Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2016
Care

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

SVQ awards

General comments

It is nearly three years since SQA was accredited to offer the Social Services and Health Care SVQs and therefore centres have a good grasp of the content of the qualifications and the approach to their delivery.

SQA's most recent Annual Statistical Report (ASR) shows that the SVQs in Social Services and Healthcare continue to be the number one vocational qualification undertaken at SCQF levels 6, 7, 9 and 10. (This is the SVQ Levels 2, 3 and 4 and the SVQ Leadership and Management for Care Services[1]). This volume of SVQ delivery reflects the value placed on these qualifications within the sector and the importance of them for ensuring individuals within the social services workforce meet registration requirements with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

In November 2015, SQA Care hosted two customer support events, one in Glasgow and one in Perth. These events were well attended by centre representatives and feedback was extremely positive, thus highlighting the benefit of these events for centres delivering these qualifications.

Workshops at these events were focused on areas that had been identified from centre feedback as being relevant to their circumstances. Materials from the workshops are available from SQA Care.

Workshop subjects were as follows:

♦ Internal verification
♦ Assessment planning
♦ An SQA CPD resource for assessors and internal verifiers
♦ Evidencing the common knowledge effectively

SQA Care is hosting two more customer support events on 28 November 2016 in Stirling and 29 November 2016 in Glasgow. From assessor and internal verifier feedback this session the following areas have been identified as the most relevant subjects for workshops at these events:

♦ Supporting candidates with additional support needs
♦ Tracking the SVQ Social Services and Health Care Level 4 (SCQF level 9) to the SVQ Care Services Leadership and Management (SCQF level 10) and *vice versa*

The Customer Support events will be run as joint events for both centres offering SVQs in Social Services and Healthcare and centres offering SVQs in Social

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[1] Now replaced with SVQ Care Services Leadership and Management

Services Children and Young People. This year there will be a specific workshop focusing on issues that are pertinent to those working within the early years' sector.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Centres have worked hard to develop materials to support candidates evidence the common knowledge in an effective way, which links knowledge to specific occasions of work practice. However, for a number of centres this has been presented as a workbook format which is not permitted for these qualifications.

External verifiers have advised centres to provide candidates with individual focused pieces of work that relate knowledge to real work-practice examples, rather than provide candidates with a booklet containing a large number of assignments, which can be overwhelming and demotivating.

Evidence requirements

The evidence requirements for the SVQ Social Services and Healthcare have not changed significantly from the predecessor qualifications, in that reflective writing and observation are the primary sources of evidence. However, what has differed is the onus on the assessor to determine the amount of observation appropriate for the unit they are assessing. This sense of autonomy for the assessor has proved to be unsettling and centres have sought clarification from their external verifier as to how much observation is needed per unit.

In the absence of a figure or percentage some centres have chosen to define their own minimum number of points that require observation. Whilst a centre can choose to adopt this approach, the external verifier team is encouraging centres instead to focus more on assessor professional judgement and consider the sources of other evidence presented for a unit. This enables them to holistically consider evidence for that unit so that they are able to reach a considered decision that the candidate has demonstrated their competence across these sources of evidence. Creating percentages and numbers of points leads to 'pc chasing' instead of competence assessing.

Administration of assessments

Whilst a number of centres are using e-portfolios for presenting candidate evidence the majority are still working with paper-based portfolios. Whether using paper portfolios or e-portfolio it is imperative that candidate evidence is appropriately referenced and clearly tracked against the National Occupational Standards (units).

This also applies to the occasion when an assessor may voice-record candidate evidence where this has been deemed appropriate due to a candidate's additional support requirements. Any voice-recorded evidence must be clearly tracked against the National Occupational Standards, detailing where in the

recording specific points have been evidenced to ensure effective assessment, internal verification and external verification of the evidence.

General feedback

Centres are identifying an increased number of candidates who are finding the academic demands of the qualifications a challenge. This has specifically been pertinent for those candidates who have not studied for a number of years and who had negative learning experiences previously. A number of centres have sought guidance from their external verifier so that they are able to identify the best way to engage candidates and keep motivation high whilst ensuring the qualification delivery is not compromised.

This has had some resource implications for centres as they consider how to provide the additional support necessary so that candidates are not disadvantaged in the assessment process. This is a key area to focus on, as the numbers of candidates requiring the Level 2 qualification is set to increase significantly over the coming years with the next phase of the SSSC register opening in January 2017. There will be a workshop focused on this area at the forthcoming SQA Care events.

Some units are presenting challenges for peripatetic assessors when undertaking observations and when obtaining expert witness statements. For example, Unit 226 (H5P104) 'Support Individuals Who Are Distressed.' It is accepted that a candidate cannot plan for an individual to be distressed. Even if they are able to ascertain that an individual is likely to be distressed at a particular time it is not appropriate or in keeping with the principles underpinning the National Care Standards to invite an assessor to come and observe their practice while an individual is experiencing distress. In these circumstances it is likely there may be a lower number of performance criteria covered with observation and therefore the assessor will need to ensure other sources of evidence for the unit are robust and demonstrate specific occasions of work practice.

Areas of good practice

Feedback from candidates continues to be positive across the board, highlighting strong support and guidance from assessors.

A number of centres have identified that candidates have significant gaps in their knowledge in relation to the significance of the National Care Standards and SSSC Codes of Practice for their role. External verifiers have noted that a number of centres have focused on pre-SVQ knowledge-development sessions to ensure candidates have a clear understanding of how these publications inform all that takes place within the work setting.

Specific areas for improvement

A number of centres are still expressing concerns about the most effective way to evidence the common knowledge points without over-assessing candidates. From development visits carried out during this session, the common knowledge

has been a key area that centre staff request support with. External verifiers have spent time providing guidance to assessors who are keen to develop focused pieces of work on the common themes that occur within the units, following the template demonstrated at the SQA Care events in November 2015.

Through endeavouring to support candidates to evidence the common knowledge points, a significant number of centres have developed workbooks which consist of a series of questions and hypothetical scenarios for candidates to work through. This approach is not permitted for the assessment of these qualifications and therefore centres have been advised to revisit their approach and refer to the guidance provided by SQA Care prior to the development of all future materials.