



Chief Verifier Report

**NVQs in Business and Administration
NQF and QCF Levels 1- 4
Schemes 06607, 05560, 04702-10**

2012-2013

North and Wales

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REPORT FOR PUBLICATION

1. The qualifications and standards

Assessment Team:	Findings: <p>EQAs have reported that staff undertaking assessment and verification activities are suitably qualified and experienced with many holding teaching qualifications. Generally speaking EQAs meet all or most of the team on every visit but certainly meet them during the year.</p> <p>They report that the various centres they visit operate in a variety of ways with Level 1 candidates observed regularly, this method of assessment forming the main method of demonstrating competence, whilst the Level 2 and 3 candidates use a variety of methods, ie personal statements especially for the mandatory units and observation, professional discussion, actual work product and question and answers to ensure as wide a range as practicable.</p> <p>EQAs reported that candidate feedback is very encouraging regarding the support received from their assessors. In all centres, internal verification activities were found to be planned at the start of the programme and include formative and summative assessments. In many cases the schedule for internal verification is placed in the centre file and tracking systems in place allow for a clear audit trail. Examples have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in the organisational structure and to candidates at the outset</i>
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of their qualification. Staff maintain their occupational competence and have opportunities for self-development.

- *The roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by all and are evident on a clear organisational chart and in discussion with the team. The College has detailed procedures including equal opportunities, assessment and quality and these are monitored and updated across all campuses. Regular cross campus meetings take place to ensure effective communication between the College assessment team.*

EQAs comment on the work of the team in the following ways

- *Following IV, feedback to the assessor and the candidate is clear and concise and refers to the assessment decisions. Assessments are closely monitored to ensure that all candidates have their needs met.*
- *Candidates sign an authentication certificate to prove the evidence is their own work and they also keep a development activity log where they keep a record a workshops attended, discussions held with their mentor, any external training they have undertaken together with internet searches etc.*

EQAs have reported that in many of their centres the observation reports are written in detail, stating when and where this took place, before being mapped to the units.

EQAs report that Standardisation Meetings are held – generally on a monthly basis - to ensure standardisation of assessment.

One EQA reported that one of their centres is part of a larger consortium that shares good practice and resources. They have had support visits in preparation for Ofsted and had a visit from LSIS. Various resources are used, including the BKSB interactive materials and the OCR past exam papers for functional skills. The centre holds workshops approximately twice a month on functional skills. Staff are qualified and maintain their CPD, which includes taking additional qualifications in teaching.

EQAs continue to email or telephone the Chief regarding queries – not that there have been many. They tend to be regarding the more unusual units for example **unit 356 (Build Case Files)**. The allocated EQA contacted the Chief for clarification:

This unit is listed under the specialist units for Legal however my learner does not work in a solicitors or court setting but works for the Safeguarding Team within the local authority. Her job role does however require her to build case files for clients where safeguarding issues have been reported and these files (electronically stored) are then updated with the investigation evidence carried out by the Safeguarding Team for which my learner also takes the minutes of meetings and monitors completion of actions. These case files can indeed be called upon in legal settings where the safeguarding issues are such that legal proceedings are taken either by the individual, their family or the local authority on their behalf.

Can you advise please if this take on the unit would be permissible? I have read through the report and seen the evidence that she is

	<p><i>presenting and I am happy that the criteria is covered fully and well it is just how flexible the Legal aspect of the unit focus is. The unit itself does not mention anything about Legal it is just where it is placed in the qualification overview document.</i></p> <p>The issue was not only about the unit itself but the EQA was concerned that the assessor at the centre was not aware of the fact that the learner had firstly selected the unit and secondly completed the unit without any apparent support.</p>
<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Findings:</p> <p>EQAs report that in all cases the respective teams are competent and qualified. Many staff are reported as having recently achieved or are working towards PTLLS and assessor/verifier qualifications as part of their CPD.</p> <p>With regard to the use of e-portfolios, EQAs report that some are moving from EAssessor to Smart Assessor as an e-portfolio option in response to ensuring it is fit for purpose for both the organisations' and learners' needs.</p> <p>A few EQAs reported on the way centres made the distinction between full time college provision and workplace provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are two distinct areas where the qualifications are delivered. There are learners who work in the model office and then there are the work-based learners.</i> <p>Some EQAs have reported that there have been new college builds, increasing and enhancing the range of equipment, facilities and accommodation.</p> <p>All EQAs reported where applicable the workplaces (in which most of the assessment takes place) were fit for purpose and complied with H&S requirements.</p>
<p>Candidate Support:</p>	<p>Findings:</p> <p>EQAs have reported that candidates in all centres are very well supported. Some examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Candidates, when they are recruited, undergo a full induction which covers the qualification process, how this process works, who is involved, how to gather evidence, health and safety rules and regulations plus the appeals procedure. Learner review records track the candidates' progress and ensure they remain on target.</i> <p>In many centres additional support is provided to those candidates who have been identified as needing this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Candidates undergo a full induction and then candidates on Levels 2, 3 and 4 complete a skills scan which aids their choice of optional units. This has recently been amended to make it more user friendly and take into account the credit values of the units.</i> • <i>The centre has a learner with Downs Syndrome who is working towards the level 2 certificate. The evidence was viewed by the EQA and a discussion took place to agree the best assessment practice to support a</i>

candidate who is clearly able to carry out the role and provide explanations but with careful consideration to assessment methods

- *Both of the candidates interviewed confirmed that they were receiving very good support and that they were fully involved with the planning and choice of assessment methods*
- *The centre is working with one of its client companies to incorporate the apprenticeship requirements into their induction programme.*
- *The centre runs workshops for ERR and functional skills and also offers additional units/credits at the employers request.*
- *The centre has an initial assessment procedure, which is currently being reviewed with additional consideration now being given to functional skills, technical certificates, ERR and PLTS.*
- *Assessment methods are tailored to suit the individual. The centre also assesses learning styles as well, as English and maths now need to be taught.*
- *The learners are introduced to the qualification with an excellent induction and the support continues through the qualification.*
- *Paced delivery apparent with drop in review days planned, normally every two weeks on a Wednesday.*
- *Interventions in the workplace are planned and the assessor ensures that the learner has maximum benefit from the reviews with highly comprehensive and detailed plans and reports on the types of evidence viewed and work practices observed.*
- *Candidates are usually well-supported and experience a substantial induction delivered on a 1-to-1 basis by the assessor. Initial assessment and skill scanning are recorded and all efforts made to ensure that the learner selects the most appropriate qualification.*
- *Good use of Unit selection with the learner, discussion with the learners today exemplified this approach – both learners working well on Units and the indication was an holistic approach,*
- *Like the idea of using the screenshots and explanations given by the learner as a potential guide for future staff members.*
- *Highly comprehensive and detailed reviews by the IQA, with reports that show exactly what was viewed and more fundamentally how the work meets the evidence requirements.*
- *The standardisation process is viable and offers opportunities for planned meetings but also the core team meet and review on regular basis, observation of practice and learner interview has been conducted since our last visit and is planned for the future.*

EQAs are keen to report what they have discussed with centres by way of improving their practice:

- *Discussed with the centre the opportunity to review potential changes and developments through the CfA website and to log onto the monthly brief as a discussion point*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>As the centre needs to review and evaluate with funding partners all reports are linked to the partners requirements, these offer enough detail to show progression and the effectiveness of the systems in place. Along with the desired feedback from learners and employers</i> <p>Most EQAs report that whilst Unit certification is available as required it is not often used. This clearly confirms that assessment teams are assessing holistically.</p>
<p>Assessment and verification</p>	<p>Findings:</p> <p>EQAs report some very good and consistent centre practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Observation is used as primary evidence for the optional units and the subsequent reports are in full detail. Professional discussions are recorded.</i> • <i>The centre uses a generic IV documentation which has cut down on the amount of individual paper work previously completed, by combining elements together.</i> • <i>The IV plan is completed at the start of the academic year with IV dates planned for every month through the academic year to be completed at the start of the programme, interim and at the end. Each IV keeps an individual log of their activities.</i> • <i>Assessors e-mail their allocated IV to inform them that the portfolio is ready to be internally verified. If there are no portfolios ready then work in progress portfolios are requested. Assessor observations are conducted quarterly with full records kept of all IV activities.</i> • <i>The portfolios are well presented and each unit contains a task log sheet which identifies and describes the task, who the task is for, the resources required to complete, the objectives and priority levels.</i> • <i>Records of observations are clearly written and state where and when the observation took place. On completion the report is then mapped to the standards.</i> • <i>Internal quality assurance in formative and summative with documented feedback provided to the assessor. Action points are clearly defined and implemented by the assessor prior to certification claims.</i> <p>EQAs report that the majority of centres now maintain an effective centre file in which a range of policies and procedures are placed including IV plans etc:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All policies and procedures are placed in a central file and were available for the visit. The centre maintains a course file for each qualification giving details of current registrations, assessment and verification team, sample signatures, and learner information relating to achievements.</i> <p>EQAs report that standardisation practice would appear to be sound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Standardisation is recording on an on-going basis, as areas of concern are identified, the two members of staff also go through portfolios together and the</i>

	<p><i>discussions are logged.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The centre, as part of the consortium, shares good practice on such areas as the new standards, review practice, assessment processes and getting 'Ofsted Ready', with the others in the group. The centre carries out 100% IQA of all portfolios, both formatively and summatively, the unit selection is based on previous coverage</i> • <i>Standardisation activities, identifying best practice, resolving of queries and monitoring of candidate progress are all carried out on a regular basis. The team work closely together and resolve issues/problems on an on-going basis.</i> • <i>The centre has a variety of programme evaluations, part 1 is carried out at the beginning of the programme at the 3/4 visit, this is used to check the correct packs have been received and the induction was sufficient. Part 2 is used to judge if there are any areas for improvement, this information is analysed. The centre also carries out a yearly programme/course evaluation and an annual employer review, which is carried out in August. The centre encourages learners to carry out a SWOT analysis of themselves at the beginning of the programme and this is reviewed at the end to see if anything has changed.</i> • <i>Standardisation meetings occur once a term, but a contact log, for assessors and IQA's to use is updated daily. This log then goes forward to the standardisation meeting and informs the agenda. The IQA meetings are held termly and good practice is shared, assessors can attend and the EQA report is the starting point for the agenda.</i> • <i>Assessors and IQA's have 6 meetings per year, 2 of which employers and apprentices are invited. Assessment and quality assurance records are stored both electronically and hardcopy.</i> • <i>The IQA has discussed the various records she keeps, the dates of standardisation and observations etc that she has undertaken. Records are still kept manually, but in addition the records are now kept on the electronic platform learning assistant. The platform will soon include a personalise approach to apprenticeship frameworks and CPD records. Standardisation has recently involved reviewing some evidence and decided which units it would correctly be allocated to.</i> • <i>The college does promote high standards and very best practice; this is clear in all documentation and communication within the centre. The centre has monthly meetings with employers to discuss policies, procedures and expectations.</i> • <i>I viewed records of standardisation activity carried out at formal meetings and informally as the team meet. The Centre staff take into account recommendations from the EV and act upon them wherever possible.</i> <p>Some EQAs have reported good relationships with various employers and who show a real interest in the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Employers indicate where they would like some 'fine tuning' - perhaps in minute taking or customer service.</i>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One of the assessors has a monthly meeting with a focus group, to identify their learner's training needs and they also review the learner's programme. At the annual programme review meeting the apprentices present a small part of the event.</i> <p>Some EQAs manage to be able to review supporting materials for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I have viewed the college policies, procedures, documentation and systems that are in place. I have also viewed the various teaching and learning resources available including ones that are used for developing IQA's and Assessors, during meetings. The centre uses Blackboard, rather than Moodle.</i> <p>There appears to be much sharing of good practice across teams both within centres and across partnerships for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All teams share good practice with other departments. The team is now with a different department and a different head of department, who had supported the team fully in their transition. The college is to take part in a 'festival' of teaching and learning that all staff will attend; this is to share good practice and show case new ideas.</i>
	<p>EQAs generally report well-presented portfolios with a wide range of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Portfolios sampled today contained detailed and robust induction and initial assessment processes which included records of interviews, dyslexia questionnaire, learning styles questionnaire, vocational initial assessment, basic skills diagnostic and initial assessment, ICT initial assessment.</i> • <i>The paper based portfolios sampled all used the standard college paperwork and this included a good TNA, assessment plans and reviews.</i> • <i>Standards had written annotated notes scribbled all over them demonstrating their use by the learner in understanding the qualification.</i> • <i>The centre has just started using e-portfolios for this programme and they also show clear planning and reviews.</i> • <i>The learners are set a target date for each unit within their individual learning plan and progress against this is reviewed and recorded. A good range of assessment methods are utilised.</i> • <i>There are good examples within the portfolios of a holistic approach to assessment being used. Assessment decisions and criteria being awarded against each piece of evidence is clear.</i> • <i>There is evidence of sound observation, oral and written questioning, professional discussion, work product and witness testimony</i> • <i>A range of assessment methods was evident in the portfolios sampled - observation, work products, personal statements and written and oral questions.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Centre has recently introduced an electronic learning plan (ELLP) to enable the learners to plan, review and record their learning. This was well received by the learners interviewed.</i> • <i>Good use is made of candidates' prior achievement in both Business Skills and ECDL.</i> • <i>IV is undertaken at all stages of the assessment process. The IV strategy meets Awarding Body requirements and the IV reports seen were detailed and fully supportive to both candidate and assessor.</i> • <i>Assessment was seen to be thorough and well documented. The Assessment Decision Reports seen in portfolios were very detailed and showed a holistic approach to assessment.</i> • <i>Observations were recorded within these reports as were the content of oral questioning. These reports also referred to work product evidence seen in the workplace.</i> • <i>Verification is ongoing and there is good feedback to the assessors. Action points are followed up. There are full records of meetings and standardisation activities.</i> • <i>Was able to see new IQA procedure in operation and records of sampling, assessor observations and learner interviews. It was noted that in several instances there had been a long delay between final IV and submission for claim but discussions with CC and Lead IV confirmed that this had been a problem with previous system that had been identified internally with procedures included in new IQA system to prevent this from reoccurring.</i> • <i>Review of IQA activities confirm that is it thorough and detailed with comprehensive feedback although we discussed the need to include procedure to check all outstanding actions have been completed.</i>
	<p>It is pleasing to note that in some centres real efforts have been made to reduce the amount of paper evidence in portfolios</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All of the portfolios sampled were to a good standard, and the centre is moving away from large amounts of copied evidence, to signposting and use of digital recordings of discussions and observations.</i> <p>EQAs report that whilst in most centres the work of trainee assessors is monitored, one instance highlighted the following issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trainee assessors are countersigned but the countersigning is often several weeks later. This is not good practice, the trainee should receive feedback fairly quickly as he/she may have to go back to the candidate for further evidence. Also the trainees may have different portfolios countersigned by different assessors. This may give rise to conflicting feedback, and could allow a portfolio to slip through un-countersigned.</i>
	<p>EQAs report that in most of their large centres there are standard policies and procedures that operate across all</p>

	<p>schemes and several Awarding Bodies. They confirm that the records in place that are easy to follow and give a clear audit trail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The policies and procedures go before an internal committee for review and updating, which occurs ongoing. The college policies and procedures are shared at programme meetings.</i> • <i>No changes since the previous report i.e. "This is a large college with full policies and procedures. These operate well across all qualifications and several Awarding Bodies. The records are easy to follow (especially as most portfolios are electronic).</i> <p>They regularly report that all requested information was supplied ready for the visit and all portfolios, staff and candidates requested were available.</p>
	<p>Many EQAs give additional support advice and guidance to centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Candidates submissions were relevant and answers to 'understand' criteria were accurate. I discussed with the Centre Co-ordinator the question of balance within the portfolio just to ensure that the assessor was not too involved in producing detailed reports where the candidate could contribute more by the inclusion of personal statements or similar evidence that also prove Business Administration skills.</i>
	<p>Many EV reports confirmed that centres continue to be well supported by Senior Management and all policies were in place and up to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Senior Management are supportive of NVQ's and all staff are fully conversant with their current roles and responsibilities. Flow charts detail each team. All centre documentation is up to date with accurate candidate details kept.</i> • <i>All EQA reports are forwarded to the Quality Assurance Manager and any action points are issued to the Head of Departments.</i> • <i>There is clear support from senior management to the centre's aims and policies and team members are given sufficient time to carry out their duties.</i> <p>EQAs have also been quick to applaud good practice in their centres – showing how effective their work with a centre over time has been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Team meetings and standardisation take place and are documented. There has been a useful dialogue between the Centre staff and the EV during the past two years about the standards, ways to improve assessment and the support of candidates which has led to improvements.</i> • <i>I have seen evidence of improvement in systems and the way candidates are supported through minor changes to already excellent assessment practice.</i>

- *The Lead IV is watchful of individual assessor loads to ensure the required time is available for each candidate group. Any queries regarding standards are routed to the EQA for clarification.*
- *The Centre is receptive to recommendations from the awarding body and there is a commitment to move the Centre forward by reviewing practice and making improvements.*
- *The Centre has a commitment to quality improvement and carries out regular reviews to ensure their learners are achieving and meet the required standard.*
- *Good feedback and discussion with all centre team members who are all well motivated and dedicated to candidate and college success*
- *The Centre had completed a full skills audit of the 3 team members to confirm their coverage across the units of the Business & Administration schemes. Where 2 or 3 units were outside the scope of their experience they had identified expertise within the College on which they could draw so that candidates had a full choice of units available. The team is well-qualified and competent, with clear records of ongoing CPD activity.*
- *The IQA policy is applied to all the qualifications subject to this audit and there is evidence of thorough planning and execution of all strands of IQA activity expected and required by OCR. IQA records show both interim and final sampling, assessor observation and candidate interviews, and ongoing regular standardisation meetings which are minuted. Any actions or recommendations from the awarding body are addressed promptly and records provided for the EQA.*
- *Learners have been encouraged to write personal statements about their work which is very good practice.*

However, they are also very clear when they require things to change:

- *Assessment and IQA is carried out by qualified and occupationally staff. All assessment decisions were confirmed by EQA sampling. However there were a number of instances of "over-evidencing" with some evidence only meeting one criterion. Assessors need to consider the most appropriate evidence to include*
- *Standardisation meetings take place and the activities involved recorded. It was noticed during the sampling that the assessment practice of the model office assessors is not as robust and detailed as that of the assessors from work-based learning. This was discussed during feedback and agreed that the model office assessors provide more detailed observations etc and not use tick lists.*
- *Recommend more frequent and stringent IQA activities for e-portfolio learners as this is still new to centre and team.*

<p>Management Systems and Records:</p>	<p>Findings: Often this section is brief but succinct in the majority of cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Naturally with the ongoing merger with other institutions there is some concern for the future nature and functionality of the enlarged entity, particularly with staffing.</i> • <i>An annual self-assessment is carried out which draws on evidence from a wide range of sources with the aim of ensuring continuing improvement.</i> • <i>The centre regularly evaluates the qualifications that it offers to ensure that they meet the requirements of the local community.</i> • <i>A discussion took place with the Team Leader with respect to the information provided to the External Verifier prior to the visit. The data is extracted from the main centre records and there is additional data not required by the External Verifier. An agreement was made that this would be revised so that only relevant data is provided.</i>
<p>Assessment Summary:</p>	<p>Findings: A few EQAs have made very detailed comments in regard to this area. Particularly good examples are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This was my first visit to this Centre following their recent approval and change from City and Guilds to OCR for these schemes. I found an excellent Centre with motivated and experienced staff where candidates were well supported. All work seen fully met standards and indeed the quality of observation, case study and candidates' personal reports were of a very high standard. We discussed some ways in which a broader range of evidence could be captured to prove competence over a wider period of time without requiring the candidate to produce further detailed case study reports. I would like the Centre to consider including log sheets reflecting case loads, scope of A&G activity in respect of a list of clients, diary notes and/or computer print outs. I would also like to see the excellent practice of listing workplace evidence seen during observation (currently recorded on some observation reports) to all observations recognising also that work product evidence (WP) needs to be shown on Evidence Record Sheets. I have clarified some uncertainty regarding signing off level 4 units and my next visit has been timed to verify completed level 4 units (rather than work in progress) and possibly some completers.</i> • <i>This Centre is well established and has a robust assessment and IV process giving excellent support to candidates. We discussed the volume of written answers and the pros and cons to candidates of the ways in which 'understand' outcomes can be proven. The Centre will consider ways to reduce written answers especially where some of these criteria can be covered by observation or product evidence as this may benefit candidates and also minimise time constraints on assessors</i> • <i>I observed a final assessment where the assessor</i>

asked the candidate questions and additional evidence was submitted to meet some remaining criteria. The candidate was encouraged to identify the criteria to which the evidence related and the unit was properly signed off. Throughout the candidate was at ease and it was obvious that there was a good relationship between assessor and candidate. Assessment material in portfolios was of a high standard and all assessment methods were used. Observation reports were excellent but could be improved by the addition of a short list highlighting the Work Products seen in the workplace.

- *Candidates' personal reports were well written and it was good to see references throughout these reports to supporting work product evidence. Assessment was holistic so as not to disadvantage the candidate and maximise the use of submitted evidence.*
- *The Centre wishes to reactivate its approval for scheme code 04708 in readiness for the recruitment of apprentices in Business & Administration. It was recommended that the current team members prepare records of occupational competence against the units of this Level 3 scheme and clarify the coverage the team has in terms of the units they can assess/quality assure. This overall matrix should be forwarded to the EV and the competence records on which it is based should be available at the next visit.*

2. Sector Developments

The review of the current standards must reflect the job roles of administrators in today's technological world. They operate in a world of social media and bespoke software. Every industry and commercial establishment uses administrators in one way or another and there is an opportunity to build a tailor made set of units for learners to access.

There continues to be provider concerns around the impact of the SASE framework and funding levels. Whilst some centres this year have seen small increases in apprenticeship numbers, many have not been as successful and have experienced difficult times all round. However, one centre appears to be recruiting a high number of administrators on the higher apprenticeship – funded by the employer (NHS) and which would attract even more if there were additional medical units (as offered by another awarding body) to meet specific needs.

Ofsted reports continue to highlight the importance of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Particularly for business administration learners, these skills are absolutely crucial and centres should be regularly monitoring their effectiveness. As administrators, learners (and their tutors/assessors/IQAs) should be making sure that there are no errors in personal reports, statements, work products or witness testimonies.

Funding issues for over 24s will continue to impact on the qualification take up.

In addition the government shake up of apprenticeship funding may well have an impact on numbers registering.

As well as consulting on long term measures to reform Apprenticeships the government is also taking actions in the shorter term to make it easier for companies to take on an Apprentice.

Companies with 1,000 employees or fewer can take advantage of a £1,500 Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) for another year, helping small and medium sized business to take on an additional 35,000 young apprentices.

Latest figures show that almost 30,000 young people have been taken on under the current grant.

There are interesting times ahead for everyone involved and particularly a wealth of opportunities for providers of business and administration qualifications and training.