

Assessment Strategy for the SVQ in Pharmacy Services Qualifications at Level 2 & Level 3 QCF Certificate / Diploma in Pharmacy Services Skills (NVQ) at Level 2 & Level 3

1. Introduction

This Assessment Strategy has been produced by Skills for Health in cooperation with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB), sector representatives, standard setting and awarding organisation partners. It relates to the assessment of the SVQ in Pharmacy Services at Level 2 and Level 3 and the QCF Certificate/ Diploma in Pharmacy Services Skills (NVQ) at Level 2 and Level 3.

It deals with assessment, evidence and quality control under the following headings:

- Assessment
- Sources of Evidence
- External Quality Control.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate competence in the required mandatory and selected optional units. They must also be able to perform to the required standard over a period of time.

This strategy supersedes and replaces all previous assessment strategies and supplementary guidance.

2. Assessment

2.1 Access to Assessment

All candidates should have equal access to assessment regardless of geographical location, work setting and patterns of work.

- Candidates must be enabled and supported to undertake awards.
- The awards must be delivered within the constraints of current legal practice
- The needs of under-represented groups should be addressed including those from ethnic minority communities, those experiencing disability, and those experiencing sensory impairment
- All individuals involved in the process (i.e. assessors, expert witnesses, verifiers,) should clearly demonstrate their commitment to equality of opportunity.

2.2 Focus of Assessment

The SVQs / QCF qualifications are based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) and assess the application of skills, knowledge and understanding in a specific occupation to the standards required in the workplace. It is anticipated that much of the evidence for the assessment for SVQ/ QCF qualifications will be gathered as candidates carry out their usual duties in support of the Pharmacy or GP Dispensing team.

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities in the Assessment Process

Those involved in the assessment and verification of the qualification should have the following occupational expertise.

2.3.1 Assessors

Assessors must:

- be a registered and practising Pharmacist or a practising Pharmacy Technician who is competent in the area of practice to which the NOS being assessed apply.
- other than in Northern Ireland, pharmacy technicians must be registered or eligible to register. Within Great Britain, unregistered Pharmacy Technicians who are eligible to register can only act as assessors during the transitional registration period.
- hold or be working towards the appropriate Assessor qualification as identified by the qualifications regulators. Assessors holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to current standards.
- have credible experience which is clearly demonstrable through continuing learning and development

2.3.2 Internal Verifiers

Internal Verifiers must:

- be a registered and practising Pharmacist or a practising Pharmacy Technician.
- other than in Northern Ireland, pharmacy technicians must be registered or eligible to register. Within Great Britain, unregistered Pharmacy Technicians who are eligible to register can only act as verifiers during the transitional registration period.
- It is crucial that internal verifiers understand the nature and context of the assessors' work and that of their candidates due to the critical nature of the work and the legal and other implications of the assessment process
- have a working knowledge of pharmacy and/or GP dispensing settings, the regulation, legislation and codes of practice for the service (where applicable), and the requirements of national standards at the time any assessment is taking place.
- occupy a position that gives them authority and resources to co-ordinate the work of assessors, provide authoritative advice, call meetings as appropriate, visit and observe assessments and carry out all the other internal verification roles as defined by the relevant national occupational standard.
- hold or be working towards the appropriate Internal Verifier qualification as identified by the qualifications regulators. Internal verifiers holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to current standards.
- have undertaken the appropriate assessor qualification identified by the regulator and practised as an assessor prior to undertaking the IV role.

It is recognised that internal verifiers are expected to verify the assessment process and not reassess the evidence provided.

2.3.3 Expert Witnesses

The use of expert witnesses is encouraged as a contribution to the provision of performance evidence presented for assessment.

The role of the expert witness is to submit evidence to the assessor as to the competence of the candidate in meeting the NOS identified in any given unit. This evidence must directly relate to candidate's performance in the work place which has been seen by the expert witness.

The expert witness must be either:

- a registered and practising Pharmacist or a practising Pharmacy Technician who is competent in the area of practice to which the NOS being assessed apply;
- other than in Northern Ireland, be registered or eligible to register. Within Great Britain, unregistered Pharmacy Technicians who are eligible to register can only act as expert witnesses during the transitional registration period.

The expert witness must have:

- a working knowledge of NOS for the competences on which their expertise is based
- credible experience which is clearly demonstrable through continuing learning and development.

All expert witnesses must be inducted by the centre so that they are familiar with the standards for those units for which they are to provide expert witness evidence. They must also understand the centre's recording requirements and will need guidance on the skills required to provide evidence for the NOS.

It is not necessary for expert witnesses to hold an assessor qualification because the qualified assessor makes all assessment decisions about the acceptability of evidence regardless of source. This would include expert witness evidence.

Observations meeting the requirement in the qualification for observation of performance can only be undertaken by assessors and expert witnesses.

2.3.4 Co-ordinating Assessors and Lead Assessors

In order that the requirements for occupational competence of assessors and expert witnesses can be met while allowing flexibility of delivery, candidates may have more than one assessor or expert witness involved in the assessment process.

Where more than one assessor is involved in the qualification there must be a named assessor who is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the assessment for each candidate. This person will be responsible for integrating, planning and directing the assessment for the whole qualification.

Where more than one assessor is involved in a unit, there must be named assessor who is responsible for the overall coordination of the assessment for that unit. The lead assessor must ensure that the best use is made

of all available evidence and will make the final judgment of competence in each unit where other assessors have been involved.

It is expected that all assessors will work closely with internal verifiers to ensure standardised practice and judgments within the assessment process

2.3.5 Assessment Centres

Assessment centres will be responsible for maintaining up-to-date information on assessors, internal verifiers and expert witnesses and for ensuring the currency of the competence of internal verifiers and all those involved in the assessment process.

3 Sources of Evidence

3.1 Assessment and Evidence Requirements.

Evidence of candidates' performance will be drawn primarily from work activities that take place under normal working conditions in a normal work environment. Evidence of performance is expected in all Units of the qualification.

There is one main evidence requirement:

Observation of practice by:

- a qualified assessor or
- an expert witness

Other assessment methods may include:

- simulation (see below)
- direct questioning and assignments
- assessment of products
- APEL and APL
- Candidate's reflective accounts and personal statements
- Evidence by a witness testimony
- Professional Discussion

3.2 Observation of Practice

Evidence should be gathered wherever possible from naturally occurring evidence collected in the work place. Knowledge to support performance should be based on practice evidence and reflection.

Direct observation by an assessor and /or observation of practice by an expert witness is to be an evidence requirement for every unit.

Where expert witness evidence has been used solely to evidence candidate performance in a unit the assessor must carry out a professional discussion to ensure the assessors' final assessment decision is robust.

3.3 Witness Testimony

The use of witnesses is encouraged as a contribution to the provision of performance evidence presented for assessment. Witnesses are an important source of performance evidence in the workplace.

Witness Testimony is a statement or comment by someone who was present while the candidate was carrying out an activity (e.g. a colleague who does not have the necessary occupational competence to be classed as an expert witness).

Evidence from witnesses must meet the tests of validity, reliability and authenticity.

The requirements of expert witnesses are distinct and set out in 2.3.3

3.4 Professional Discussion

It is a requirement that professional discussion, of which an auditable record has been made, between the assessor and the candidate must take place when direct observation by an assessor is not possible.

Professional Discussion is a discussion which is planned and led by the assessor and must be recorded in such a way as to create an audit trail. It is not a question and answer session, but more of a chance for wider ranging discussions reflecting and evaluating on areas decided during the planning process. Professional discussion provides a holistic approach to assessing knowledge and understanding and is useful in determining not only what and how a candidate is performing, but also their analytical and decision-making abilities.

3.5 Simulations

The use of simulation is normally **only permitted** in the following 3NOS but must not be the sole source of performance evidence in that particular unit:

- Pharm 11- *Prepare extemporaneous medicines for individual use*
- Pharm 15- *Issue pharmaceutical stock*
- HSS1- *Make sure your own actions reduces risks to health and safety.*

The use of simulations in other units is only permitted in circumstances specified within unit guidance and should only be undertaken in the minority of cases i.e: where performance is critical and:

- where events either never or infrequently occur and yet a high degree of confidence is needed that the candidate would act appropriately for example: (i) where there is a high risk of harm or abuse to the individuals, key people in their lives and others, (ii) where events such as medical emergencies (such as cardiac arrest) occur and competence is vital to ensure best practice and results, (iii) where cash is being handled when this does not happen routinely in the workplace or
- where events happen frequently but where there is risk of harm to the candidate or service user in a real situation, for example, dealing with aggressive or abusive situations (although evidence from direct observation should be used where possible).

Where simulations are used they must replicate working activities in realistic (but not necessarily actual) workplace environments and this must be agreed with the EV beforehand.

3.6 Knowledge

The Pharmacy Services NOS describe the knowledge and understanding required to support competent performance on the workplace. The awarding bodies through their external verification arrangements are responsible for ensuring that all centres make provision for candidates to successfully cover the knowledge requirements. It is expected that when a centre applies to an awarding body to offer a qualification they will identify how the knowledge will be delivered and assessed, so that the external verifiers can ensure the knowledge is adequately covered.

4. External Quality Control

4.1 External Verification

The standard external verification model will apply to the qualifications. Awarding Bodies are responsible for the competence of external verifiers and must require them to monitor Centres' performance in accordance with regulatory requirements, sampling all aspects of the qualifications' delivery.

External verification will include both assuring the quality of the centre that is responsible for making the assessment and sampling from the judgments made on a number of candidates to ensure they are of consistent quality. Skills for Health work with awarding bodies to ensure that:

- the level of sampling undertaken in external verification is sufficient to guarantee consistently high standards between different Centres and between different awarding bodies
- there is a comprehensive strategy for sampling assessment which is applied across the UK
- external verification takes place using scrutiny of documents and observation of assessment / verification practice in assessment Centres subject to the need for confidentiality of patient information
- external verification is planned and linked to intelligence about assessment centre functioning and abilities - awarding bodies routinely look at and evaluate compliance and then alter the level of activity accordingly.

Awarding bodies must require external verifiers to take part in regular standardization activities .

4.2 External Verifiers

The external verifier is the key link for awarding bodies in the quality assurance and verification of the assessment of candidates' performance in the workplace.

External verifiers must be:

- be a registered and practising Pharmacist or a practising Pharmacy Technician.
- other than in Northern Ireland, be registered or eligible to register. Within Great Britain, unregistered Pharmacy Technicians who are eligible to register can only act as external verifiers during the transitional registration period.
- have working knowledge of pharmacy and/or GP dispensing settings, the regulation, legislation and codes of practice for the service (where applicable), and the requirements of national standards at the time any assessment is taking place
- hold, or be working towards, the appropriate external verifier qualification as identified by the qualifications regulators. External verifiers holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to current standards.
- External verifiers who are not yet qualified against the appropriate competences but have the necessary occupational competence and experience, can be supported by a qualified external verifier who does not necessarily have the occupational expertise or experience.
- have credible experience which is clearly demonstrable through continuing learning and development

5.0 General.

Skills for Health will work with all stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Occupational Standards and review them as part of the overall management programme for the qualifications.

Appendix 1

Royal Pharmaceutical Society Great Britain – Guidance

Those learners wishing to register with the RPSGB as a Pharmacy Technician will be required to undertake an additional knowledge based qualification. The RPSGB can provide up to date guidance to centres and learners on which qualifications are accepted for registration purposes.