Vocational Qualifications

Level 4 Diploma Career Information and Advice – 04663

Level 6 Diploma Career Guidance and Development – 04664

EQAs' report 2023/2024

About this EQAs' report

This report on the 2023/24 assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful

- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection

- points of advice for future assessments.

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.

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Overview

The qualification suite comprises of two levels, the Level 4 Diploma in Career Information and Advice (04663) and the Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development (04664). These are the revised qualifications that have superseded Level 4 (04512) and Level 6 (10215). Centres are reminded that the final certification date for the legacy qualifications is 31 December 2024.

The Level 4 Diploma in Career Information and Advice provides regulated professional development opportunities for those currently working within the career development sector in para-professional roles. The aim is to improve the knowledge, skills and understanding that is required for employment within a career development role and help improve performance. In addition, it provides a progression route to the Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development qualification.

The Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development aids higher understanding of career development whilst developing skills and competences within the career development and guidance role. It is also used as a mechanism for continued professional development.

There have been instances where centre assessors have identified that candidates have been registered for the revised qualifications due to late registrations by the centre. This has caused issues where candidates have been providing evidence against the requirements for the legacy qualifications. This has resulted in candidates having to provide additional evidence to meet the revised standards, thereby extending their time on programme for completion. Assessors and IQAs are reminded to carefully check the qualification that their candidates have been registered for by the centre. Failure to do this, can result in candidates being disadvantaged.

Many centres use peripatetic assessors. Whilst this is acceptable, centres are responsible for ensuring that assessors have the correct qualification to not only assess work-based performance but also the knowledge and understanding requirements of the units within the qualification. Assessor who hold the ACWE qualification can only be approved for assessing performance evidence within the working environment. To assess full units including the knowledge and understanding, assessors should also hold a qualification that confirms that they are qualified to assess vocational skills, knowledge and understanding. Failure to comply with this mandatory requirement, will result in centres being levied a sanction by the EQA and candidate certification not being approved.

IQAs must be occupationally knowledgeable with respect to the units they are internally quality assuring as well as holding the relevant IQA qualification.

General comments

Many centres deliver the apprenticeships and map evidence from the apprenticeship assignments to the vocational diplomas. Whilst this is acceptable, centres are reminded that assignments to not provide sufficient evidence of performance. Where a learning outcome stipulates that a candidate must 'be able to….', then it is important that there is evidence of performance e.g. through the use of work products, observations, and witness testimonies.

There has been an improvement in assessment of candidate evidence to meet the demands of the higher level command verbs such as critically analyse and critically evaluate. Whilst a word count is not stipulated within the standards, it is a requirement that any form of evaluation or

analysis would contain sufficient depth and breadth of the topic area which may have included a requirement for extensive research. Half a page is unlikely to provide sufficient depth and breadth to address the demands of the command verbs.

Centres continue to effectively use video conferencing with their candidates as well as visiting them in the working environment. Video conferencing has been used to record professional discussions and Q&A sessions as well as discussing evidence and conducting feedback.

Centres are reminded that it is perfectly acceptable to obtain audio witness testimonies, where the assessor can conduct an interview with the relevant witness and ask questions about the candidate's performance in certain situations within their working environment.

Comments on individual units

Level 4 (04663: OCR Level 4 Diploma in Career Information and Advice)

Unit 4: Meeting the career-related information needs of clients

This is a mandatory unit within Group A of the level 4 qualification and comprises of three learning outcomes as follows:

LO1: Understand sources of career-related information including web-based information
LO2: Be able to support client's access and use of career-related information
LO3: Be able to sign-post clients to external sources of career-related information in accordance with organisational procedures.

For LO1, candidates are required to evaluate the sources, forms, and types of career-related information. In addition, the must evaluate the actual career-related information and ways it can be kept safe, reliable and up to date.

EQAs are usually presented with individual sections using the headings for the section titles within their reports. Whilst this is acceptable, the candidate evidence would flow better if they conducted a more focused evaluation incorporating not only the sources, forms, and types, but the actual information itself as well as ensuring its reliability and that it is up to date. Some candidates also tended to refer only to web-based sources and not consider other sources such as access to sector experts, visits to employers within the client's chosen career path etc.

For LO2, candidates are required to agree the career-related information needs with their clients, identify the sources that would be appropriate, support clients in accessing, using, and interpreting the information as well as recording what has been provided. This is clearly a performance learning outcome and the expectations would be that candidates would provide evidence of competent performance including a mandatory observation. Some candidate portfolios combined LO2 and LO3 where candidates were required to provide evidence of explaining to clients career-related information provided by other services as well as signposting them to other sources. This has been very effectively conducted and the candidate evidence has flowed much better and confirmed a good level of knowledge, skills and understanding.

More effective evidence can be secured by encouraging candidates to consider different clients with differing needs and then evaluating the sources of career-related information that they would benefit from accessing (LO1). They can then follow through with these candidates by

using the career-related information they sourced and evaluation to support them and provide good evidence for LO2 and LO3.

Unit 19: Operate within networks to support the delivery of the service

This is an optional unit within Group B of the level 4 qualification and consists of two learning outcomes as follows:

LO1: Understand the physical and virtual networks supporting the delivery of the careers-related organisation.

LO2: Be able to network with organisations.

For LO1, candidates are required to evaluate the networks used within their own organisation, the benefits of working in networks for all stakeholders, sustaining and developing relationships and how organisations work together in a network. This is usually completed well with candidates considering the different types of networking partners available. However, it is important that candidates also consider the physical and the virtual networks and not just focus on one aspect or the other.

In addition, candidates are required to explain sources of conflict of interest and disagreements between organisations and how to resolve them. This tends to be the weaker evidence for this learning outcome because candidates do not consider the wider picture and what these conflicts of interests and disagreements can be. Candidates should also consider the following:

- competing organisations can try and "poach" clients from another organisation
- a conflict between the organisations with respect to the client's interests
- differing service models and approach
- resource competition due to limited resources and funding
- differences in ethical standards and practices
- data sharing and confidentiality.

This would provide candidates with a wider understanding of the potential of networking as well as the barriers they may have to be overcome, in order to provide good quality support to clients.

LO2 is a performance related outcome and candidates must provide evidence of performance based on their working environment. There should be clear evidence of the candidates establishing and maintaining contacts with people in other agencies whether this is for the benefit of their client, themselves or their organisations that will support the provision of career-related information. In addition, it should be clear that the candidate has ensured that organisational protocols have been followed and where necessary, stating what these are. There should also be evidence of the records that the candidates keep, whether these are personal or an organisational requirement of the information that has been exchanged with other agencies.

Level 6 (04664: OCR Level 4 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development)

Unit 4: Agree the purpose of client-centred interactions and maintain communication with clients.

This is a mandatory unit within Group A of the Level 6 qualification and comprises four leaning outcomes and must include an observation of performance. The aim of the unit is to develop candidates' critical understanding of the purpose of the career guidance and development interactions. This includes the range of techniques to be deployed and the approaches used when clarifying and agreeing expectations. It is important that candidates understand and prepare for interaction and know how to effectively maintain and adapt communication throughout the interaction.

Overall this unit has been done well by the majority of candidates. Where there have been weaknesses, it has been in relation to meeting the demands of the command verbs critical analyse and critically evaluate. When critically analysing it should go beyond a mere description or summary and delve into deeper analysis, questioning and interpretation. It is helpful to candidates if they are encouraged to break the process down into sections as follows:

- **Understanding the subject** – this requires thorough research and understanding of the techniques used in relation to career guidance and development interactions and associated background information.
- **Evaluation of evidence** – this is an assessment of the quality, relevance, and reliability of the evidence they have researched. This will include looking at sources of information, the methodology used and the validity of the findings.
- **Identifying strengths and weaknesses** – candidates should identify and articulate the strengths, limitations and weaknesses of the different techniques that can be deployed.
- **Comparison and contrast** – it is important that candidates compare the different techniques and highlight any differences and similarities and explain the significance of these.
- **Interpretation and insight** – it is important that they provide a nuanced interpretation of their findings and arguments. It should not be simplistic in content and include explanations of the implications, significance, and potential impacts of the carious techniques.
- **Form a judgment** – based on the analysis candidates should be able to present a reasoned judgement or conclusion which should be supported by evidence and arguments they have evaluated.
- **Balanced perspective** – a critical analysis should not be one-sided but should acknowledge the different perspectives and viewpoints.
- **Clear and structured augmentation** – the analysis should be communicated in a clear and logical manner. It should be coherent with each point building upon the previous points to support their overall argument and conclusion.

When providing evidence for the critical evaluation of the range of digital technologies used to communicate with clients it should go beyond a mere summary or description of the digital technologies and include an in-depth analysis that considers multiple perspectives and contexts. A critical evaluation should consider both the positive and the negative aspects and provide a comprehensive and balanced judgement based on evidence and reasoned argument.

There have been occasions where the EQAs have raised concerned that the critical analysis or critical evaluation are not more than descriptions or explanations as to what candidate already

use as opposed to other digital technologies that are available and could be used based on individual client requirements and needs.

LO3 and LO4 is performance evidence and must provide evidence of candidates agreeing the purpose of the career guidance and development interactions and establishing their clients' expectations. It is also important that there is evidence that the candidate has ensured that their clients understand that the outcomes from the interaction will result in actions having to be conducted by the client. Further evidence must show that the candidate has used a range of models and techniques with their clients, used communication methods appropriate for the context and how communication was adapted based on the availability of different digital technologies.

Observations on the whole from centres have been well done and provide detailed information relating to the context in which they were observing their candidates. If claiming numerous assessment criteria, it is important that the observations provide a detailed account of the performance evidence observed to support the assessment criteria being claimed.

Unit 13: Providing ongoing support to clients

This unit is an optional unit within group B of the level 6 qualification and consists of two learning outcomes as follows:

LO1: Understand the nature of ongoing support for clients to meet their career-related needs.

LO2: Be able to provide ongoing support for client to meet their career-related needs in accordance with the organisation's protocols.

This is a popular unit within the qualification and EQAs have reported seeing some very good evidence. Evidence has included recorded professional discussions, reports, case studies, witness testimonies and observations by assessors. Some of the stronger evidence seen, is where candidates have used the same examples of supporting certain clients that they have used for their other units. It has shown the entire process of career development and guidance conducted with a range of clients with very differing needs.

LO1 is theory based with candidates evaluating the nature of the ongoing support for their clients, the different ways it is provided and the policies and procedures to be followed for their particular organisation. LO2 is competence based and candidates are required to provide evidence where they have reviewed the ongoing support requirements for their clients, provided the agreed support and where appropriate working with other agencies for the benefit of the clients. There is also a requirement for records to be maintained and many candidates provide some form of evidence where sensitive information has been redacted.

Sector update

Effective careers guidance can have a positive impact on the employment outcomes of young people. It is agreed on an international level that carefully, and well target careers guidance can help young people achieve their potential and that is has particular benefits for those people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Research suggests that children and young people who have experience of future careers whilst in school are less likely to be unemployed. This confirms the importance of effective careers guidance to help children and young people understand the options that are available to them and make informed decisions enabling them to maximise their potential.

Many of the political parties have included plans within their manifestos for education and skills and the support to be provided to people through careers advice, development, and guidance. This has included:

- bringing Job Centre Plus and the National Careers Service together to provide a national job and careers service
- guaranteeing work experience and improving the careers advice for young people by providing additional funding
- the creation of a new Young Futures programme to include a network of hubs with careers advisors available to support the young people.

The arena in which careers professionals work is constantly changing and requires constant evaluation and analysis of the availability of opportunities for the clients they work with and the support that is required.

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