



**Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2012
Children's Care, Learning and
Development**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in Scottish Vocational Qualifications in this subject.

SVQ awards

General comments

External verification reports indicate that all centres visited in 2011–12 had a clear understanding of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Children's Care, Learning and Development. All but a few centres are established and have been working with the standards for some time. Many centres contributed to the consultation on the revision of the NOS as they were aware that any changes to the NOS would inform the new vocational qualifications in this area.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

With only a few exceptions, all assessors were familiar with the Units for the levels of the award that they deliver. Instruments of assessments were appropriate and assisted in the production of evidence at the correct SCQF level.

At present, the exemplification material is due to be updated. The recent NOS review provides an excellent opportunity to revise and update all material in line with the new frameworks for the SVQs.

Evidence Requirements

With the exception of a small number of Units, there is an understanding of the Evidence Requirements for the Units in the award.

There have been concerns expressed by External Verifiers (EVs) that some specialist Units are being offered by centres and EVs are not seeing robust evidence for these units. For example, the Level 3 Unit *Creating Environments that Promote Positive Behaviour* states that the Unit is about 'Children who challenge' but candidates in the vast majority of centres cannot generate evidence that meets the criteria.

Another area of concern is the evidence produced by candidates for the Units that deal with reflective practice (at all three levels). The evidence for these Units is perceived as weak in some centres as it appears that only records of appraisal and review are being used as evidence. These Units are based on the kind of reflective practice and self-evaluation which practitioners need to demonstrate to meet the professional development requirements of the Scottish Government.

External Verifiers feel that in many instances there is insufficient theory included in candidates' evidence. This is preventing candidates from making the crucial link between theory and practice. Where there is a sufficiency of theory, it is not always referenced well and EVs are encouraging centres to reference theoretical content from the start of the SVQs, at all levels.

Administration of assessments

In the majority of centres, internal verification is robust and Internal Verifiers are highlighting areas of strengths and areas for improvement. Where project work is used, it is devised to reflect the candidates' job roles and the appropriate SCQF levels, and is used only to provide evidence not readily integrated into accounts of candidate practice. This approach is ensuring that there is a holistic approach to assessment.

General feedback

The feedback to candidates from assessors and from Internal Verifiers to assessors is, generally, very positive and helpful and the vast majority of candidates interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the assessment process.

The issue of assessor qualifications has come to light this year. It has always been custom and practice for the External Verifiers to recommend that assessors are qualified to the level above or, at the very least, the same level as the award being delivered. However, the Assessment Strategy states: *all assessors must have the necessary competence in the subject matter of the National Occupational Standards...they must be occupationally experienced and competent, ie be capable of carrying out the functions covered by the Units they are assessing to the standard described within them according to good practice.* The recent NOS review has provided the opportunity to revise the current Assessment Strategy for the SVQs. There may now be scope to identify a range of formal qualifications that would assist with the selection of assessors.

Where e-portfolios are used, the systems are working well and candidates, particularly in rural areas, are finding it beneficial. There has been an increase in the use of professional discussion and centres have been reminded by EVs that professional discussion should be planned and structured as part of the assessment process and not be *ad hoc*. In addition, centres have been advised that answers must be written or recorded and this evidence tracked as usual.

Areas of good practice

Some centres are planning for candidate progress through the SCQF levels, to the degree equivalent Childhood Practice level 9 award, by encouraging research and research skills with bibliographies and referencing at all levels.

Following a very successful customer support day, many centres visited since have been promoting research and theory and practice links. They are also updating their own knowledge of current policy guidance and legislation to ensure that candidates are current in their knowledge.

It is recognised that continuing professional development (CPD) is an area of very good practice in the majority of centres, with appropriate CPD being recorded for all assessors and verifiers. However, some of the smaller centres are having difficulty in accessing appropriate CPD. In these instances, EVs are

encouraging professional reading and the use of various government and other websites.

The use of professional discussion, to aid reflective practice, is working very well in some centres and where this is planned for as part of the long-term assessment plan it is allowing candidates to generate very good evidence of their own reflection on practice.

Specific areas for improvement

Extreme difficulties with gaining funding, particularly for SVQ Level 2 candidates, has meant that some centres are putting very young and totally inexperienced candidates on to Level 3 of the award. The External Verifiers sympathise with this funding problem but centres must ensure that these candidates are supported to learn and develop and produce sufficient evidence at the correct SCQF levels.

A few centres are offering their young and inexperienced candidates two or three Units from SVQ Level 2 to let them gain some underpinning knowledge, which is very good practice. It is appreciated, however, that financial constraints do not allow all centres to take this approach.

Centres must ensure that candidates reflect on their own practice and relate this reflection to current theory, guidance, legislation and policy. This will ensure that they meet the requirements of Education Scotland and of the Care Inspectorate for delivery of a quality service to children and families.

Assessors and verifiers must also take responsibility for ensuring that they keep up to date with the many changes to guidance, policy, legislation and current theory to ensure that candidates are supported to include this knowledge in their portfolios and in their practice.