Scottish Qualifications Authority

Piloting e-verification (2008-10)

From 2008-2010, SQA worked with centres and SQA External Verifiers to pilot e-verification. This project was initiated because we were aware that centres and candidates were increasingly using e-portfolios and other electronic means to manage assessment evidence and we wanted to explore how SQA could make use of e-verification as part of its quality enhancement process.

The following table lists the products, qualifications and types of centre involved in the e-verification pilots.

2008-09 E-verification Pilot		
E-portfolio	**Subject/qualification**	**Centres**
Learning Assistant	SVQ Business and Administration	College
Paperfree	SVQ Health and Social Care	College
eNVQ	A and V Units (Assessor and Verifier Units)	Training provider
SQA Deskspace	Skills for Work: Childcare and Education	2 Colleges
SQA Deskspace	Skills for Work: Construction Crafts	2 Schools
2009-10 E-verification Pilot		
E-portfolio/VLE	**Subject/qualification**	**Centres**
Learning Assistant	SVQ Management	2 Training providers
Learning Assistant	SVQ Childcare or Playwork	Training provider
Learning Assistant	SVQ Business and Administration	College
Paperfree	SVQ Business and Administration	Training provider
e-Track	SVQ Customer Services	Training provider
Moodle (VLE)	Multimedia Computing: Web Development (HN Graded Units)	College
SQA Deskspace	Skills for Work: Energy	College
SQA Deskspace	Skills for Work: Sport and Recreation	School
SQA Deskspace	Skills for Work: Rural Skills	School
SQA Deskspace	Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare	School

Findings and recommendations

Skills for Work: E-verification via the SQA Deskspace e-portfolio

♦ Many centres were new to Deskspace and initially felt they needed more training and experience. As the pilots progressed, SQA responded to feedback from learners, Assessors and Verifiers by exploring ways to make Deskspace more user-friendly, provide more training and support, and support collaboration among centres.

♦ E-portfolio evidence was sometimes supplemented with evidence from candidates' paper portfolios, which was not accessible for e-verification, however centres suggested more evidence would migrate to the e-portfolios in time. In general most assessment evidence was accessible and able to be cross-referenced for verification.

♦ In the year 2 pilot, all of the schools were located in the Highland Authority and used the Authority's regional Deskspace quality assurance model. This was very effective and allowed External Verifiers to confirm that good internal verification was taking place.

SVQs and HN qualifications: E-verification via centres' e-portfolios and a VLE

♦ Centres' e-portfolio systems were easy to use and effective and the e-portfolios sampled met the required standards. A good range of assessment methods were employed, with an appropriate balance of performance evidence and supporting evidence. Assessment by observation was evidenced via voice recordings, photographs, scanned images and personal statements. Generally there was good cross-referencing of evidence, though in a few cases there needed to be clearer indications of where performance indicators and knowledge statements were covered within the evidence.

♦ In one case a centre which was new to the e-portfolio had failed to 'accept' any candidate evidence, opting instead to keep work active and only lock it when completed. In this case the Verifier arranged to visit the centre and the verification had a successful outcome.

♦ E-verification of evidence held within a centre VLE was successful, however the pilot highlighted that the process of locating and tracking assessment resources, including candidate evidence, marked work and Assessor feedback, may be less clearly defined in VLEs than in e-portfolio products.

Verifiers' views and recommendations

♦ Verifiers found few differences between planning e-verification and planning a standard verification. On average, e-verification took the same amount of time as verification during a visit. Verifiers suggested e-verification may become quicker as they become more familiar with the various electronic systems. In addition there were time and cost savings resulting from Verifiers not having to travel to and from centres.

♦ Verifiers spoke to centre representatives by phone and in one case using telephone conferencing. Some Verifiers also spoke with candidates by phone or by email. These approaches worked well but Verifiers noted that lack of personal contact and the opportunity to speak with candidates and to support centre staff could be a drawback of e-verification. It was suggested that web-conferencing may better support remote verification and allow an element of face-to-face communication.

♦ Most assessment materials were accessible though remote access to centres' electronic systems. However in a few cases some documents had to be sent to Verifiers. It was

suggested that web-conferencing could address this problem by allowing centre documentation to be shared and discussed with Verifiers in a secure online environment.

♦ Most Verifiers noted that it is not as easy to obtain a quick overview of an e-portfolio as it is with a paper portfolio. Nevertheless Verifiers generally thought e-verification was an economical and effective way to access and verify assessment resources.

♦ Verifiers also commented that there would be occasions when there would be no substitute for meeting and talking with centre representatives and candidates. It was suggested that e-verification might be used to alternate with visits and could be used where centres were experienced in offering specific qualifications.

Centres' views and recommendations

♦ Key benefits of e-verification identified by centres were that it saves time, is more appropriate for e-portfolio evidence and could allow more frequent contact between the centre and the Verifier. Drawbacks identified included less face-to-face contact, receiving feedback by phone and difficulties with ring fencing time for e-verification.

♦ Some centres also thought that e-portfolios and e-verification helped with internal verification, enabling External Verifiers to see the on-going support and guidance provided to candidates by Assessors, and to Assessors by Internal Verifiers.

♦ Some centres suggested that e-verification should be used to supplement but not replace visits. Centres also suggested that they could be allocated Verifiers who were familiar with their electronic systems and that SQA could provide Verifiers with CPD on the most commonly used e-portfolios.

Next steps

The next steps are for SQA to consider the pilot findings, including the recommendations from centres and Verifiers. The intention would be communicate with centres on the most effective ways to use e-verification, possibly supporting this approach with web-conferencing, with a view to using e-verification within SQA's quality enhancement strategy in the future.