

SVQ HABIA STATEMENT - Temporary Adaptions/Mitigations and supplementary guidance

Purpose

The statement has been prepared on behalf of Skills Active as the SSC and Habia as the SSB in relation to the achievement SVQ competency-based qualifications (Hairdressing, Barbering, Beauty Therapy and Nail Services) during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are keen to support those learners/candidates that are currently registered on these SVQs and this statement shall apply for a period of 6 months to 30th January 2021, so that they are not disadvantaged by the current situation. This affects the assessment of SVQs, across a number of awarding bodies, learners in full time, part-time education and those on existing apprenticeship frameworks. This statement will remain subject to review.

Aim

This statements aim is to provide clear direction, guidance and support for awarding bodies, training providers/centres, employers, learners/candidates, regulatory organisations, and insurers. It is provided in relation to adaptations/mitigations and guidance as a direct response to Covid-19 restrictions.

Background

The SVQ is a measure of competency in a job role and as such provides certification to practice and enter the sector as a competent job ready professional. The certificate issued upon completion of the qualification is recognised by the sector, employers, and insurance providers. The certificate demonstrates that the required level of competency has been met in full, forming the basis of fact to gain employment and the relevant professional indemnity cover.

The Impact of COVID-19

The Covid19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the sector and will continue to have when we are able to return to work, there will be new ways of working required. Maintaining professionalism within the sector is a key determiner to the sector returning to a new normal and assuring public confidence.

Impact of Covid-19 to Competency Levels

In order to protect and maintain the integrity of the qualifications and assessment levels, performance evidence should continue to be the primary source of assessment to demonstrate consistent competent performance. Any variation has the potential to devalue the SVQ, leading to confusion over levels of competence. Consequently, learners/candidates will potentially enter the sector with lesser skills, resulting in unprofessional ways of working, the potential to cause harm and reputational damage to the sector.

We believe that the following principles should continue to be applied when considering any adaptations, they:

1. must ensure that learners are competent and safe to practice meeting health, safety and legal requirements

2. must support the standards set by standard setting authority, employers and individual industries
3. will neither advantage or disadvantage learners historically, now or in the future
4. must maintain the validity, reliability, and integrity of standards and qualifications
5. must cover all the knowledge, skills, values and competencies

All stakeholders have a duty of care to every learner/candidate and ultimately the client. The achievement of a regulated hair, barbering, beauty therapy or nail services SVQ qualification is confirmation of competence that a learner is 100% job ready to work in the sector, ratified by the issued certificate.

Permitted Assessment methods*, Temporary adaptations/mitigations and additional guidance valid for 6 months to January 2021

Knowledge & understanding to demonstrate 100% achievement of the underpinning knowledge and understanding specification in the National Occupational Standards required by each learner/candidate

The recommended approach including the knowledge and understanding criteria usually assessed by externally set mandatory testing (closed book) or knowledge assignments is as follows, this could be conducted virtually and recorded with appropriate consent:

- Knowledge and understanding assessed by externally set mandatory question papers where it is not possible to invigilate under formal assessment conditions ('closed book'); the knowledge and understanding should be evidenced and referenced to other forms of knowledge and understanding achieved to include:
 - evidence cross referenced from another unit already achieved as a mandatory question under formal assessment conditions ('closed book')
 - assignment/project evidence cross referenced to the knowledge and understanding
 - written questions
- ***Where possible knowledge and understanding criteria should be inferred from practical observation****
- ***Where knowledge and understanding cannot be inferred, oral Q&A and professional discussion should be used to generate evidence against the remaining criteria*.***

Assessment of knowledge and understanding criteria, oral questioning/Q&A and professional discussion sessions must be carried out by an assessor who is occupationally competent and in a way that authenticates the responses are the learners/candidates own, as set out in the assessment strategy. All evidence gathered should be traceable, auditable, and authenticated*.

Existing assessment methods in the current assessment strategy*.

Performance criteria to demonstrate 100% achievement of the skills performance and range specification in the National Occupational Standards is required by each learner/candidate. However, it should be noted that the number of observations and number of clients is not fixed provided the full performance criteria and range is met

Practice or assessment observations can only be completed when the sector and salons are operational, inclusive of realistic working environments in educational settings (RWE) and an appropriate Covid-19 risk assessment has been completed. These must adhere to National, Regional and local Covid-19 guidance restrictions.

To maintain the rigour and consistency of the assessments against the National Occupational Standards in a workplace setting or realistic working environment (RWE), whilst taking account of government restrictions and guidance in respect of Covid-19 the following **existing assessment methods***, additional adaptations/mitigation and guidance may be considered:

The recommended approach including the assessment of performance criteria and range assessed by direct observation and supplemented by additional evidence.

- Performance criteria assessed by direct observation by a qualified assessor could include:
 - practical skills and range assessments carried out in the workplace or RWE on 'clients' **from the learner's/candidate's household*/**educational or workplace bubble.
 - **evidence collection could be cross referenced from another unit already achieved to cover a range***
 - clustering the performance of multiple treatments and services on individual 'clients' to maximise the evidence opportunities of performance criteria and range, limiting close proximity timescales associated with providing treatments or services to increased numbers of clients, examples to consider;

Hairdressing:

Cut hair using basic techniques (SKACH3), learners/candidates are required to carry out the following cuts; one length - above shoulder, one length – below shoulder, uniform layer, short graduation with scissor over comb, long graduation, with a fringe. If a learner/candidate has been observed carrying out each of these cuts, has been assessed as being competent in each and has covered the remaining range areas, this could be covered in 5 observations

Beauty:

Provide manicure services (SKANS2), learners/candidates are required to carry out the following for providing manicure services; have used all the consultation techniques, have dealt with at least one of the necessary actions*, have used 4 of the 5 types of hand and nail treatments*, have applied all types of nail finish, have provided all types of treatment advice. A learner/candidate could cluster the types of hand and nail treatments to maximise the observation opportunity by the learner/candidate being observed performing hand exfoliator, mask, mitts and dark enamel finish from the range on one hand and the paraffin wax, french enamel finish from the range on the other.

- use of technology in a workplace, could be considered to evidence the observation of range performance evidence, remotely by the assessor (live streamed, recorded and retained), provided there is a vocationally competent person onsite
- payment by the 'client' should be made by contactless means
- Performance evidence and the use of simulations is identified in the assessment strategy as 'any structured assessment exercise involving a specific task which reproduces real life situations'. The use of simulation based on this criteria for the assessment of the following activities is acceptable and could include:
 - **dealing with fire and other emergencies***; a current accepted simulation
 - **dealing with health and safety activities outside or peripheral to normal practices*** a current accepted simulation
 - reception and retail facilities to be managed in line with Covid19 risk assessment for the safe distancing of clients, learners/candidates and assessors due to Covid-19 restrictions this additional simulation has been deemed acceptable

The use of head blocks or other artificial mannequin, nail or other trainers is not a permitted simulation.

Internal and external verification

To maintain the rigour and consistency of the internal and external verifications process against the National Occupational Standards in a workplace setting or realistic working environment (RWE), both the internal and external quality assurance arrangements remain as stated in the assessment strategy documentation.

- Performance criteria verified by direct observation by a qualified internal or external verifier could include:
 - verification processes may be completed and conducted virtually, by live stream, recorded and retained with appropriate consent and authentication of the candidate and assessor
- **Knowledge and understanding verified by sampling of the production evidence by a qualified internal or external verifier is achieved by Remote Desktop sampling in line with the current policies and procedures, taking account of the management of the programme*.**

Continual professional development of Assessors, Internal and External Verifiers

- To maintain continual professional development, it is recommended that due to the availability of excellent online resources, assessors and verifiers are able to attribute these activities as part of the CPD requirements. When recording this type of CPD activity, reference should be made to the learning outcome and how it is intended to be implemented in practice.

Certification

The above temporary mitigations/adaptions and additional guidance will permit learners/candidates to be able to progress to the next stage of their learning or career and will be reviewed as required and could include:

- Unit certification for those units already completed with full skills evidence, assessed and verified
- Full certification only to be issued once full achievement of the assessor observed practical skills evidence requirements, knowledge and range of job competence are achieved against the existing criteria and internal and external verification processes completed.