

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

Career Information and Advice

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

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

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

OCR Report to Centres 2016

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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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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1. Overview:

During 2015-16 forty seven centres across England and Wales were active, offering mainly the Level 4 and Level 6 Diplomas. As this report is completed, forty centres will be active during this forthcoming year with possible new centres to be approved in the near future. The centres have been supported by eight EQA's, with one of the team to complete the EQA Award in the next three months.

The work completed within the centres is generally of a good, consistent standard. There have been a couple of issues regarding interpretation of the standards which will be outlined within the General Comments section. The centres continue to meet learner demand by offering either distance learning or structured training programmes. The training covers mainly career theory, reflective practice and LMI. This is supported by access to a range of resources and qualified staff maintaining high levels of CPD.

The career guidance sector continues to be in a state of transition with government guidance expected in the coming months. This will be outlined later in the report. The Level 3 Award has 31st December as the final certification date with OCR. The numbers are few with most learners completing last year. The Level 4 and 6 Diplomas continue to have a good demand with increased interest in the Career Leadership Units 21-23.

2. General Comments

During the last year there have been no specific issues raised with the application and interpretation for either the Level 3 Award or Level 4 Diploma. Two issues have arisen within the Level 6 Diploma that have needed clarification and action from OCR.

The first regards the requirements for IQA and assessment of Unit 3 as outlined on page 11 of the Centre Handbook. It was agreed that the guidance for qualifications required be extended to include those achieving either the full Diploma or Unit 3. As a result the statement on page 11 was updated in January 2016. In addition, centres have been reminded to check that new staff meet these requirements and produce full CV's and original certificates for the EQAs to examine during visits.

The second issue concerned the need for observation as specified within the assessment requirements of a number of units. In some cases centres were applying this rule liberally and using witness testimony or personal statements instead. The guidance produced by the previous Qualification Manager and Chief Verifier stated that witness testimony could be used sparingly

with the agreement of the EQA. This has been addressed within the centres concerned and guidance given to EQAs to remind centres of the observation requirement.

The IQA process has largely been maintained at a good standard with clear support of assessors and relevant feedback provided. The sampling rates vary across centres but appear appropriate and in-line with RAG guidelines. Within centres there is a good range of standardisation activity and access to a range of CPD opportunities. A lot of this is linked to the CDI (Career Development Institute) and is disseminated across teams.

The assessment practice generally continues to have good depth, thorough feedback and intensive support of learners to help with research processes and application of the verbs. Some centres have reviewed learner resources and/or updated assignment briefs and workbooks. Centres are increasingly using e-portfolio systems which have received a positive feedback from learners and the assessment teams appear to be receiving sufficient levels of training and support in their use.

Some centres have sought guidance on the following topics:

- 1) The need for line managers to authenticate personal statements completed by learners.
- 2) The use of audio recordings for observation where necessary, the recording of the feedback and storage for IQA/EQA sampling.
- 3) The development of a separate Certificate by OCR to cover the Career Leadership Units 21-23 (the decision on this is still being considered by OCR).
- 4) The appropriate level of signposting and recording processes for completed verbal testimonies or examined products.
- 5) The need for verbal testimonies to be accompanied by an email from the witness for authenticity purposes.
- 6) The issues with using observation for Units 21-23 due to access issues and the use of a holistic testimony instead to support the extensive range of products that can be sourced.

These queries were responded to by the Chief Verifier and appointed EQAs within the centres.

During 2015-16 less than 5% of centres received sanctions and action points for both levels of qualification. Those applied ranged from a Level 1 to a Level 3B.

Where sanctions were applied they related to the following issues:

- 1) The observation requirement not being met within a number of portfolios for Units 7 and 12 of the Level 6 Diploma.
- 2) Incorrect assessment decisions and insufficient feedback to justify completion of units.
- 3) Insufficient assessment planning and reviews with learners which was disadvantaging learner completion.
- 4) Insufficient IQA at both interim and summative stages.
- 5) IQA feedback had not picked up on or offered guidance to assessors on poor practice or where assessment requirements had not been met.

3. Comments on Individual Units

Comments specific to individual units and LOS / ACS within those units

The main issue during 2015-16 related to observation not being undertaken for Units 7 and 12 of the Level 6 Diploma. This has been resolved as outlined in the above section. The other issue that arose is to ensure that product evidence for the reflective practice units in both diplomas is current and relevant to the role of a careers practitioner. This applies to appraisal, PDR, supervision and CPD records.

On the whole centres have adapted effectively to the requirements of units across the three schemes and have had six years of working with the qualifications. It is encouraging to see the

numbers of centres that are annually reviewing processes and designing new materials and assignments to assist with learner research and holistic assessment practice.

4. Sector Update

Updates on any vocationally relevant, subject specific developments

As stated briefly within the Overview section there have been some developments within the sector and at a parliamentary level. This may provide some clear decisions that could have a positive impact on the development of the Level 6 Diploma. At the start of the year the government made mention of a new 'Careers Strategy' with a vision through to 2020. It was hoped that the detail for this would be available by the early summer, however with the present political climate this has been put back to later in the year. In June, the 'Sub Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy' presented its findings on a number of issues and topics related to the future provision, quality assurance and practitioner requirements within the sector. One of the recommendations made which could be covered within the future 'Careers Strategy' is to ensure that careers advisers working within schools, Colleges and training providers have a minimum of a Level 6 qualification. This could potentially increase learner numbers at this level and raise the profile of both the Level 4 and 6 Diplomas.

Both the Level 4 and 6 Diplomas have had the final registration dates extended until the end of December 2017. This is in-line with the ending of the QCF and we await developments with the RQF (Regulated Qualification Framework).

In conclusion, the sector does face challenges and differing perspectives on the way forward to support a wide client base. However both the Level 4 and 6 Diplomas are highly regarded and have helped support the development of a professionally qualified workforce which can adapt to changing needs. OCR remains the market leader with these qualifications and although centres have closed, this has not impacted on the ability of other centres to cater for the consistent interest and recruitment onto both schemes.

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