

Assessment Strategy for the SVQs in Healthcare Support

December 2015

Introduction

This strategy sets out specifications for the assessment and quality control of the SVQs in Healthcare Support. It has been produced by Skills for Health in cooperation with sector representatives, SQA Accreditation and awarding body partners.

This assessment strategy relates to the following SVQs:

- SVQ 2 Healthcare Support (Clinical) at SCQF 6
- SVQ 2 Healthcare Support (Non Clinical) at SCQF 6
- SVQ 3 Healthcare Support (Clinical) at SCQF 7
- SVQ 3 Healthcare Support (Non Clinical) at SCQF 7

This document outlines the principles that underpin the assessment of the above qualifications with regard to:

- 1. External quality control of assessment**
- 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 regulatory requirements that awarding bodies must meet as specified by SQA Accreditation.

This strategy supersedes and replaces all previous assessment strategies and supplementary guidance.

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1. External Quality Control of Assessment

The standard external verification model will apply to these qualifications. Awarding bodies are responsible for the competence of those involved in external verification activities and must require them to monitor centre performance in accordance with regulatory requirements, sampling all aspects of qualification delivery. External verification will include both assuring the quality of the centre that is responsible for making the assessment and sampling from the judgments made on a number of candidates to ensure they are of consistent quality.

Skills for Health work with awarding bodies to ensure that:

- there is a comprehensive strategy for sampling assessment which is applied
across centres
- the level of sampling undertaken in external verification is sufficient to guarantee consistently high standards between centres and between awarding bodies
- external verification takes place using scrutiny of documents and observation of the assessment and verification practices in assessment centres subject to the need for confidentiality
- external verification is planned proportionally and linked to assessment centre performance
- external verifiers are required to take part in regular standardisation activities.

Skills for Health will work with all stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Occupational Standards, the qualification structures and this assessment strategy.

2. Assessment

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.

Assessment of candidate's performance must take place during the course of their day-to-day work. Direct observation of the candidate's performance in the workplace must be the primary source of evidence. 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 a qualification
- The qualifications must be delivered in keeping with any codes of conduct applicable to their role and the setting within which they work
- 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

Each unit has 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. Use and Characteristics of 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. 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

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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 SSC has identified that, in keeping with the ethos and breadth of units within the qualifications, there may be the following people involved in the assessment and verification 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

have knowledge and experience of the regulation, legislation and/or codes of practice applicable to their role and the setting within which they work.

and

take the lead role in the assessment of observed candidate performance in relation to the mandatory units of the qualification.

and

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 qualification 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.

4.2 Co-ordinating 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. 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. The Co-ordinating Assessor must have an overarching occupational competence and experience in health care settings.

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 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 are indirectly supervised during 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 those units for which they are to provide expert witness evidence. Expert witnesses must:

have a working knowledge of the relevant National Occupational Standards

and

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

and

evidence continuous professional development relevant to the area of practice for which they are assessing competence

and

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

and

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- 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 knowledgeable in the area of practice they are verifying and have gained their knowledge through working within the health sector or appropriate professional/occupational area. 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 in which assessment is taking place.

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.

and

- 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 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.

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 health 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 assessment is taking place.

and

□ 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 knowledge 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

Integration of knowledge and practice is a fundamental feature of work within the health sector. 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.

Evidence of candidates' performance will be drawn primarily from direct observation of 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. However, there **must** be:

direct observation of practice by a qualified assessor

or

observation of occupationally specific units by an expert witness **and** professional discussion with a qualified assessor

and

reflective accounts. This may take the form of structured discussion with a qualified assessor which must be recorded.

There may also be:

(This list is not exhaustive)

direct questioning and assignments

assessment of products generated during the candidates' normal work practices

5. 1 Alternative forms of recording evidence using ICT

It is recognised that alternative forms of recording assessment evidence will evolve using information and communication 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 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 qualification unit 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.