



Chief Verifier Report

NVQs in Customer Service Levels 1-4

September 2012-August 2013

Midlands, Anglia, North, NI

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REPORT FOR PUBLICATION

1. The qualifications and standards

Assessment Team:	Findings: Throughout the year EQA verifiers have supported the centres located in the regional areas shown above, offering advice and guidance across all aspects of the qualifications. Recorded recommendations to centres have been many and varied and included things such as: • How to integrate delivery of the competence and knowledge units • How to record CPD activities for the internal assessment team • How to access information on OCR's Interchange web site • Potential standardisation activities • Best practice in respect of learners' evidence and how best to record this There have also been formal action points raised with centres on some occasions. Interestingly most of these occurred within the first half of the year, suggesting that action points were taken on board and had been implemented by the second visit of the year. This is considered good practice on the part of the centres involved. A review of these action points confirms that there are no specific trends or common examples of poor practice but just a series of random anomalies which have since been addressed. The EQA verifier team is very experienced and has
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	remained stable throughout the year. All members of the team have taken part in OCR's quality assurance procedures and processes for EVs demonstrating their clear understanding of assessment procedures and OCR's 'Criteria for Verified Qualifications'. EQA visit reports have not revealed any examples of centres being under resourced in terms of assessment personnel. Most have fairly stable teams who are able to assess/IQA across a range of qualifications. If Customer Service learner numbers increase for any reason they are able to call on the support of other assessors from other vocational areas. Smaller centres often employ peripatetic assessors and IQA verifiers, in these cases standardisation activities become very significant. Most centres have a fairly robust procedure for recording the CPD activities of their team. Some maintain a central record of this and others ask the individual team members to retain their own personal records and submit them to the centre on an annual basis. It should be pointed out that for those who have the original D32/33/34 or A1/V1 units, it is not necessary to formally upgrade to the current qualifications but it is necessary to remain up to date with current practice. For those that are returning to the industry and are not current, the 'knowledge unit' of the new assessor and IQA qualifications provides an excellent means of updating. Although difficult to categorically define, learner:assessor caseloads would appear to have reduced with learners being given more time to complete their qualifications.
Resources:	Findings: The physical resources provided by centres is generally of a very high standard, many now have access to electronic recording devices and e-portfolios and some provide CD-ROMs on which learners can store their evidence, etc. For the customer service qualifications much of the assessment takes place in the work environment and many centres are using the paperwork provided by funding bodies to ensure that health and safety requirements are checked. On some occasions this paperwork has proven onerous for the assessors and it has not always been confirmed that they have the necessary expertise to conduct risk assessments.
Candidate Support:	Findings: Most of the EQA verifier visit reports confirmed that high quality support is being provided to learners. Most centres have well developed induction checklists and

	written support materials outlining the scope of the qualifications and centre procedures. All centres are clear about the need to have an Appeals Procedure and spend a lot of time developing and communicating this. In practice, as far as we are aware, there have been no appeals identified throughout the whole of this year. Centres continue to use 'skillscan' documents to try to highlight learner development needs and confirm the achievability of the chosen qualification. However these are inclined to be a box ticking exercise and on many occasions contribute little to the process. Assessors have become increasingly familiar with the 'holistic' approach to assessment and are well versed at mapping evidence across units. Although this is to be encouraged, centres should nevertheless remain focussed on the 'learner journey' and not just the need to minimise the amount of evidence included in portfolios. In accordance with the requirements outlined in the Centre Handbooks, some assessors are working at encouraging learners to map their own evidence to the Assessment Criteria. However, many are still resisting this on the grounds that it is time consuming and the learners might get it wrong.
Assessment and Verification:	Findings: Having reviewed the EQA visit reports completed throughout the year it is clear that centres are aware of the need to have written IQA procedures which are regularly reviewed and remain fit for purpose. Most centres have demonstrated their understanding of the need to plan portfolio sampling, assessor observations and learner interviews. Some of these plans are centrally coordinated and some are developed and instigated by the individual IQA verifiers. On the odd occasion where the assessors have been responsible for prompting the IQA activity, it has been pointed out that this is not good practice. There has been a small number of instances of EQA verifiers sanctioning centres and raising action points in relation to internal quality assurance. One of these action points focussed on the need for IQA sampling to address <i>whole</i> units rather than specific, individual examples of evidence. This is considered to be a particularly valid point. It was confirmed that centres are maintaining records of what they describe as 'standardisation meetings' but these might sometimes be better described as 'communication meetings'. This could be a reflection of

	the fact that as the qualifications have become increasingly embedded and assessors have become increasingly familiar with the requirements, there is less need for traditional standardisation activities. There is, therefore, greater reliance on the IQA verifiers to ensure parity across assessors.
Management Systems and Records:	Findings: EQA verifiers report that senior managers within centres are supportive and often closely involved in the delivery of these qualifications. This could be a reflection of the fact that activity is increasingly monitored and audited by various regulators. OCR verifiers are sensitive to these levels of control and are aware that centres may receive advice from more than one source as a result. Communication between centres and OCR seems to be effective and efficient. There was only one action point (and subsequent level 3b sanction) which called for a centre to provide accurate details of learners to the EQA verifier prior to the visit. There were no suggestions that access to information within centres was being denied.

Assessment Summary:	Findings: Portfolio sampling appears to be being conducted in accordance with the guidelines across all qualifications and all stages of completion. The full range of assessment methods are being used with, as might be expected, an emphasis on 'observation'.
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2. Sector Developments

The Customer Service qualifications are now undergoing a periodic review and it is expected that there will be substantial changes with competence and knowledge units being included in the same qualifications. (Rather than separate NVQ and Technical Certificates as at present.)

It is also the case that the need for functional skills to be tested as part of the higher level apprenticeship qualifications is no longer a requirement.

In addition it was recently announced that funding for qualifications may well be devolved directly to employers, rather than being administered through third parties as at present.

If any or all of these proposals come about, the impact could be considerable.