

Appendix 1

Assessment Strategy for Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Social Services and Healthcare SVQ 2, 3 and 4 and Social Services (Children and Young People) SVQ 2, 3 and 4

Introduction

This strategy sets out recommendations and specifications for the assessment and quality control of SVQs in Social Services and Healthcare as well as Social Services (Children and Young People).

The National Occupational Standards referred to in this document (HSC and CCLD) underpin the Scottish Vocational Qualifications 2, 3 and 4. This assessment strategy relates to the following SVQs:

Social Services and Healthcare

- SVQ 2 Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 6
- SVQ 3 Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 7
- SVQ 4 Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 9

Social Services (Children and Young People)

- SVQ 2 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF Level 6
- SVQ 3 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF Level 7
- SVQ 4 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF Level 9

The above standards, assessment strategy and award structures are owned by Skills for Care and Development (of which Scottish Social Services Council are partners) and Skills for Health.

The following sections outline the principles that underpin the assessment of the above standards and qualifications with regard to:

- 1. External quality control of assessment (EQCA)**
- 2. Assessment**
- 3. Use and characteristics of simulation**
- 4. Roles within the assessment and verification process**
- 5. Sources of evidence**
- 6. Recognition of Prior Learning.**

These principles are in addition to the generic criteria that awarding bodies must meet as specified within SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles (2011) and Criteria for Accredited Qualification. <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42384.html>

1. External quality control of assessment (EQCA)

External quality control of assessment will be carried out through the Scottish Awarding Bodies Forum. All awarding bodies involved in the provision of qualifications based on the National Occupational Standards for Health and Social Care and Children's Care, Learning and Development delivered in Scotland are required to be members of the Scottish Awarding Bodies Forum and attend meetings of the forum.

The forum will be managed and led by the Sector Skills Council (Skills for Care and Development) and will inform the continuous improvement of the standards, qualifications and other associated products.

Awarding bodies are responsible for the competence of external verifiers and must require them to monitor centres' performance in accordance with regulatory requirements by sampling all aspects of the qualifications' delivery. External verification will include both assuring the quality of the centre that is responsible for making the assessment and sampling candidates assessed work to ensure that they are of consistent quality.

The Sector Skills Council will work closely with awarding bodies to achieve external quality control of assessment. Awarding bodies are required to meet with the SSC on a regular basis to identify and address issues arising from implementation of national occupational standards and related qualifications as well as non-compliance. The SSC will directly raise issues of non-compliance with SQA accreditation and awarding bodies when required.

The sector skills council will work with awarding bodies to ensure compliance with the following.

- The level of sampling undertaken in external verification is sufficient and comprehensive to ensure consistency in providing high standards between different centres and across different awarding bodies.
- Areas of risk are identified and addressed to improve quality and consistency.
- External verification is planned and linked to intelligence about assessment centre functioning and abilities.
- Awarding bodies routinely scrutinise and evaluate compliance and alter the level of monitoring accordingly.
- Awarding bodies require external verifiers to take part in regular standardisation activities.

2. Assessment

The SSC requires that all assessments of candidate's performance must take place during the course of their day-to-day work. Observations should be of naturally occurring practice within the candidate's work role and include demonstration of application of knowledge and understanding. This principle will apply to all units and elements except where simulation has been deemed acceptable.

2.1 Equal opportunities

All candidates should have equal access to assessment regardless of geographical location, work setting and patterns of work.

- Candidates must be enabled and supported to undertake an award.
- The awards must be delivered in keeping with the codes of practice applicable to their role and the setting within which they work. For those within the social service sector this will include the SSSC Codes of Practice.
- The needs of under-represented groups should be addressed.
- All individuals involved in the process should clearly demonstrate their commitment to equality of opportunity.

2.2 Holistic assessment

Integration of knowledge and practice is a fundamental feature of work within the social services and health sectors. When planning for assessment it is essential that assessors and candidates identify opportunities to integrate a number of activities and knowledge. It is not generally necessary to provide separate pieces of evidence for each performance criteria. However, assessors and candidates need to be satisfied that all performance criteria and knowledge are covered.

2.3 Assessment of knowledge and understanding

In order to assist consistency and reduce repetition universal knowledge and understanding is included in each unit to underpin competence and support candidates to question and reflect on their practice. Each unit has additional knowledge and understanding relevant to the specified area of practice.

Assessment of knowledge and understanding should, wherever possible, be carried out during performance to ensure integration of theory and practice. Evidence of knowledge and understanding should be clearly identified within the audit trail.

Assessors need to ensure that the candidate is able to apply knowledge and understanding within the context of the units. Assessors may use holistic assessment to establish the knowledge and understanding required to support competent practice. Holistic assessment should be used as outlined in part 2.2 of this strategy. This will support establishing knowledge and understanding within and across units.

3 The use and characteristics of simulation

Simulation should only be undertaken in a minority of situations when the candidate is unable to complete the standards because of the lack of opportunity within their practice. Simulation may also be considered if there is a potential risk to the candidate or others. Evidence of competence in such situations is viewed as essential to ensure best practice and confidence in the candidate's ability to act appropriately.

Where simulation is used it **must** replicate usual activities in realistic workplace settings. Simulation can never be the sole source of evidence for a unit. Awarding bodies must ensure that their guidance to assessment centres includes a common approach to the use of simulation agreed with the SSC. The Awarding Bodies and SSC will develop guidance on where simulation may be used.

The use of simulation to support evidence should be agreed in advance by the assessor and candidate at the assessment planning stage. Those involved in the assessment process must be satisfied that the use of simulation does not compromise the rigor and integrity of assessment.

Evidence gathered using simulation must result from activities that have taken place in a realistic working environment. A realistic working environment should include the following features.

- It should reflect the workplace conditions and environment and include facilities, equipment and materials used in the workplace for the activities being assessed.
- It should reflect the relationships, constraints and pressures met in the workplace.
- Information available to the candidate on the nature of the activity must be consistent with the policies and practices typical of the workplace setting.

4. Roles within the assessment and verification process

The assessment centre will be responsible for maintaining up-to-date information on assessors, internal verifiers and expert witnesses.

The Sector Skills Council (SSC) has identified that, in keeping with the ethos and breadth of the standards within qualifications, there may be the following people involved in the assessment process – assessors, co-ordinating assessors, expert witnesses, internal verifiers, external verifiers, service users and carers.

Details of the relationship between the candidate and the above must be declared and noted by the assessor.

The Awarding Bodies and SSC will develop and agree guidance on the following matters.

4.1 Assessor

The assessor is the key to the assessment process. All assessors must:

- be occupationally competent and experienced. This means that each assessor **must** be capable of carrying out the functions covered by the units they are assessing to the standard described within them, according to current sector practice

and

- take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. This should be credible and maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing professional development appropriate to the area of assessed practice. It is expected that learning and development activity will contribute to professional development, inform practice and assist assessors to meet their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent and confident manner

and

- hold a registrable qualification acceptable to the SSSC for the area and level of practice being assessed. This applies to those who are registered or eligible for registration with either the SSSC **or** working predominantly in the social services sector. Guidance on this will be agreed between the Sector Skills Council and awarding bodies through the Scottish Awarding Body Forum

and

- have knowledge and experience of the regulation, legislation and/or codes of practice applicable to their role and the setting within which they work. For those within the social service sector this will include the SSSC Codes of Practice

and

- have knowledge and experience of national standards at the time assessment is taking place

and

- be able to assess holistically the values contained and embedded in National Occupational Standards

and

- take the lead role in the assessment of observed candidate performance in relation to the Mandatory units of the award.

Assessors must hold or be working towards, an assessor qualification deemed appropriate by the qualification regulator. Achievement of assessor qualification needs to be within appropriate timescales. Assessors, who are working towards an appropriate assessor award and have the necessary occupational competence and experience, as identified above, should be supported by an appropriately qualified assessor. Appropriately qualified assessors must review and countersign decisions and activities.

Appropriately qualified assessors must hold the following:

- occupational competence across some units

and

- a relevant occupational background

and

- an appropriate assessor qualification

4.2 Coordinating assessor

In order to allow flexibility of the assessment process candidates may have more than one assessor each assessing different units or elements of units. In such circumstances a named and agreed co-ordinating assessor must be identified. They will be responsible for co-ordinating the assessment of an individual candidate.

Co-ordinating assessors will be responsible for the integration, planning and directing of assessment for the whole qualification. Co-ordinating assessors must ensure best use is made of all evidence available to make judgements about the competence of candidates against standards. The co-ordinating assessor should make the final judgement of competence for each unit that has been assessed by more than one assessor.

The co-ordinating assessor must be a qualified assessor who is occupationally competent and experienced in the terms stated in 4.1 of this document.

Co-ordinating assessors will work closely with internal verifiers to ensure standardised practice and decision-making within the assessment process.

4.3 Expert witness

The nature of work to be assessed may include situations of a sensitive nature which require confidentiality. There may also be occasions when there are no occupationally competent assessors for occupationally specific units. In such circumstances an expert witnesses may be used as a source of performance evidence in the workplace.

Expert witnesses can be drawn from occupationally competent individuals who can attest to the candidate's performance in the workplace. This may include line managers or other experienced colleagues from inside an organisation or from other agencies.

Expert witnesses may prove particularly important for those candidates who work unsupervised as part of their work role, but who have contact with a range of different professionals in the course of their work activities.

Evidence from expert witnesses must meet the requirements of validity, reliability and authenticity. Expert witnesses must be inducted by the centre so they are familiar with the standards for those units for which they are to provide expert witness evidence. Expert witnesses need to demonstrate:

- a working knowledge of the relevant National Occupational Standards

and

- current or recent (within the previous 2 years) experience of working at or above the level for which they are attesting competence

and

- continuous professional development relevant to the sector for which they are assessing competence

and

- they have either a qualification in the assessment of workplace performance or a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff

and

- they understand the centre's recording requirements and the necessary skills required to provide evidence

A qualified assessor **must** assess the evidence provided by an expert witness including its contribution to overall evidence of competence.

4.4 Internal verifier

The internal verifier is central to the quality assurance and verification of assessment of performance evidence in the workplace.

Due to the critical nature of the work internal verifiers must:

- be occupationally competent in the area they are verifying. It is crucial that internal verifiers understand the nature and context of the assessors' work and that of their candidates.

and

- take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. This should be credible and maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing professional development appropriate to the area of assessed practice. It is expected that learning and development activity will contribute to professional development, inform practice and assist internal verifiers to meet their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent and confident manner.

and

- have working knowledge of the regulation, legislation and codes of practice applicable to their role and setting and at the time assessment is taking place. For those within the social service sector this will include the SSSC Codes of Practice.

and

- occupy a position that gives them authority and resources to co-ordinate the work of assessors, provide authoritative advice, call meetings as appropriate, visit and observe assessments and carry out all the other internal verification roles.

Internal verifiers must hold or be working towards, an IV qualification deemed appropriate by the qualification regulator. Achievement of IV qualification needs to be within appropriate timescales. Internal verifiers, who are working towards an appropriate IV award and have the necessary occupational competence and experience, as identified above, should be supported by an appropriately qualified internal verifier. Appropriately qualified internal verifiers must review and countersign decisions and activities.

4.5 External verifier

The external verifier is the key link for awarding bodies in the quality assurance and verification of assessing candidates' performance in the workplace.

External verifiers must:

- be occupationally knowledgeable and have gained their knowledge through working within the sector or appropriate professional/occupational area

and

- take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. This should be credible and maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing professional development appropriate to the area of practice which they are verifying. It is expected that learning and development activity will contribute to professional development, inform practice and assist external verifiers to meet their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent and confident manner

and

- have knowledge and experience of the regulation, legislation and/or codes of practice applicable to their role and the setting within which they work. For those within the social service sector this will include the SSSC Codes of Practice.

External verifiers must hold or be working towards, an EV qualification deemed appropriate by the qualification regulator. Achievement of EV qualification needs to be within appropriate timescales. External verifiers, who are working towards an appropriate EV award and have the necessary occupational competence and experience, as identified above, should be supported by an appropriately qualified External Verifier. Appropriately qualified External Verifiers must review and countersign decisions and activities.

4.6 Service users and carers

Service users and carers are in an advantageous position in relation to having direct experience of service provision. Their views of the service received should be seen as relevant and important in the assessment of the candidate's performance, alongside other sources of evidence. Service users and carers may provide witness testimony. Final decisions about the suitability and status of this testimony in the candidate's assessment will be made by the assessor.

5. Sources of evidence

Evidence of candidates' performance will be drawn primarily from work activities that take place under normal working conditions and within their usual work role and environment. Knowledge to support performance should be based on practice evidence and reflection.

Where candidates have particular needs the evidence required may vary. Any alternative evidence used must demonstrate the standards of competence and knowledge identified in the unit, or any part of the unit.

Evidence must be from the candidate's performance at work and will include the integration of the value requirements and the application of knowledge and understanding. This will be assessed through direct observation of practice.

It is expected that a range of different assessment methods will be used:

- direct observation of practice by a qualified assessor
- observation of occupationally specific units by an expert witness
- direct questioning and assignments
- assessment of products

5. 1 Alternative forms of recording evidence using ICT

It is recognised that alternative forms of recording assessment evidence will evolve using information and communications technologies including e portfolios. Regardless of the form of recording used, the guiding principle must be that information about practice must comply with legal requirements and best sector practice in relation to confidentiality. This information must also be traceable for internal and external verification purposes. Additionally, assessors must ensure they are satisfied the evidence presented is traceable, auditable and authenticated and meets the requirements set out in this strategy.

Awarding bodies must ensure that their guidance to assessment centres includes a common approach to the use of sources of evidence agreed between the SSC and awarding bodies.

6. Recognition of prior learning

Awarding bodies must ensure that guidance includes a consistent approach to recognition of prior learning that is agreed with the SSC and reflects the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework RPL Core Principles. The core principles state RPL should be:

- learner focused
- accessible
- flexible
- reliable, transparent and consistent
- quality assured.

The aim of the SCQF RPL Core Principles is to make sure that there is effective, quality-assured practice that will enable all users of the SCQF to have confidence in the outcomes of RPL.

Evidence from prior learning must be relevant to the standard concerned, and be authenticated, reliable and valid. Evidence more than five years old should not be considered unless in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances will require agreement of the external verifier. Where there have been significant changes within the sector within the previous five years, prior experience and learning should be used with caution and additional evidence sought.