

Guidance for the assessment of Scottish Vocational Qualifications levels 2, 3 and 4 in Social Services and Healthcare and Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF levels 6, 7 and 9.

This guidance is designed to assist assessors, in approved centres, with the assessment of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Social Services and Healthcare and Social Services (Children and Young People) (SSCYP). It must be read in conjunction with the Assessment Strategy set out by the sector skills council. This guidance is to be used to support the Assessment Strategy for the following qualifications:

- SVQ level 2, 3 and 4 Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF levels 6, 7 and 9
- SVQ level 2, 3 and 4 Social Services (Children and Young People) at levels 6, 7 and 9
- SVQ Care Services Leadership and Management Level 10.

Readiness for assessment

SVQs are based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) and assess the application of skills, knowledge and understanding in a specific occupation to the standards required in the workplace.

Candidate evidence must be focused on activities that they have carried out within their job role demonstrating how these activities relate to the knowledge and performance criteria within the SVQ award and at the SCQF level they are undertaking. This principle of evidence being related to work practice and the work context of the candidate applies to all aspects of these qualifications.

Candidate evidence must show competent practice over a period of time. Therefore, the assessor must satisfy the IV that they have selected a range of appropriate assessment methods that reflect the candidate's development and application of knowledge to practice to a range of practice situations.

The Employer's Role

It is the employer's role to identify those employees who are required to undertake a qualification to meet the current registration requirements in accordance with the employee's job role and responsibilities. This is in accordance with the "SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers" employer code 3.3 "Supporting staff in posts subject to registration to meet the SSSC's eligibility criteria for registration and its requirements for continuing professional development"

Employers must ensure that candidates have completed an induction into their role and responsibilities, including familiarising themselves with policies, procedures and relevant legislation. Employers must also ensure that candidates have had sufficient occupational practice experience to demonstrate competence within their role and to ensure readiness for assessment, before undertaking their qualification.

An employee who is under investigation for issues relating to practice should not commence an SVQ program until the matter has been resolved and their competence in practice is not in question. Any candidate who is under investigation for any disciplinary matters, that call into question their competent practice in accordance with the NOS, should be placed on hold until the matter has been resolved and their practice is no longer called into question.

Employers need to ensure that they have considered the SCQF characteristics prior to a member of staff being presented for assessment. This is specifically in relation to the characteristics relevant to communication at the different SCQF levels. For information on these characteristics please use the link below:

<http://scqf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/SCQF-Revised-Level-Descriptors-Aug-2012-FINAL-web-version1.pdf>

The Assessor's Role

In line with the requirements of the L&D9DI Unit it is the responsibility of the assessor to determine whether the candidate is ready to plan their assessment. The assessor should work with candidates to identify any gaps in knowledge and skills before starting assessment. This responsibility extends to determining the candidate's written and spoken English language ability that is required for their job role and responsibilities.

This is crucial in ensuring candidates are in the right role and can generate the required standard of evidence to meet the competences within the qualification. It is important to ensure those candidates who may need additional time, to reach the required level of competence, can receive the support they need.

In brief assessors must ensure candidates are ready for assessment.

Selecting Assessors

The Assessment Strategy requires those who are working within the social services sector to hold a registerable qualification for the area and level of practice being assessed. However, assessors are not required to register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) or other accepted regulatory body.

It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that assessors have achieved or are working towards a registerable qualification as defined by the SSSC in the area of practice they are assessing. In addition to this the assessor must hold qualifications equivalent to, or above, the level of award they are assessing and in the relevant area of practice.

The SSSC website provides a list of registerable qualifications for each area of practice. For further information go to:

<http://www.sssc.uk.com//Applying-for-registration/qualifications.html>

If a current assessor does not meet the above requirement they must plan to work towards an approved qualification within the agreed timescale of three years stated within the Assessment Strategy.

The SSSC will accept a qualification meeting the registration requirements with other regulatory bodies as detailed on their website. For further information go to:

<http://www.sssc.uk.com/Applying-for-registration/who-can-apply-to-register.html>

It should be noted that if an individual has let their registration lapse with any of the other regulatory bodies detailed on the SSSC website then it is incumbent on the individual assessor to show through their CPD that they have kept their experience, knowledge and skills current to enable them to assess at the level and in the area they are assessing.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that assessors are:

- occupationally competent and experienced. (Occupational competence must be certificated. Experience should be credible and maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing professional development appropriate to the area of practice assessed).

and

- have knowledge and experience of the regulation, legislation and Codes of Practice for the service, and the requirements of national standards at the time assessment is taking place.

and

- hold or be working towards, an assessor qualification deemed appropriate by the qualification regulator and achieved within agreed timescales. (Where assessors do not yet hold a qualification their decisions and activities must be reviewed and countersigned by an appropriately qualified assessor).

Access to assessment

All candidates should have equal access to assessment. Regardless of geographical location, work setting and patterns of work they must be enabled and supported to undertake these awards. Centres are required to demonstrate how they ensure candidates have equal access to assessment.

Assessment

Evidence of candidates' competent performance must be drawn from work activities that take place under normal working conditions and within their usual work role and environment. Where candidates write about their work practice they must identify appropriate knowledge points that show how the knowledge informs their practice.

Every effort must be made to ensure that claims for knowledge and performance are maximised in each piece of evidence to avoid evidence only containing performance or knowledge

Planning and Holistic Assessment

Integration of knowledge and practice is a fundamental feature of work within the care sector. When planning for assessment it is essential that assessors and candidates identify opportunities to integrate a number of activities and knowledge for assessment. The success of integration of knowledge and practice is facilitated through the assessor's ability to support the planning process with candidates. Unit by unit planning is strongly discouraged and candidates must be supported to consider how their skills and knowledge in a particular situation are not discrete to one unit but cover aspects of a number of units.

Planning needs to be documented in a way that is meaningful and beneficial for the candidate and assessor to ensure the candidate is clear about what they are expected to do, what they are expected to cover, the assessment method to be used and the timescale for completion. How this plan is presented is dependent on the learning style and needs of the candidate but assessors need to ensure that their approach to planning is congruent with the current learning and development standards.

It is not generally necessary to provide separate pieces of evidence for each aspect of Performance Criteria, where it mentions individuals/key people and others. Additional discussion with the candidate may be all that is required to ensure the claim for such a performance criterion is robust. However, assessors and candidates need to be satisfied that all parts of a performance criterion are covered sufficiently.

Assessors must use their own judgement and expertise to deploy a range of assessment methods, in line with current Learning and Development Standards, to establish candidate competence.

Observation of candidate performance is considered to be the principle and most reliable method of assessment and observation is required for each Unit. The amount of observation carried out for each unit is determined by the assessor. They must be satisfied that they have observed a sufficient amount of practice in conjunction with other candidate evidence to reach a decision that the candidate is deemed to be competent in relation to that unit. The assessor must be prepared to justify their assessment decisions to the IV and EV if required.

It is expected that observation will be carried out holistically therefore any one observation may provide evidence across several Units.

Where an assessor observation would be intrusive, compromising the dignity or privacy of the individual, it is expected that an observation by an expert witness is provided.
(see section on expert witness)

Sources of evidence (1-10)

1. **Observation of a Candidate's practice** — a record of the direct observation of the candidate's performance, in naturally occurring work situations by a qualified assessor, or an assessor undergoing L&D9Di with their decisions being countersigned by a qualified assessor.
2. **Candidate's reflective account** of practice/practice journals — evidence must include the candidate's explanation of their practice and focus on the reflective questions; What? How? When? What now? Why?

Recording evidence

The candidate must produce reflective writing for all levels of these qualifications as this is in keeping with the role and functions of any employee within the social care and child care sectors.

Post registration CPD requirements with the SSSC and other regulatory bodies requires reflective writing and therefore it is expected that within any candidate portfolio there is written reflection focused on candidate practice. For further guidance centres should refer to SCQF descriptors for each SCQF level.

It is recognised that alternative forms of recording portfolio evidence will evolve using information and communications technologies including e-portfolios. Assessors must ensure they are satisfied that the evidence presented by the candidate is traceable, auditable and authenticated and meets the requirements set out in the assessment strategy and this guidance document.

Regardless of the form of recording used, the guiding principle is that candidate evidence and information must be traceable for internal and external verification purposes. Where an e-portfolio requires candidate evidence to be 'uploaded' claims for performance and knowledge must be claimed within the evidence itself to ensure the claims can be tracked against the NOS.

All evidence relating to practice must be robust and comply with legal requirements and current best practice in the sector. This is particularly crucial in relation to confidentiality of information and data protection.

Voice Recorded Evidence.

On the occasion that voice recorded evidence is used the place in the recording at which each performance criterion and knowledge point is being claimed **must** be clearly documented. This enables the assessor, IV and EV to locate these points within the

evidence and to then confirm whether they believe these have been met as claimed and a judgment of candidate competence can therefore be determined.

3. Products of the candidate's own work and contributions they have made to a specific document. For example:

- care plans,
- minutes,
- reports,
- project reports,
- curriculum planning,
- plans for care and support,
- child observations and assessments.

4. Records of professional discussion with an assessor on how evidence meets the standards. Records of naturally occurring questions arising from direct observation and/or discussion.

Professional Discussion is an important element in evidence gathering and should not simply be a question and answer session but be planned in advance with the candidate. The planned discussion will be used to clarify the candidate's practice as well as providing evidence integrated across a number of units.

Professional Discussion could also provide evidence for knowledge and performance criteria that are difficult to evidence through observation of the candidates work activities.

Professional discussion for vocational awards should be in the form of a structured review of practice with the discussion captured on audio tape or as a written account. The written or audio summary must be clearly cross referenced to the standards to enable the evidence to be internally verified and be authenticated by the assessor. An audit trail of such evidence must be clearly identified.

Professional Discussion is particularly useful to provide evidence of a candidate's knowledge and understanding of the principles which support practice, policies, procedures and legislation. It can also provide evidence that the candidate can critically evaluate these and apply them to their practice and clearly demonstrate the link between theory and practice.

5. Direct questioning:

This where the assessor asks the candidate questions and records their response or where the candidate is given a few questions to write a response to. Please note question banks are not permitted within these qualifications. Questions can be used to fill gaps in performance or knowledge but this usually only occurs at the end of the candidate's portfolio when it is not possible to cover them using other principal

assessment methods as detailed above.

- 6. Written assignments and projects**, relevant to the candidates work role, designed to cover knowledge not easily incorporated into accounts of practice.

Assessment of Knowledge and Understanding

Assessment of Knowledge and Understanding should, wherever possible, be carried out during performance to ensure integration of theory and practice. Evidence of Knowledge and Understanding should be clearly identified within the audit trail within the candidate's portfolio of evidence.

Common Knowledge Points

In the majority of Units, at each level of each SVQ, there are knowledge points which are common across the Units at that particular level.

Where it is not possible to identify this knowledge in reflective accounts of practice, to avoid repetition, assessors should assist candidates to provide evidence for these knowledge points in focused pieces of work. The aim of these pieces of work is to cover knowledge points fully and should clearly demonstrate the application of knowledge to the candidate's everyday work practice.

Assessors should be clear that knowledge cannot be inferred from observed practice, however it is acceptable for knowledge to be included as long as it is explicit from what has been observed or from what a candidate specifically states during the activity being observed. For example, a candidate might be explaining why they are washing their hands to an individual or a child and then they may go on to explain that this is part of their organisation's specific health and safety policy. This would cover specific knowledge points and is a natural discussion that could take place during practice that the assessor would hear. However if a candidate washed their hands and did not explain the reasons for doing this then to claim those same knowledge points would not be appropriate as knowledge would be inferred rather than explicit.

Observation could also be used to confirm knowledge if the situation observed is similar to a piece of practice recorded in a previous reflective account by the candidate, this will help avoid assessors and candidates writing about the same piece of practice. For example a candidate may have written in a reflective account that they always wash their hands using a specific technique and antibacterial hand-wash whenever they are about to undertake personal care to avoid the risk of cross infection. Then in an observation the assessor might then see them carry out this task thus showing how the knowledge has been applied to practice. A range of methods should be used to identify knowledge from observed practice. For example, candidates could be questioned, encouraged to review their practice verbally or knowledge could be included in reflective accounts of practice.

Assessors need to ensure that the candidate is able to apply knowledge and understanding within the context of the Units. Assessors should use holistic assessment to establish the knowledge and understanding required to support competent practice.

Centres may choose to use their own style of project or assessment to cover these points. However, when considering the approach to use centres must ensure the following key areas are covered:

- Candidates must show their understanding of the knowledge point
- and**
- Candidates must explain how they would use that knowledge in their job role
- and**
- Candidates, wherever possible, should be guided to provide a specific example from their work practice where they have applied that knowledge
- and**
- Candidates should demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in the context of the Units

This approach provides a structure or framework to facilitate the candidate meeting these common knowledge points. The assessment methods used to cover the common knowledge points are subject to the professional judgement of the assessor and should be planned to meet all knowledge points.

It is essential that the key areas detailed above are covered. **Workbooks or set pieces of work which identify scenarios for reflection or which contain a list of questions are not acceptable pieces of evidence** to demonstrate candidate competence in relation to the common knowledge points.

Other methods of assessment:

7. Simulation

- Simulations should not be used other than in exceptional circumstances. The assessor should seek clarification from the Internal Verifier as to the relevance of the method and keep a record of the discussion for standardisation purposes.
- Centres are advised not to create standard simulated activities or worksheets as the requirement for any simulated piece of evidence would only occur at the end of the portfolio development where gaps are identified and therefore will be specific to each individual candidate.
- If a centre feels there is a need for a standard simulation activity then this is an indicator that the candidate unit selection is not appropriate as it does not relate to the candidate's job role and function
- If in doubt the Internal Verifier should seek clarification from the Awarding Body as to the suitability of the simulation method of assessment.
- Where simulation is used it must replicate usual activities in real work situations. The use of simulation to support evidence should be agreed in advance by the assessor and candidate at the assessment planning stage.

8. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

A candidate may have completed pieces of work from a training course or other qualification which demonstrate knowledge and understanding applicable to the candidate's work setting. It is the candidate's responsibility to highlight these pieces of work as part of the assessment planning process and the assessor must then consider the relevance of these pieces of work in the context of the qualification the candidate is now undertaking.

Any previous pieces of work must be no more than 5 years old and the content in terms of legislation and best practice must be current. All pieces of RPL should be presented within the candidate's portfolio of evidence, given an evidence number and any performance or knowledge points it covers should be clearly marked alongside the parts of the text they relate to. The assessor must authenticate that any evidence used is the candidate's own work.

Where a candidate has completed individual SVQ units as part of an HNC they will receive automatic credit for this within SQA's qualification registration data base and so will not be required to complete these units again as they appear within the SVQ. In these instances it would be helpful for an SQA record of the unit achievements be presented in the candidate's portfolio so that it is apparent why these will not be covered as part of this qualification.

9. Witness Testimony

This is a statement from someone who has worked alongside the candidate or can confirm their practice in a specific context. They be asked to endorse and comment on a reflective piece a candidate has written that they have witnessed.

The witness must confirm in their statement that what the candidate has written is accurate, rather than fulfilling the role of the assessor and writing a direct observation. It is the assessor's role to determine the suitability of the witness. This assessment method is seldom used within the assessment of these qualifications, instead Expert Witness provides more robust evidence of a candidate's competent practice

Individuals as witnesses

Individuals and carers are in an advantageous position in relation to having direct experience of care provision. Their views of the service received should be seen as relevant and important in the assessment of the candidate's performance, alongside other sources of evidence. This type of evidence will be particularly relevant to lone workers such as childminders and home carers.

Service users and carers may provide witness testimony. Final decisions about the suitability and status of this testimony in the candidate's assessment will be made by the assessor.

10. Expert witness

Expert witness testimony can be used to meet the practice observation requirement of option units and can provide additional observation evidence for the mandatory units (in addition to the assessor observations of practice).

Centres are required to evidence how they have selected and supported the expert witnesses that are used. There is not an SQA requirement that they attend centre standardisation meetings or fill out centre registration forms, however if the centre the candidate is doing their SVQ with requires this then that is the centre's prerogative. External Verifiers are looking to see that the centre has a process for approving the expert witness and supporting them – this will look different for different centres.

The role of the expert witness is to submit evidence to the assessor as agreed between the assessor and candidate at the assessment planning stage. The evidence may cover points from an individual unit or across several units. This evidence must directly relate to candidate's performance in the work place which has been observed by the expert witness.

The expert witness must:

- have a working knowledge of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for the competences on which their expertise is based.

and

- have credible experience/occupational competence in the area being assessed. This may include line managers or other experienced colleagues from inside an organisation or from other agencies involved with the workplace.

and

- be inducted by the centre to ensure that they are familiar with the Standards for those Units for which they are to provide expert witness testimony.

They must also understand the centre's recording requirements and will require guidance on the skills required to provide evidence for the NOS.

It is not necessary for expert witnesses to hold an assessor qualification as the qualified assessor makes all assessment decisions about the acceptability of evidence regardless of source. This would include expert witness evidence.

Internal Verifiers

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that Internal Verifiers:

- Are occupationally competent in the area they are verifying. (It is crucial that Internal Verifiers understand the nature and context of the assessors' work and that of their candidates).

and

- have working knowledge of the regulation, legislation and Codes of Practice for the service and the requirements of national standards at the time any assessment is taking place.

and

- hold qualifications and/or experience equivalent to or above that of the assessor.

and

- hold, or be working towards, the appropriate learning and development qualifications for Internal verification. Achievement of this qualification must be within appropriate and agreed timescales.

and

- occupy a position that gives them authority and resources to co-ordinate the work of assessors, provide authoritative advice, call meetings as appropriate, visit and observe assessments and carry out all the other internal verification roles in accordance with the most current Learning and Development National Occupational Standards.

National Occupational Standards

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all candidates, Assessors and Internal Verifiers are using the current standards. These can be downloaded from SQA Care's website.

Candidate Portfolios

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the candidate's portfolio is completed and includes the names of the Assessor(s) and Internal Verifier(s), the achievement record and the candidate's signed, plagiarism declaration that the work contained is the candidate's own.

Photographic evidence

No photographic evidence, which identifies individual children or adults, should be included in portfolios.

Location of evidence

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the External Verifier has access to the candidates' evidence in a format that is clearly tracked against the NOS. This requires all evidence to detail where it meets the standards through performance criteria and knowledge points being claimed alongside the relevant part of the text that they are applicable to. Evidence presented with no claims for performance and/or knowledge detailed on it will be deemed to be unsatisfactorily tracked against the NOS.

Malpractice Policy

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that SQA's procedures for dealing with suspected cases of malpractice are adhered to. These procedures are necessary for maintaining the integrity of SQA's qualifications.

SQA is committed to safeguarding its reputation for the quality and credibility of its qualifications. All allegations of malpractice should be investigated consistently, fairly and impartially.

The term 'malpractice' covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the assessment process or the integrity of an SQA qualification, the validity of an SQA certificate, or the reputation and credibility of SQA.