



Higher National Units

Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2019

Stonemasonry Occupations

Verification group: 172

Introduction

There was extensive qualification verification activity throughout 2018–19 for qualification SVQ Level 3 Stonemasonry Occupations and GF1T 23 and GM7X 23. 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 SVQ level 3 (SCQF level 6) Stonemasonry (Construction)

Work-based evidence was verified through e-portfolios, paper-based portfolios and knowledge evidence gathered from the PDA.

First and second year evidence was in the form of photographic evidence, video evidence, personal statements, site induction evidence, witness testimonies (only a very small handful were used), professional discussions and knowledge-based evidence gathered from site and relayed through personal statements and professional discussions. All other knowledge evidence was collated through the PDA SCQF level 6 assessments and class work carried out at college.

No set units for this qualification can be verified because candidates can only gather evidence when it becomes available on site. With this being the case, all external verifiers were trained to verify evidence from the workplace. PDA knowledge-based units were verified along with all work-based evidence submitted by the candidates.

For third and fourth year candidates, there was verification of the Phase Test (H109 12) and Candidate Record of Evidence from the Workplace (CREWs).

External verification was carried out for skills testing. These were conducted as separate visits. Unit number B664 04 covered all trades for candidates who started before 2017. The new code, for candidates who started after 2017, is HP8C 04.

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 in Stonemasonry confirmed that assessors and internal verifiers at all centres were competent and well qualified. All staff had extensive industry experience.

Expert witnesses were required for skills testing and had to be trade-specific and competent. All centres managed to recruit appropriate competent expert witnesses.

All staff undertook and recorded appropriate CPD activity. Some centres undertake CPD almost on a monthly basis. This helps to ensure staff maintain academic and occupational currency and comply fully with the requirements of the Assessment Strategy.

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 in Stonemasonry have effective ongoing processes and procedures in place to review accommodation, assessment procedures, equipment, learning resources and assessment materials. As almost all of the practical evidence is gained on site, the assessment environments are rarely the same.

Due to the nature of the industry and BS standards set on sites, all material for practical-based work will meet SQA requirements.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

Inductions are carried out on the first day of training and almost all centres undertake diagnostic testing within the first three weeks. Centre staff discuss with candidates their prior learning and/or achievements. This allows centres to gauge whether or not additional learning assistance is required, or if the candidates have carried out some of the course work prior to attending college.

All centres had processes and procedures in place to allow candidate development needs to be identified and appropriate support provided.

Additionally, for SVQ programmes, portfolios in the workplace are in place for assessors to assess and internally verify. For third and fourth year apprentices, CREWs are still being used (for pre-2017 candidates) to ensure that candidates' experience and learning from the workplace is matched to unit requirements.

In almost all centres, assessors have regular discussions with candidates around what is required from the site and identify and discuss areas of the qualification that they needed to improve and develop.

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

Almost all centres visited gave candidates some form of feedback regarding assessment decisions. Most feedback was very well structured with an assessment plan or future plan put in place for the candidate to follow.

Feedback to candidates was almost always positive. Some centres encouraged candidates to elaborate on their site evidence. This written evidence from candidates was in the form of work-based diaries, job cards, time sheets etc. Assessors were clear in their feedback about what was achieved and what was still outstanding. Feedback was given in specialist and generic unit competences.

The frequency of contact was mostly based around candidates' college block attendance.

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 well established assessment and verification processes and procedures in place.

Qualification verifiers' reports stated that all assessors and internal verifiers implemented their centre's assessment and verification procedures effectively. One centre received a recommendation to ensure their assessment and verification procedures were followed correctly.

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

All centres continue to use SQA's most up-to-date framework — the Training and Assessment Programme (TAP) for the knowledge evidence of the SVQ. As this is current practice for all stonemasonry occupations to carry out knowledge assessing, it ensures all assessing instruments are valid, reliable, practicable, fair and equitable for all candidates.

All practical work-based (on-site) evidence generated from site has to be mapped to the NOS. Candidate portfolios all have the criteria from the NOS. Candidates must gather evidence for all of the criteria. All SVQ centres have a portfolio in place with all the NOS criteria listed. This helps ensure all assessing instruments are valid, reliable, practicable, fair and equitable for all candidates' practical work-based evidence.

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

As centres are using TAPs to carry out the knowledge-based assessments for the stonemasonry occupations, the assessment environment is in line with SQA requirements. The assessment sheets require the signature of candidates, assessor and sometimes an internal verifier within the feedback pages. This helps to clarify it is the candidate's own work.

Almost all practical work-based evidence has the candidate's photo, video or signed evidence. The evidence found in all centres clarified that this process is taking place.

Some centres received good practice, this was for the quality of evidence and how well it was assessed; all centres had at least some evidence from candidates, so all centres met with these criteria.

Some centres had a substantial amount of very good quality evidence. Other centres had evidence of varied quality — it was recommended that these centres get CITB involved to ensure that candidates gather appropriate evidence.

There are elements of the stonemasonry NOS that assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers know very few candidates can generate evidence for.

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

Assessment judgements have been reported as being accurate and consistent at almost all centres that undertook the qualification verification process.

Practical (on-site) and knowledge-based evidence that had been completed and assessed confirmed that candidates were meeting the requirements of units and the NOS. The exception was the skills test for one candidate, which had been built the wrong way round and was still marked as passed. The centre was able to rectify this decision thanks to input from the external verifier.

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

All centres continue to retain candidate evidence and assessment records in line with SQA requirements. Almost every centre's 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 taken to develop assessment practice.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

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

- ◆ Filming professional discussion with candidates.
- ◆ Diagnostic testing to identify candidate needs.
- ◆ Candidates receiving milestones for achievements.
- ◆ Great relationship with local suppliers.
- ◆ Candidates applying their own feedback.
- ◆ Exemplary portfolio system, very well-organised, easy to follow and stored alphabetically — this portfolio was offered to other centres delivering the Stonemasonry SVQ.
- ◆ Good positive feedback, encouraging good dialogue between staff and students, creating an excellent learning environment.
- ◆ Excellent assessor-to-candidate ratio.

Specific areas for development

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

- ◆ To save time, assessors could devise a bank of questions to use during video discussions with candidates.
- ◆ PPE should be further risk-assessed for practical activities.
- ◆ Centres could reduce stone size for ashlar walls. (Centres are in discussion about this — skill test feedback.)
- ◆ Centres must be vigilant to ensure assessment and verification procedures are followed correctly.
- ◆ It is extremely difficult for candidates to generate evidence of tracery window construction, which is part of the fixing route.