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**Assessment Strategy**

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| **Sector** | Justice and Legal |
| **Qualification Title(s)** | SVQs in the Justice, Community Safety and Legal Sectors |
| **Developed by** | Skills for Justice |
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Skills for Justice

**Assessment Strategy for Scottish Vocational Qualifications in the Justice, Community Safety and Legal Sectors**

**July 2023**

# Contents

1. [Background ............................................................................................................ 3](#_TOC_250011)
2. [Introduction 3](#_TOC_250010)
3. [External Quality Assurance A rigorous and robust system of Internal and External Verification 4](#_TOC_250009)
4. [Workplace Assessment 4](#_TOC_250008)
5. [Simulation 4](#_TOC_250007)
6. [Alternative forms of recording evidence using ICT 5](#_TOC_250006)
7. [Requirements of Assessors, Subject Matter Expert and Verifiers 5](#_TOC_250005)
   1. [Assessors 5](#_TOC_250004)
   2. [Subject Matter Expert / Expert Witness Testimony 6](#_TOC_250003)
   3. [Internal Quality Assurance 7](#_TOC_250002)
   4. [External Quality Assurance 7](#_TOC_250001)

[Appendix 1 SVQ’s covered by Assessment Strategy 8](#_TOC_250000)

Appendix 2 Qualification Specific information SVQ Emergency Fire Services:

Operations in the Community 9

Appendix 3 Qualification Specific information SVQ Custodial Care and

Practice 11

# Background

Skills for Justice is the sector skills council for employers, employees and volunteers in the Criminal Justice, Community Safety and Legal sectors throughout the United Kingdom. This includes:

* Custodial Care including the public and private sector establishments
* Community Justice
* Courts and Tribunals Services
* Forensic Science
* Fire and Rescue Sector
* Legal Services
* Prosecution Services
* Police Forces
* Law Enforcement Agencies including SOCA, HMRC, UK Border Agency
* Youth Justice

**This assessment strategy applies to Scottish Vocational Qualifications listed in Appendix 1.**

# Introduction

This document sets out the specifications of Skills for Justice for the assessment and quality assurance for Scottish Vocational Qualifications that sit within the Skills for Justice footprint. The following sections outline Skills for Justice’s specific principles in regard to:

* external quality assurance
* workplace assessment
* the use and characteristics of simulation
* the required occupational expertise of assessors and verifiers
* liaison between the SSC and the Awarding Bodies

These principles are in addition to the generic criteria that Awarding Bodies must meet for the delivery of Scottish Vocational Qualifications as required by the Qualification Regulator, SQA Accreditation.

This Assessment Strategy does not describe these systems in detail. It only provides the overarching principles.

These systems may vary from one Awarding Body to another and Skills for Justice accepts this, providing the overarching principles of this document are consistently put into practice. Skills for Justice sees itself as working in partnership with Awarding Bodies in order to deliver quality assessment and will be happy to provide them with appropriate support in implementing its requirements.

This Assessment Strategy is applicable to Scottish Vocational Qualifications within the Justice, Community Safety and Legal sectors.

# External Quality Assurance A rigorous and robust system of Internal and External Verification

The monitoring and standardisation of assessment decisions will be achieved by a robust and strong external quality assurance process. The mechanisms required to achieve this are outlined by the Qualification Regulator, SQA Accreditation.

The monitoring and standardisation of assessment decisions must be achieved through robust assessment, internal and external quality assurance systems. These must be reliable, transparent and fit for purpose and, must comply with the requirements of the Qualification Regulator, SQA Accreditation.

# Workplace Assessment

Skills for Justice believes that direct observation by a competent assessor (as outlined in Section 7.1) or testimony from a Subject Matter Expert\* (as outlined in Section 7.2) is always to be preferred.

Subject Matter Expert testimony has parity with assessor observation unless otherwise stated in unit evidence requirements. The Subject Matter Expert testimony may be used as an alternative assessment method to Assessor observation but should not entirely replace this.

### The Assessor is responsible for making the final judgement in terms of the candidate meeting the evidence requirements for the unit.

Skills for Justice recognises that there are alternative evidence sources which may be used where direct observation is not possible or practical e.g. work products, records, reflective accounts, question and answers, personal statement, professional discussion etc.

In order to ensure that the evidence used to assess candidates is valid, all centres must demonstrate that the candidates have access to the types of resources commonly in use in the sector and that the pressures and constraints of the workplace are reflected.

It is accepted that the assessment of some knowledge and understanding may take place in a different environment, for example in a training and development centre or another environment, which is not the immediate workplace. However, the assessment of this knowledge and understanding should be linked directly to workplace performance and should include performance evidence.

# Simulation

Simulation should only be undertaken in a minority of situations when the candidate is unable to complete the unit because of the lack of opportunity within their normal day to day 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.

\*Subject Matter Expert is also commonly referred to as an Expert Witness

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 rigour 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

# 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 valid, reliable, authentic, current and sufficient 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.

# Requirements of Assessors, Subject Matter Expert and Verifiers

Skills for Justice believes that the occupational expertise of assessors, subject matter experts and those responsible for internal/external quality assurance is one of the key factors underpinning valid, fair and reliable assessment. The integrity and professionalism of assessors, subject matter experts and those responsible for quality assurance are of paramount importance. Centres must ensure that staff whose role is assessment or quality assurance are given sufficient time to carry out their role effectively.

## Assessors

All assessors must:

* + 1. be occupationally competent having gained their competence working within the sector
    2. provide current records of their skills and supporting knowledge and understanding in the context of a role directly related to the qualification units they are assessing
    3. be familiar with the qualification units; and must be able to interpret and make judgements on current working practices
    4. maintain their occupational competence by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities to keep up to date with developments within the sector.
    5. hold or be working towards an appropriate assessor qualification as recognised by the Qualification Regulator, SQA Accreditation. Or alternatively, where the individual may have completed a qualification and/or training course/programme which has been confirmed by the awarding body as providing the equivalent level of rigour and robustness of the regulatory body approved qualifications for assessment.
    6. where an assessor is working towards the relevant Assessor qualification, all assessment decisions must be countersigned by another qualified assessor. The assessor holding the qualification for assessing must meet the criteria laid out in points 1 and 2 above.

Where a new qualification is being introduced and there are not sufficient occupationally competent assessors to meet the counter signatory requirements as above, centres may use assessors who are not occupationally competent for up to 18 months from introduction of the qualification.

Any such arrangements should be agreed with the Awarding Body and be monitored through the external quality assurance process.

## Subject Matter Expert / Expert Witness Testimony

The use of Subject Matter Expert / Expert Witness testimony is encouraged as a contribution to the provision of performance evidence presented for assessment. The role of the Subject Matter Expert / Expert Witness is to submit evidence to the assessor as to the competence of the candidate in any given unit. This evidence must directly relate to candidate’s performance in the workplace which has been seen by the Subject Matter Expert / Expert Witness.

All Subject Matter Experts / Expert Witnesses must:

* + 1. be occupationally competent in the area being assessed.
    2. provide current records of their skills and the current supporting knowledge and understanding in the context of a recent role directly related to the qualification units that they are witnessing.
    3. be inducted by the centre so that they are familiar with the standards for those units for which they are to provide evidence. They must also understand the centre’s recording evidence requirements and will need guidance on the skills required to provide expert testimony evidence. for the units
    4. be familiar with the qualification units; and must be able to interpret and make judgements on current working practices.
    5. maintain their occupational competence by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities to keep up to date with developments within the sector and for the units they are providing testimony for.

## Internal Quality Assurance

Those responsible for the internal quality assurance must:

* + 1. be occupationally knowledgeable across the range of units for which they are responsible for quality assuring.
    2. provide current records of their skills and the current supporting knowledge and understanding in the context of a recent role directly related to the qualification units that they are verifying.
    3. be familiar with the qualification units; and assessment requirements and must have sufficient knowledge of these units to be able to offer credible advice on the interpretation of the standards.
    4. maintain their occupational knowledge by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities to keep up to date with developments relating to the sector.
    5. hold or be working towards an appropriate verifier qualification as specified by the Qualification Regulator, SQA Accreditation. Or alternatively, where the individual may have completed a qualification and/or training course/programme which has been confirmed by the awarding body as providing the equivalent level of rigour and robustness of the regulatory body approved qualifications for verifiers.
    6. Internal verifiers, who are working towards an appropriate internal verifier qualification and have the necessary occupational knowledge 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.

## External Quality Assurance

Those responsible for conducting external quality assurance must:

* + 1. be occupationally knowledgeable and have gained their knowledge working within the sector or associated professional/occupational area.
    2. have a thorough understanding of the qualifications they will be quality assuring
    3. have a thorough and detailed knowledge of the Awarding Bodies’ guidance, systems and documentation describing assessment and quality assurance practice
    4. maintain their occupational knowledge by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities to keep up to date with developments relating to the sector.
    5. hold or be working towards an appropriate External Verifier qualification as specified by the Qualification Regulator, SQA Accreditation. External verifiers who are not yet qualified but have the necessary occupational knowledge and experience, can be supported by a qualified external verifier who does not necessarily have the occupational expertise or experience.

## Appendix 1 SVQs covered by Assessment Strategy

Please note that this assessment strategy is applicable to all of the following qualifications:

* + - * SVQ Emergency Fire Services: Control Operations SCQF Level 7
      * SVQ Emergency Fire Service: Operations in the Community SCQF Level 7
      * SVQ Court and Prosecution Administration SCQF Level 5
      * SVQ Court Operations SCQF Level 5
      * SVQ Court Operations SCQF Level 6
      * SVQ Managing Individuals in a Custodial Environment SCQF Level 7
      * SVQ Paralegal Practice SCQF Level 7
      * SVQ Custodial Care and Practice SCQF Level 7
      * SVQ Emergency Services Contact and Control Operations SCQF Level 7

## Appendix 2

**Qualification Specific Assessment Strategy Appendix – SVQ Emergency Fire Services: Operations in the Community at SCQF Level 7**

Appendix 2 this is the specific assessment strategy for the SVQ Emergency Fire Services: Operations in the Community at SCQF level 7 and sets out the assessment requirements that are specific to this qualification. This assessment strategy appendix must be used alongside the overarching Skills for Justice Assessment Strategy for Scottish Vocational Qualifications in the Justice, Community Safety and Legal Sectors.

### Assessment Environment

Given the nature of the role where work activities present high risk/danger to the candidate and others, but where evidence of competence is essential to ensure best practice and confidence in the candidate’s ability to act appropriately, the majority of these activities will take place and be assessed in a realistic working environment (RWE).

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

In a small minority of situations/circumstances, simulation is also deemed acceptable – see details below. Where simulations are used, they must be planned, developed and documented by the centre in a way that ensures the simulation correctly reflects what the specific unit seeks to assess.

### Assessment Guidance and Evidence Requirements

Assessment should be conducted on several occasions, over time, to ensure demonstration of consistency of competence against the specified standards.

### SFJFRSFF3 Search for, rescue and support endangered life

The use of breathing apparatus equipment must be assessed on at least two occasions for the unit.

When demonstrating provide treatment to casualties, the use of simulation is acceptable and should be assessed on three separate occasions for the unit.

### SFJFRSFF4 – Resolve fire and rescue operational incidents

The use of breathing apparatus equipment must be assessed on at least two occasions for the unit.

### SFJFRSFF5 – Protect life and the environment of the effect of hazardous materials

Simulation is acceptable for this unit in the absence of opportunities for demonstration of competence through actual work performance.

The use of breathing apparatus equipment in a **Hazmat** environment must be assessed on at least two occasions for this unit.

The use of **Hazmat** equipment must be demonstrated on at least three occasions for this unit.

Demonstrate **Decontamination** in line with organisational procedures on two occasions for this unit.

## Appendix 3

**Qualification Specific Assessment Strategy Appendix – SVQ Custodial Care and Practice at SCQF Level 7**

This is the specific assessment strategy for the SVQ Custodial Care and Practice at SCQF level 7 and sets out the assessment requirements that are specific to this qualification. This assessment strategy appendix must be used alongside the overarching Skills for Justice Assessment Strategy for Scottish Vocational Qualifications in the Justice, Community Safety and Legal Sectors.

Simulation should only be undertaken in a minority of situations when the candidate is unable to complete the unit because of the lack of opportunity within their normal day to day practice. Simulation may also be considered if there is a potential risk to the candidate or others, but where 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 (with the exception of the unit noted below).

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

Given the nature of the role where some work activities present high risk/danger to the candidate and others simulation in a realistic working environment may be used to assess the following unit. However naturally occurring evidence should be used wherever possible.

* **SFJFF3 Control and restrain individuals**