

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Level 4 Diploma in Career Information and Advice – **04512**

Level 3 Award for Supporting Clients to Overcome Barriers to Learning and Work – **10214**

Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development – **10215**

OCR Report to Centres 2013-2014

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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1 The qualifications and standards

· Structure and content

Assessment Team:

Within the centres all assessors were found to be occupationally competent and meeting specific requirements within certain units eg Holding certain qualifications to assess on the Unit 3 of the Level 6 Diploma. Nearly all assessors and verifiers are fully qualified, with less than 5% of centres having staff working towards relevant qualifications. This could be attributed to the specialist nature of the careers qualifications and the low turnover of staff within established centres.

Assessors and verifiers have undertaken relevant Continuous Professional Development. This included attendance at the CDI (Career Development Institute) events on theory training and developments with qualification frameworks. It has also included in-house training on career theory and research completed by teams to support learners with theory. The recording of the CPD was generally reflective, although it would be fair to say that individuals are still viewing CPD in a limited way and not recording the learning from wider activity eg team meetings.

Resources:

Centres continued to make use of the resources provided by OCR. In particular the guidance on career theory and mapping documents are being fully utilised.

The majority of centres have continued to develop or revise materials and resources to support learner research needs and training inputs.

A number of centres have developed workbooks or adapted assignment briefs to take on board learner and EV feedback.

Learners are being encouraged to use websites such as the CDI and the National Guidance Research Forum.

A growing number of centres are using e-portfolio systems to support assessment processes and allow for learner flexibility in completing evidence and accessing resources.

All centres have complied with health and safety requirements both internally and when visiting learners in other locations.

Candidate Support:

The recording of learner interviews and evidence within portfolios confirms that centres are supporting learners throughout the duration of the qualification. Centres are completing detailed inductions along with training sessions to cover theory and skills development. Learners have generally remarked on the depth of research required to complete units, especially within the Level 6 Diploma and the need for increased support from centres in completing assignments, referencing and signposting to resources. Centres are increasing using initial assessment to support learners onto programmes. The feedback from learners has generally been positive with clear links to how the theory is developing learners' understanding of client's needs and barriers and how to use different models and techniques to assist with client transitions. One of the general concerns highlighted by learners is the time needed to complete the Level 4 and 6 schemes, research required and fitting it into demanding work schedules. Centres are increasingly aware of these factors and work with the learners and organisations to consider study leave or to be flexible with assessment processes.

Assessment and Verification:

All centres are completing high levels of IQA sampling throughout the duration of the qualification. Initially, centres were operating at 100%. However, as they are becoming more confident and familiar with the schemes, this is being reduced to around 30%. The recording of IQA processes has been effectively documented, developmental to support assessor practice, and justified.

The assessment practice has generally been of a good standard. This could be attributed to regular standardisation events, becoming familiar with the standards and expectations of all parties, clarity in regard to the verbs within the criteria and good in-depth IQA feedback.

As stated above, centres are increasingly having quarterly standardisation where a lot of emphasis has been placed on reflecting on best practice and finding consistency with assessment, especially for the theory component.

Some centres across the year have sought guidance about:

- 1 The methods or approaches which are acceptable to cover the observation requirement in a number of units. This has included the use of DVD and SKYPE where appropriate.
- 2 The use of audio recording to cover observation requirements where guidance is increasing being undertaken by media formats and methods.
- 3 Entry requirements to the CDI Register of Career Development Professionals in light of revised entry dates to the register.
- 4 Assessment approaches for the units on Careers Education on the Level 6 Diploma. (Units 21-23)
- 5 The availability and use of e-portfolio systems.
- 6 The use and recording of guided discussion to cover theory and how to ensure a clear audit trail.
- 7 Possible impact and changes to the standards as a result of the CDI taking over responsibility for them.
- 8 The requirements for referencing work, completing a bibliography and word count for Level 4 and 6 units.
- 9 How to address plagiarism by learners and awarding body guidance to centres.
- 10 The type and range of diagnostic and assessment tools which are relevant to cover requirements within Unit 8 of the Level 6 Diploma.

These queries have been responded to by the Chief Verifier and previous Qualifications Manager.

Centres continue to be aware of the distinction between the levels of the verbs used within the qualifications and ensuring that the depth is being applied when critically evaluating for example.

During 2013-14 less than 10% of centres received sanctions and action points. Most of these were at Level 1 and administrative in nature. This highlights the good work being produced by centres and growing confidence with these qualifications.

Where sanctions have been applied these related to the following:

- 1 Insufficient depth of analysis and evaluation of theory by learners, which was not picked up on by the assessor or IQA.
- 2 Insufficient IQA formative sampling.
- 3 Assessment decisions not being clearly evidenced on feedback records.
- 4 The need for more accurate recording on the Evidence Record Sheets.
- 5 Some signatures missing across a portfolio.

- 6 Information provided to the EV prior to the visit being inaccurate or not included to enable EV letter 2 to be completed fully.
- 7 Portfolios not being organised to allow for a clear audit trail.
- 8 Incorrect ratio of assessors to learners which could disadvantage learners in terms of support needs, assessment feedback and completion timescales.
- 9 The lack and depth of recording of what took place during standardisation meeting and effective communication to those not present to ensure continuing consistency of assessment practice.

Management Systems and Records:

Within the EV reports there was recognition that most centres are managing systems and records effectively. Some are linked to e-portfolio systems with a number of centres using their own devised database to monitor registrations, progress and certification claims.

During EV visits assessors and verifiers have been interviewed to discuss the effectiveness of the systems and communication generally. Overall the feedback has been positive with attendance at team meetings and standardisation regularly occurring.

There have been no problems reported in the use of the Interchange and the changing format of the OCR website has generally been well received.

Centres are maintaining systems to complete learner evaluation, normally at course completion. Overall the feedback has been positive with useful development points raised mainly around the training inputs and access to resources. As a result a number of centres have revised the assignment briefs, content of training days and developed additional resources eg workbooks or reference materials.

Assessment Summary:

Overall, centres involved in these qualifications are undertaking detailed and effective assessor and IQA practice. Centres are conscious of the support needed, especially with the Level 6 Diploma, for their learners and providing a range of additional resources to meet this varied need. This has been reflected back by the comments provided by learners and the general recognition by all parties of the ongoing developments across the careers guidance sector which are regularly changing and demanding as a consequence for all involved.

Generally the qualifications are highly regarded by the profession and providing increased levels of knowledge and skill development which is required to support clients with varied needs and a changing economic and social climate.

2 Sector Developments

Over the last twelve months there have been a number of developments within the sector. In April, the government provided revised statutory guidance, 'Career Guidance and Inspiration in Schools' to be in place by September 2014. This highlighted the need for schools to ensure provision of some form of independent careers guidance, involving employers more in the process and highlighting how OFSTED will continue to monitor the quality of provision.

In recent months the new contracts for the National Career Service have been agreed with some changes to the providers and a possible focus on increased levels of telephone and media guidance.

Within the CDI, there have been some developments, with Claire Johnson moving from her role as Chief Verifier within OCR for the careers schemes to becoming the Professional Development Manager.

The focus has been on developing a definitive framework for recognised qualifications that will be approved for entry onto the Register of Career Development Professionals. This will be in place during the Autumn of 2014. In addition the Codes of Ethics are being revised to be implemented from October 2014. The CDI has also taken over responsibility for the NOS CD. (National Occupational Standards-Career Development) Over the last few months work has been undertaken on revising the standards and the draft has been recently accepted by the UKCES. A full consultation is now taking place until the end of September 2014, with the standards due to be in place by March 2015.

The final development has been extending the deadline for access to the CDI Register until April 30th 2016, for those completing specified units within the Level 6 Diploma and having previously completed the Advice and Guidance and/or LDSS 4 old standards.

OCR has decided to not continue with the Level 3 Award. This has been viewed with regret by a number of centres who believed it offered potential within some markets eg the voluntary sector.

One of the recent developments by some centres is to focus on marketing the careers education units to Local Education Partnerships. The emphasis will be on highlighting how the three units can assist managers within schools to set up and run careers education programmes and support the revised statutory guidance. It has been suggested that a separate Level 6 Certificate could be offered by an awarding body covering units 21-23 and other relevant units.

In conclusion, the sector is evolving to include the wider career guidance community and to develop and safeguard career guidance practice for the future. The CDI is actively recruiting for new members and would eventually like to achieve chartered status for the profession. OCR has been involved in these qualifications since their inception and has the experience and framework to be involved in the revision and implementation of the NOS-CD. The interest from individuals and organisations in completing the full Level 6 Diploma is increasing and centres are looking to offer more 'specialised clusters' such as described above in relation to the Careers Education units.

Therefore 2014-15 offers OCR and the sector as a whole the opportunity to develop and market a wider range of products to meet the training and qualification needs of its practitioners and managers.

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