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**Assessment Strategy**

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| **Sector** | Food and Drink |
| **Qualification Title(s)** | SVQ in Spirits Operations at SCQF L6 |
| **Developed by** | National Skills Academy for Food and Drink |
| **Date approved by ACG** | 26 February 2020 |
| **Version**  | 1 |

**Section 1**

**Introduction**

The purpose of an assessment strategy is to provide awarding bodies with a consistent approach to assessment that complies with SQA Accreditation’s regulatory requirements.

The key areas this assessment strategy will cover are:

* how external quality control of assessment will be achieved
* which aspects must always be assessed through performance in the workplace
* the extent to which a realistic work environment and simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence
* the occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers

Awarding bodies must use the assessment strategy as the basis for developing and defining the evidence requirements and assessment methods their providers will use. This includes specifying how the qualification will be internally and externally quality assured.

**Scope**

This assessment strategy covers the SVQ in Spirits Operations at SCQF L6. This qualification is suitable for all types and sizes of spirit organisations that produce the range of different spirits, such as whisky, gin or vodka.

**Features**

The SVQ in Spirits Operations at SCQF L6 covers the competences required to work within general operations, processing, bottling, packing, labelling, casking, warehouse operations and despatch.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competency-based qualifications designed for use in the workplace.

Their purpose is to raise skills levels and performance across the workforce.

They ensure that individuals develop the skills and knowledge, which are exactly those needed to perform reliably and consistently at work. The knowledge content of the qualifications is designed to support and suit individual’s needs. It will support those who require the basics, but will also develop those who require significantly more detailed knowledge and understanding.

This flexible approach to designing SVQs allows employers and individuals to select those competences which are critical to performance at work, and also to support progression in employment. This way it is possible to develop the workforce and produce the technicians and managers of tomorrow. With such a key focus on the development and recognition of competence at work, these qualifications are ideal to use within workplace training and assessment systems. They will be essential to upskilling, driving up performance and increasing productivity across the sector.

SVQs are made up of units of competence based on National Occupational Standards. SVQs in the spirits sector have been credit rated and placed on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Each unit of competence is allocated a level, based on the SCQF descriptors, which reflect the degree of challenge of each unit.

Each unit is also allocated a credit value. This credit value is based on the average amount of time taken to complete the learning and assessment required by each unit. One credit equates to 10 hours of learning. Units with differing credit values are therefore a feature of qualifications, reflecting the varying learning and assessment requirements of units.

For further details about the SCQF, visit [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

**Equality of Opportunity and Diversity**

For further details on how the National Skills Academy for Food and Drink (NSAFD) works to ensure equality of opportunity and diversity, please refer to our Equality and Diversity Policy.

Awarding Body policy, procedures and guidance will detail the equality of opportunity and diversity implications for assessors and verifiers.

## **Section 2**

NSAFD works closely with Awarding Bodies to ensure that SVQs can be effectively implemented.

In addition to engagement and technical activity, individual memoranda of understanding and/or action plans are agreed with individual Awarding Bodies to drive forward a range of operational and development activity.

## NSAFD respects the individuality and confidentiality of each Awarding Body offering qualifications to the sector and the market place in which they are offered. NSAFD understands the need for differentiation in types and levels of service provided by Awarding Bodies to meet wide-ranging conditions across the sector, its labour market and potential sector entrants.

## **External quality control**

## The sector view is that it is important for external quality control to be achieved through an effective external quality sampling process combined with an annual approved centre risk rating system. Primarily, external quality control is aimed at improving internal quality assurance and assessment practice, and the effective exchange of information between centres, Awarding Bodies and NSAFD.

## External quality control will be achieved through these requirements:

## NSAFD recommends that each year external verifiers will complete two days of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), comprised of training or other developmental activities relevant to the spirits sector and approved by the Awarding Body. Training should include relevant updating in respect of changes to legislation and regulations impacting on the sector, standardisation activities and good practice developments in assessment and improving quality assurance. NSAFD may be invited by Awarding Bodies to observe and/or provide relevant input to CPD activity as appropriate.

## Awarding Bodies will operate a risk rating system that is applied to each active approved centre. Details of the risk rating system should be provided as part of the submission for accreditation of the qualification to the relevant qualifications regulatory authority. The Awarding Bodies will carry out risk assessment and risk rate each approved centre for SVQs. External quality assurance activity, and in particular the scope and rigour of sampling, is required to reflect the risk rating status of each centre.

## NSAFD, through its Qualifications and Frameworks staff, will maintain ongoing dialogue with Awarding Organisations to monitor practices, consider issues and gain feedback, which impact on qualifications design and the use of units of competence.

**Approval of centres to offer SVQs**

Approval procedures and quality assurance systems are developed by Awarding Bodies. Awarding Bodies will approve and quality assure provision of SVQs within centres. This allows assessment and verification activity to be tailored to the professional needs of centres in the best interests of candidates.

**Section 3**

**Approved Centres**

Approved Centres who are learning and skills providers deliver training and assessment services to learners and their employees in and around the workplace. Providers usually employ or contract with assessors, who often work peripatetically, to visit learners in their workplace at pre-arranged or contracted times.

For some employers, there may be business and operational advantages to becoming a centre to deliver qualifications and obtaining their own centre approval from an Awarding Body. This involves setting up and maintaining the quality systems and controls required by Awarding Bodies to offer qualifications within the company. Employers deliver training and assessment services to learners employed in their workplace. They use assessors (sometimes referred to as in-house assessors as they are usually company employees) to assess learner employees. However, they may also contract out externally with assessors who work peripatetically, to visit learners in their workplace at contracted times.

Units of competence completed by learners and assessment practice are subject to internal quality assurance via the internal verification process. Internal verification is an agreed and planned sampling process. This is carried out by a centre’s internal verification staff, who may be employed or under contract, to quality assure the assessment processes and practice.

## **Workplace assessment**

SVQs are specifically designed to be assessed in the workplace and workplace performance evidence is essential for all units of competence.

The use of employer’s training and assessment processes and records in the workplace are strongly encouraged, where this supports evidence of competent learner performance. This is particularly significant where such evidence is audited as part of external quality standards relevant to the spirits sector. Learner records of assessment and internal quality assurance activity will in this case reflect employer systems and records.

Where employer’s assessment processes or records are insufficiently rigorous to generate credible evidence of learner performance, then formal assessment processes must be implemented to confirm learner’s competence and this evidence captured in portfolio based records of assessment and internal verification.

**Workplace testimony**

Workplace personnel, who are not recognised as assessors, may contribute to the assessment process by providing workplace testimony. Those providing the testimony must be familiar with the activity being carried out and able to make a judgement that the task has been completed to organisational procedures and to the required standard. The person providing the testimony is not in a position to decide if the learner is competent overall, they are only able to judge the specific instance they observe. The overall decision regarding competence of the learner will be made by the assessor and is subject to internal verification.

## **Realistic work environment and simulation**

The use of simulation to replace normal working practice is **not** acceptable.

The only exception to this rule is for units of competence which address rare conditions or emergency situations which might endanger learner safety. These exceptions are clearly defined in the assessment guidance in the relevant unit of assessment. In such cases this will require the agreement of external quality assurance personnel.

When simulations are used they must be designed to mirror the same activity, as it would be carried out in the workplace and include:

* The number and sequence of actions needed to complete the activity
* The number and complexity of factors needed to complete the activity
* The urgency with which the activity must be completed and
* Achievement of an outcome(s) in the same time constraints that might apply in the workplace

Simulation cannot be used to provide the sole evidence for any one complete unit of assessment.

## **Occupational expertise of Assessors**

The role of an assessor is a demanding and complex one, requiring a high degree of both interpersonal and organisational skills. Assessors are required to make accurate and objective decisions as to whether the learner’s performance meets the assessment requirements laid out in units of competence.

For assessments to be considered valid, the assessor must meet the following requirements. Any assessments carried out by personnel who do not meet these requirements will be deemed a contribution to workplace testimony.

Assessors are required to:

* Provide current evidence of competence, knowledge and understanding in the areas to be assessed, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Body. This will normally be achieved through demonstrating competence in the roles which are to be assessed, which may be recorded in company training records. Alternatively, this can be demonstrated by relevant experience and continuing professional development which may include the achievement of qualifications relevant to the areas being assessed.
* Hold or be working towards achievement of the relevant assessor qualifications approved by the regulatory authority and set out in national requirements and guidance for assessment.
* Demonstrate their continuing professional development to ensure they are up to date with work practices in their sector area of expertise and developments in the SVQs they assess.
* Have a full and current understanding of the units of competence and requirements of the qualifications being assessed.
* Operate safely as an assessor in a spirits environment.

Assessors ‘in training’ who are not fully recognised as competent by Awarding Bodies may carry out assessment practice. For the period in training and working towards recognition, the assessor must have assessment activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised and competent assessor. The ‘in training’ period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for achieving recognition and competence.

**Occupational competence of internal verifiers**

Approved centres appoint internal verifiers (to play an Internal Quality Assurance role - IQA’s) and their role is to ensure consistency, maintain and improve the quality of assessment within the centre. The internal verifiers will monitor assessment activities and provide feedback to assessors, co-ordinate standardisation and provide guidance to assessors.

Internal verifiers in the spirits industry are likely to be departmental managers or specialist such as production or quality control managers. The essential point is that internal verifiers should be in a position to monitor the activities of the assessors for whom they are responsible and be able to carry out sample checks on both assessments and associated paperwork. It will also mean liaising with external verifiers and other representatives.

For assessments and internal quality assurance to be considered valid, the internal verifiers must meet the following requirements:

* Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the qualifications to be internally verified, and know how they are applied in business, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Body. Relevant knowledge and understanding of the workplace areas to be sampled during quality assurance activity is required. Relevant experience of working in or with the sector area(s) is preferable.
* Demonstrate competent practice in internal verification of assessment, and demonstrate understanding of the principles and practices of internal verification of assessment.
* Hold or be working towards achievement of the relevant internal verification qualifications approved by the regulatory authorities and set out in national requirements and guidance.
* Demonstrate their continuing professional development to ensure they are up to date with work practices and developments in the qualifications they internally verify.
* Know where and when to access specialist sector advice, regarding specialist or technical knowledge relating to assessment and internal verification decisions.
* Operate safely in a spirits environment.

Internal verifiers ‘in training’ who are not fully recognised as competent by Awarding Bodies may carry out internal verification of assessment practice. For the period in training and working towards recognition, they must have their internal verification activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised and competent internal verifier. The ‘in training’ period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for achieving recognition and competence.

**Occupational competence of external verifiers**

Awarding Bodies appoint external verifiers (to play an External Quality Assurance role - EQA’s) to perform a number of quality assurance tasks on their behalf. They visit centres to monitor the assessment and internal verification processes and sample learners’ work to ensure that standards are maintained and are compliant with Awarding Body procedures. External verifiers also have a developmental role in assisting centres to develop best practice and to provide information on new qualifications and developments in assessment and quality assurance.

External verifiers are required to:

* Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the areas within the sector being externally quality assured.
* Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the qualifications to be externally verified, and know how they are applied in the sector, to the satisfaction of the Awarding Body.
* Hold, or be working towards achievement of the relevant external verifier qualifications, approved by the qualification regulatory authority and set out in national requirements and guidance.
* Complete a minimum of two days Continuing Professional Development (CPD) each year, composed of training or other developmental activities relevant to the spirits sector and approved by the Awarding Body.
* Have good report writing, auditing and communication skills to the satisfaction of the Awarding Body.
* Know where and when to access specialist sector advice, where additional specialist knowledge relating to assessment and quality assurance decisions is concerned.

**External quality assurance of assessment for employer approved centres**

Awarding Bodies approving employer centres may wish to consider flexibilities in the external quality assurance of these centres to meet the specific learning and development needs of employers and employees (learners). The purpose of these flexibilities is to build effective and pragmatic links to employer training, where the external quality assurance of SVQs is not compromised in principle, but that the application of external quality assurance is better aligned to good workplace training and development practice to maintain the required rigour.

Flexibilities in external quality assurance of assessment can only be considered where the employer can demonstrate a sufficiently structured and internally quality assured approach to learning, development and assessment. The external audit of training systems and records implicated by some of these arrangements will provide additional evidence to Awarding Bodies of the rigour of internal quality assurance.

To approve such employer centres Awarding Bodies will work closely with appropriate employers to evaluate their training systems. This must include:

* the alignment/mapping of employers training and assessment arrangements to qualifications
* an analysis of the effectiveness of internal quality and recording systems
* evaluating the extent to which external audits of training contribute to overall quality arrangements.

Flexible external quality assurance arrangements to align with the training systems of individual employers in an employer centre may not always be necessary. However, flexibilities may be agreed as an outcome of the evaluation activity, where a rationale for such flexibility is justified. Awarding Bodies will formally agree the arrangements with the employer centres.

For example, a sector specialist external verifier may be involved in the evaluation, setting up and approval of an employer centre to ensure that technical expertise is suitably involved in recognising employer training at the centre, allowing a non-sector external quality assurer to carry out ongoing external verification of assessment. The non-sector expert should have experience of the systems and processes used in the spirits sector.

In this instance, the sector specialist external verifier should be available for consultation and to re-evaluate the centre should the employer training systems or circumstances change.

## **Recognition of prior learning and experience**

## Evidence from past achievement may be included as evidence within assessment methods for SVQs.

## Evidence of knowledge and understanding can be presented as supplementary evidence, provided it is a measurable assessed outcome of learning which links to outcomes detailed in the units of competence and confirms current competence.

## Assessors should make best use of all the assessment methods available to them in ensuring the most reliable and effective use is made of claims of prior learning and experience which relate to the individual learner’s circumstances.

## All learners, presenting evidence from past achievements, must also be able to demonstrate current competence.