

Assessment Strategy

Qualification Title(s)	Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Dental Nursing at SCQF Level 7
Developed by	Skills for Health
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Version	1

Assessment Strategy for the SVQ in Dental Nursing at SCQF Level 7

Introduction

This Assessment Strategy sets out specifications for the assessment and quality control of the SVQ in Dental Nursing. It has been produced by Skills for Health in cooperation with sector representatives, SQA Accreditation and Awarding Body partners.

This assessment strategy relates to the following SVQ:

- SVQ in Dental Nursing at SCQF Level 7

This document outlines the principles that underpin the assessment of the above qualification with regard to:

- external quality control of assessment
- assessment
- use and characteristics of simulation
- sources of evidence
- roles within the assessment and verification process
- additional assessment guidance for SFHOH34

These principles are in addition to the regulatory requirements that awarding bodies must meet as specified by SQA Accreditation.

This strategy supersedes and replaces all previous assessment strategies and supplementary guidance for SVQ in Dental Nursing at SCQF Level 7.

1. External Quality Control of Assessment

Awarding Bodies must apply a robust model of external quality assurance to competence-based qualifications that includes external verification. They are responsible for the competence of those involved in external verification activities and for ensuring that external verification monitors centre performance in accordance with regulatory requirements, sampling all aspects of qualification delivery.

External verification will include both assuring the quality of the centre that is responsible for undertaking the assessment and sampling from the judgments made on a number of learners to ensure they are of consistent quality. Awarding Bodies must ensure that:

- the level of sampling undertaken in external verification is sufficient to guarantee consistent standards across centres
- external verification includes both scrutiny of documentation and of the assessment and verification practices in Assessment Centres
- external verification is planned based on a risk assessment and taking account of both volume of activity and centre performance
- external verifiers are required to take part in regular standardisation activities

Skills for Health will work with all stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Occupational Standards, the qualification structures and this assessment strategy.

2. Assessment

Learners will be expected to demonstrate competence in the required mandatory units. They must also be able to perform to the required standard over a period of time. Assessment must meet the requirements of the Awarding Body requirements.

Learners must be working in a relevant job role or in an appropriate work placement, providing chairside support during a wide range of clinical dental procedures throughout the period in which they undertake the qualification, and assessment of learner's performance must take place during the course of their day-to-day work.

All the units in this qualification are designed to reflect the expected performance of practitioners in real workplace situations and settings.

Where, for reasons of safety or security, or in exceptional circumstances a learner is not in a position to provide evidence within their current role, the learner will need to negotiate with their assessor suitable alternative opportunities to generate evidence. This might be through an alternative work placement or through simulation within a realistic working environment – but must be both planned and agreed with the Assessment Centre. *See section on simulation below for further details.*

Learners will gather evidence of their competence in the workplace, and this will be assessed within an Awarding Body approved centre by qualified and experienced staff.

Observation of the learners' performance must be the primary source of evidence. Observations should be of naturally occurring practice within the learner's work role and through performance demonstrate the application of knowledge and understanding. This principle will apply to all units except where simulation has been deemed acceptable.

Generating evidence of workplace competence to meet assessment requirements will require initial discussions and planning between the learner and assessor.

Awarding Body arrangements should also ensure that competence can be demonstrated over a period of time, rather than simply for the purposes of a single assessment.

2.1 Holistic assessment

Each unit has performance criteria and knowledge and understanding relevant to the specified area of practice.

Integration of knowledge and practice is a fundamental feature of work within the dental nursing sector. When planning for assessment it is essential that Assessors and learners identify opportunities to integrate a number of activities and knowledge. It is not generally necessary to provide separate pieces of evidence for each performance criteria. However, Assessors and learners need to be satisfied that all performance criteria and knowledge are covered.

Assessment of knowledge and understanding should, wherever possible, be carried out during performance to ensure integration of theory and practice. Evidence of knowledge and understanding should be clearly identified within the audit trail. Knowledge and understanding criteria can also be demonstrated through any of the following:

- Questioning
- Professional discussion
- Personal statement
- Reflective account
- Online assessment

Assessors need to ensure that the learner is able to apply knowledge and understanding within the context of the units. Assessors may use holistic assessment to establish the knowledge and understanding required to support competent practice. Holistic assessment should be used as part of this strategy. This will support establishing knowledge and understanding within and across units.

2.2 Observation of Practice

Evidence of learners' performance will be drawn **primarily from naturally occurring work activities that take place in the workplace** under safe and normal working conditions. Learners are encouraged to produce a range of evidence to demonstrate performance in all Units of the qualification.

Therefore, there must be evidence of observation of practice by:

- a qualified Assessor (see Section 3)
- and or an Expert Witness (see Section 3)

Where Expert Witness evidence has been used solely to evidence learner performance in a Unit, the Assessor must carry out a professional discussion with the learner to ensure the Assessors' final assessment decision is robust. Knowledge to support performance should be based on practice evidence and reflection.

2.2.1 Alternative forms of recording evidence using ICT

Observation of practical activities may include:

- remote observation in real time using live video streaming platforms (consent must be obtained)
- recordings of practical activities with assessment being carried out at a future time.

When using digital methods, the learner's workplace is responsible for obtaining and recording patient consent for their procedure to be observed as part of the live stream observation.

Assessors must ensure that the learner and their workplace's clinical operators have obtained consent/permission from individuals involved in advance.

Assessors must ensure they are satisfied the evidence presented is valid, reliable, authentic, current and sufficient and meets the requirements set out in this strategy.

Awarding bodies must ensure that their guidance to Assessment Centres includes a common approach to the use of sources of evidence.

Learner evidence must be retained in accordance with the Awarding Body evidence retention guidance.

2.3 Professional Discussion

It is a requirement that professional discussion, of which an auditable record has been made, between the Assessor and the learner 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 learner is performing, but also their analytical and decision-making abilities.

2.4 Use and Characteristics of Simulation

Simulation should only be undertaken in a minority of situations when the learner is unable to complete the unit because of the lack of opportunity within their normal day to day practice. Simulation may also be considered if there is a potential risk to the learner or others. Evidence of competence in such situations is viewed as essential to ensure best practice and confidence in the learner's ability to act appropriately.

Where simulation is used it **must** replicate usual activities in realistic workplace settings. Evidence gathered using simulation must result from activities that have taken place in a realistic working environment. A realistic working environment should include the following features:

- reflect the workplace conditions and environment and include facilities, equipment and materials used in the workplace for the activities being assessed.
- reflect the relationships, constraints and pressures met in the workplace
- ensure information available to the learner on the nature of the activity is consistent with the policies and practices typical of the workplace setting

Simulation should only be undertaken in the minority of cases where events happen:

- never or infrequently (or frequently but where there is a risk of harm) yet a high degree of confidence is needed that the learner would act appropriately for example, where events such as medical emergencies (such as cardiac arrest) occur and competence is vital to ensure best practice and results. This applies to SFHCHS36 Provide basic life support.

The use of simulation to support evidence should be agreed in advance by the Assessor and learner at the assessment planning stage. Those involved in the assessment process must be satisfied that the use of simulation does not compromise the rigour and integrity of assessment. Simulation can never be the sole source of evidence for all Performance Criteria and/or Knowledge and Understanding points in a unit.

Simulation assessment can only be used for the following units within the SVQ in Dental Nursing:

- SFHCHS36 Provide basic life support
- SFHOH2 Provide information and support to individuals on oral health

2.5 Sources of Evidence

The following methods of assessment may contribute to the assessment of the qualification – note this is not an exhaustive list:

- observation of practice
- questioning
- evidence by an expert witness
- professional discussion
- personal statements
- reflective accounts
- online assessment
- simulation
- product evidence

3. Roles within the Assessment and Verification Process

The following people may be involved in the assessment and verification process:

- Assessors
- Co-ordinating Assessors
- Expert Witnesses
- Internal Verifiers
- External Verifiers

The Assessment Centre will be responsible for maintaining up-to-date information on Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Expert Witnesses.

Those involved in the assessment and quality assurance of the qualification should:

- be a dentist who holds a qualification recognised by the General Dental Council (GDC) for registration, and who can demonstrate ongoing occupational competence **or**
- be a dental nurse who holds a qualification recognised by the GDC for registration and who can demonstrate ongoing occupational competence **or**
- be a Dental Care Professional (DCPs) who is competent in the area of practice to which the particular National Occupational Standards apply and who holds a qualification recognised by the GDC for enrolment or statutory registration (e.g. dental hygienist, dental therapist, dental technologist) **or**
- be a professional who is competent in the area of practice to which the particular National Occupational Standards apply and who holds a qualification recognised by another UK Health Regulatory body and are registered with the appropriate healthcare regulator in health and social care (e.g. anaesthetist, radiographer)

To avoid conflicts of interest, the relationship between the learner and those involved in the assessment and quality assurance process should be recorded within the portfolio of evidence.

3.1 Assessor

The Assessor is the key to the assessment process. **All Assessors must:**

- be competent in the area of practice to which the National Occupational Standards being assessed apply. This means that each Assessor must be capable of carrying out the functions covered by the units they are assessing to the standard described within them, according to current sector practice.
- take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. This should be credible and maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing professional development appropriate to the area of assessed practice. It is expected that learning and development activity will contribute to professional development, inform practice and assist Assessors to meet their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent and confident manner

- have knowledge and experience of the regulation, legislation and/or codes of practice applicable to their role and the setting within which they work
- take the lead role in the assessment of observed learner performance in relation to the units of the qualification.
- must hold, or be working towards, an appropriate Assessor qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation, the qualification regulator. Achievement of Assessor qualification needs to be within appropriate timescales. Assessors, who are working towards an appropriate Assessor qualification and have the necessary occupational competence and experience, as identified above, should be supported by an appropriately qualified Assessor. Appropriately qualified Assessors must review and countersign decisions and activities. Assessors holding older Assessor qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to the current standards.

3.2 Co-ordinating Assessors

Where more than one Assessor is involved in a Unit, there must be a named Assessor who is responsible for the overall coordination of the assessment for that Unit.

The Coordinating 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.

The **Co-ordinating Assessor must be a qualified Assessor** and occupationally competent and experienced.

It is expected that all Assessors will work closely with Internal Verifiers to ensure standardised practice and decision-making within the assessment process.

3.3 Expert Witness

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

Expert Witnesses can be drawn from occupationally competent individuals who can attest to the learner's performance in the workplace. This may include line managers or other experienced colleagues from inside an organisation or from other agencies.

Expert Witnesses may prove particularly important for those learners who are indirectly supervised during part of their work role, but who have contact with a range of different professionals in the course of their work activities.

Evidence from Expert Witnesses must meet the requirements of validity, reliability and authenticity. Expert witnesses must be inducted by the centre so they are familiar with those units for which they are to provide Expert Witness evidence. **All Expert Witnesses must:**

- be competent in the area of practice to which the National Occupational Standards being assessed apply
- have a working knowledge of the relevant National Occupational Standards for the competences on which their expertise is based
- evidence continuous professional development relevant to the area of practice for which they are assessing competence
- have either a qualification in the assessment of workplace performance or a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff
- understand the centre's recording requirements and the necessary skills required to provide evidence

It is not necessary for Expert Witnesses to hold an Assessor qualification as a qualified Assessor must decide upon the acceptability of evidence, regardless of source.

3.4 Internal Verifier

The Internal Verifier is central to the quality assurance and verification of assessment of performance evidence in the workplace. Due to the critical nature of the work **all Internal Verifiers must:**

- understand the nature and context of the Assessors' work and that of their learners due to the critical nature of the work and the legal and other implications of the assessment process
- take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills. This should be credible and maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing professional development appropriate to the area of assessed practice. It is expected that learning and development activity will contribute to professional development, inform practice and assist Internal Verifiers to meet their roles and responsibilities in an informed, competent and confident manner
- have working knowledge of the regulation, legislation and codes of practice applicable to their role and setting and at the time 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
- must hold, or be working towards, an Internal Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation, the qualification regulator. Achievement of Internal Verifier qualification needs to be within appropriate timescales. Internal Verifiers, who are working towards an appropriate Internal Verifier qualification and have the necessary occupational competence and experience, as identified above, should be supported by an appropriately qualified Internal Verifier. Appropriately qualified Internal Verifiers must review and countersign decisions and activities. Internal Verifiers holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are verifying to the current standards.

3.5 External Verifier

The External Verifier is the key link for awarding bodies in the quality assurance and verification of the assessment of learners' performance in the workplace. **External Verifiers must:**

- be occupationally competent and have gained their knowledge through working within the sector or appropriate professional/occupational area
- have a working knowledge of dental care settings, the regulation, legislation and codes of practice for the service they are verifying
- have working knowledge of the requirements of the National Occupational Standards they are verifying at the time any assessment is taking place
- have credible experience which is clearly demonstrable through continuing learning and development
- hold, or be working towards, the 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 current standards. External Verifiers who are not yet qualified against the appropriate competence 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.

4. Equal Opportunities

All learners should have equal access to assessment regardless of geographical location, work setting and patterns of work. In addition:

- learners must be working in a role that enables them to practice and demonstrate the required knowledge/skills relevant to the qualification
- learners must be enabled and supported to undertake a qualification
- the qualifications must be delivered within the constraints of current practice
- the needs of under-represented groups should be addressed
- all individuals involved in the process should clearly demonstrate their commitment to equality of opportunity

5. Additional assessment guidance for SFHOH34 Maintain personal and professional practice for dental care professionals

The process of self-assessment, reflection and evaluation of practice are central to the development of an individual's skills and professional development. This involves learners taking ownership of their learning by reviewing their work and reflecting on their progress throughout their learning programme to achieve the SVQ. There are many approaches that may be used to facilitate and record this.

The learner's assessor will also work with the learner to define, exemplify and understand skills required in the context of their work role, which can be achieved through various methods:

- observing and offering constructive feedback
- encouraging self-reflection by the learner
- encouraging and promoting professional discussion
- providing a range of opportunities to support the learner's learning and development.

Accordingly, most workplace appraisal/performance management processes involve setting clear objectives, agreeing development activities and conducting regular progress reviews and feedback. This enables evidence of personal and professional development including the development of individuals' knowledge, job specific skills and other skills to be generated naturally and documented as part of these processes. As is the case more widely, a holistic approach to assessment is encouraged. Using larger pieces of work to evidence performance and knowledge criteria will more naturally provide opportunities to reflect on how skills and knowledge have been applied or developed.

The following approach may assist learners in generating evidence to meet the performance and knowledge criteria of this unit:

- an initial self-assessment of their own skills
- identifying and setting goals to inform development action planning for own skills
- using feedback and regularly reflecting on the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours and produce evidence to demonstrate this to achieve the unit requirements
- completing a final self-evaluation, and self-reflection on the development of skills, providing clear evidence of the skills developed at the end of the qualification