

## **Assessment Strategy**

### **Introduction**

This document specifies the requirements of the joint Sector Bodies<sup>1</sup> for the assessment and quality control of Level 3 and 4 National Vocational Qualifications/Scottish Vocational Qualifications for 'Delivering Learning, Development and Support Services for children, young people and those who care for them.

These requirements are in addition to the generic criteria that awarding bodies must meet as specified by the accrediting bodies in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA's) 'NVQ Code of Practice' and the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA's) 'SVQ Criteria and Guidance for Awarding Bodies'.

The assessment strategy is divided into the following sections:

1. The Value Base
2. Workplace assessment
3. Evidence from other relevant qualifications
4. Independent assessment
5. Role of simulation
6. The Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning (APEL)
7. Required occupational competence of assessors and verifiers
8. The Awarding Body Forum

---

<sup>1</sup> For this project, these are PAULO, the Employment NTO, and TOPSS UK

## 1. The Value Base

The Sectors involved in the development of the National Occupational Standards and qualifications framework for Delivering Learning, Development and Support Services for children, young people and those who care for them have also agreed a statement of the values that must inform and underpin all practice in this area. Assessors must be familiar with the Value Base that is an integral part of the National Occupational Standards and should ensure that practitioners working in these occupational areas conform to best practice as specified in the Value Base.

## 2. Workplace Assessment

Assessment of the candidate's performance will take place primarily in the workplace and evidence will be drawn from real work activities performed under normal working conditions. This will apply in all cases except where the use of simulation will be permitted as defined in the next section of this assessment strategy.

Given the nature of the work with children, young people and their families there will be the need to make use of **Expert Witnesses** as one of the primary sources of performance evidence in the workplace. Expert Witnesses can be drawn from a wide range of people who can attest to performance in the workplace, including line managers and experienced colleagues from inside an organisation or from other agencies.

For such evidence to be valid it will be necessary for the Expert Witness to demonstrate:

A working knowledge of the National Occupational Standards they are attesting to on behalf of the candidate

Current or recent past experience of having either performed the relevant competences in the National Occupational Standards or having acted as line manager for those who are required to demonstrate them. Current or recent experience is defined as having performed the activities or having been line manager for them within the last three years

Demonstration of their occupational competence through clear evidence of appropriate continuous professional development

It would be desirable if the Expert Witness possessed an appropriate unit of competence in the assessment of workplace performance (such as the Learning and Development Unit L20 'Support competence achieved in the workplace'. Alternatively they should hold a post that involves responsibility for monitoring the quality of work performed by those for whom they are acting as an Expert Witness.

The co-ordinating assessor<sup>2</sup> will be responsible for vetting the selection of such Expert Witnesses including evidence of occupational competence and monitoring their contribution to the assessment process. A register of all accepted Expert Witnesses must be maintained by the centre and be subject to review as part of the external verification process. The Co-ordinating assessor will make use of appropriate Expert Witness testimony as part of the overall assessment of the candidate.

Direct observation of the candidate by the **assessor** will remain a primary source of evidence and will be possible in many aspects of competence described by the National Occupational Standards.

---

<sup>2</sup> See page 4

Such observation will be supported by a range of appropriate corroborating evidence drawn from a variety of sources including:

Witness Testimony for example, from colleagues and those from other agencies. A vital source of witness testimony will come from end users of the service, particularly children, young people and those who care for them, relating to specific aspects of practitioner competence. These will be supplementary sources of evidence and must be balanced by other forms of evidence. In all cases such witnesses must be fully briefed about the purpose and use of their testimony in relation to specific aspects of competence. The precise relationship between the candidate and the witness must be stated and checked by the assessor.

Documentation such as case notes, letters, memoranda, logs of conversations, minutes of planning meetings and other forms of tangible evidence. Where there are issues of confidentiality in relation to any documentation (such as client case notes) then an Expert Witness who is permitted to access and assess the information should be used.

### **The Role of a Co-ordinating Assessor**

In a qualifications framework such as the one encompassed by this Assessment Strategy, where candidates may be undertaking units in a range of specialisms, there will be a need for centres to identify a co-ordinating assessor. The co-ordinating assessor will be assessing the candidate in one or more area but will also have the responsibility of ensuring that a clear assessment plan is agreed. This will include details of where specialist assessors will be required and when the specialist assessment should be scheduled.

The co-ordinating assessor will also be responsible for making the assessment judgement for units whose assessment relies extensively on expert witness testimony or where parts have been assessed by different assessors.

### **3. Evidence from Other Relevant Qualifications**

There are qualifications which provide evidence of required knowledge and understanding, whether in whole or part, for the N/SVQ. The role of these in providing evidence of the underpinning knowledge will be considered in other fora.

### **4. Independent Assessment**

A key aspect of effective practice in this area is the ability to reflect on own practice, identify areas of good practice and areas where practice could be improved. The actions to be taken to improve practice are a critical aspect of the reflective practitioner.

A mandatory requirement for the achievement of both the level 3 and level 4 qualifications will be the maintenance of a Reflective Practice Log. The Log will provide evidence of achievement of the mandatory units:

- Level 3: Review own contribution to the service
- Level 4: Evaluate and develop own contribution to the service

The Log should reflect the practice across all units being undertaken by the candidate. There should be an indication of how the practitioner has obtained feedback on his/her practice from clients (children, young people and those who care for them) and how this has been used to improve service delivery.

The Log will be assessed by an assessor **who is independent of the candidate** i.e. demonstrably independent of anyone who might have a vested interest in the outcome of the assessment decision.<sup>3</sup>

Further guidance on the structure and assessment of the Reflective Practice Log will be agreed through the Awarding Body Forum for this sector and be provided by each awarding body to their centres.

## **5. Role of Simulation**

The Sector Bodies will indicate which aspects of performance in each Unit of competence can be demonstrated by means of simulation as an alternative to other forms of direct evidence. This will be shown in the form of a table with unit title and area of competence prepared by the Sector Bodies<sup>4</sup> that can be demonstrated by means of an appropriate form of simulation. This will be included in the normal guidelines provided by each awarding body.

The primary areas where simulation will be permitted include:

- Aspects of health and safety and personal safety and security
- Child protection where no incidents occur in the normal course of work activities
- Rarely occurring events and procedures such as particular forms of legal action
- Activities which may not occur during the assessment cycle such as renegotiating a service agreement or representing the agency in courts and formal hearings

No unit within the National Occupational Standards can be achieved solely through simulation of whatever kind. Simulation can only form a secondary and corroborating source of evidence for any mandatory unit or optional pathway unit.

The principles and practice relating to simulation should be agreed between candidate and assessor and incorporated into the individual assessment plan. Centres will have a strategy for assessment agreed with the External Verifier and assessors should ensure that any simulation conforms to the Centre Strategy. The simulation should be as realistic as possible in terms of reflecting the constraints, resources and normal workplace requirements of performing the activity

## **6. The Accreditation of Prior Learning and Experience (APEL)**

Assessment Centres will be expected to implement a system of initial assessment of candidates and develop an individual assessment plan that could include the accreditation of prior learning and experience. Guidance on the APEL processes will be provided to centres by Awarding Bodies in their Guidance to Centres documentation.

---

<sup>3</sup> From Developing an Assessment Strategy for NVQs and SVQs

<sup>4</sup> From Developing an Assessment Strategy for NVQs and SVQs

## **7. Required Occupational Competence of Assessors and Verifiers**

The following requirements take into account the variety of contexts and locations in which support is provided to children, young people and their families in order to encourage their learning, well being and self-development.

### **7.1. Assessors**

All assessors must be occupationally competent to the standard described in the units they are assessing based on current professional practice. This can be demonstrated by:

- being an experienced practitioner who has demonstrated the competences required in the standards within their professional career within the last three years

**or**

- being currently responsible for monitoring or managing those who are performing the functions required in the standard.

They should also be able to demonstrate the currency and credibility of their occupational competence through clear evidence of appropriate continuous professional development.

In addition assessors must hold positions that enable them to evaluate evidence provided by Expert Witnesses and to co-ordinate their contribution to the assessment process.

Assessors may be appointed who are able to assess individual units or whole awards. Where they assess an individual unit then there must be a co-ordinating assessor responsible for ensuring that full competence is demonstrated across all the required units for a qualification.

Assessors must hold or be working towards the appropriate assessor qualification. They must therefore hold or be working towards A1 or hold D 32/33. Achievement of the qualification must be within the timescales contained in the Code of Practice of the Regulatory Authorities. Assessors who do not have the appropriate assessment unit(s) must have assessment decisions reviewed and agreed by a fully qualified assessor.

### **7.2. Internal Verifiers**

Internal verifiers must be occupationally competent in the standards that they are being asked to verify. Occupational competence can be demonstrated by being:

- an experienced assessor in the relevant occupational area

**or**

- An experienced senior practitioner who has demonstrated the competences required in the standards within their professional career and who can demonstrate the currency and credibility of their occupational competence in the relevant standards through clear evidence of continuous professional development

**or**

- A manager of those who perform the competences required in the standards which involves the direct monitoring of their work performance

**or**

- A trainer with direct responsibility for developing the competences required in the standards and making judgements as to when someone has completed training successfully

Internal verifiers must be in a position to obtain the necessary resources to ensure the effective co-ordination of the assessment process which may involve the selection, training and monitoring of individual assessors as well as the standardisation of assessment decisions across a number of assessors.

Internal verifiers must hold or be working towards the appropriate internal verifier qualification. Achievement of the qualification must be within appropriate timescales. Internal verifiers who do not have the V1 or D34 units must have internal verification decisions reviewed and agreed by a fully qualified internal verifier.

All internal verifiers must be able to demonstrate the currency and credibility of their occupational competence in the relevant standards through clear evidence of appropriate continuous professional development.

### **7.3. External Verifiers**

External verifiers must have relevant employment experience that ensures that they have broad occupational knowledge of delivering learning, development and support to children, young people and those who care for them and the competences required to deliver such support. Relevant employment experience can be demonstrated by having:

- Held a senior practitioner post in one of the major support areas responsible for the management and monitoring of the work of others

**or**

- Been a manager of others in one of the major support areas responsible for the effectiveness of service delivery

**or**

- Been an experienced assessor in the relevant occupational area

All external verifiers must be able to demonstrate the currency and credibility of their occupational experience in the relevant standards through clear evidence of appropriate continuous professional development activities.

External verifiers from one functional area (e.g. education welfare) may conduct external verification activities for any of the functional areas (e.g. support services or learning mentors) until such time as an appropriate functional specialist is available to perform the external verification role.

External verifiers must hold or be working towards the appropriate external verifier qualification. Achievement of the qualification must be within appropriate timescales.

## **8. The Awarding Body Forum**

All Awarding Bodies involved in the provision of qualifications based on the National Occupational Standards for Delivering Learning, Development and Support for Children, Young People and Those who Care for them will be members of the Awarding Body Forum for the sector, that will be managed and led by the Sector Body.

The Awarding Body Forum will:

- Provide information and statistics about take up and completion which can be used by the Sector Body to identify any potential problem areas and agree appropriate remedial action
- Develop and agree appropriate guidance on the form and assessment of the Reflective Practice Logs for levels 3 and 4
- Develop and agree appropriate joint evidence requirements
- Review and report on issues about the standards and their implementation which may inform future review and development processes
- Agree and implement a process for liaison with appropriate Professional Bodies, and employers