Scottish Vocational Qualifications, Higher National Qualifications and National Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2019
Customer Service

Verification group: 297

Introduction

There were 45 visits to centres for the academic year 2018–19 and verification covered a variety of Customer Service units and qualifications in verification group 297 Customer Services:

SVQs in Customer Service
GL0E 21   SVQ in Customer Service (SCQF level 4)
GL0F 22   SVQ in Customer Service (SCQF level 5)
GLOD 23   SVQ in Customer Service (SCQF level 6)

HN and NQ Units and Awards in Customer Service
GG2A 45   Award in Customer Service: Principles and Practices (NQ)
F38W 10   Skill for Customer Care (National Unit used in the Certificate for Work Readiness)
HIFO   34   Creating a Culture of Customer Care (HN Unit)
H49P   33   Customer Care (HN Unit)

Of the 45 centres visited in 2018–19, 28 are very experienced, established and competent, and have well qualified and knowledgeable staff delivering sound, well documented and organised qualifications. Their candidates enjoy the training and are usually successful. Centre policies continue to be well set up and extensive, and are continually monitored and modified. The other 17 centres are new to Customer Service and had their first qualification verification visit since approval. These centres are well organised with paper-based or online assessment material for the candidates.

There is still the issue relating to the ongoing employers' levy, as many of the centres visited in 2018–19 are not sure if further candidates will be recruited for the SVQs in Customer Service due to this. Despite the challenges facing these centres, they are generally coping well and trying out other qualifications like the Certificate for Work Readiness, which includes unit F38W 10 Skills for Customer Care. Most of the new centres visited were delivering this unit.

New National Progression Awards in Customer Service at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6 are now available and it is hoped that these will be of interest to centres.

Advances in technology have helped with far better broadband access, and many centres are investing in online assessment programmes. This allows assessors and candidates more flexibility without compromising standards.

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. (This criterion only relates to the SVQs in Customer Service)

Assessors and internal verifiers in all the centres that were sampled were occupationally competent and either held or were working towards appropriate assessor and internal verifier awards. Staff were experienced in the delivery of work-based qualifications and had a full understanding of the requirements of the awards. Comprehensive continuous professional development (CPD) records were being maintained for all members of the assessment and verification team.

In a lot of centres, CPD records showed not only the course and training attended but also the impact of the learning by staff on the assessment process. Examples include:

♦ What did you learn from this activity?
♦ What did you do that contributes to your CPD?

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

The qualification verification reports confirmed that where workplaces are being used for delivery and assessment of qualifications (in the main SVQs), they are checked to ensure the appropriateness in relation to equipment, accommodation, learning and reference materials to support the qualifications.

Centres used a workplace checklist (ie Site Selection Checklist) to ensure that the candidates' workplace had the appropriate equipment to meet the requirements for the Customer Service qualifications. This process also checked that candidates had proper access to appropriate reference and learning materials, and checked that the health and safety aspects of the policy were regularly reviewed to ensure best practice was being used.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Qualification verifier reports confirmed that at all 45 centres a comprehensive initial assessment of each candidate was conducted during the induction process of the award. Previous certificates, Core Skills profile and candidate job roles were reviewed against the requirements of the qualifications to ensure candidates are selected for the appropriate qualification and level, and the units chosen are appropriate to the candidate's work role if undertaking a work-based qualification.

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 visited, there was clear evidence of assessment planning to support candidates. The majority of assessments were well planned and carried out with good feedback being given to candidates. In all the centres visited there was good documentation to support the assessment planning process.

Feedback from candidates interviewed mentioned the excellent ongoing support provided.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

In almost all centres, assessment and internal verification procedures were fully documented. The candidate portfolios, internal verification reports, and sampling plan confirmed implementation. Regular standardisation meetings took place and minutes were available which detailed the discussions that had taken place.

There was also evidence of a good system of internal verification in place providing good feedback to both the assessors and candidates.

In all the centres, there were opportunities to attend both formal and informal meetings to support standardisation between assessors. The formal meetings were minuted. There were also many informal opportunities for standardisation discussions.

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

The majority of candidate portfolios were well presented and well assessed. There was a good variety of evidence presented with a good account of both performance evidence and supporting evidence. For example, in some centres screenshots were used to confirm Customer Service assessments were applied to all candidates.

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

In all the centres, assessors knew their candidates well, which resulted in good candidate support. This in turn helped to ensure the authenticity of evidence submitted by each candidate. Authenticity was also supported by witness testimonies if assessment was being carried out in the workplace.

A lot of centres were now using e-portfolios and these were password protected which also helped to ensure authenticity.

In all centres, all candidates undertook an induction programme when they started their qualification, and this included informing candidates of the implications of plagiarism. They were also required to sign a statement confirming that they were aware of the centre policy and would comply with it throughout the duration of their award. They were also required to sign a declaration to confirm that all work produced for their portfolio was their own work. There was no evidence of malpractice in any of the centres visited during 2018–19.

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

In all the centres visited, there were regular formal meetings to support standardisation between assessors and these were minuted. There were many informal opportunities for standardisation discussions to take place.

In almost all centres visited, the assessment decisions were consistently and accurately judged against the standards, and in a fair manner. Evidence was being assessed against the current and valid standards.

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

All centres were well aware of the retention rules relating to SVQ requirements, ie assessment evidence/portfolios are retained for a minimum period of three weeks following the date of completion held by SQA — unless notified of an impending verification visit.

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

All 45 centres use different methods and procedures to disseminate the findings of qualification verifier reports to relevant staff. This is part of each centre's assessment and internal verification procedures. All centres share the feedback electronically and this is normally followed up with a staff meeting where the qualification verifier report is discussed in more detail, especially if any action needs to be completed within a timescale set by SQA.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

♦ Good examples of evidence of assessment planning that provided excellent support to candidates.

♦ Good balance of performance evidence and supporting evidence for all qualifications.

♦ Good use of modern technology, with more centres moving over to e-portfolios and preparing user-friendly material for qualification verifiers to sample when visiting centres.

♦ More SVQ centres are registered using SQA SOLAR system for mandatory SVQ Units for Customer Service — this saves centre time when candidates undertake awards.

♦ Improvement in relevant customer service entries in CPD records.

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2018–19:

♦ Still encourage centres to ensure that criteria 2.1, 2.4 and 4.2 are reviewed and are in line with SQA requirements at all centres, as this was the only area picked up during 2018–19.

♦ Continue to have more CPD entries related to Customer Service Award standard to meet assessment strategy requirements.

♦ Ensure that all centre staff have read the latest guidance on the SQA website about the requirements to undertake the qualification.