### Guidance Briefing Note

### SQA Work Placement units — HF88 43, HF88 44, HF88 45 and

### HF88 46

### SQA, July 2020

### Background

The Work Placementunits at SCQF levels 3–6 are designed to recognise the valuable learning and development which take place while participating in a suitable work placement. Learners have an opportunity to think about their knowledge and skills, abilities, and career aspirations and to identify a learning goal in preparation for a work placement. During the placement, they will have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to work with others and carry out allocated tasks. At SCQF levels 5 and 6 the unit incorporates a work placement project and in all units learners review their progress on completion of the work placement.

The Work Placement units were developed by SQA in 2016 as part of a refresh of the existing Work Experience units. Consideration was given to Scottish Government guidance in *Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce — Education for All* (June 2014) and *Developing the Young Workforce — Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy* (December 2014). One of the key points made in the latter report was: ‘The key message we have had from young people … is their need for significantly enhanced quality work experience while at school and college’.

Work experience has generally been thought of as a week-long placement undertaken in S4 in partnership with an employer. The units were developed with flexibility to recognise that a work placement is not a ‘one size fits all’ matter, nor a single opportunity, but a placement which provides a meaningful experience of work-based learning supporting individual learner needs and career aspirations.

The Work Placement unit specifications at SCQF levels 3–6 contain relevant guidance on the approaches to delivery:

‘The arrangements for the work placement are flexible and can be tailored to suit the needs of the learner, the work placement provider, and the context of the work placement itself. For example, the work placement could involve: a half day; single day; timetabled opportunities; an introductory week-long work placement with additional opportunities built in. The work placement could also take place outwith the school/college day. **The length of the work placement is not specified. However, it must be sufficient to allow the learner to have a meaningful experience and generate the evidence required for the unit.** It is expected that those following a specific vocational pathway should have a work placement directly linked to their career aspirations.’

This means that the actual length of time in the workplace can be decided between the individual and the work placement provider. At a time when it may be difficult to gain access to a work placement, there is flexibility in the unit specifications to organise placement activities to suit the work placement provider and the individual learner in a flexible working pattern rather than on a one-off block basis.

### Work placement delivery

Times are changing and we need to consider flexible options in the delivery of work placement opportunities. There is no doubt that it is becoming more and more difficult to access and organise work placement activities for learners, but we know how much learners appreciate and value the opportunity to participate in work-based learning. For some learners at SCQF levels 3 and 4, the centre will take on the responsibility for accessing and organising the placement, while at SCQF levels 5 and 6 learners can take on more individual responsibility for doing this. In some instances, a work placement may be considered as an extension to an existing part-time job where the learner wishes to pursue a career aspiration with an existing employer, for example, if they are working in retail sales and want to pursue a career within the company.

### Summary

The Work Placement units need to provide the opportunity for learners to engage in work-based learning. **This work-based learning cannot be simulated. The learner must engage in a real work placement experience in a real work environment.** Centres have had great success over the years in the delivery of Work Placement units as free-standing units or as part of SQA group awards — wider achievement awards, National Certificates (NCs), National Progression Awards (NPAs). The Work Placement units are also part of Foundation Apprenticeships. This success can still be achieved if a flexible approach is taken for work placements. Centres or learners may wish to consider with the workplace provider how best they can improvise to ensure that the required time to be spent in the workplace is achievable, and that the bulk of evidence generated through the cycle of preparation, planning, implementing and reviewing is achieved using an integrated and/or holistic assessment approach. Thinking of new and innovative ways to gather evidence could include some or all of the following:

* One-to-one learner/teacher interview to consider career aspirations and learning goals
* SWOT analysis to review strengths and weaknesses
* Planning tool to specify agreed tasks and duties with the employer/training provider
* Project plan which offers some ‘real value’ to an employer/training provider
* Use of digital technology to progress the various stages of the work placement, such as: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, video, PowerPoint, blogs, podcast, email, online interview, screenshots
* Reviewing feedback from the employer using a ‘live’ streaming session

If any further clarification is required, please contact mycentre@sqa.org.uk