Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2019
Medical Laboratory Science

Verification group 83

Introduction

Six external verification visits were carried out by the team this session. Most centres had a clear understanding of the standards required.

The units that were externally verified were:

H00M 04	Access and Communicate Scientific or Technical Information to Authorised Personnel
H012 04	Assess Your Own Scientific or Technical Knowledge and Skills for Workplace Activities
H00T 04	Carry Out Complex Scientific or Technical Sampling Operations
H00S 04	Carry Out Complex Scientific or Technical Testing Operations
H00G 04	Carry Out Routine Maintenance, Cleaning and Checking of Scientific or Technical Equipment
H00L 04	Carry Out Scientific or Technical Testing Operations
H00D 04	Carry Out Simple Scientific or Technical Tests Using Automated Equipment
H00C 04	Carry Out Simple Scientific or Technical Tests Using Manual Equipment
H00X 04	Diagnose Faults, Repair and Maintain Scientific or Technical Equipment for Workplace Activities
H015 04	Evaluate and Provide Scientific or Technical Assistance for Learning Activities
FY9W 04	Follow Health and Safety Procedures for Scientific or Technical Activities
H00Y 04	Maintain and Control Stocks of all Resources, Equipment and Consumables for Workplace Scientific or Technical Activities
H00A 04	Maintain Effective and Efficient Working Relationships for Scientific or Technical Activities
H00K 04	Maintain Health and Safety in a Scientific or Technical Workplace
H00J 04	Prepare Compounds and Solutions for Scientific or Technical Use
H00E 04	Prepare Scientific or Technical Samples for Testing Activities
H00N 04	Provide Technical Advice and Guidance for Scientific or Technical Activities
H014 04	Provide Scientific or Technical Leadership for a Workplace Team

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.

Assessors and internal verifiers at all centres visited were appropriately qualified both academically and vocationally, fully meeting the requirements of the Cogent Skills assessment strategy. Continuing professional development was universally undertaken in accordance with the Cogent Skills assessment strategy.

Assessors and internal verifiers are encouraged to make use of the SQA continuing professional development toolkit to provide evidence of review of practice that meets the requirements of the assessor qualifications. The toolkit is available from the SQA secure website.

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 had established internal quality control procedures. These were robust, effective, and routinely applied. Pre-delivery internal verification was generally of a high standard. Centre staff demonstrated a good understanding of the resources required for each of the units verified, and there was documented evidence of effective and ongoing reviews.

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 candidates sampled were in full-time employment in a science-related industry. Employers therefore had a considerable input in their selection. All centres visited had processes in place to ensure that candidates' development needs and any prior achievements were taken into consideration during induction.

Centres should ensure that evidence of assessment planning for each unit is included in the portfolio detailing candidate instructions and assessment method — observation of task, reflective practice, etc. This approach allows the candidate to highlight any development needs prior to assessment, and ensures that the next stages of assessment remain clear.

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

Regular contact between assessors and candidates was found to be consistent across centres, and periodic reviews were carried out. Many candidates were enrolled on Modern Apprenticeship/Foundation Apprenticeship programmes, and, as such, contact with centre staff was strictly regulated and adhered to.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Most of the centres visited have developed robust, effective, and routinely-applied internal quality control procedures. Some centres had little evidence of assessment and/or verification of evidence, as no signatures were evident on the work produced. Much of the paperwork was template-driven, and there were no personalised comments made by the assessor to assure authenticity of work.

Centres should ensure that where candidates are supporting observation planning via a pre-prepared statement, these should be made clear on the paperwork and the assessor can then add additional statements or professional discussion during/after observations. In addition, centres should review all reflective accounts that have been allocated against performance or scope, and ensure that some additional evidence is captured via witness testimonies, or additional assessor/candidate questioning, or professional discussion, to ensure the requirements of validity, authenticity, reliability, currency and sufficiency (VARCS) have been met.

Good practice identified during the verification visits included the use of candidate reflective accounts backed up with witness statements to demonstrate candidate performance.

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

Assessment instruments were derived directly from the National Occupational Standards (NOS). All centres were fully compliant with the Cogent Skills assessment strategy in this regard, and assessments were found to be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

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

All centres have systems to ensure the authenticity of candidate submissions. These range from signed disclaimers to anti-plagiarism software. Given the diverse nature of workplaces and candidate job roles, opportunities for collusion are extremely limited.

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

Most of the centres visited had arrived at clear, consistent and accurate judgements of candidate performance. Some centres had evidence that did not fully comply with the requirements of the National Occupational Standards and there was limited evidence of work being assessed through the vocational qualification tracking grids.

In some instances, evidence from questions and reflective accounts had been registered as showing performance. This on its own does not show performance. The assessor and internal verifier should ensure that additional evidence is gained for the eventualities — this could be a witness testimony or a professional discussion. This will evidence performance that meets the requirements of the company and demonstrate a good level of understanding from the candidate.

Centres should ensure in personal statements (reflective accounts) and witness testimonies that there is an additional area for the assessor's signature, to state that the evidence was marked and accepted. Personal statements and knowledge question responses cannot be used as showing candidate performance on their own. Witness testimonies and/or a professional discussion should be added to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of evidence.

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

All centres visited complied with SQA policies and procedures regarding the retention of candidate evidence.

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

All centres visited had policies and procedures to ensure that feedback from qualification verifiers was disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice. Delivery teams in this cognate area tend to be small and they meet on a regular basis.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following example of good practice was recorded during session 2018–19:

♦ As a general (national) area of good practice, the Foundation Apprenticeship in Scientific Technologies at SCQF 6 has attracted much interest nationwide and represents a much-needed vocational introduction to science opportunities for candidates in the school sector. The implementation of the Foundation Apprenticeship in Scientific Technologies at SCQF 6 is to be commended.