



Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022
Carpentry and Joinery,
Wood Machining and Floorcovering

Verification group numbers: 165, 170, 371

Introduction

[SVQ Carpentry and Joinery \(Construction\) SCQF level 6](#)

[SVQ Carpentry and Joinery \(Construction\) SCQF level 5](#)

[SVQ Wood Machining \(Construction/Sawmilling Extrusion\) SCQF level 6](#)

[SVQ Floorcovering \(Construction\) SCQF level 6](#)

Qualification verification for 2021–22 consisted of two SVQ external verification visits for all centres delivering Craft SVQs, with an agreed focus on the 2017–21 and 2018–22 cohorts. Approval for the ‘new’ SVQs commencing August 2022 was dependent on two successful SVQ external verifier visits.

There was a significant amount of interest shown in how these candidates completed the course from Scottish Government, CITB Sector Skills Council (CITB SSC), SQA Accreditation, SQA Awarding Body, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), CITB Managing Agent (along with other managing agents) and employers.

Special measures had been agreed and put in place by Scottish Government to assist candidates in completing their awards, following COVID-19.

The candidates selected over the two visits were the first to be completing an SVQ in Construction Crafts using only work-based evidence. SQA carried out six development visits per delivering centre in 2017 and 2018 to ensure centres were prepared for this radical change in assessment approach including the use of a candidate work-based evidence portfolio.

As in session 2020–21, the sample requested of centres in 2021–22 was only ‘six’ portfolios and only one piece of assessed work-based evidence per portfolio/candidate.

All the following comments relate to verification groups 165 Carpentry and Joinery, 170 Wood Machining, and 371 Floorcovering.

Where comments only relate to one of the above groups then that is made clear.

Session 2021–22

Qualification verification (QV) activity took place at 26 centres delivering the SVQ in Carpentry and Joinery at SCQF levels 5 and 6. This included two external training providers (ETPs) and 24 colleges. Qualification verification activity also took place in two colleges for SVQ Wood Machining at SCQF level 6 and one college for SVQ Floorcovering at SCQF level 6.

Of the portfolios sampled, 88% were found to be acceptable with the remainder having actions to be addressed. All were successfully completed by October 2022.

The main issue found in the centres which required actions was insufficient appropriate work-based evidence — the evidence being either unavailable or not observed by assessors.

Qualification verifiers found that most centres were doing their best to continually improve both the format of the portfolios and the assessors' skills in assessing work-based evidence.

Many centres had employed dedicated work-based assessors and had made significant progress in the way they were managing the qualification. The assessors were demonstrating much improved skills in writing observation reports and the gathering of evidence in a holistic way.

As a result of COVID-19, some centres had only recently employed work-based assessors and consequently only one or two 'live' observations had been carried out. Video evidence, in line with Appendix 'C' of the CITB SSC Consolidated Assessment Strategy and SQA's Appendix 1 of Requirements for Assessment of SVQs in Construction had been used with varying degrees of success.

A small number of centres were still experiencing resistance from staff in embracing the work-based qualification which inevitably resulted in actions through the QV process. It was noted by qualification verifiers that there was a large turnover of work-based assessors in the sector which was worrying from a consistency perspective.

There was an increase in the number of centres using ETPs to carry out the work-based assessment and generally they were in a better position due to experienced assessors being used. Where new assessors had been employed by ETPs they were being well supported by their fellow assessors and internal verifiers.

However, with this increase there were some concerns expressed by qualification verifiers as to the ratio of candidates to assessor. This will be monitored in the coming session. Another concerning factor was the availability of work-based assessors with many only working on a part-time basis and a few not living in the same geographical area as their candidates.

It was found that many internal verifiers in the centres were supporting the assessors but external verifiers still had to emphasise the importance of this role and the type of support required for new assessors.

Qualification verifiers were able to sample and verify candidate evidence and assessment decisions at most centres through virtual verification activity.

Most centres were able to provide sufficient assessed evidence for their candidates to complete their portfolios and allow them to undertake skills testing.

Some eligible candidates had used the Skills Test Readiness document to allow them to undertake skills testing prior to completing their portfolio. This documentation was made available to qualification verifiers who found that in almost all cases it had been applied correctly.

However, it was reported by qualification verifiers that there were still some candidates who were unable to gather appropriate work-based evidence due to being enrolled on the wrong qualification in 2017.

Wood Machining

One of the centres delivering this qualification had to use the simulation route agreed as part of the special arrangements for COVID-19. SQA Awarding Body wrote appropriate simulation work instructions for the centre which were carried out with one candidate under SQA conditions.

Floorcovering

The centre delivering this award had to use evidence from the Skills Test (as agreed in the special arrangements for COVID-19 documentation) to allow candidates to complete their portfolio.

There is an issue with one particular unit contained within this SVQ which has been reported back to CITB SSC.

Development visits

There was an increase in the number of development visits requested by centres and, in all cases, feedback confirmed these were very worthwhile events. Most of the time during these events was spent training assessors in the art of writing a good observation report and how to 'holistically' assess candidates in the workplace. Some development visits were carried out directly prior to QV visits. In almost all cases the outcome of the QV visit was found to be positive.

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.

All centres were complying with the CITB Consolidated Assessment Strategy and SQA's Requirements for Assessment of SVQs in Construction in relation to staff qualifications and expertise for assessors and internal verifiers.

However, incomplete CPD logs for the work-based assessors was a recurring issue. In many cases activities were being carried out (the nature of a work-based assessor's role requires them to be on-site) but not logged. But, in some cases no activities were being carried out which resulted in recommendations being included in the reports. It was encouraging to note that most staff had managed to maintain a level of professional CPD including attendance at SQA quality networks.

Qualification verifiers will be specifically focusing on this criterion in session 2022–23, checking certificates for all staff qualifications and CPD logs.

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

Most centres now have effective procedures in place to review the assessment environments — either using SQA's own site selection checklist document or a centre devised version of their own. It was encouraging to see that many centres were also reviewing their candidate portfolio (assessment procedures/materials) and had improved upon the original version quite considerably. Most centres now have a standard template in place for their observation reports which meets SQA's requirements and those of the sector skills council.

Some areas of good practice noted were the continual improvement of candidate portfolios and assessment documents.

Recommendations were made to some centres to create a standard agenda for their standardisation meetings — including an agenda item for site selection checklists.

One recurring issue, which was raised with centres at the time and at the most recent series of quality networks, related to electronic portfolios. Some portfolios are set up in such a way that when evidence is uploaded against a particular criterion it marks that criterion as being complete, regardless as to whether it has been assessed or not. This obviously then provides a false impression of the overall percentage completion of the portfolio.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

All centres were using their own methods of determining candidates' development needs, usually through an enrolment form or registration document. Where any development needs were highlighted, all centres were putting in place the appropriate type and amount of support.

Prior achievements were only relevant for candidates undertaking the two-year apprenticeship. All the centres involved in the delivery of this two-year award were applying the associated conditions and were very conscious of ensuring currency of previous achievements was taken into consideration.

Almost all centres had ensured candidates were maximising their opportunities on-site, especially the 2017 and 2018 starts. These candidates' development needs were to try and complete their qualification as soon as possible.

Most centres were carrying out 'live' observations on-site in line with the requirements of the award. However, some centres were relying too heavily on video evidence (acceptable for the 2017, 2018 and 2019 starts during COVID-19) and secondary evidence.

This resulted, in a small number of cases, with the centre having to provide additional evidence to satisfy the requirements of the award.

There were examples of good practice for this criterion recorded in some centres including: induction programmes for candidates; assessor/candidate meetings pre-site to establish requirements; candidates issued with laptops; and candidate guidance document within portfolio.

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

Many centres had developed distance learning materials for their candidates to ensure they remained engaged and were progressing with their learning despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Qualification verifiers were able to report that most of these support systems had been kept in place by centres.

At some centres the qualification verifiers reported that effective and supportive virtual and e-mail contacts between the work-based assessors and candidates was welcomed by candidates. This was decisive in maintaining a focus on SVQ evidence requirements and progress towards completing their award.

Almost all candidates interviewed during QV visits confirmed that they were in regular contact with their assessor.

Many centres had received recognition for good practice in their QV report.

Some centres received a recommendation to formalise their approach to this criterion and have a documented logging system to record all activities.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

As would be expected, all centres had assessment and verification policies and procedures in place. However, it was found that many were not flexible enough to fully support the assessors of the SVQs in Carpentry and Joinery, Wood Machining and Floorcovering at SCQF level 6. In these centres the internal verification documentation was designed for full-time courses and did not fully meet the requirements of an SVQ. Internal verifiers in many centres were not fully supporting their assessors in terms of providing relevant feedback or confirming assessment decisions.

In some centres the internal verification process was not effective, and the internal verifiers were not picking up discrepancies in the assessment process such as: use of secondary evidence; insufficient 'live' observations; incorrect judgement of evidence; insufficient evidence; and incomplete paperwork.

These shortcomings inevitably resulted in actions for the centres which were required to re-submit evidence, that had been signed off as being acceptable, but had to be re-assessed and internally verified, which ultimately impacted on the candidates' progress/completion.

However, most centres were implementing their internal verification and assessment procedures effectively.

There were some examples of good practice noted in the reports including: planning of sampling schedule; level of detail contained in internal verifiers' reports, both positive and critical appraisal; assessors being observed on-site by the internal verifier; support for new assessors provided by the internal verifier; 100% internal verification for first year of course/new assessor.

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

All centres delivering the SVQs in Carpentry and Joinery, Wood Machining and Floorcovering at SCQF level 6 had in place candidate work-based evidence portfolios and assessment documentation for collating and assessing evidence from the workplace.

There was an increase in the use of electronic portfolios across the sector which centres were finding easier to manage. It was noted by qualification verifiers that gaining access to some systems could be problematic but having remote access outweighed this minor issue. There were a range of different electronic portfolios in use which enabled candidates to upload evidence directly. This in turn enabled assessors to assess work remotely and ensure the process continued.

All centres were using the knowledge and understanding evidence from the Professional Development Award (PDA) at SCQF level 6 and some centres had developed further sets of questions for use on-site. Assessors were being encouraged by qualification verifiers to confirm the knowledge gained through the PDA was being applied on-site by candidates.

Almost all centres now have developed their own observation report pro formas, and most are using them as their main assessment instrument. These have developed over the last four years and many centres are much more confident in their use.

Centres are being encouraged by qualification verifiers to use professional discussions with candidates (along with secondary evidence) to 'fill the gaps' in their portfolios.

As mentioned in section 4.2 of this report, some centres assessors are not using the correct assessment instruments to assess candidates, for example observation of live activity and completion of an observation report, and therefore have had to re-assess candidates using the correct instrument and re-submit for internal and external verification.

Some areas of good practice were noted by qualification verifiers including: the development of knowledge questions for the assessor to use on-site confirming the knowledge was being applied in on-site conditions; well written and matrixed observation reports; well written professional discussions with back-up photographs, and in some cases video as well.

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

Almost all centres delivering the SVQs in Carpentry and joinery, Wood Machining and Floorcovering at SCQF level 6 had a declaration document included in their candidate work-based evidence portfolio which was signed by the candidate declaring all work submitted as evidence was their own.

Also, almost all centres had assessment observation documentation which is signed by both the assessor and candidate at the end of the process.

Almost all assessors know their candidates personally and can confirm their participation in assessment activities.

Most centres have adopted the sector skills council temporary special arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of these special arrangements is the requirement for candidates to identify themselves and provide their date of birth in any video evidence submitted.

Some areas of good practice were noted by QVs including: pre-site engagement of assessor and candidate to confirm all the evidence requirements; photographic and video evidence accompanying observation reports which confirm candidate involvement; internal verifier observing assessor on-site; and all parties signing documentation.

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

Qualification verifiers reported that most assessor judgements were accurate and consistent for centres delivering the SVQs in Carpentry and Joinery, Wood Machining and Floorcovering at SCQF level 6.

However, there were some cases where there was either insufficient primary evidence or poorly assessed evidence contained in candidate portfolios.

This was due to a number of reasons including: non-engagement of centre staff; use of secondary evidence; inexperienced assessors; inexperienced/non-supportive internal verifiers; misinterpretation of the requirements of the award; no assessment decisions within observation reports and lack of knowledge of the National Occupational Standards (NOS). These shortcomings inevitably resulted in actions for the centres which were required to re-submit evidence, that had been signed off as being acceptable, but had to be re-assessed and internally verified, which ultimately impacted on the candidates' progress/completion.

Most centres however had made significant improvements in their assessment decisions and were being supported by internal verifiers. Qualification verifiers commented, that through discussions with assessors and internal verifiers, it was apparent that they had a much better understanding of the NOS and were able to holistically assess candidates much more effectively than previously.

Qualification verifiers reported that there were some concerns regarding teamwork in some centres, particularly where the work-based assessors were line managed by a different department to the staff delivering the PDA.

Some areas of good practice were noted including: quality of report writing in the observation reports; cross-referencing of PCs within reports; standardisation meeting minutes; internal verifier observing assessors on-site and support for new assessors.

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

All evidence identified on EV visit plans was readily available during qualification verification activity at almost all centres.

Centres had a clear understanding of the awarding body retention of candidate evidence and assessment record policy requirements. Centres using electronic portfolios had very robust access policies and procedures with access being restricted to relevant parties by means of a password protected and time bound system.

Centres using paper-based portfolios stored these documents safely within the centre and in some cases had an electronic back-up system in place as well.

All EV reports confirmed that centres continue to retain candidate evidence and assessment records in line with SQA requirements. Retention of evidence policies at most centres exceed SQA requirements.

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

All centres had policies and procedures in place for the dissemination of information from qualification verifiers to assessors and internal verifiers.

However, it was found that some centres were not implementing these procedures effectively. As mentioned in section 4.6 of this report some centres were not holding official standardisation meetings to the detriment of the assessment process. Some centres were advised by qualification verifiers to have a set agenda for these meetings including specific items relating to assessment, internal verification etc. They were also advised to have clear minutes from these meetings indicating who was responsible for dealing with any actions resulting from QV activity as well as a time frame for completion.

There were some areas of good practice noted including: regular standardisation meetings including all assessors and internal verifiers; cross-campus standardisation meetings with comprehensive minutes; workshops set up to standardise assessment decisions.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2021–22:

- ◆ Induction programmes for candidates
- ◆ Assessor/candidate meetings pre-site to establish requirements
- ◆ Candidates issued with laptops
- ◆ Candidate guidance document within portfolio
- ◆ Continual improvement of candidate portfolios and assessment documents was evident
- ◆ Planning of sampling schedule
- ◆ Level of detail contained in internal verifiers' reports, both positive and critical appraisal
- ◆ Assessors being observed on-site by the internal verifier
- ◆ Support for new assessors provided by internal verifiers
- ◆ 100% internal verification for first year of course/new assessor
- ◆ The development of knowledge questions for the assessor to use on-site confirming the knowledge was being applied in on-site conditions
- ◆ Well written and matrixed observation reports
- ◆ Well written professional discussions with back-up photographs and in some cases video as well
- ◆ Quality of report writing in the observation reports
- ◆ Cross-referencing of performance criteria within reports
- ◆ Standardisation meeting minutes
- ◆ Internal verifier observing assessors on-site and support for new assessors

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2021–22:

- ◆ Industry-related CPD to be undertaken and logged by assessors and internal verifiers
- ◆ Recommendations were made to some centres to create a standard agenda for their standardisation meetings including an agenda item for site selection checklists
- ◆ Formalise approach to criterion 3.3 and have a documented logging system to record all activities
- ◆ Some centres' internal verification process was not effective. The internal verifiers were not picking up discrepancies in the assessment process such as: use of secondary evidence; insufficient 'live' observations; incorrect judgement of evidence; insufficient evidence; and incomplete paperwork
- ◆ Some centres assessors are not using the correct assessment instruments to assess candidates, for example observation of live activity and completion of an observation report/s
- ◆ A set agenda for standardisation meetings including specific items relating to assessment, internal verification etc

- ◆ Clear, concise minutes from these meetings indicating who was responsible for dealing with any actions resulting from QV activity as well as a time frame for completion