

HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice – starting work placements

The Scottish Social Services Council, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate are working together to support, as far as reasonably possible, students undertaking work placements to allow completion of full Higher National Certificate (HNC) qualifications this academic year 2020-21.

The HNC qualifications in social services and childhood practice are work-based awards and a practice placement is required. This is supported widely across the sector with organisations and employers regularly welcoming students to support achievement of the qualification. This gives individuals the necessary practice experience and enables future employment in the sector.

Placement providers and centres working together

COVID-19 has meant placement providers are anxious about having students in the workplace. However, without a placement, assessment requirements cannot be completed for these awards.

We encourage centres and placement providers to work together to offer placements to students and ask that they carry out a full risk assessment. All centres and organisations have their own risk assessment procedures which they should use when arranging placements.

We're developing a toolkit to support the safe return of students to work placements where possible. It will include resources, current guidance and FAQs and we'll publish it on the [SSSC's Learning Zone](#) this autumn.

SSSC Registration

Both HNC awards are benchmark qualifications for some SSSC registration categories. SSSC's criteria for qualifications acceptable for registration is that any award:

- incorporates assessment against occupational standards or is based on the assessment of work-based competence
- is designed to match a particular function or range of functions within social services, or meets registration criteria set by a nationally recognised regulatory body
- is subject to a recognised and regulated form of external verification or assessment.

The key principles are that any award must:

- integrate observed, assessed practice and learning
- be recognised within a national qualifications framework
- recognise the importance of underpinning knowledge and a value base that is consistent with the Code of Practice for Social Service Workers.

Routes for completion of awards

Route 1

Candidates currently being supported by their employer should continue to use their employment as their placement for the duration of the award.

Route 2

Candidates independently undertaking their award but currently working in a suitable social service setting can seek permission to use their workplace as a placement opportunity. This would require agreement between the centre and the organisation to ensure suitability and is at the discretion of the organisation. A contract template will be available in the toolkit.

Route 3

Candidates with no sector employment have a suitable placement identified at the earliest opportunity and meet the competency requirements of the three SVQ units and achieve the full HNC award.

Route 4

Due to the pandemic and associated risk assessment it may not be possible for all candidates to start placements as early in the academic year as normal. Some centres are managing this by making contingency plans to support students to complete a block placement from January 2021 if possible. This would create enough practice opportunity for candidates to achieve the SVQ units.

More information

Given the current uncertainty around COVID-19 it is likely that some candidates may be unable to access sufficient work placement time and complete the full award. We are aware of this and considering, along with the SQA, possible alternatives. We will publish additional details as we have them.

If you have any questions about student placements please use the web form on our [Contact us page](#). You can also contact SQA at sqacare@sqa.org.uk

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