



**Higher National Qualifications
Qualification Verification Summary Report 2021
Social Services and Healthcare**

Verification group number: 82

Introduction

The following units in GK89 15 HNC Social Services were verified in 2020–21:

H8MN 34 Care in Contemporary Society at SCQF level 7

H8MM 34 Health Wellbeing and Safeguarding at SCQF level 7

Only a small number of centres were visited.

There were considerable challenges for college-based centres. The HNC in Social Services has a 60-day placement built in, but due to the pandemic most students had limited or no placement experience.

Working in partnership with the College Development Network and the regulatory body SSSC, a small group of qualification verifiers developed a series of case studies for learners to use for both core and optional units. Learners were left with the option of completing the three SVQ units that are included in the group award at a later date.

A 'theory-only route' was also developed as a number of learners needed three additional 'theory-based units' to replace the three SVQ units — or they would have been unable to access higher education.

These changes took time to develop, however all centres were issued with copies in March 2021 and all centres were able to complete their course programmes.

Feedback from the visits identified that the increased use of electronic communications as well as SVQ portfolios has been welcomed. Centres remarked that it 'speeds up the process' as tutors and assessors can review progress online, pick up any issues quickly and respond to learners.

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.

This criterion is not part of the HNC although 50% of the assessors are also involved in the assessment of the SVQ units that make up the group award GK89 15. Employers are also making the maintenance of CPD records a condition of employment and records are routinely updated and subject to scrutiny by employers.

Those that did include records had been able to access CPD opportunities through the internet, SSSC website and online courses.

There was also extensive use of MS Teams, Zoom or Google Drive in relation to ongoing CPD as well as routine standardisation meetings.

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

The pandemic has severely restricted access to workplaces. It is only since early summer 2021 that assessors and tutors have been able to access workplaces and for some colleges to be able to access limited placement opportunities. Forced changes had to be made to

take account of the lack of workplace access. This is covered in detail in the introduction to this report.

Category 3: Candidate support

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

All centres easily met this criterion with well-established processes in place to support candidates. The development of virtual meetings due to the pandemic wasn't a challenge and individuals commented that the virtual meetings, email and telephone contact worked well. One centre was able to provide laptops to learners without their own, although they did report that this did take time to organise. The qualification verifiers were not surprised about delays, as all centres had to make changes and revise plans at short notice.

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

All candidates had scheduled contact with their assessor and tutors, although teaching/delivery/tutorials and access moved from face-to-face to virtual. Centres that were visited indicated that the use of virtual technology for maintaining contact will be an ongoing feature of their contact with candidates. The few conversations that qualification verifiers had with candidates also confirmed that most candidates felt it improved contact and allowed them to maintain contact during a difficult time. One-to-one meetings were seen to be very valuable and were welcomed.

Virtual communication with candidates and between candidates increased during the pandemic and allowed assessors to increase support to individual learners requiring extra support. Candidates who were struggling or falling behind set dates for submissions were easily identified and contact initiated.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

All qualification reports indicated that there were no issues in relation to standardisation of assessment. Meetings moved from face-to-face to virtual, and reports from centres visited indicated that they were just as effective. Notes from the virtual meetings were written up and minutes made available for scrutiny.

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

For the HNC group award changes had to be made due to the lack of placements and during the academic year regular meetings were held between the SSSC, SQA and the College Development Network.

At the start of the academic session placements were available and most centres were making plans for the placements, with most due to start at the beginning of 2021. A small team of qualification verifiers developed a number of case studies that could be used across all colleges where learner placements were not available.

Changes also had to be made to the graded unit marking schedule and a revised marking schedule was issued to all centres who were able to use it to reflect the adaptations made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

The change from paper-based to electronic platforms has been increasing for a number of years and accelerated during the pandemic. All centres made changes to take account of the pandemic and in discussions with qualification verifiers they were confident that all evidence that was scrutinised was generated by candidates. Some centres also used electronic checks to ensure malpractice was minimised and all electronic platforms have their own password-protected systems. Candidates also complete a signed declaration that all evidence submitted is based on their own work and cannot start their award until the declaration is completed.

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

Of the small number of centres that were subject to qualification visits there were no issues reported of poor practice. The move from a physical visit to remote scrutiny and a virtual Teams meeting does remove the 'pressure on the day' as verifiers had the time to look at the materials selected. All verifiers reported that a virtual/remote visit does take longer than an on-site visit.

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

All centres were aware that changes to retention had been made by SQA. All had made the change and there were no issues or difficulties. This was checked and confirmed at all visits.

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

There were no issues identified. Standard practice is to set clear timelines to resolve any issues and all centres discussed the visit report at standardisation meetings.