

**SVQs in Business and Administration**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**July 2019**

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| **How is competence over time evidenced?** |
| Demonstration of **competence over time** is important, as it provides a high degree of **confidence** that the **evidence** (and therefore **assessment judgements**) are a **true reflection** of the candidate’s **competence** in their **job role** and not a one-off or unduly influenced by exceptional factors.  This is best evidenced by **triangulation** of performance and supporting evidence that complement and reinforce each other. For example, **Work Product** supported by a **Personal Statement** and **Witness Testimony** providing a consistent account of the same competences. This provides far more insight and is more effective than multiple items of very similar evidence that may lack context (e.g. multiple word-processed documents without annotation).  Demonstrating competence over time may involve more than one item of **performance evidence**, however this would depend on the scope and depth of particular tasks and the requirements of the **Performance Indicators (PIs)**. For example, a presentation to an audience delivered clearly and confidently; using appropriate tone, pace, body language etc, and supported effectively by equipment and materials, may well be sufficient to satisfy the assessor that the candidate is competent. A presentation is a holistic task that brings together a number of competences and it is unlikely someone who is not competent could meet all these criteria as a one-off fluke.  On the other hand, tasks that are more discrete, limited in scope and commonly occurring (such as making diary entries) may benefit from having more than one example to cover different contexts (e.g. internal/external meetings, reminders, recurring entries, confidential entries etc.). If more than one example is used, each should add value in some way that previous ones do not.  If in doubt, the question the assessor should ask is – “Am I confident that the candidate is competent, and what additional value could be gained from asking the candidate to repeat the task?” If the answer is “yes” and there is little to be gained that hasn’t already been evidenced, then asking the candidate to generate more evidence for the same PI/K is likely to be over-assessment.  Candidates will generate evidence for units over a period of time, therefore if assessment is suitably holistic candidates will naturally generate more than one item of evidence for many PIs. |
| **What types of evidence should candidates have against PIs and Knowledge?** |
| **PIs** require **performance evidence** i.e. **Work Product** and/or **Observation**. **Knowledge** can be demonstrated via many forms of **supporting evidence** e.g. **Personal Statement, Questioning** (written and/or oral)**, Professional Discussion** etc.Some Knowledge can be inferred from performance evidence where, in the assessor’s judgement, it is clear that the candidate has applied the relevant knowledge to their practice.  It may be a good idea for candidates to start their SVQ by gathering performance evidence, as some of the Knowledge can be covered via performance. This means that questioning/personal statement etc. can be targeted at the remaining Knowledge gaps, preventing duplication and over-assessment.However, many centres prefer to ask candidates to begin with a personal statement to help the candidate **reflect** on their **job role**, give the assessor insight into what they do and generally help the candidate settle into and familiarise themselves with the process of SVQ **assessment**. There is no one correct method, the best approach will vary between candidates. |

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| **Some PIs can be difficult to cover by Performance Evidence – can Supporting Evidence and/or Simulation to cover these?** |
| Where **performance evidence** does not occur naturally for certain PIs, the use of **supporting evidence** may be acceptable. This should only be used for a minority of PIs across the Unit, where naturally occurring Performance Evidence can be difficult to generate (e.g. problems with Office Equipment), but overall the Unit matches the candidate’s **job role**. If a candidate has difficulty generating performance evidence for more than a few PIs it is likely the Unit is not suitable. This is not an exact science as PIs vary in size and scope. Due to this there is no specific quantity attached to the amount of supporting evidence/simulation that can be used for PIs.  Pre-2011, **Contingencies** were identified as the only PIs which could be simulated. This created problems because it meant that by default all other PIs could not be simulated and it was not possible to foresee every circumstance in which it may be legitimate to use other forms of evidence. This meant that some candidates were unable to achieve Units because performance evidence was not naturally occurring for one or two PIs.  The **Assessment Strategy** states that supporting evidence/simulation should only be used for PIs to plug small gaps where performance evidence is not naturally occurring. |
| **What is meant by triangulation of evidence and why is it important?** |
| **Triangulation** involves using a variety of evidence – performance supplemented by supporting evidence – to demonstrate competence, for example an **observation** combined with **questioning** and a **personal statement**.  The various items of evidence provide different perspectives that combine to create an overall picture of competence - for example; **observation** (assessor), **personal statement** (candidate), **witness testimony** (line manager/colleague/customer etc.) and **professional discussion** (assessor and candidate). Triangulation ensures the PIs are covered by performance evidence, and the supporting evidence helps demonstrate that this is the candidate’s consistent standard of performance.  Triangulation strengthens authenticity as it places the evidence in context – i.e. how it was generated and for what purpose? Multiple examples of the same **work product** may not provide this background and – although being potentially important forms of **performance evidence** - would therefore have a significant weakness in this respect if not supported by other forms of evidence.  Over a period of time **triangulation** allows the **Assessor**, **Internal Verifier (IV)** and **External Verifier (EV)** to build an overall picture of the candidate’s job role and how they fit within their team/organisation. This is valuable for making judgements on evidence and competence.  **Triangulation** reduces the volume of assessment as it promotes a holistic approach and helps prevent the need to repeat tasks for the same PIs in order to demonstrate competence over time. A holistic approach involves mapping evidence to more than one Unit. |

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| **How should evidence be referenced?** |
| **Referencing** is a vital element of **assessment** and **quality assurance** **processes**. It provides the audit trail by which assessors can make **assessment judgements** and **Internal Verifiers** (IVs) and **External Verifiers** (EV) can make **verification decisions**.  **Internal and External Verification** is a process of **sampling assessment judgements** to ascertain whether they are **valid and reliable**. It does not consist of independently re-assessing all the evidence and then making a comparison with the assessor’s decisions. This is not practical for either assessor or IV/EV (just as an assessor couldn’t assess several portfolios in a few hours, neither can an IV/EV) and is guaranteed to lead to discrepancies, as no two assessors’ judgements will exactly match across a whole SVQ portfolio.  Once the **sample** is taken, if it meets the required standard the IV/EV can have **confidence** that the other assessment decisions throughout the portfolio are also valid and reliable. In the case of External Verification, where there are significant deficiencies, the sample will be widened to ascertain whether this is a reflection of the assessment decisions throughout or an atypical sample. The process continues until the IV/EV reaches a point where they have confidence in the validity and reliability of the assessment decisions, or, that there are significant weaknesses that may require action.  **This process cannot function without some form of referencing**, as it is the referencing that allows the IV/EV to follow the assessment decisions that have been made. If referencing is absent or weak, it is very difficult for an assessor to justify assessment decisions in the event that assessor and IV/EV are in disagreement. This is because there will be a lack of clarity on the rationale for the assessment decision(s). Ultimately the IV/EV must have confidence in the assessment decisions that have been made, therefore the onus must be on the learner/assessor to be clear about the rationale for what claims are being made i.e. what evidence relates to which PIs and Knowledge.  **It is strongly recommended** that referencing is done in a way that identifies the location within the evidence where PIs and Knowledge are claimed (e.g. by **annotating PI and Knowledge** numbers within the evidenceat the point they occur, or at the side of the page next to it). If this is not done (e.g. PIs and Knowledge are annotated only at the top or foot of the page) this leads to a scenario where that evidence is being independently re-assessed which is more time consuming for all concerned and more likely to lead to discrepancies that have to be clarified.  It is acknowledged that referencing in this way is not always possible - some **E-Portfolios** are not condusive to this approach - and there are some PIs and Knowledge that are more **holistic** in nature and not easily pinpointed to one place. However, **assessors** should make every effort to provide clarity as to which areas of evidence relate to which PIs and Knowledge.  For most forms of evidence, e.g. Personal Statements, Work Products, Witness Testimonies etc. the candidate can be asked to do the referencing themselves to reduce the onus on the assessor. This can also help focus candidates with the examples and types of evidence they need to provide, however the assessor should double-check the claims.  Refer to Understanding Standards website for examples  <https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/SVQ/BusinessAdministration/svq_ba_home> |

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| **How and why is evidence annotated?** |
| Some forms of **Work Product** are meaningless without **annotation** as they do not provide **context** to explain the **candidate’s role in producing it** (e.g. a meeting agenda or a health and safety policy). The reason for annotating Work Product is to clarify the candidate’s role and therefore **what the evidence demonstrates** about their **competence** (e.g. in the case of the meeting agenda, did they use a template or create the document from scratch? Did they have to ‘chase-up’ information or was it all provided in full? How much time did they have to produce it? etc.). This then influences the **assessor’s assessment decision** as to what the candidate has evidenced.  Separately recorded **supporting evidence** can be used to clarify the candidate’s role in such examples (e.g. questioning, personal statements, witness testimony etc). This is acceptable, however, rather than have three separate items of evidence relating to the same task, it is better if it can be combined in one (e.g. by providing screenshots of an email thread (Work Product) within a Personal Statement). In a sense, this is the Work Product “annotating” the supporting evidence, however that is not important; the priority is to present evidence in a way that can provide the entire picture in one place, rather than have to refer to multiple items of evidence for the same task.  There are many ways to annotate evidence. Simple examples include - writing on white space within a document and scanning photographs onto a personal statement. **E-Portfolios** will have other means of annotating evidence.  Annotation also helps **authenticate** evidence as it clarifies the circumstances around how the candidate produced it, and contributes to the wider picture of the candidate’s job role in general terms. |
| **Should spelling and grammar be assessed?** |
| Judgement of competence should not be influenced by factors not related to the standard being assessed. This impairs the **validity** of assessment. Spelling and grammar is more likely to be relevant to the **Communication mandatory units** where communication to an appropriate **business standard** is required. This is something centres need to be vigilant of when mapping to the Communication Unit from optional units, particularly SCQF level 5 units.  Any **additional support needs** that may exist have to be taken into account when making judgements in this area. **Assessors** may highlight mistakes in spelling/grammar to candidates to help their future development, however candidates can’t be penalised if they have met the standard for the PI(s)/Knowledge/Unit concerned but there are some spelling and/or grammatical errors. |

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| **Why is it good practice to collect evidence for the Optional Units first and then the Mandatory Units?** |
| The **Mandatory Units** cover **generic competences** (e.g. communication, working in a business environment, prioritising work, meeting deadlines etc.). The **Optional Units** involve activities that are related to **specific** tasks and **competences** and therefore provide the **context** for these generic competences to be demonstrated. As a result, most activities carried out for Optional Units **naturally generate evidence** of the generic competences in the Mandatory Units (e.g. producing a document to a deadline).  This means that if a candidate where to begin their SVQ by gathering evidence for the Mandatory Units it is very likely they will duplicate evidence when working on Optional Units later. This will result in over-assessment which is more time consuming, resource intensive and costly for all concerned. |
| **Is it possible to cross reference evidence from SCQF Level 5 Units Optional Units into SCQF Level 6 Mandatory Units?** |
| Evidence for **mandatory units** must meet the performance and knowledge requirements at **SCQF Level 6**. The level of a unit is determined by its content, however the **level of demand** across all PIs and Knowledge may not be completely uniform.  Some PIs and Knowledge within **SCQF Level 5** Units may generate evidence that holds up well in the context of SCQF 6 mandatory units. Some PIs and Knowledge will map better than others, some not at all – it comes down to **professional** **judgement** against the relevant criteria. |
| **The SCQF 5/ SCQF 6 Business & Administration frameworks have an overlap of common Units. Is there straight transfer if a candidate progresses?** |
| If a candidate has completed and been **resulted** for an **SCQF level 5 Unit** (or any SQA unit) as part of a prior SQA qualification, this achievement stays on the candidate’s SQA record and contributes to any **SQA Group Award** he or she is entered for in the future.  This means that any SCQF level 5 unit **forming part of the optional section** of the **SCQF Level 6 SVQ** will contribute automatically to the **Group Award** if subsequently entered for it. The SCQF Level 6 SVQ framework allows a maximum of **two** SCQF level 5 units to25 contribute to achievement of the Group Award in this way. Not all SCQF Level 5 units are included in the SCQF level 6 SVQ options so **centres should** **check this when selecting units**.  This is not a credit transfer process as the relevant results are already with SQA. There is no need for any further entries or results in this scenario. |

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| **We have devised our own evidence matrix document for each Unit, do we have to use the template devised by SQA?** |
| No, there are some excellent matrices in use which have been devised by centres. SQA supporting documents are designed to provide a resource for centres to use, or as a reference for designing their own assessment resources. Centres can amend or create their own to suit their own methods of delivery, as long as the resulting assessment meets the Assessment Strategy, can be authenticated and is supported by a robust quality assurance process.  The mandatory documents which cannot be altered are the Units (based on the NOS), the Assessment Strategy and Candidate Disclaimer form. These are available on SQA website – <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45620.html> |
| **How long do we need to retain portfolios after submitting results?** |
| For information on the retention periods for candidate evidence, please contact [asv@sqa.org.uk](mailto:asv@sqa.org.uk) |