◆ Robust internal verification procedures.
- ◆ Very good candidate induction.
- ◆ Very good centre preparation for the EV visit.

Specific areas for development

The following area for development was reported during session 2018–19:

- ◆ The following points relate to the increased rollout of the Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) in Business Skills. The Foundation Apprenticeship is divided into 2 parts — the SVQ part and the NPA part. The NPA part is verified by another verification group, so these comments and issues relate to the four SVQ units in the award.
- ◆ There are a variety of delivery models, and for many centres it will be next year before we see the completion of the full award.

Issues discussed during verification visits relating to Foundation Apprenticeship Business

- ◆ The time for candidates to complete the award — some centres are doing it over one year, and some two years. Centres are not sure that the time over one year given to candidates in the workplace will be enough to generate appropriate evidence on the basis of a placement for a limited part of the week.
- ◆ The need to ensure that appropriate standards are met in generating evidence as the four units are also units that appear in the Modern Apprenticeship SVQ Business and Administration Level 3 (SCQF level 6)

- ◆ Need to ensure that candidates are in appropriate work roles to generate appropriate evidence for this level of award.

Centres are working hard to address these issues. It is good that centres are discussing them and some are working together to identify good practice in the delivery of this Foundation Apprenticeship.