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| **Assessment Strategy** |
| **Qualification Title(s)** |  SVQ Integrated Health and Social Care SCQF level 7 |
| **Developed by** | Skills for Care and Development (SfC&D) |
| **Approved by ACG** | 12/6/2024 |
| **Version** |  1 |

#### **Introduction**

This strategy provides awarding bodies with consistent approaches to assessment and quality assurance. It sets out compliance standards for awarding bodies referring to SQA Accreditation regulatory requirements. The evidence requirements and principles in this strategy, relate to the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Integrated Health and Social Care SCQF level 7.

Representatives and stakeholders from health and social care sectors, co-designed this strategy with:

* Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)
* NHS Education for Scotland (NES)

The key areas are:

#### assessment requirements

#### simulation

#### roles within the assessment and verificationprocess

#### external quality assurance requirements for awarding bodies

#### additional information.

**1 ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS**

**1.1 The shared principles of assessment**

There are four standard setting organisations (SSOs) within the UK that collectively, under the umbrella of Skills for Care and Development (SfCD), have the responsibility to maintain and develop the national occupational standards for the sector. The SSOs are:

* Skills for Care (SfC) – England
* Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) – Northern Ireland
* Social Care Wales (SCW) – Wales
* Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) – Scotland

The NOS underpin Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) for the social care and children and young people workforce. SSOs set the [[1]](#footnote-1)principles and approaches for assessment and quality assurance underpinning this strategy. [[2]](#footnote-2)Skills for Health assessment principles are also aligned due to the integrated nature of this qualification.

**1.2 Readiness for assessment**

SVQs are based on NOS and aligned with the [[3]](#footnote-3) Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). These work-based qualifications require learners to provide evidence for all performance criteria and knowledge in each NOS which makes up the full qualification. The learner's job role must match the SCQF level and the mandatory and optional NOS, enabling the learner to collect and submit relevant practice evidence, theory and knowledge for assessment. The assessor and learner must check that the NOS the learner has selected are relevant to the learner's regular practice activities before the assessment begins, avoiding simulation as an assessment method.

Learners deserve the best opportunity and conditions for completing their qualifications. The learner must have:

* completed an induction, and have sufficient occupational practice and knowledge
* their own learning and assessment needs are met, through the provision of support, conditions and materials
* relevant understanding, and documentation about the assessment process
* registered with the awarding body before the formal assessment begins
* consented to the assessment.

The learner must not have:

* any disciplinary matters under investigation which question their practice competence.
	1. **Equality, diversity, and inclusion**

Everyone involved in the assessment process must:

* demonstrate a commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusionunder current legislation
* actively promote human rights and the core principles of dignity, fairness, accessibility, respect, and autonomy
* deliver qualifications in line with the codes of practice applicable to the learner’s role and work setting.
	1. **Protection, wellbeing, and trauma-informed practice**

Everyone involved in the assessment process must recognise and understand their responsibilities for the well-being and safeguarding of children and adults. They should be [[4]](#footnote-4)trauma-informed, to promote safe and trusting relationships, empowerment, collaboration and choice throughout the assessment processes.

**1.5 Holistic assessment**

Assessors must apply the principle of holistic assessment, enabling the learner to meet the performance criteria, theory and knowledge across several mandatory and optional NOS within each piece of evidence. Holistic assessment minimises the impact of the assessment on individuals who need care or support. It also avoids duplication of evidence and over-evidencing the NOS.

Assessment decisions against the NOS must be based on the learner’s normal work activity and assessed over a period of time by occupationally qualified, competent, and knowledgeable assessors. Assessment of the learner’s theory and knowledge may take place in or outside of a real work environment. However, it must be tailored to the learner. The learner's understanding of the theory and knowledge must be applied to current practice in the workplace.

Data protection policy and legal requirements must be followed when gathering and recording evidence for assessment. It must be recorded and presented in a holistic way that is explicit, traceable, auditable, and authenticated for internal and external quality assurance.

Assessors and verifiers must be satisfied that all performance evidence, theory and knowledge, meet the assessment strategy and guidance for assessment requirements.

**1.6 Planning for holistic assessment**

The assessor and learner must jointly complete and record an assessment plan, enabling the learner to collect evidence holistically. The assessor will identify a combination of assessment methods (triangulation), to produce robust evidence and justify the assessment decisions against the NOS.

Acceptable assessment methods are:

* observation
* expert witness testimony
* related questioning and inspecting work products
* professional discussion with learners
* witness testimony
* learner statements or reflective accounts
* recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Relevant RPL should be completed at the start of the assessment, avoiding duplication of evidence and learning. Assessment providers, assessors, and verifiers can access RPL resources on [[5]](#footnote-5)[SSSC](https://www.sssc.uk.com/careers-and-education/qualifications/recognition-of-prior-learning/), and [[6]](#footnote-6)[SCQF](https://scqf.org.uk/support/support-for-individuals/rpl-for-learners/) websites.

The quality assurance principles of assessment (valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient) are defined in learning and development standards. They must be applied when deciding when and how each assessment method should be used.

Planning should be learner-led, with the assessor encouraging the learner to become familiar with the standards, have ownership of the qualification and understand how they can progress through the qualification. The plan should be unique to each learner, any reasonable adjustments, and the care or support needs of individuals. Continual planning will support the ongoing process of assessment, review, and feedback throughout the assessment until all performance criteria and knowledge are met.

**1.7 Direct observation**

Assessment of the NOS must include direct observation as the principal and most reliable assessment method. The observation must be naturally occurring to minimise any impact on the care or support of individuals.

Observations are completed as part of a robust triangulation of assessment methods, which cover performance-based evidence from different sources. Observed practice should link to the reflective evidence by the learner and confirm that the practice is accurate, authentic, and consistent.

Assessors should apply creative methods for observation, including the use of technology where appropriate, review of records, liaising with others in the workplace and directly observing learners undertaking tasks.

Audio and visual technology for remote observations is acceptable where a risk assessment demonstrates the technology does not compromise the privacy, dignity, consent, or confidentiality of anyone involved in the assessment, as described in section 5. Retaining some face-to-face observation in the portfolio is required.  Interactions in the wider naturally occurring environment inform holistic assessment and safeguarding. Where remote observation benefits the individual receiving care or support, remote observation is acceptable, but there should be at least one instance of face-to-face observation in a portfolio.

**2** **SIMULATION**

Simulation should only be undertaken in a minority of situations when the learner is unable to complete the standards because evidence cannot be collected through normal work activity. This could be an emergency or rare situation where other assessment methods have been exhausted. Simulation cannot be the sole source of evidence for a whole unit.

Where simulation is used it must:

* replicate usual activities in realistic workplace settings
* be standardised with a clear rationale
* meet the necessary rigour and integrity of the assessment
* result from activities that have taken place in a realistic working environment.

A realistic working environment should include the following features:

* reflect the workplace conditions and environment and include facilities, equipment and materials used in the workplace
* reflect the relationships, constraints and pressures met in the workplace
* information available to the learner on the nature of the activity must be consistent with the policies and practices typical of the workplace setting.
1. **ROLES WITHIN THE ASSESSMENT AND VERIFICATION PROCESS**

Assessment providers will be responsible for maintaining up-to-date information on assessors, and internal verifiers. Details of the relationship between the learner and anyone providing evidence for assessment must be declared and noted by the assessor to minimise conflict of interest.

The awarding body is responsible for confirming that assessors and verifiers are qualified to make assessment decisions.

The awarding body and SSO will develop guidance for the assessment of SVQs.

* 1. **Assessor**

The assessor is key to the assessment process and is subject to the following requirements.

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| **Requirement** | **Definition** |
| **Occupational competence**  | * The assessor must be capable of conducting the functions covered by the NOS they are assessing to the standard described within them, according to current sector practice.
* They must hold a registrable qualification acceptable to the SSSC for the area and level (SCQF 7 or above) of practice being assessed or a recognised healthcare qualification at SCQF level 7 or above.
* SSSC registration is not required as the assessor may not be in a post which can be registered under the functional criteria of SSSC registration.
* The assessor must have knowledge of regulation, legislation and/or codes of practice applicable to the role they are assessing.
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| **Assessor qualification** | * The assessor must hold or be working towards a valid assessor’s qualification as identified by the qualification regulator SQA Accreditation. Qualifications must be achieved within appropriate timescales.
* Holders of predecessor qualifications must work to the current NOS for Learning and Development which can be evidenced through continuous professional learning (CPL).
* Assessors completing a qualification should be supported by, and have all decisions countersigned by a qualified assessor.
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| **Experience** | * The assessor should have sufficient operational experience of the role they are assessing and be able to interpret current working practices, technologies, and products.
* The assessor must have technical knowledge and experience of NOS at the time the assessment is taking place.
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| **Continuous professional learning (CPL)** | * The assessor should have access to and be engaging with CPL activities to keep up to date with developments in the sector and any issues relevant to the qualification and/or its NOS.
* It is expected that credible CPL will contribute to professional development, inform practice, and assist assessors in meeting their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent, and confident manner.
* CPL should be maintained as an annual requirement which will be examined as part of the external quality assurance process.
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* 1. **Coordinating assessor**

As the assessor’s occupational competence determines which NOS they assess, more than one assessor may be required. In such circumstances, a coordinating assessor must hold responsibility for the overall qualification and support of the learner. The coordinating assessor must be a qualified assessor who is occupationally competent and experienced in the terms stated in **3.1** of this strategy.

The coordinating assessor will be responsible for:

* coordinating the assessment of an individual learner
* the integration, planning and directing of assessment for the overall qualification
* ensuring the best use of all evidence available to make judgements about the competence of learners against standards
* the final judgement of competence for each NOS that has been assessed by more than one assessor
* working with internal verifiers to ensure standardised practice and decision-making within the assessment.
	1. **Expert witness**

Expert witnesses can meet the practice observation requirements of the optional NOS. They can also provide additional observation evidence for the mandatory NOS (in addition to the assessor's observations of practice).

Where the assessor's observation is unsuitable for ethical or practical reasons, or they do not hold occupational competence in an area of practice, the expert witness is a valid replacement for the observation. The assessor is still responsible for the final assessment decision. The expert witness can authenticate the performance claims of the learner or provide new evidence.

Where the expert witness evidence is solely to evidence candidate performance in the NOS, the assessor may carry out a professional discussion to ensure the final assessment decision is robust. The assessor may also support the expert witness to record the assessment and provide an audit trail.

Expert witnesses must be inducted and supported by the assessment provider.

Expert witnesses must demonstrate:

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| **Requirement** | **Definition** |
| **Occupational competence** | * The expert witness must have a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff.
* They must have current or recent experience of working at or above the level for which they are attesting competence.
* The expert witness must understand the assessment provider’s recording requirements and the necessary skills required to provide evidence.
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| **Assessor qualification** | * Not required
 |
| **Experience** | * The expert witness should have sufficient operational experience of the role they are assessing.
* The expert witness must have a working knowledge and experience of the NOS at the time the assessment is taking place.
 |
| **Continuous professional learning (CPL)** | * The expert witness should have CPL relevant to the sector for which they are assessing performance.
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* 1. **Internal verifier**

The internal verifier is central to the quality assurance and verification of assessment of performance evidence in the workplace. Internal verifiers should occupy a position that gives them authority and resources to coordinate the work of assessors, provide authoritative advice, call meetings as appropriate, visit and observe assessments and conduct all the other internal verification roles as required.

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| **Requirement** | **Definition** |
| **Occupational competence**  | * The internal verifier must be occupationally competent in the area they are verifying. It is crucial that internal verifiers understand the nature and context of the assessor’s work and that of the learner.
* They must hold a registrable qualification acceptable to the SSSC for the area and level (SCQF7 or above) of practice being assessed or a recognised healthcare qualification at SCQF level 7 or above.
* SSSC registration is not required as the internal verifier may not be in a post which can be registered under the functional criteria of SSSC registration.
* The internal verifier must have knowledge of regulation, legislation and/or codes of practice applicable to the role they are assessing.
 |
| **Internal verifier qualification** | * The internal verifier must hold or be working towards a valid internal verifier’s qualification as identified by the qualification regulator SQA Accreditation. Qualifications must be achieved within appropriate timescales.
* Holders of predecessor qualifications must work to the reviewed NOS for Learning and Development which can be evidenced through CPL.
* Internal verifiers completing a qualification should be supported by, and have all decisions countersigned by a qualified internal verifier.
 |
| **Experience** | * The internal verifier must have sufficient operational experience within the sector that can be evidenced and is current and relevant to the qualification at or above the level being verified. This must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when verifying judgements about the assessor’s assessment processes and decisions.
* The internal verifier must have in-depth knowledge and experience of the NOS at the time the assessment is taking place.
 |
| **Continuous professional learning (CPL)** | * The internal verifier should have access to, and be engaging with, CPL activities to keep up to date with developments in the sector and any issues relevant to the qualification and/or its units.
* It is expected that credible CPL will contribute to professional development, inform practice, and assist internal verifiers to meet their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent, and confident manner.
* CPL should be maintained as an annual requirement which will be examined as part of the external quality assurance process.
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* 1. **External Verifier**

The external verifier is the key link for awarding bodies in the quality assurance and verification of assessing learners’ performance in the workplace.

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| **Requirement** | **Definition** |
| **Occupational competence**  | * The external verifier must be occupationally knowledgeable and have gained their knowledge through working within the sector or appropriate professional/occupational area.
* The external verifier must have knowledge of regulation, legislation and/or codes of practice applicable to the qualification they are assessing.
 |
| **External verifier qualification** | * The external verifier must hold or be working towards a valid external verifier’s qualification as identified by the qualification regulator SQA Accreditation. Qualifications must be achieved within appropriate timescales. External verifiers working towards this will be supported by a qualified external verifier.
 |
| **Experience** | * The external verifier must have operational experience within the sector. This must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when verifying judgements about assessment processes and decisions.
* The external verifier must have in-depth knowledge and experience of NOS at the time assessment is taking place.
 |
| **Continuous professional learning (CPL)** | * The external verifier should have access to, and be engaging with, CPL activities to keep up to date with developments in the sector and any issues relevant to the qualification and/or its units.
* It is expected that credible CPL will contribute to professional development, inform practice, and assist external verifiers to meet their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent, and confident manner.
* CPL should be maintained as an annual requirement which will be examined as part of the awarding bodies professional development programme.
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**3.6** **Witness testimony**

Witness testimony from others including individuals and carers can enrich the assessment, making a valuable contribution to the evidence. Final decisions about the suitability of the testimony will be made by the assessor.

1. **EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDING BODIES**

The Scottish Awarding Body Forum (SABF) is a partnership between the SSSC, Awarding Bodies, SQA Accreditation, and representatives from learning and development. They oversee and support the development, quality, integrity, and consistency of qualifications and external verification. This partnership ensures consistency and high standards between different awarding bodies and their assessment providers.

Awarding bodies have the responsibility for ensuring assessment is of consistent quality. They must meet the regulatory requirements as specified by SQA Accreditation. Awarding bodies are responsible for the quality assurance of assessment providers.

**5 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**5.1 The use of remote assessment** **and audio/visual data**

Remote assessment is where the learner and assessor use digital technology for the assessment when the learner is in a different location from the assessor. This may include online portfolios, video conferencing and mobile devices which support:

* online observations of practice
* professional discussion
* viewing products
* discussion with expert witnesses
* virtual individual or group learner support.

As with all evidence, an accurate and traceable audit trail is necessary for internal and external verification. However, only short pieces of audio/visual recordings must be used as evidence. Assessors and verifiers must be able to determine where in the recording the evidence occurs, and this should be recorded and traceable.

It is best practice for the audio/visual evidence to be transcribed, and the audio/visual recording deleted to preserve anonymity. Informed consent is necessary before taking part in any remote assessment, including how the information will be shared and stored. The assessor must keep a record of consent.

The assessment provider must have a standardised approach to remote assessment, data protection and security. Measures for accountability, such as privacy policies and risk assessments are required, including for third-party online platforms or personal devices.

Assessment providers may wish to seek support from their own Information Technology/Governance department or the [[7]](#footnote-7)Information Commissioner’s Office.

1. https://skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SfCD-assessment-principles-\_updated-Feb2019-1.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/images/standards/qcf/Assessment%20of%20Competence%20-%20SfH%20Assessment%20Principles%20November%2017.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://scqf.org.uk/about-the-framework/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.gov.scot/publications/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland/pages/10/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. https://www.sssc.uk.com/careers-and-education/qualifications/recognition-of-prior-learning/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://scqf.org.uk/support/support-for-individuals/rpl-for-learners/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)