Scottish Vocational Qualifications
Internal Assessment Report 2013
Sport and Recreation — Playwork

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

SVQ awards

General comments

This session, External Verifiers found that the majority of centres were delivering robust Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Playwork, underpinned by playwork principles and theoretical playwork and developmental perspectives.

Assessment and verification teams are striving to provide excellent support to their candidates to ensure they are competent in professional playwork practice and can integrate their knowledge of playwork principles, theory, legislation, etc with their practice.

It is evident from external verification undertaken this session that the majority of centres delivering the SVQs in Playwork are managing the assessment and verification process well to ensure that all the evidence presented is of a high standard. Assessment teams are to be complimented on their consistently high standards and the good systems used to ensure that the presentation of evidence is clearly recorded and matched against the National Occupational Standards (NOS). This has ensured that the assessment evidence is easy to verify, and it was clear to see that the work has been comprehensively standardised across all assessors and awards.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

It is evident from external verification that most centres have a clear understanding of the requirements of the NOS for Playwork embedded in SVQs 2, 3 and 4 in Playwork. Centres understand the level of work to be produced based on the SCQF levels of the SVQ Units and of the overall qualification levels.

Most of the assessment evidence sampled was practical and sufficient; the assessment methods used were appropriate and met the Evidence Requirements set out in the Skills Active (sector skills council) assessment strategy.

The methods of assessment used to gather evidence for the SVQs in Playwork were valid and reliable, covering both the candidate's playwork practice and knowledge. As required in the assessment strategy, the most frequently used assessment methodology was candidate reflective accounts, supported by assessor observation of practice, or in unplanned or unexpected situations, witness testimony.

Assessment centres are using other relevant assessment methods such as oral or written questions, projects or tasks, accreditation of prior learning and experience (APLE), and research projects.

Evidence Requirements

The majority of centres are producing a high standard of work which is holistic and integrated throughout and meets the Evidence Requirements in the NOS, as well as complying with the sector skills council assessment strategy.

External verifiers found that most assessment is undertaken in a holistic and integrated manner and is sufficiently observed over a period of time to ensure consistency of candidates' playwork practice.

Internal verification processes ensured that the evidence presented for external verification complied with the assessment strategy. Evidence of the discussion between assessors and Internal Verifiers about assessment practice was found in the minutes of standardisation meetings.

The majority of centres have experienced, competent and qualified assessors and Internal Verifiers involved in the delivery the SVQs in Playwork. Assessors and Internal Verifiers have appropriate qualifications for assessment and verification purposes, and for meeting the sector skills council requirements. Many centres are using the learning and development toolkit to ensure that assessment and verification practice is current and compliant with best practice.

Administration of assessments

From the evidence sampled in the candidates' portfolios, it is clear that in most centres the assessment process is robust.

The assessment planning is holistic and considered. External Verifiers found evidence of assessment planning that was clearly recorded, and comprehensive feedback was given to candidates. This feedback was focussed and supportive and identified areas for further improvement or assessment opportunities. In most cases, this is linked to a comprehensive and structured assessment plan for the qualification as a whole.

A good range of assessment methods were used and the evidence was very clearly presented. Assessors' observational records are sufficiently detailed and candidates' reflective accounts provide evidence of their playwork practice and knowledge.

Assessor observations reflected good knowledge and understanding of play theory and the assessment strategy. These clearly reflected the terminology found in the playwork Units and in playwork theories such as play spaces and the play cycle.

Candidate reflective accounts were holistic and integrated. Most of the knowledge evidence required by the NOS for Playwork was claimed through these reflective accounts or through questioning in relation to practice.

In most cases, assessors were making consistent, valid and reliable assessment decisions which were based on the NOS for Playwork; the Evidence

Requirements and the SCQF level of the Units; and the assessment strategy for each level of SVQ in Playwork.

External Verifiers found that the majority of centres had internal verification policies, procedures and processes in place. These were effective in supporting standardisation of assessment decisions and ensuring support for quality assessment practice.

These policies were in line with the guidance provided in *Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres offering SQA Qualifications* and related to the NOS for Playwork.

General feedback

In the majority of centres, it is clear that assessment and verification practice is ensuring that the assessment process is robust. External Verifiers have found that there is a commitment to assessment practice to provide constancy and consistency for the candidates, and to support them to produce evidence for their SVQ which integrates knowledge along with reflection of their professional playwork practice.

Assessors are working with candidates to develop skills in reflective account writing where the candidate is providing evidence of their playwork practice and their knowledge. Candidates at most centres are being supported to produce well-organised portfolios which are of good quality and are easy to match against the standards. This reflects a strength of SVQs in Playwork — the quality of assessment practice. The available evidence therefore suggests that, in general, centres are well aware of the requirements of the NOS in Playwork across the three levels.

Overall, External Verifiers were pleased with the level of commitment and enthusiasm of assessors and Internal Verifiers at centres, and there seems little doubt that this contributes significantly to the good standard of work which is achieved.

The external verification team received very positive feedback from candidates which is a tribute to those involved in assessing the SVQs in Playwork.

Areas of good practice

This session, External Verifiers have identified a number of areas of good practice where staff at centres have shown innovative and creative methods to support the assessment and verification of the SVQs in Playwork.

Assessment practice

External Verifiers found that many centres were using positive techniques introduced by assessors to build confidence in candidates and enhance their understanding of assessment practice. This was seen in the many supportive induction programmes developed for new SVQ candidates which include core

skills development and SVQ portfolio-building preparation. Assessors then provided excellent support to their candidates to ensure they are competent in professional playwork practice. There were opportunities for continual support and for the observation of everyday workplace practice.

Assessors are providing a flexible approach to assessment based on candidates' needs and the constraints of their playwork setting. This has enabled assessors to consider the most appropriate approach to apply, and can result in efficiencies in delivery through integration of assessment practice and holistic observations to ensure consistency of candidates' playwork practice.

Many centres are providing underpinning knowledge workshops or training sessions to support the learning and development of knowledge related to the SVQs in Playwork. This has proven to be invaluable to candidates in allowing them to develop their own knowledge and to support peer learning around playwork practice.

In the majority of centres, staff are providing additional support such as one-to-one interviews, online and e-mail support, and guidance sessions undertaken between assessors and candidates.

Many centres have developed a range of support materials to ensure quality across the three levels of SVQs in Playwork. These integrate the knowledge requirements with the Outcomes of performance. This has helped develop assessors and proved to be a considerable aid to candidates. These support materials assist candidates in ensuring that their knowledge is included throughout the reflective accounts and at all levels; the playwork principles and the play theories are then integrated into the practice.

E-portfolios/e-learning

Many centres are making use of electronic systems, such as e-portfolios and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) to support learners as they work through their qualification.

A number of different e-portfolio systems are becoming much more common for the assessment and storage of candidates' evidence. These e-portfolios help to record and keep track of candidate progress, as well as providing a portfolio structure for candidates. They can also make the storage of items of evidence much more manageable.

A number of centres are making use of VLEs such as Blackboard and Moodle to develop e-learning aspects of the SVQ in Playwork. These systems help candidates to access useful learning material, online discussion forums and online support. Comprehensive resources and tools have been developed by centres to support candidates in gaining the specific knowledge required for the SVQs in Playwork.

Continuing professional development

External Verifiers found that continuing professional development (CPD) records were available for all current assessors and Internal Verifiers (many centres now hold these electronically). In the majority of centres, these were designed to provide a summary of professional development undertaken specifically relating to the SVQ in Playwork, and could capture and identify development points for the future.

In some centres, CPD records were linked to the Scottish Social Services Council's Post Registration Training and Learning Record of Achievement in order to record assessor and Internal Verifier professional development.

Centres were also using CPD records to show assessment and verification practice was compliant and current with new learning and development standards.

Most centres also make good arrangements for the induction of new assessors, often in the form of a specific induction programme, which includes joint visits with experienced assessors, as well as careful monitoring.

Specific areas for improvement

External Verifiers highlighted a small number of areas for improvement this session. To some extent, development points follow on from the good practice highlighted above as other centres seek to improve and follow what is being done elsewhere.

Assessment practice

Centres should continue to develop an approach to assessment which ensures compliance with the assessment strategy and the requirements of the SVQs in Playwork. Most centres understand these requirements, but there is some variation between centres in the implementation of this understanding.

Centres should take account of the SCQF descriptors for each level of the Playwork Units. These can give a good guide to the quality of evidence required for each Unit and to the depth of knowledge and understanding a candidate should demonstrate.

Portfolio building
Tracking evidence

Centres should ensure that evidence is entered onto tracking systems when it is assessed and signed as complete by the assessor. External Verifiers found that some centres were not tracking evidence when signed off, and instead were waiting until completion of the Course, or candidates were tracking evidence when it had not been signed off. Neither of these are acceptable practices. Centres need to maintain a rigorous and comprehensive system for tracking candidate evidence to ensure compliance with the assessment strategy and to enable candidates and assessors to plan appropriately.

Supporting evidence

Blank documents or copies of policies are not generally required as proof of candidate performance. An assessor observation or witness testimony should be provided as supporting evidence to a candidate's reflective account. The exception would be for SVQ level 4 in Playwork where the candidate has had some input into the policy or procedural document, for example the candidate had developed or revised the play policy for the centre.

Currency of evidence

Evidence in candidate portfolios should be current, this means generated within the past two years. Because of the holistic nature of the SVQs in Playwork, where a candidate takes more than two years to complete the SVQ, centres should consider completing Units so that evidence is current at the time of assessment.

Internal verification

Internal verification is key to continuing development of centre assessment practice and compliance with Evidence Requirements and the assessment strategy. Whilst the majority of centres have robust and transparent systems and procedures for internal verification, a small number have to ensure that they maintain these high standards.

External Verifiers have recommended that centres provide detailed and well-formatted standardisation minutes which fully record issues arising; developments in delivery; and the progress of candidates, and that are up to date and reflect centre good practice. These should be written in some depth to reflect the detailed and comprehensive feedback, informal discussions and assessment decisions taken, and recommendations for action.

Some centres need to develop clear procedures to ensure that internal verification recommendations are acted on.

Formative and holistic internal verification seems to promote standardisation and ensures the quality of assessment practice better than concentrating internal verification at the end of the portfolio-building process.