

Guidance for the assessment of Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Healthcare Support (Clinical and Non-Clinical) at SCQF levels 6 and 7

This guidance is designed to assist Assessors, in approved centres, with the assessment of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Healthcare Support (Clinical and Non Clinical). It must be read in conjunction with the Assessment Strategy set out by the sector skill council.

The guidance is to be used to support the Assessment Strategy for the following qualifications:

SVQ Healthcare Support (Clinical) at SCQF level 6

SVQ Healthcare Support (Non-Clinical) at SCQF level 6

SVQ Healthcare Support (Clinical) at SCQF level 7

SVQ Healthcare Support (Non-Clinical) at SCQF level 7

Readiness for assessment

SVQs are based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) and assess the application of skills, knowledge and understanding in a specific occupation to the standards required in the workplace.

The majority of evidence for assessment of these vocational qualifications will be gathered as candidates carry out their usual duties in their workplace. This principle will apply to all competencies.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate competence in the required mandatory and selected optional units. They must also be able to perform to the required standard over a period of time.

The Employer's Role

It is the employers' role to present candidates for assessment and it is their further responsibility to ensure that the candidate has had appropriate induction into the organisation and to their own role within it.

The Assessor's Role

In line with the requirements of the L&D9DI Unit it is the responsibility of the Assessor to determine whether the candidate is ready to plan their assessment. The Assessor should work with candidates to identify any gaps in knowledge and skills before starting assessment. This is crucial in ensuring candidates are in the right role and can generate appropriate evidence. This approach will also ensure support to those candidates, who may need additional time, to reach the required level of competence.

*In brief Assessors **must** ensure candidates are ready for assessment.*

Access to assessment

All candidates should have equal access to assessment regardless of geographical location, work setting and patterns of work and must be enabled and supported to undertake these awards. The qualifications must be delivered in keeping with any applicable Codes of Conduct.

Assessment

Evidence of candidates' competent 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 evidenced through practice and reflection.

Planning and Holistic Assessment

Holistic Assessment

Integration of knowledge and practice is a fundamental feature of work within the health and care sector. When planning for assessment it is essential that Assessors and candidates identify opportunities to integrate a number of activities and knowledge for assessment. The success of integration of knowledge and practice is facilitated through the Assessor's ability to support the planning process with candidates and this holistic approach will be further facilitated through Assessor feedback and review of candidate performance.

It is not necessary to provide separate pieces of evidence for each Performance Criteria, however, Assessors and candidates need to be satisfied that all parts of performance criteria are covered.

Knowledge to support performance should be based on practice evidence and reflection and this should be clearly identified within the audit trail. Therefore it is essential that a range of assessment methods are used to provide the evidence.

Assessors must use their own judgement and expertise to deploy a range of assessment methods, in line with current Learning and Development Standards, to establish candidate competence.

Observation of candidate performance is the principle and most reliable method of assessment and observation is required for each Unit.

It is expected that observation will be carried out holistically, therefore any one observation may provide evidence across several Units.

Where an Assessor observation would be intrusive, compromising the dignity or privacy of the individual, or where there are no occupationally competent Assessors for occupationally specific Units, it is expected that an observation by an expert witness is provided in accordance with the Assessment Strategy for the award.

The sources of evidence must include:

Direct Observation — a record of the direct observation by a qualified **Assessor** of the candidate's performance in naturally occurring work situations **or** observation of occupationally specific units by an **Expert Witness and Professional Discussion** with the qualified Assessor.

NB: The Assessor must take the lead role in the assessment of observed practice in the mandatory Units.

Reflective Accounts — evidence must include the candidate's explanation of their practice and focus on the reflective questions; What? How? When? Why? and What now? They should also include how learning is applied. This may also take the form of a structured and planned **Professional Discussion** with the qualified Assessor.

There may also be:

Products of the candidate's own work and contributions they have made. For example contributions to care plans; scoring tools; recordings of physiological observations; reports for audit; checks on equipment; minutes of meetings; reports, etc.

Records of naturally occurring **questions** arising from direct observation and/or discussion.

There may also be written assignments and projects, relevant to the candidates work role, designed to cover knowledge not easily incorporated into accounts of practice.

This list is not definitive and Assessors and Verifiers may decide to use additional and alternative assessment methods, particularly to meet the requirements of candidates with additional support needs and to ensure fair access to assessment.

Other methods of assessment could include:

Assessing candidates in **simulated** environments where appropriate as identified in the assessment strategy (eg assessment of competence in Life Support). This can never be the sole source of evidence for a Unit.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Witness testimony

Clarification of additional assessment methods

Expert witness

The role of the expert witness is to submit evidence to the Assessor as to the competence of the candidate in occupationally specific units where there are no occupationally competent Assessors or where observation of assessed practice by the Assessor would compromise the dignity and privacy of the individual. Their evidence must directly relate to candidate's performance in the work place which they have observed. Expert witnesses may be useful for candidates who have contact with, and are supervised by, a number of different professionals during the normal course of their work. If expert witness testimony has been used where the assessor lacks professional competence, the professional discussion could be used to confirm the candidate's understanding of the holistic principles which support practice, policies, procedure and legislation. If expert witness testimony has been used to protect the individual's dignity and privacy, the professional discussion could clarify and confirm understanding around knowledge or practice specific to the unit.

The Expert Witness must:

- ◆ have a working knowledge of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for the competences on which their expertise is based.
- ◆ demonstrate current or recent (within the last two years) credible experience/occupational competence in the area being assessed at or above the level being assessed. This may include line managers or other experienced colleagues from inside an organisation or from other agencies involved with the workplace.
- ◆ evidence continual professional development relevant to the area of practice for which they are assessing competence.
- ◆ hold either a qualification in assessment or a role which involves evaluating the practice of others.
- ◆ be inducted by the centre to ensure that they are familiar with the Standards for those Units for which they are to provide expert witness testimony.
- ◆ understand the centre's recording requirements and have been given guidance on the skills required to provide evidence for the NOS.

It is not necessary for expert witnesses to hold an Assessor qualification as the qualified Assessor makes all assessment decisions about the acceptability of evidence regardless of source.

Professional Discussion

Professional Discussion is an important element in evidence gathering and should not simply be a question and answer session, but planned in advance with the candidate. The planned discussion could be used to clarify the candidate's practice as well as providing evidence integrated across a number of units. Professional Discussion could also provide evidence for knowledge evidence and performance criteria that are difficult to evidence through observation of the candidates work activities. It is a necessary form of evidence where observation for a unit has been provided by an Expert Witness.

Professional discussion for vocational awards should be in the form of a structured review of practice with the discussion captured on audio tape or as a written summary. The written or audio summary **must** be clearly cross referenced to the standards to enable the evidence to be internally verified and be authenticated by the Assessor. An audit trail of such evidence must be clearly identified.

Professional Discussion is particularly useful to provide evidence of a candidate's knowledge and understanding of the principles which support practice, policies, procedures and legislation.

Simulation

Simulations should not be used other than in exceptional circumstances. The Assessor should seek clarification from the Internal Verifier as to the relevance of the method and keep a record of the discussion for standardisation purposes.

If in doubt the Internal Verifier could seek clarification from the Awarding Body as to the suitability of the simulation method of assessment.

Where simulation is used it **must** replicate usual activities in real work situations.

The use of simulation to support evidence should be agreed in advance by the Assessor and candidate at the assessment planning stage.

Witness Testimony

The nature of work to be assessed may include situations of a sensitive nature which require confidentiality. In such circumstances a witness may be used to authenticate the candidate's reflective accounts; the witness must confirm in their statement that what the candidate has written is accurate, rather than fulfilling the role of the Assessor and writing a direct observation. It is the Assessor's role to determine the suitability of the witness.

Individuals as witnesses

Individuals and carers are in an advantageous position in relation to having direct experience of care 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. This type of evidence will be particularly relevant to lone workers such as community support workers. 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.

Recording evidence

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 all evidence relating to practice must be, robust and comply with legal requirements and best practice in the sector. This is particularly crucial in relation to confidentiality of information and data protection.

Information must 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 the Assessment Strategy.

Photographic evidence

No photographic evidence which identifies individuals should be included in portfolios.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that they hold up to date information on all Assessors, Internal Verifiers and expert witnesses involved in the delivery of the awards.

Assessors

The centre must ensure that all Assessors:

- ◆ are occupationally competent, experienced and able to carry out the roles described in the units they are assessing to current sector standards. Occupational competence must be certificated and experience must be credible.
- ◆ take responsibility for maintaining and improving knowledge and skills by clearly demonstrable continuing professional development appropriate to the area of practice assessed.
- ◆ have knowledge and experience of the regulation, legislation and Codes of Conduct and practice relevant to their role and the area of work.
- ◆ hold or be working towards, an Assessor qualification deemed appropriate by the qualification regulator and achieved within agreed timescales. Where Assessors do not yet hold a qualification their decisions and activities must be reviewed and countersigned by an appropriately qualified Assessor.

If a co-ordinating or lead Assessor is identified they must be occupationally competent and experienced as described above and must **hold** an Assessor qualification.

Internal Verifiers

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that Internal Verifiers:

- ◆ are occupationally knowledgeable in the area they are verifying and have gained that knowledge from working within the health sector or an appropriate professional/occupational area. It is crucial that Internal Verifiers understand the nature and context of the Assessors' work and that of their candidates.
- ◆ have working knowledge and experience of the regulation, legislation and Codes of Conduct and practice relevant to their role and the area of work being assessed.
- ◆ are in a position that allows them the 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 in accordance with the Learning and Development Standards.
- ◆ hold, or be working towards a qualification deemed appropriate by the qualification regulator and achieved within agreed timescales. Where Verifiers do not yet hold a qualification their decisions and activities must be reviewed and countersigned by an appropriately qualified Internal Verifier.

National Occupational Standards

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all candidates, Assessors and Verifiers are using the current standards.

Candidate Portfolios

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the candidate's portfolio is completed and includes the names of the Assessor and Verifier, the achievement record and a candidate's signed, plagiarism declaration that the work contained is the candidates own.

Location of evidence

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the External Verifier has access to the candidates' evidence in a format that is clearly tracked to the Standards.

Malpractice Policy

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that SQA's procedures for dealing with suspected cases of malpractice are adhered to. These procedures are necessary for maintaining the integrity of SQA's qualifications.

SQA is committed to safeguarding its reputation for the quality and credibility of its qualifications, all allegations of malpractice should be investigated consistently, fairly and impartially.

The term 'malpractice' covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the assessment process or the integrity of an SQA qualification, the validity of an SQA certificate, or the reputation and credibility of SQA.