



# **Internal Assessment Report: Care (82)**

Sector Panel or SSC: Skills for Care and Development

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

# SVQ Awards

## Titles/levels of SVQ Awards verified

SVQ Health and Social Care Level 2  
SVQ Health and Social Care (Adults) Level 3  
SVQ Health and Social Care (Children and Young People) Level 3  
SVQ Health and Social Care (Adults) Level 4  
SVQ Health and Social Care (Children and Young People) Level 4  
SVQ Leadership and Management for Care Services Level 4 (LMC)  
SVQ Registered Manager Health and Social Care Level 4

## General comments

This year there have been over 180 verification visits for the SVQs in Health and Social Care. A significant number of centres have come forward for approval to deliver these awards for the first time. It is important for centres to note that they are entitled to a free development visit from SQA within six months of gaining approval. This beneficial service seems to have been missed by centres in most cases.

Development visits allow centres to ensure they receive support, as they begin to deliver the newly approved qualification, with guidance on areas that need to be addressed before an official verification visit. I strongly encourage any centres who have been newly approved for qualifications, or who are considering coming forward for approval in the coming session, to make the most of this opportunity for a development visit.

This session, centres have tentatively started working towards the SVQ Leadership and Management for Care Services Level 4 (which replaced the SVQ Registered Manager for Health and Social Care Level 4). Centres say they welcome this new qualification, which has been designed by the sector for the sector, but that there has been some anxiety around the level of work required for it.

The majority of candidates who have started work with the LMC have produced a good standard of evidence. Candidates who have previously completed an SVQ Health and Social Care at Level 4 have welcomed the design of the LMC as it is the same format as the other Health and Social Care qualifications. One of the main questions External Verifiers have been asked is about the observation requirement for the LMC. It is important to note that observation is required across all Units in this qualification. Centres who are unsure of any aspect of the delivery of this qualification should contact the Care Scotland team.

This year Care Scotland hosted three very successful quality network events. These were held in Glasgow, Inverness and Edinburgh and were well attended by representatives from centres across Scotland. The workshops at these events focused on subjects which had been identified by centres as the areas where they required the most guidance and support.

Members of the external verification team facilitated workshops in the following areas:

- ◆ assessing night workers
- ◆ developing an internal verification sampling strategy in a centre
- ◆ creative assessment planning
- ◆ SVQ leadership and management for Care Services Level 4

Materials provided during these workshops will be available on the Care Scotland webpage.

A number of centre staff spoke to their External Verifiers about the benefits and pitfalls of using e-portfolios. However, only a small number of centres use this approach at present. Centres should ensure that the e-portfolio system they use allows them to present evidence that is compliant with the assessment strategy for the group award. They should also ensure all evidence is available on the day of the verification visit and that the system is accessible to the External Verifier. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure all evidence is trackable and that there is a clear audit trail for planning, feedback, review, and remediation between assessor and candidate, and internal verifier and assessor.

## **Advice on good practice and areas for further development**

### **Areas of good practice**

This has been another year where candidates have again said that they feel well supported by their assessors and the assessment centre staff teams. Centres have looked creatively at ways to support candidates with special assessment needs. The outcome is that candidate levels of confidence have increased as they achieve their qualification, often in some very challenging circumstances.

Assessment centres have responded to the need for assessors to work more flexibly, particularly to allow night workers the same access to assessment opportunities as staff who work day shifts. This has required centres to review and update their policy on lone working and associated risk assessments for staff working outside of office hours.

More and more centres carry out assessment across a wide geographical area. Greater use has therefore been made of technologies to enable assessors and internal verifiers to standardise practice, without having to attend meetings on fixed dates at venues that are hard to reach. This session, we have seen innovative use of online standardisation forums to ensure consistent practice and effective communication among teams.

Centres have embraced the holistic approach to assessment planning and evidence gathering. This has resulted in portfolios with a more integrated and less Unit-by-Unit feel. We have seen some excellent examples of reflective accounts in candidates' portfolios, demonstrating integration of knowledge with practice.

Assessors gave greater detail in assessment plans and are using different creative approaches to planning to reflect the individual needs of candidates. This level of detail ensures the assessment plan is a meaningful tool in the assessment process for both assessor and candidate.

More and more centres are investing in resources with a Scottish focus. This is reflected in knowledge candidates have shown in their accounts of practice. There have been previous issues of candidates using resources which did not reflect the Scottish legislative context in which they worked.

### **Areas for further development**

External Verifier reports show that the most developmental feedback is given in the following areas, in order of frequency:

- ◆ depth and application of knowledge to practice
- ◆ internal verification sampling
- ◆ linking products to reflective accounts
- ◆ knowledge claims in observations and sufficiency of observations
- ◆ use of question banks
- ◆ assessor/internal verifier occupational competence
- ◆ real work activity
- ◆ assessor and internal verifier feedback

### **Depth and application of knowledge to practice**

This is still a problem for many centres and has been one of the main topics of discussion with assessors and internal verifiers during visits. Candidates must show that they know, understand and can apply knowledge to practice. The SVQ is not intended to be a training programme. If candidates do not have the foundational knowledge to inform their practice then they will struggle to show knowledge in sufficient depth. This is an issue across all levels of Health and Social Care SVQs.

Many candidates have not benefited from core training, sufficient workplace induction or workplace experience before embarking on the SVQ. This puts them at a disadvantage when they try to show the knowledge points. A number of centres have recognised this as a problem and have implemented pre-SVQ knowledge sessions covering social care practice, values, legislation and theory along with guidance on how to apply this knowledge to the candidate's specific work context.

### **Internal verification sampling**

Centres are moving away from excessive internal verification of portfolios. However, some centres are still adopting a Unit-by-Unit approach, which does not fit as effectively with the holistic approach to evidence gathering that is promoted for these qualifications.

Some centres with experienced assessors have moved to only verifying portfolios on their completion. This end-loaded approach to verification is a cause for concern. External Verifiers this session have encouraged centres to stagger verification. This approach avoids the scenario of a completed portfolio requiring extensive remediation when it could have been avoided if the issue had been picked up at an early verification.

### **Linking products to reflective accounts**

Some candidates are missing out on opportunities to include products which have been referred to in reflective accounts. The use of products serves to strengthen claims for some performance criteria, eg in Unit 375.2.6 which states: 'You clearly and accurately enter relevant information in the correct records.' In this instance the candidate may write in a reflective account that they have carried out these actions but by including the records referred to, as a product, the candidate is presenting robust evidence of competence. These products do not have to be physically included in the candidates' portfolio, provided their location is stated so that the assessor and internal verifier can check their content and existence. A number of Units refer to the candidate recording or reporting on some aspect of practice. It is important for assessors to note when these occur so that they can be used as supporting evidence.

It should be noted that product evidence can stand alone and does not always have to support reflective accounts, eg incident/accident reports or extracts from care plans.

### **Knowledge claims in observations and sufficiency of observations**

Some Units have been found without observations tracked against the standards. All Health and Social Care SVQs require observation for each Unit. There are very few exceptions to this guidance and these only relate to elements rather than a whole Unit. Centres need to be aware that if a Unit is signed off without sufficient observation then this is non-compliance.

Another point to note is that observations will usually provide more evidence of practice, ie performance criteria, than knowledge. If an assessor is claiming knowledge points in an observation, these must be explicit from what has been observed and not inferred. Good practice is where the assessor asks the candidate questions following the observation to draw out the knowledge that has informed the candidate's practice. The candidate's response to these questions can then be documented in the additional evidence/clarification box on the evidence gathering form.

### **Use of question banks**

During visits to centres we have been asked about the use of question banks. This is where the centre devises pre-prepared questions and gives these to candidates to work through to meet knowledge points. This is not permitted for these qualifications and use of this is non-compliance. Questions can be used as an assessment method, but this is usually where evidence has not been obtained through the main assessment methods of reflective account and observation.

### **Assessor/internal verifier occupational competence**

External Verifiers have been looking at this area in more detail this session. Centres must ensure that all assessors and internal verifiers have occupational competence in the areas they are assessing and verifying. Centres should refer back to the assessment strategies for the respective SVQs and ensure that their centre policy and procedure for recruiting and selecting assessors and verifiers complies with this.

Centres should also ensure that records of assessor and internal verifier qualifications (a photocopy of a certificate is sufficient) and information on their occupational competence, ie a current CV, are accessible on the day the External Verifiers visits, as he/she will be looking at these. Some centres have not been able to produce this information as it is held centrally

in an HR department. However, it is the centre's responsibility to ensure that this information can be viewed on the day of the visit.

### **Real work activity**

Some External Verifiers have noticed an increasing trend of candidates starting to write about what they have done in their work practice and then moving on to talk about what they would do. In these instances candidates move into talking hypothetically and this equates to simulation and not actual work practice. Candidates can use this approach for knowledge points, but when claiming performance criteria they **must** refer to actual pieces of real work practice they have carried out.

### **Assessor and IV feedback**

From meetings with candidates, it is clear that candidates feel well supported by their assessors, and the assessors feel supported by their internal verifiers. However, when sampling portfolios during external verification visits, this level of support is not always well documented. Omitting clear details of feedback to candidates and to assessors does not do justice to the effort and commitment of the assessors and verifiers. This makes it difficult if an assessor or internal verifier leaves the centre suddenly and someone else is required to take over their workload. The lack of feedback means that there is not a clear picture of how things have been left with the candidate to enable the new assessor to work with them effectively.