



Skills for Health

Sector Qualification Strategy Action Plan for Northern Ireland

February 2008

PART A

1. Scope

This action plan refers specifically to the health sector in Northern Ireland; it arises from the Skills for Health UK wide SQS and is one of a suite of action plans which have been developed, one for each of the four UK countries. It is inclusive of all parts of the health sector, as described in section 2.1 of the SQS and demonstrates priorities, methods and outcomes which will be actioned in Northern Ireland during 2008. It is recognised that many of the actions identified in this plan cannot happen in isolation but will form part of UK wide initiatives, thus the plan should be considered in the context of the full SQS and action plans for the three other countries.

Key Stakeholders

Skills For Health welcomes the opportunity to work with a wide range of stakeholders as detailed in section 6.2 of the SQS. Specifically in Northern Ireland this will include:

- Employers – NHS Trusts, private and voluntary sectors
- Funding bodies
- Government departments
- Other sector skills bodies – Skills for Care & Development, Skills for Justice, Council for Administration
- Statutory Qualification Regulator – QCA Northern Ireland, CCEA
- Awarding bodies

Priority Areas

The following priorities relate to section 6.3 of the SQS; the priorities for 2008 have been grouped into those pertaining to

- National Occupational Standards
- Qualifications
- Related non-qualification items

Priorities Relating to National Occupational Standards

Action 1: Develop criteria to identify priorities for qualifications development

Skills for Health will develop criteria and appropriate success outcomes to prioritise qualifications development which responds to employer needs in a timely and appropriate way, effectively reconciling expectations with what can be delivered.

Outcome: Agreed set of criteria to identify priorities for qualifications development

Date to be achieved: December 2008

Action 2: National Occupational Standards Rationalisation

Skills for Health recognizes the great deal of duplication across suites of NOS and is undertaking work to rationalize the NOS, reducing duplication and overlap. Skills for Health are also standardizing NOS into a single element template. Future work is required to review how NOS can be developed and designed to more readily lend themselves to use within qualifications across the range of learning and qualifications frameworks. Skills for Health will use the learning achieved from current work on the QCF Tests and Trials to inform the development of NOS for use in qualifications.

Outcome: Devised plan for future develop and design of 'fit for purpose' NOS

Date to be achieved: December 2008

Action 3: National Occupational Standards for Development - Pharmacy

The existing National Occupational Standards for Pharmacy were reviewed in 2006. Stage two of the project commenced in August 2007 and is identifying any new NOS. The structure, rules of combination and assessment strategy of the current NVQ qualification will then be reviewed.

Outcome: Complete suite of NOS for Pharmacy

Date to be achieved: June 2008

Action 4: National Occupational Standards for Development - GP Dispensers

Work is commencing on identifying the competences required for staff working in as GP Dispensing Assistants and GP Dispensing Technicians. Where required, new NOS will be developed and, if possible, a new VQ for this staff group will be developed.

Outcome: NOS for GP Dispensers

Date to be achieved: June 2008

Action 5: National Occupational Standards for Development - Pathology Support Worker

Work is currently underway to identify NOS for Pathology Support Workers. Discussions have taken place with Awarding Bodies and it is intended to incorporate Pathology Support units into the NVQ in Health.

Outcome: Complete suite of NOS for Pathology Support

Date to be achieved: December 2007

Action 6: National Occupational Standards for Development - Health Care Science

Skills for Health acquired NOS for staff working in healthcare science in 2006. A project is underway to review and rationalize these NOS. This work may entail the development of further NOS and qualifications for this workforce.

Outcome: Complete suite of NOS for Healthcare Science

Date to be achieved: December 2008

Action 7: National Occupational Standards for Development - Complementary Therapies

A review of the NOS for Complementary Therapies will commence during 2008 and will be due for completion in 2009; there may be a need to develop new NOS to meet voluntary regulation of complementary therapy practitioners. NOS will be tested between November 2008 and February 2009. Work will then be undertaken with key stakeholders and partners to review the need for new vocational qualifications for Complementary Therapies.

Outcome: Draft revised suite of NOS for Complementary Therapies

Date to be achieved: November 2008

Action 8: National Occupational Standards for Development - Public Health

Skills for Health is currently working with partners to develop a career Framework in Public Health. Work will commence in 2008 to identify the need and develop NOS for staff working in sexual health and to consider how these will be reflected in new or existing qualifications.

Outcome: Completed suite of NOS for working in sexual health

Date to be achieved: December 2008

Action 9: National Occupational Standards for Development - New and Extended Roles

Work will be undertaken to explore the NOS required for new and extended roles e.g. Assistant Practitioners. The need for new NOS may emerge from this scoping work and future consideration will then be given to the need for new qualifications to support these roles.

Outcome: Draft suite of NOS for New and Extended Roles

Date to be achieved: November 2008

Priorities Relating to Qualifications**Action 10: Review of NVQ in Health**

This qualification is currently in incremental review and is due to be reaccredited in May 2008. The qualification will remain on the NQF for the immediate future. The incremental review will include a revised structure following the employer consultations. As part of the review of the NVQ Skills for Health intends to review the implementation of the recommendations of the 'Exploring Best Practice in the Assessment of S/NVQs' (Skills for Health, 2007).

Outcome: Revised NVQ in Health Levels 2 & 3.

Date to be achieved: May 2008

Action 11: Review of vocational qualifications in Pharmacy and GP Dispensing

The NVQs in Pharmacy Services have an extension to accreditation to October 2008. It has been agreed with key stakeholders that the revised Pharmacy VQs at Level 2 & 3 will be developed for the QCF. It may be necessary to develop separate qualifications for GP Dispensing staff. Further discussion will be

required with these stakeholders on completion of Action 3 – Completion of NOS for Pharmacy.

Outcome: Revised Pharmacy vocational qualification(s)

Date to be achieved: November 2008

Action 12: Review of NVQ in Support Services

This qualification is being reviewed as part of the incremental review of the S/NVQ in Health with the intention to bring it into the S/NVQ in Health from May 2008 as part of the rationalization programme.

Outcome: Inclusion of Support Services units into NVQ Health and withdrawal of the current Level 2 NVQ in Healthcare Support Service

Date to be achieved: May 2008

Action 13: New QCF Qualification based on the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) Core Dimensions

(this is the same qualification as the Technical Certificate for England and Wales) As the NVQ in Health is not included in the Health & Social Care Modern Apprenticeship Framework in Northern Ireland the proposed qualification will be a standalone vocational qualification providing underpinning knowledge to support achievement of the NHS KSF Core Dimensions.

Outcome: New QCF qualifications at Level 2 & 3

Date to be achieved: September 2008

Action 14: Rationalise suite of Qualifications for First Aid

Skills for Health is responsible for First Aid Qualifications (not First Aid at Work). We are committed to supporting the development of First Aid qualifications on the NQF/ QCF to ensure that the learning is fit for purpose and based on appropriate NOS. QCA and Skills for Health are in discussions with the Health and Safety Executive regarding the standards for First Aid at Work. Skills for Health support any intentions to have First Aid at Work as a qualification on the QCF.

Outcome: Rationalised suite of Qualifications for First Aid

Date to be achieved: August 2008

Action 15: Rationalise suite of Qualifications for Infection Control

Infection control remains a priority for the development of qualifications. A number of qualifications have been developed but we will continue to support new qualifications that provide choice of learning delivery and assessment strategies for employers and learners.

Outcome: Rationalised suite of Qualifications for Infection Control

Date to be achieved: August 2008

Action 17: National Curriculum

Skills for Health wants to develop links between GCSE & GCEs in Health & Social Care qualifications directly related to the sector and the relevant NOS. It is not a desirable outcome that these qualifications do not provide evidence that can be directly recognised in vocational qualifications. Skills for Health will prioritise the need to ensure GCSEs and GCEs are linked to NOS and that they are unitized. We will need to engage regulators and awarding bodies in achieving this vision.

Outcome: Regulators contacted to commence discussions to develop links between GCSE/GCE qualifications and NOS

Date to be achieved: March 2008

2. Methodology

This action plan has been developed in partnership with the Northern Ireland SQS Steering Group. Membership of this group can be found in the circulation lists at the front of the full SQS and comprises of representation from partner SSCs, funding bodies, government departments, employers, the regulator and providers.

The Awarding Body Forum is held quarterly and is regularly attended by the majority of Awarding Bodies with whom we work; actions arising from the SQS form a central theme to these meetings and we will continue to work closely with awarding bodies in achieving these plans.

Full details of the SQS consultation are available at www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/sqsappendices

The Skills for Health Internal SQS Steering Group serves to ensure that the actions and outcomes contained in this plan can be prioritized, achieved and communicated throughout the organisation.

3. Summary of outcomes

- Complete suite of NOS for Pathology Support (December 2007)
- Skills for Health will participate in the pilot of the QCF Approvals process (From February 2008)
- Regulators engaged in discussions to develop links between GCSE/GCE qualifications and NOS (March 2008)
- Agreed final date for endorsement & extension to accreditation of qualifications on the NQF (April 2008)
- Revised NVQ in Health Levels 2 & 3 (May 2008)
- DELNI notified of changes to the NVQ in Health to inform changes to Modern Apprenticeships (May 2008)
- Inclusion of Support Services units into NVQ Health (May 2008)
- Complete suite of NOS for Pharmacy (June 2008)
- NOS for GP Dispensers (June 2008)
- Rationalised suite of Qualifications for First Aid (August 2008)
- Piloted QCF Approvals process with final report and agreed Qualifications (see Annex 1) accredited on the QCF (August 2008)
- Rationalised suite of Qualifications for Infection Control (August 2008)
- New QCF qualifications at Level 2 & 3 to support achievement of the NHS KSF Core Dimensions (September 2008)
- Convened Health Sector Vocational Qualifications Advisory Group with agreed membership and terms of reference (September 2008)
- Draft suite of NOS for New and Extended Roles (November 2008)
- Draft revised suite of NOS for Complementary Therapies (November 2008)
- QCF qualifications for Pharmacy Services and GP Dispensing (November 2008)
- DELNI notified of changes to Pharmacy Services qualifications to inform changes to Modern Apprenticeships (November 2008)
- Agreed set of criteria to identify priorities for qualifications development (December 2008)
- Agreed plan for future development and design of 'fit for purpose' NOS (December 2008)
- Complete suite of NOS for working in sexual health (December 2008)
- Complete suite of NOS for Healthcare Science (December 2008)

4. Partner engagement and working arrangements

In implementing this Action Plan, Skills for Health will continue to engage with partners through a number of existing groups and established working arrangements. These are detailed in section 6.2 of the SQS. Most of these forums are not specifically convened for the purposes of implementing the SQS but rather the SQS will underpin and influence these forums with the Action Plan becoming embedded as core business. Through this section of the SQS we have shown how we will continue to engage with all types of partners, for example employers and regulators.

In addition to these existing working arrangements, Skills for Health has a put in place additional specific arrangements will be more focussed in delivering the SQS Action Plans.

The establishment of the Health Sector Vocational Qualifications Advisory Group will be central in implementing this Action Plan with external partners. The group will be convened by Skills for Health, drawing together representation from a number of key partners including employers, statutory qualification regulators, awarding bodies, funding bodies and professional bodies. The final membership and terms of reference for this group is to be determined.

The Skills for Health Internal SQS Steering Group will play a key role in operationalising the Action Plans within the organisation. It will explore, identify and prioritise Skills for Health work streams arising from the Action Plan, facilitate feedback into the wider corporate agenda, internally contribute to and 'sign off' the Annual SQS Action Plan and monitor progress against the Action Plan.

The Northern Ireland SQS Steering Group will continue to provide support, giving a 'Northern Irish focus' to achieving the planned outcomes.

5. Risks and assumptions

Assumptions

QCF is agreed
 Skills for Health footprint remains constant
 Skills for Health is re-licensed as an SSC
 Resources are available to complete projects

Risks & contingencies

Risk	Likelihood (H, M, L)	Impact (H,M,L)	Contingency
Insufficient project management capacity	L	H	SfH matrix structure, utilisation of external contractors
Failure to engage partners	L	M	Review membership and ToR for stakeholder groups
Competing priorities affect delivery times	M	M	Executive sign up via Internal Steering Group, quarterly monitoring of progress

6. Monitoring arrangements

Skills for Health will ensure that monitoring arrangements for the SQS Action Plans comply with the SfH Evaluation Strategy currently being developed.

Skills for Health will monitor progress against the Action Plans on a regular and continuous basis, ensuring that the plans remain fit for purpose and aligned with the changing landscape in which they will be delivered. Stakeholders will be included in this monitoring through the Northern Ireland SQS Steering Group and through the Awarding Body Forum previously described.

Formal monitoring will take place quarterly as part of the core business of the Skills for Health Internal SQS Steering Group. The group will identify appropriate performance measures and will access reporting mechanisms from projects and programmes of work put in place to deliver these plans. Group membership will continuously feed information into the action plan in order that it will reflect any changes or new LMI arising from the SSA.

Planning for the development of Action Plans for 2009-10 will commence in Spring 2008.

PART B

1. List of non-qualification outcomes.

Action 1: Establish Health Sector Vocational Qualifications Advisory Group

Skills for Health will establish this group to provide strategic advice and guidance in the identification of need, development and review of all health sector vocational qualifications. It will supersede previous groups which have focused on individual qualifications to take a broader view across the sector and across all four UK countries.

Outcome: Convened Health Sector Vocational Qualifications Advisory Group with agreed membership and terms of reference.

Partners: Professional bodies (health), awarding bodies, regulators, employers

Date to be achieved: September 2008

Status: Planned

Action 2: Endorsement & Extension to Accreditation of Qualifications on the NQF

Skills for Health has a robust system for endorsement and support for extensions to accreditation. The current maximum accreditation end date for all NQF Health and Health & Social Care qualifications is August 2009. During 2008 we will review this date in line with the timetable to transfer qualifications to the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

Outcome: Agreed final date for endorsement & extension to accreditation of qualifications on the NQF

Partners: Professional bodies (health), awarding bodies, regulators, employers

Date to be achieved: September 2008

Status: Planned

Action 3: Approval for Accreditation of Qualifications on the QCF

Skills for Health is part of the QCF 'Approval' project and the QCF 'fast track' project. In line with Strand 4 of the UKVQRP each qualification will be reviewed prior to transfer to the QCF. Where the numbers of registrations or certification of the qualification have been significantly below expectations (as identified through the endorsement process) Skills for Health will work with all key stakeholders to review the ongoing viability or barriers to completion before supporting its inclusion in the QCF.

Outcome: Piloted QCF Approvals process with final report and agreed Qualifications (see Annex 1) accredited on the QCF

Partners: Regulators, awarding bodies

Date to be achieved: August 2008

Status: Underway on target

Action 4: Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks

The current NVQ in Support Services in Health will be incorporated into the NVQ in Health. There will also be other changes to the structure of the NVQ in Health including units for Pathology Support Services and Endoscopy Support.

Outcome: DELNI notified of changes to the NVQ in Health

Partners: DELNI, AAG, Skills for Care & Development

Date to be achieved: May 2008

Status: Planned

Action 5: Revised Pharmacy Services Modern Apprenticeship Framework

Skills for Health will work with partners and stakeholders to review the Pharmacy Services Modern Apprenticeship Framework in line with the development of the Pharmacy and proposed GP Dispensing QCF qualifications.

Outcome: DELNI notified of changes to Pharmacy Services qualifications

Partners: DELNI, AAG, Skills for Care & Development

Date to be achieved: May 2008

Status: Planned

Action 6: QCF 'Approval' Pilot

Skills for Health will participate in the pilot of the QCF Approvals process

Date to be achieved: From February 2008

2. Provision of information to funding bodies

Skills for Health will provide information to the relevant bodies when requested and in line with their business funding cycle.

3. List of qualification outcomes (see separate spreadsheet)

This should be provided in the form of the completed Excel template provided, in accordance with the instructions below:

Column A: Qualification	<i>Please state the qualification name and type and purpose.</i>
Column B: Country(ies)	<i>Please state the country(ies) and framework to which the qualification applies.</i>
Column C: Level	<i>Please state the level of the qualification, if relevant.</i>
Column D: Action	<i>Please state what action is being taken, e.g. whether a new qualification is being developed or whether a particular revision is taking place to address an identified issue.</i>
Column E: With whom	<i>Please state which partners you are working with to achieve the stated action. If agreement with a particular partner is still in negotiation this should be stated.</i>
Column F: By when	<i>Please state target completion date.</i>
Column G: NOS	<i>Please indicate the current status of NOS underpinning the qualification and confirm that NOS will be in place in sufficient time to ensure that any new or revised qualifications are underpinned by NOS.</i>
Column H: Current status	<i>Please indicate whether this is a qualification that is already in development, or whether it is planned.</i>
Tab at bottom of sheet	<i>Please rename to state your SSC/SSB name.</i>