

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools

Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools Level 2 Certificate - **04465**

Supporting the Wider Curriculum in Schools Level 2 Certificate - **04466**

Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools Level 3 Certificate - **04468**

Cover Supervision of Pupils in Schools Level 3 Certificate - **04469**

Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools Level 3 Diploma - **04470**

OCR Report to Centres August 2015

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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CONTENTS

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools	4

Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools

1 Overview:

The most popular qualification of the suit for 2014-2015 has been the Level 3 Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools as funding for this qualification, through the Apprenticeship scheme, makes for easier access. The Level 2 Certificate and the Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools remain popular with those candidates who are mainly volunteers within schools or who are new to the profession. The Level 2 Certificate in Supporting the Wider Curriculum in Schools and the Level 3 Certificate in Cover Supervision in Schools have grown in popularity this session, having declined in 2013 – 2014.

From monitoring the reports, it appears that assessment within centres is thorough and varied. Observation is used as primary evidence, especially for the optional units in order to evidence the 'Is able to' aspect of the Learning Outcomes. Candidates are visited by their assessors on a regular basis, usually at monthly intervals. Assessment reports are clear with SMART targets and clear feedback. A large number of centres have devised workbooks for the mandatory units which guide candidates through the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria. The use of Professional Discussion works well, either as an aspect of the candidates' role or to 'plug gaps' identified. Where recommendations have been written on EQA reports, these have been designed to aid centres improve on already satisfactory practices. Actions have only been issued when necessary and relevant.

2 General Comments

The qualifications and standards

Structure and content

The Assessment Team:

The EQA team have reported that the teams undertaking the assessment and IQA activities within centres are suitably experienced and qualified. Many of the assessors and IQA's are former Teaching Assistants themselves. Staff turnover has been minimal and where trainee assessors and IQA's have joined centres, they have been fully supported until they have achieved their respective qualifications. A wide range of assessment methods continues to be used – the mandatory units mainly by the use of assignments which have been carefully designed to ensure that candidates meet all the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria. Evidence which has been produced as a result of research is, in the main, clearly referenced.

With regards to the optional units, the main form of assessment continues to be observation. EQA's have reported that the majority of these observations are holistic and have been written in details stating when and where the observation took place.

Candidate feedback, which is mainly by telephone, is very encouraging in regards to support received from their respective assessors.

IQA activities are reported in detail, stating the assessment methods used. IQA planners are mainly in colour to denote planned and actual sampling activities. IQA reports (both formative and summative) tend to be placed in the front of each portfolio. A number of centres use colour coding as a method of monitoring trainee and newly qualified assessors more closely than their experienced counterparts.

Copies of Assessor and IQA certificates together with CVs are kept within the centre's main file and updated as necessary and an increasing number of assessors are currently working towards their IQA qualification.

Standardisation meetings tend to be on a termly basis and minutes are made available to the EQA.

There have been no queries relating to standards by members of the EQA team. The only issues raised by centres this year have related to the extension dates for the qualifications.

Resources:

A number of centres are now using e-portfolios, of which there are several versions, eg VQManager, Skillwise and E-assessor. However the most popular at the moment are Learning Assistant and One File. Full training is given to both the assessors and candidates alike in the use of this method of recording evidence. There have been no issues with regards to Health and Safety within centres.

CPD records continue to be kept up to date by centre teams. Health and Safety and Safeguarding training tend to be updated annually. Larger centres use training rooms for groups of candidates on a weekly basis over half a day. These activities allow candidates to talk with their peers and discuss how to manage and resolve situations that may arise or have arisen within the classroom. EQAs report that they have been able to attend some of these sessions and speak to candidates about their experiences.

Comments on EQA reports include:

I was able to sit in with a group of Level 3 candidates during a visit to xxxxxx. They were discussing safeguarding and their experiences within the classroom.

There is sufficient assessment and IQA personnel for the number of candidates on programmes who are both qualified and occupationally competent.

All staff undergo an annual appraisal and Human Resources record all training undertaken.

Equipment, to ensure this remains fit for purpose, is checked annually.

Candidate Support:

Many of the Level 2 candidates are volunteers or newly appointed Teaching Assistants.

EQAs report that candidates are well supported within their respective centres. Candidates undergo an in-depth induction programme where they receive information on building a portfolio of evidence, types of evidence, and how to record this. They are also introduced to their assessor and given copies of their respective programmes.

EQAs report that candidates are fully aware of the appeals procedure and have been given a copy during their induction which is placed in their portfolio. Candidates are able to contact their assessor easily either by text, telephone or email.

Some candidates use a textbook which was written to help candidates work through the mandatory units, although this is not being used as frequently as in the past due to an increasing number of centres writing their own assignments to address these units. Candidates report that centre devised assignments guide them through the evidence requirements.

EQAs report that there is good variety of evidence being used with observation being the primary form for the optional units. Witness Testimonies, generally written by the class teacher, give a concise report on the candidate's performance within the classroom. Evidence, produced as a result of research, is correctly referenced.

Assessment plans demonstrate that candidates and assessors have sat down together to plan what and how the assessment criteria should be met.

Comments on EQA reports include:

Xxxxxx reported that the feedback she got from her assessor was valuable. She was given both verbal and written feedback so that she was clear what had been achieved.

I spoke to xxxxxx on the telephone as she was unable to be released from her school. She said that she had received good support from her assessor who had visited her at school for observations and assessment planning. She felt the induction programme was clear and sufficient information given.

Xxxxxx said that embarking on his Level 3 Diploma has made him look closely at the way he carried out his role and as a result had changed many of his working practices. He said he reviewed his time in the classroom daily.

The learner I interviewed today did not report any insufficiency of resources and had regular monthly meetings with her assessor and additional contact by email. She had not had any issues with the use of e-portfolio.

Assessment Review:

EQAs continue to report that IQA activities are thorough with clear feedback given. Many centres use an IQA sampling plan per assessor and IQA sampling continues to show coverage of all assessors and units with colour coding being used on the sampling plans. Both formative and summative IQA activities take place on a regular basis.

Assessment plans give a clear timescale for completion and all targets are SMART.

Assessment and IQA activities are conducted by appropriately qualified and occupationally competent staff and where assessors and IQA's are working towards their respective qualifications, they are closely monitored.

Standardisation meetings take place at regular intervals and involve the whole team. As the current standards have been in place for a number of years, there is less standardisation of specific units; instead team/standardisation meetings are based around types of assessment and its validity and sufficiency.

Any actions identified during EQA visits are discussed during the next team or standardisation meeting.

Comments regarding assessment include:

Assessment reports to candidates are clear and show how competency has been achieved. It is clear that candidates are encouraged to be thorough and detailed in their responses to knowledge-based questions and it was good to see solid examples drawn from practice.

Portfolios today were very well presented and easy to locate. They contained a good variety of evidence and evidence which was not instantly clear was annotated.

An interview with all team members highlighted their enthusiasm and dedication especially during the transitional period from paper based to e-portfolio.

Observation reports are holistic and state when and where the observation was carried out. They are mapped to the assessment criteria.

Scrutiny of the minutes of standardisation meetings clearly demonstrate that recommendations made by the EQA at previous visits had been discussed and implemented.

Internal Verification Review:

There is clear evidence that senior management continue to support both the delivery and assessment of OCR's verified qualifications and give full support to both the assessment and IQA teams. Centre policies and procedures, which are maintained in the a central file are reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose and copies of Equal Opportunities and Access to Fair Assessment policies can be found within this file. Where the centre belongs to a Local Authority, then the LA's policies and procedures are adopted.

Also maintained within the central file are copies of assessor and IQA certificates, CVs and CPD records, together with sample signatures. Records of standardisation meetings demonstrate that there is clear and effective communication between team members.

An increasing number of centres have appointed a Lead IQA. This allows more effective monitoring across both the assessment and the IQA team.

Conversations with both assessors and IQAs confirm that they have been given sufficient time to carry out their roles.

Centres maintain records of their candidates together with a list of their achievements and these records readily available during EQA visits. Records are also stored for the required period of time.

The main query during the past year has been around the last certification date for each of the qualifications in the suite, giving concern to the registration of further candidates. Once an extension to the registration dates had been announced, centres felt more at ease.

Comments regarding internal verification review include:

All policies have been reviewed in the light of the organisation's move to electronic portfolio with each programme manager being involved within the process. Additionally, individual policies are considered within the rota of six-weekly team meetings.

The centre's funding provider supplies cross-qualification achievement data via gender and ethnicity.

The existence of a Lead IQA in the team is a clear strength.

The centre has excellent communication within its team and with the EQA. There are detailed records of both business and standardisation meetings.

EQA visits are always well organised and any requests for information, both prior and during, are always fully and readily met.

3 Comments on Individual Units

The most popular optional units within the Level 2 Certificate are:

Unit 15 – Provide displays in schools

Unit 21 – Support extra curricular activities, and

Unit 20 – Support children and young people’s travel outside of the setting

Due to an increase in the number of candidates who work with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, Unit 18 – Support children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs is becoming more popular.

The most popular optional units within the Level 3 Diploma are:

Unit 12 – Plan and deliver learning activities under the direction of the teacher

Unit 13 – Support literacy development

Unit 14 – Support numeracy development

Unit 15 – Support teaching and learning in a curricular area

Unit 40 – Invigilate tests and examinations

As with the Level 2 Certificate, due to an increase in the number of candidates who work with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, the following units becoming increasingly popular:

Unit 20 – Support bilingual learners (mandatory under the rules of combination)

Unit 21 – Provide bilingual support for teaching and learning

Unit 22 – Support disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (mandatory under the rules of combination)

Unit 23 – Support children and young people with behaviour, emotional and social development needs

Unit 24 – Support learners with cognition and learning needs

Unit 25 – Support learners with communication and interaction needs

Unit 26 – Support learners with sensory and/or physical needs

Unit 27 – Support individuals to meet personal care needs

4 Sector Update

Now that the last entry date for registration for the all the qualifications within the current standards has been extended to 31 August 2017, centres are able to plan for the future. There have been no changes to the current standards and currently none are expected.

Schools, in particular the primary sector, are now employing an increasing number of teaching assistants. Those working in special schools are supporting children and young people on a one-to-one basis and find the units within the Level 3 Diploma especially helpful. There are also an increasing number of Learning Support Assistants being employed in the Secondary sector.

OCR Report to Centres – August 2015

Letters of support, in order to maintain funding for the qualifications, were received in abundance. Comments from Head Teachers who provided the bulk of these letters were clear in stating that the qualifications for support staff were vital and should be continued.

Ofsted reports continue to highlight the valuable contribution to classroom activities made by the teaching assistants and the high level of support they provide.

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