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**Assessment Strategy**

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| **Sector** | Youth Work |
| **Qualification Title(s)** | SVQ Youth Work SCQF Levels 6 SVQ Youth Work SCQF Level 7 |
| **Developed by** | Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland |
| **Date approved by ACG** | 08/09/2021 |
| **Version**  | 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 Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Youth Work at Levels Six and Seven.

**Context**

The SVQs in Youth Work form part of a qualification pathway for youth work and the broader field of community learning and development. They offer practitioners delivering youth work in all contexts an opportunity to develop and consolidate their skills while gaining a national qualification which is recognised by employers and most educational institutions as part of the pathway.

The Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland (CLDSCS) is the body established by Government to act as the professional body for people who work and volunteer in CLD in Scotland. It has a mission to drive high standards of professional CLD practice and an objective to maintain and develop models of professional learning and training opportunities for CLD practitioners. These practitioners include youth workers for whom the SVQs in Youth Work offer an early/initial step on developmental route to a career as a professional youth worker.

The CLDSCS recognises the important contribution that the SVQs in Youth Work make to improving the quality of youth work practice and to the work-based learning opportunities available to youth workers at different stages in their professional lives.

**Features**

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 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 essentials, but will also develop those who require more detailed knowledge and understanding.

The SVQs in Youth Work are made up of units of competence based on the National Occupational Standards in Youth Work, which were last updated in 2018 and published in 2019. The Standards derive from the Key Purpose of Youth Work, which was agreed by the youth work sector in 2008. It encompasses the outcomes of delivering youth work (what is achieved). The key purpose of youth work is to……

 *‘Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential’*

The SVQs in Youth Work have been designed to offer candidates and employers an element of choice. Each of the qualifications comprises a number of Mandatory and Optional units, ensuring that candidates develop competence in essential and generic areas of practice, while retaining the flexibility to develop their skills in aspects of youth work that reflect their practice context, specific job role and areas of professional interest.

Each unit of competence included in the qualification is allocated a level, based on the SCQF descriptors, which reflect the degree of challenge involved.

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

## **External quality control**

The primary function of external quality control is to improve internal quality assurance and assessment practice, thereby driving up the standard of qualifications’ delivery and outcomes.

Effective external quality control for the SVQs in Youth Work will be achieved by:

* Robust arrangements for granting approved centre status and specific qualification approval
* The operation of a risk rating system for all centres approved to deliver the SVQs in Youth Work
* A systematic and rigorous programme of external quality assurance activity, which takes full account of centres’ risk ratings

The CLDSCS, the national standards body for youth work in Scotland should also maintain ongoing dialogue with Awarding Bodies, to monitor practice, gain feedback and consider any issues impacting on the design and uptake of the qualifications and the units of competence that form part of them.

**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

## **Workplace assessment**

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

The starting assumption for assessing the SVQs in Youth Work is that all performance evidence should come from *real workplace practice* in youth work.

Assessors should deliver a person-centred and negotiated assessment process, which is tailored to the needs of individual candidates within the context of the qualifications.

They should employ the full range of assessment approaches including:

* Workplace observations
* Product evidence
* Questioning – written and oral
* Professional dialogue
* Reflective accounts
* Witness testimony, ideally provided by qualified and experienced youth work practitioners

## **Realistic work environment and simulation**

The use of simulation to replace normal workplace practice is not acceptable, subject to very limited and clearly defined exceptions.

Exceptions are limited to performance criteria relating to rare occurrences or involving matters of confidentiality. These exceptions must be identified clearly in assessment guidance for any relevant units, which should define the performance criteria to which exceptions apply and the scope and nature of evidence required.

When simulations are used, they must be designed to mirror the same activity as 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

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

Assessment evidence must be authentic, current, sufficient, fit for purpose and valid. Wherever possible, it should also be holistic. This means that learners, should gather evidence to illustrate competency:

* Across elements and units that naturally link together in terms of whole jobs
* From naturally occurring evidence collected in the workplace when performing the role of a youth worker.

Workplace evidence may be generated and collected in the context of full time, part time, casual or voluntary employment.

**Occupational competence 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.

Assessors for the SVQs in Youth Work are required to:

* Provide up-to-date working knowledge and experience of best practice in youth work. This should be consistent with requirements set out by any relevant national professional organisation. This will normally take the form of professionally recognised qualifications and details of current or recent work experience in youth work. Qualifications held by assessors should be at a higher level than the qualifications to be assessed.
* Hold, or be working towards, an appropriate Assessor qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation the qualification regulator. Assessors holding older assessor qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to the current standards;
* Provide current evidence of continuing professional learning and development in youth work and directly related areas of professional practice. ;
* Demonstrate a full and current understanding of the Units of Competence that make up the SVQs in Youth Work and the requirements of these qualifications;
* Demonstrate commitment to the agreed value base for youth work in their assessment and youth work practice.

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 normally 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. 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.

All those who internally quality assure these qualifications or units must:

* Provide up-to-date working knowledge and experience of best practice in youth work. This should be consistent with requirements set out by any relevant national professional organisation. This will normally take the form of professionally recognised qualifications and details of current or recent work experience in youth work. Qualifications held by verifiers should be at a higher level than the qualifications to be verified,
* hold or be working towards an appropriate Internal Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation the qualification regulator. Internal Verifiers holding older internal verification qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to the current standards;
* Provide current evidence of continuing professional development in youth work, assessment and related areas of professional practice;
* Demonstrate a full and current understanding of the Units of Competence that make up the SVQs in Youth Work and the assessment requirements of these qualifications
* Demonstrate their commitment to the agreed value base for youth work in their assessment and youth work practice
* 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 verifier. The ‘in training’ period should normally 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. 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.

All those who externally quality assure these qualifications or units must:

* Provide up-to-date working knowledge and experience of best practice in youth work. This should be consistent with requirements set out by any relevant national professional organisation. This will normally take the form of recognised qualifications and details of current or recent work experience in youth work and quality assurance. Qualifications held by verifiers should be at a higher level than the qualifications to be verified,
* hold or be working towards an appropriate External Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation the qualification regulator. External Verifiers holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are verifying to the current standards;
* Provide current evidence of continuing professional learning and development in youth work, quality assurance and related areas of professional practice;;
* Demonstrate a full and current understanding of the Units of Competence that make up the SVQs in Youth Work and the requirements of these qualifications;
* Demonstrate their commitment to the agreed value base for youth work in their assessment and verification of youth work qualifications;
* 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.