

Policing 2009 - 2010

England and Wales

This report has been designed around the structure of the External Verifier Visit Report.

The qualifications and standards

The centre assessment team

Centres generally have adequate numbers of assessors to carry out the assessment process. The main area of concern for assessors tends to be that in the majority of centres assessors are not dedicated to that role but are serving police officers who are subject to the operational requirements of policing. This often causes a dilemma in terms of available time for them to spend with candidates. This was noted by External verifiers:

"I have to raise a concern that there is no resilience in this assessment team, which may lead to an unacceptable risk, medium to long term."

Where centres are able to provide full time assessors this ensures that candidates are effectively supported, receive regular planning and review meetings and are observed in the workplace carrying out their role.

"Assessment decisions are robust and there is good assessment planning in place."

"All the team are actively engaged in ensuring that the centre continues to deliver a high level of service to their customers."

The majority of assessors are serving police officers who are occupationally competent in accordance with the assessment strategy and are able to maintain this through their involvement in operational policing activities. There are a few external, non police assessors who are used by centres to assess the management units. This appears to work successfully within Centres.

Most assessors practice a holistic approach to assessment ensuring that best use is made of all the available evidence to ensure candidate achievement.

Resources

Centres are equipped with resources to facilitate assessment. Some centres utilise an e-portfolio to store evidence and the assessment process. This is an effective approach to retention of evidence and appears to work effectively. Many centres encourage the use of technology to record evidence such as digitally recording of professional discussion etc. and provide the necessary equipment. Access to centres operational computer systems is sometimes an issue due to the potential security risks and virus introduction, but centres have overcome this by the use of standalone and non networked equipment.

“The assessment team are utilising recording equipment as much as possible for the collation of evidence.”

Some centres still produce paper portfolios. There are still some centres that are photocopying product evidence when, due to the nature of the organisation the centre sits within, the majority of this is electronic. EVs regularly recommend that such evidence is not copied by assessors but assessed in situ and commented upon.

Candidates generally have access to computers to carry out their work and some are allocated dedicated time to work on their qualification during work hours. Others were concerned that they did not have adequate time during working hours to work in the qualification:

“The candidate expressed some concerns regarding lack of time to complete their work based learning due to the conflict of operational demand.”

Centres have attempted to address this issue through the allocation of ‘protected learning time’ in the form of days away from the workplace or allocated time during the working day. These measures work to a greater or lesser degree dependant upon the assessment location of the candidate.

Candidate Support

Candidates generally indicated to external verifiers that they were happy with the support they were receiving from their assessor and verifier.

“Candidates sampled spoke highly of the support during reviews, with assessment plans that are clear and realistic taking into consideration the demands of operational policing.”

It is evident that most candidates meet regularly with their assessor to assessment plan and review plans and to have their evidence judged. Candidates receive regular and meaningful feedback as to their progress and achievement and guidance as to the next steps towards achievement. There is evidence in centres of internal verifiers carrying out candidate interviews to establish their assessment experience.

Discussions with candidates revealed that they received an induction into the qualification. This was often early in the training phase of their 2 year development programme. Some centres provide additional induction sessions later in that particular phase. Candidates had initial meetings with assessors who also outlined the requirements of the qualification. Candidates were aware of the appeals process in place in their centre and how to make use of it if necessary

Assessment and Verification

External verifiers noted that a range of assessment methods are being used by centres:

“The centre uses a range of assessment methods and all centres now support a holistic approach to assessment.”

Use of observation as the main assessment method is now more widespread with examination of product evidence, use of witness testimony and professional discussion the other main methods. Previous issues around a lack of, and the quality of, assessment plans appear to have been addressed in most centres. One external verifier commented:

“Assessment decisions are robust and there is good assessment planning in place.”

Assessors are carrying out their role effectively and in some cases in difficult circumstances whilst having to deliver operational policing services at the same time.

There has been a continual improvement in the standard of internal verification. This is now a more robust process and external verifiers have noted:

“The internal verification procedures and activities are of a good standard and the centre is to be congratulated for achieving this standard.”

“Both formative and summative assessment practice was sampled and found to be of a high standard.”

Sampling plans are in place and covered the requisite areas and sampling is being carried both formatively and summatively with written feedback being provided to assessors. Internal verifiers are carrying out observations of assessors working with candidates and then providing feedback on their performance. Where appropriate they are addressing assessor development needs in an appropriate way.

Management Systems and Records

In 2009/10 a greater number of centres used electronic portfolios to store and retain evidence whilst a few others are now using on-line assessment software for the whole of the assessment process. This has generally received favourable comments from all involved in the process. The practice of photocopying product evidence is declining with assessors being encouraged to assess this in situ.

Centres are running standardisation meetings during the year for their assessment teams. It was clear that a variety of activities are undertaken in meetings including professional updating, information around the qualification and standardisation activities using live candidate evidence. Some Centres are ensuring the CPD of staff via internal training and external workshop attendance. There are a number of regional assessment forums where representatives of assessment and verifier teams meet to share noteworthy practice and standardise practice where possible. OCR and Skills for Justice representatives are often in attendance at these forums.

All centres have appropriate policies in place including assess to assessment and appeals procedures. There have been a few reported appeals against assessor decisions or practice that have been reported to the internal verifier teams and these have been quickly addressed to the satisfaction of all involved. External verifiers have not been required to become involved in these appeals.

Centres have effective recording systems in place to support the assessment process. There are established HR systems for recording candidate details and progress, achievement and certification.

Assessment Summary

Centres tend to provide a positive assessment experience for candidates. There are rare occasions when this is not the case and this is often due to difficulty with the number and deployment of assessors and the demands/conflicts of the dual role with the need to meet operational policing demands. Centres have developed creative approaches to negotiating these difficulties to ensure candidates are supported and achieve the qualification.

Centres are generally well organised and managed and meet the requirements of the OCR as identified during external verification. There have been fewer sanctions imposed this year with verifiers making a greater number of recommendations to improve performance. The majority of centres hold DCS status and the few that currently do not are working hard to develop their practice and are likely to see that recommended during the next assessment year.

1. Sector Developments

The Diploma in Policing has now been made nationally available by OCR and has been used by a number of Centres. The Diploma receives mixed comment in terms of the content with some Centres content with the current 10 units and others assessing against additional units to ensure their officers are competent in areas that are necessary for effective performance within that particular Police Force. The additional Police Development Awards currently being finalised by Skills for Justice will go some way towards meeting these additional needs.

The National Police Promotion Framework (PPF) continues to be piloted and candidates assessed against 6 Management or 6 Supervisory Units as part of this promotion process dependent upon the promotion level. A decision as to whether this will be rolled out nationally is still awaited. The two full QCF competence based qualifications to support the PPF are now available nationally from OCR:

- 4689 OCR Level 4 Certificate in Police First Line Management
- 4690 OCR Level 5 Diploma in Police Management

It is evident that as police forces are looking to meet current financial constraints that the recruitment of new police officers is being put on hold and OCR candidate registrations are slowing. Assessment and verification teams are being redeployed to other work in some centres and should this continue for a period of time it is likely that assessment and verification expertise and competence in some centres will be diminished.