



Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Qualification Verification Summary Report 2021
Customer Service

Verification group number: 297

Introduction

There were 16 visits to centres for the academic year 2020–21 and verification of all the different levels of Customer Service Award:

- GL0F 22 SVQ 2 Customer Service (SCQF level 5)
- GL0D 23 SVQ 3 Customer Service (SCQF level 6)
- GG2A 45 Customer Service: Principles and Practices Award (Customised unit)
- F38W10 Skills for Customer Care (Customised unit)

Of the 16 centres visited in 2020–21, 14 are very experienced, established and competent, and have well qualified and knowledgeable staff who deliver a sound, well documented and organised qualification. 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 two are new centres which had their first qualification visit since approval and are well organised with either paper-based or online assessment material for the candidates.

There have been major issues with COVID-19 forcing all 16 centres to support and give guidance to candidates as many were furloughed for a period of time. Assessors were not able to meet candidates face to face but used packages like Microsoft Teams or Zoom to keep in touch and ensure all were given support and guidance.

Despite the challenges facing these centres during lockdown in 2020 and most of 2021, access is slowly being allowed for centre assessors to meet candidates to support them with their qualification. All centres are generally coping well.

With COVID-19 in mind, many centres have been looking at new technology to deliver their qualifications online and safely, including assessment, allowing 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.

Assessors and internal verifiers in all of the centres that were sampled were occupationally qualified 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 do that contributes to your CPD?
- ◆ What did you learn from this activity?
- ◆ How have/will you use this?

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

There were many video conference calls from centres to ensure centre assessors were keeping up to date during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. When the workplace is being used, these are checked to ensure their appropriateness to support different the awards in relation to equipment, accommodation, and learning and reference materials.

Centres are still using a workplace checklist, ie Site Selection Checklist, to ensure that all candidate workplaces in centres have the appropriate equipment to meet the requirements of the Customer Service qualifications. This process also checks that candidates have had proper access to appropriate reference and learning material and ensures that the health and safety aspects of the policy are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice.

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 qualification verifier reports indicated that all candidates at all 16 centres had undergone a fully comprehensive initial assessment which was conducted during the induction process for the award. Previous certificates, profiles of Core Skills along with candidate job roles were all reviewed and signed with the requirements of the awards and appropriate units and level of the awards correctly selected for the candidate. A lot of time is taken at this crucial stage to ensure that the correct level of awards is identified and that the units that are chosen are appropriate to the candidate's work role.

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

In all centre visits, there was clear evidence of assessment planning to support all candidates during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sometimes it was very challenging to ensure candidates had that support and guidance. However, most assessments were well planned and carried out with good feedback given. In all centres that had virtual visits there was good documentation to support the assessment planning process.

One thing that must be mentioned is that all candidates were given a lot of on-going assessor support. Feedback from candidates who were interviewed mentioned the excellent support especially during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

Assessment and internal verification procedures were fully documented in all centres. The candidates' portfolios, internal verification reports, and sampling plans confirmed implementation. Standardisation meetings have been taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic using packages such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Minutes were available of the discussions.

In almost all the centres there was evidence of a good system of internal verification in place, providing good feedback to both the assessors and candidates.

In all centres there were opportunities to attend both formal and informal meetings to support standardisation between assessors. The formal meetings were minuted.

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

Almost all candidate portfolios were well presented and well assessed. All candidates had access to the assessment process. There was a good variety of evidence with good accounts of both performance evidence and supporting evidence. For work product evidence, some centres were using screenshots to confirm the 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 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 through the use of witness testimonies, which featured more during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

A lot of centres are using e-portfolios during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are password protected which helps to ensure authenticity.

In the virtual visits to all 16 centres, there was evidence that all candidates had received an induction programme when they started their qualification. This included information about the implications of plagiarism, and they were required to sign a statement confirming that they were aware of the centre policy and would comply with it during 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. Again, there was no evidence of malpractice in any of the centres visited during the 2020–21 session.

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, minuted meetings to support standardisation between assessors. These often took place online. There were also 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 done so 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 SVQs. These were extended during the COVID-19 pandemic — 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 16 centres used different methods and procedures to disseminate the findings of qualification verifier reports to all relevant staff. 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 actions need to be fulfilled within a set timescale date set by SQA.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2020–21:

- ◆ Assessment planning during the COVID-19 pandemic that provided excellent support to candidates
- ◆ More use of e-portfolio systems
- ◆ Good balance of performance evidence and supporting evidence
- ◆ Improvement on relevant customer service entries on CPD records

Specific areas for development

Centres are encouraged to:

- ◆ ensure that the requirements of criteria 2.1, 2.4 and 4.2 are reviewed and are in line with SQA requirements
- ◆ continue to have more CPD entries related to the Customer Service Award standard to meet assessment strategy requirements
- ◆ ensure that all centre staff have read the latest guidance on SQA’s website in order to meet all requirements of the award