



Professional Development Award at SCQF level 9

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2017

Childhood Practice

Introduction

This report sets out the findings of the external verification team in relation to annual visits to the centres delivering the PDA in Childhood Practice at SCQF level 9. The centres that deliver this qualification also have to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) in order for their candidates to be able to register as lead practitioners or managers with the SSSC. As a result of an agreement with SQA and SSSC, all centres delivering this qualification will be externally verified annually.

There are now four centres delivering this qualification although another centre is in the process of approval with SSSC, having been approved by SQA.

The centres delivering have now been working with this qualification for several years and are familiar with the units and the assessments, which is reflected in the high-quality comments of the external verifiers in the reports.

The following units were sampled by the external verification team this session:

FD6Y 36 Developing Services for Children and Young People
FD70 36 Children's Rights: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
FD75 36 Childhood Practice: Early Learning
FD71 36 Participatory Partnerships: Working with Families
FD77 36 Childhood Practice: Family Support
FD72 36 Childhood Practice: Leadership and management
FD6X 36 Childhood Practice: Leadership and management

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.

The assessment strategy for the PDA in Childhood Practice at SCQF level 9 states that the assessors of this qualification should be qualified to appropriate degree level and CPD should be reflective of the changes in the sector. All centres' assessors and verifiers are qualified and competent to degree level as a minimum. There is evidence in some centres of new assessors joining the team and while having the required qualifications and experience, the centre has asked them to gain some current experience in the sector.

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

There was evidence in all centres of activity in relation to updating resources, assessments and learning materials. This is in some way related to the updated Benchmark Childhood Practice standards 2015 and the SSSC Codes of Practice standards 2016. There has also been new legislation such as the Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014 which the external verifiers explain has been incorporated into learning materials in the centres. All centres provided evidence of standardisation meetings where the updates and revision of material have been discussed among assessment teams.

Category 3: Candidate support

Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.

In this qualification, the prior achievements of the candidates are part of the access requirements stated within the assessment strategy. All centres are aware of this and provided evidence showing the various methods used by the centres to establish the initial qualifications gained for access to the qualification. These methods include training needs analysis, individual interviews and application forms — which not only gather the information about the candidates' previous qualifications but also look at their current ability to work at management level.

Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.

All centres are working with the candidates on a weekly basis, using face-to-face discussions but also VLE sessions. The discussions are focused on the learning and are also led by the assessors. The reports explain that the candidates are offered regular support from their assessors. One of the centres supports candidates by the assessors visiting the workplace to encourage progress through the award. Supporting candidates through the qualification appears to be a strong area in the centres and this is backed up in the reports by the external verification team.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

Criterion 4.2: Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.

All centres had robust systems of internal verification procedures and showed how these were clearly implemented when assessing the candidates. Almost all centres provided evidence of standardisation, being recognised through the minutes of the standardisation meetings. One of the external verifiers had highlighted the fact that the internal verification process in a centre had recognised that a learner's work could be viewed as 'marginal' and as such was given more support. All centres' paperwork was clearly signed and dated, and sampling of evidence was according to the centre procedures. One centre with a new assessor showed evidence that this assessor had been supported and that the sampling of their work had been 100% according to the centre's procedures.

Criterion 4.3: Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

All the centres are using the SQA assessment support packs which contain exemplars and checklists for the units in the qualification. The use of the assessment support packs and the SQA assessments ensure the candidates are being treated in a valid, fair and equitable manner in regard to the assessment process.

Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.

The reports from the verification team about the centres all relate to the fact that there is a policy about plagiarism in each centre. Candidates are asked to read the policies as part of induction and two of the centres also relate this to the malpractice policy. All of the centres have candidate disclaimers which ask the candidate to sign to say that the work is their own. One of the centres has Turnitin software which highlights the percentage of the original work as compared to quotes and references.

Criterion 4.6: Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.

All centres have been viewed by the external verifiers as working to a high standard in this area. Assessor's judgements on the candidates' work had been accurately assessed against the evidence requirements of the units. Centres have shown this by their detailed feedback to candidates and their internal verification reports. Centres have also discussed assessment judgements on particular units in the standardisation meetings, which was evident from the minutes of these meetings.

Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.

All centres evidenced a Retention of Evidence Policy which is in line with SQA guidance on the retention of evidence. All centres are aware that candidates' work is held for three weeks after certification (or until an external verification visit if one has been arranged).

Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.

All centres discussed the feedback of the external verification report with all assessment staff, covering any issues at the standardisation meeting. One centre explained that on receipt of the external verification report, an analysis is carried out identifying any issues raised and any good practice. This analysis is then sent to the rest of the centre for discussion in meetings. Any issues raised are addressed by the wider assessment team.

Areas of good practice report by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2016–17:

- ◆ One of the centres gathered information from stakeholders, including parents and children, which when analysed is used in the candidate's reflective assessments (criterion 2.4)
- ◆ The use of a VLE for candidates' learning (criterion 2.4)
- ◆ Some of the mentors who support the candidates have previously achieved the PDA in Childhood Practice at SCQF level 9 themselves (criterion 3.2)
- ◆ A review at the end of year one shows the candidates' progress and encourages them through to the next year (criterion 3.3)

Specific areas for development

There were no areas for development reported during session 2016–17.