

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Occupational Health and Safety

Level 3 – Revised 2008 specification Occupational Health and Safety – **03943**

Level 3 Certificate (NVQ) Occupational Health and Safety – **10176**

Level 5 Diploma (NVQ) Occupational Health and Safety Practice – **10177**

OCR Report to Centres 2014-2015

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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1 The qualifications and standards

Structure and content

This report is based on the content of 29 visit reports and other contacts via telephone and e-mail received from three external verifiers, with 31 centres.

Throughout this year centres have been undertaking qualifications with candidates who were registered prior to 31 December 2013. There have been two examples of late registrations allowed. The qualifications undertaken have mainly been the level 3 certificate in Occupational Safety and Health and the level 5 diploma in Occupational Safety and Health. Some candidates have only worked towards the single unit 8 of the level 3, review health and safety procedures in the workplace.

There has been an increase in centres with candidates who have failed to complete. This is in the main due to the final certification date approaching and centres have become much more proactive in re-evaluating dormant candidates who have changed jobs or job roles and the qualification no longer meets their needs. They have therefore opted to withdraw.

Centres continue to provide candidates with a diverse range of assessment and support. There is good evidence across all centres visited that they are making good use of initial assessments and amending these to meet candidates changing needs, if suitable. Centres are making good use of traditional observation and product examination methods whilst embracing technology in the form of on-line assessment and webinars, which are being commented on as benefiting candidates within their work patterns.

Centres continue to make good use of the exemplification documents and candidates have been issued with pick lists based on the content of the document. This has enabled candidates to recognise what is good evidence and how it can best be used.

Throughout the year centres have been identifying other awarding bodies and are registering new candidates with the new awarding body.

Assessment Team:

Findings:

Reports continue to confirm that within the majority of centres there are sufficient assessors to meet candidate assessment requirements. The numbers of candidates will naturally continue to decline as new registrations have ceased but centres are continuing to maintain their staffing levels and standards to meet the requirements of the new awarding body. The majority of assessors are highly qualified health and safety practitioners at the appropriate level.

A total of 21 candidates were interviewed across all centres; they confirmed their support for the assessors and their appreciation of the guidance and support they had received from them.

Assessment within the centres is robust and the standard of the evidence produced by candidates has been maintained at a high standard and regularly exceeds the required standard. Portfolios are well presented and show good auditable evidence produced by the candidates.

The majority of the candidates have been at the diploma level five with smaller numbers at the level three and the stand-alone unit eight. At the start of the year there were 412 candidates registered across all three qualifications.

EQAs continue to support centres with recommendations on best practice within the assessment and internal verification process, cpd and centre policy and procedures.

EQA reports continue to confirm that work product is the primary source of evidence and as such is of a consistently high standard. With the reducing numbers of candidates the value that the action plans were providing was more evident. These were being adjusted to meet the changing requirements of candidates within the constantly changing economic environment.

Resources:

Findings:

Centres remain well-resourced in terms of assessors and equipment with some centres demonstrating up to date facilities, video cameras and audio recorders, web conferencing facilities and access to the latest health and safety publications, all for the benefit of candidates. There have been no issues around centre resources.

Candidate Support:

Findings:

All candidates have received an induction and initial assessment to confirm their suitability for the qualification. This ensures that all candidates have an understanding of the appeals procedure. If a candidate has been identified at this early stage to have a weakness, then an individually tailored package of additional support or training can be action-planned. These action plans are subject to change as candidates take on additional workloads or are moved to different departments.

Centres continue to provide good candidate information packages with details of the assessment team and the assessment process.

The majority of centres continue to use a similar assessment methodology, which requires the same type of evidence, for example observation, witness testimony and work product. A number of centres is providing candidates with pick-lists based on the emulation document. This provides the candidate with a clear indication of the evidence they will require and the value of the evidence. It also ensures that any deviations from this process are identified at an early stage in the process and the candidate's assessment is then re-assessed and tailored to meet their newly identified needs.

Assessment and Verification:

Findings:

Assessment continues to be suitably robust and the internal quality assurance team maintains a regular and documented process of assessor monitoring. This provides a clear and auditable trail of the process.

Because centres have well-established assessment teams, internal quality assurance is mixed between the formative and summative, with the majority being of the summative. Centres are continually encouraged to undertake the formative quality assurance at an earlier stage in the process.

EQAs found that centres hold regular team meetings to maintain the standards across all the team; these meetings are minuted and examined by the EVs at each visit.

During this period there was no requirement to recommend the imposition of sanctions against any centre.

Management Systems and Records:

Findings:

Most EQA reports provide confirmation and positive comments on management systems and records with regular reviews and updates on centre policies and procedures.

Reports also confirm that centres provide easy access to centre and candidate records, progress, achievements, IQA and assessor activities. New assessors and IQA's have been seen with their original certificates either at the visit or following a recommendation at the following visit.

Assessment Summary

Findings:

Reports from EQAs continue to confirm that the qualifications are well-received by the candidates and the assessment team. Assessment continues to be robust across all qualifications.

Centres have reported that the systems, policies and procedures, required of them by OCR have exceeded the requirements of the new awarding bodies with whom they have now registered. Centres have expressed sadness that OCR is withdrawing the qualification, but also gratitude for the support received from OCR and their EQA during the visits.

2 Sector developments

During the last parliament the government legislated to reduce the amount of health and safety within the workplace. It is noted that in health and safety publications, there appears to be an increase in prosecutions for breaches of legislation reported. There have been some serious incidents that have made national headlines.

This would tend to indicate that there is a greater need for professionally qualified and competent persons to be in charge of health and safety in the workplace. If legislation does not cover the workforce then the requirement for competent personnel is greater.

The new level six qualification may not fit the bill as there is too large a gap between the level three and level six. This qualification, in some form, will continue to be the backbone of this industry and the publication of the new standards is awaited with interest.

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