Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Qualification Verification Summary Report 2021

Computer Science

Verification group number: 357

Introduction

A small number of verification visits took place in this block in session 2021.

The virtual model verification was adopted and all evidence was submitted through the SQA hub in advance of the Teams meetings taking place.

This report covers Professional Development Awards (PDAs) at SCQF levels 7 and 8. There was little uptake of awards at this level.

This report covers:

GL13 48 PDA Software Development (SCQF level 8)
HA4D 35 Software Development: Analysis and Design
HA4G 35 Software Development: Implementation and Testing
HA4K 35 Software Development: Project

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.

In all centres evidence of assessor and verifier qualifications was available and showed that all assessors are fully qualified and technically experienced to offer this PDA award.

A wide range of CPD activities were undertaken to ensure currency in both the vocational and assessment areas. Centres made use of in-house training to ensure assessors are up to date and confident in delivery and assessment.

In some cases, assessors and verifiers, although experienced and holding qualification for alternative settings, did not have L&D qualifications. Although not essential to meet the assessment strategy, this would be considered an appropriate level of qualification for delivery.

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

Verifiers reported that reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials are carried out on a regular basis throughout the year and at the start of each new teaching block.

All centres have a system for gathering leaner feedback — both informally in class and formally via questionnaires. This helps to inform the review process.

In all centres, review of assessment takes place and forms part of the overall review of all aspects of course delivery. In most cases these presented to the management as part of the self-evaluation process.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

In almost all centres, candidates' development needs and prior achievements are matched against the requirements of the award during a video or telephone interview. Candidates who are selected then undertake additional skills tests to ensure they have the potential to be successful

In all cases, robust evidence was seen of induction programmes prior to starting the course. This included input from the learning support teams and identification of additional support needs.

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

In all cases, candidates had a high level of interaction with all assessors involved in the delivery and assessment. For each unit, subject-specific support is provided throughout the working week in a scheduled timetable.

All candidates have regular scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and assessment plans.

In all cases feedback for assessment evidence was available for candidates. In many cases this was very supportive and provided an effective means for candidates to evaluate their own performance.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All centres have effective systems for internal verification and assessment. In all cases these are stored electronically and are easily accessible to all. Some centres make use of electronic systems confirming all candidate assessment decisions for all its candidates which are easy to follow.

In all cases, standardisation of assessment forms part of the overall review process and it was evident that this takes place effectively.

All centres carry out a three-stage verification process. Evidence of this, in most cases, was available at each stage. In addition, most centres make use of a risk-based verification model to ensure that the system is robust and that inexperienced assessors have a higher level of sampling.

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

In all cases, evidence requirements and assessment conditions are clearly understood and applied as per unit specifications.

In all cases, centres were using locally-devised assessments. These were holistically assessed in a project-based assessment model. Verifiers examined these in advance of the virtual event and all were found to be appropriate for use.

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

In all centres, all candidates complete and sign a student declaration form confirming the authenticity of their work. In addition, authenticity is maintained by monitoring and conducting class-based assessments under controlled conditions. Due to remote delivery, these were conducted through suitable online platforms.

In most instances, candidates have a selection of project topics which allows them to take ownership and develop a unique solution, thereby ensuring there is little scope for copying during the software project.

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

In all instances, assessment evidence was accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements. Candidates' work was in line with the national standards. The different projects were matched against the evidence requirements appropriately, and all assessment judgments with respect to this award and its three component units were accepted in all cases.

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

All centres are aware of SQA's retention policy. Most need to retain evidence beyond the period required by SQA so that they meet other bodies' requirements.

All centres have secure digital storage. In some instances, there is and additional layer of authentication for access to evidence.

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

All centres are aware of the requirement to disseminate external verification feedback to staff. There is evidence in standardisation meeting agendas that this is discussed regularly. There was no evidence of actions or recommendations being considered as there had been no prior points for consideration due to the reduction in activity.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

There were no items of good practice identified.

Specific areas for development

The following area for development was reported during session 2020–21:

♦ Centres should consider putting staff through relevant assessor and verifier qualifications to ensure currency of occupational standards.