

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS INFORMATION FOR NEW SVQ CANDIDATES

1. What have I agreed to?

You have agreed to undertake a vocational qualification which means that you will be assessed in the workplace, during work time. “Assessed” means measured against a set of national standards of competency. Your employer has ensured that you have been registered to undertake the appropriate award at the appropriate level for the job you do and the level of responsibility you have. This means that you will not be expected to know or demonstrate anything that is not a part of your job.

2. What happens now?

You will be notified of an induction date and venue. This will have been arranged by ARC Scotland and your employer to fit in with your work commitments. The induction is facilitated by an assessor from ARC and will last approximately 2 to 2½ hours. At this induction session, the assessor will explain the assessment process, including who’s who, what we mean by “gathering evidence”, how long the course is expected to last, study time, how you will be observed and will allow plenty of time for you to ask questions. It would be a good idea if you jot down any questions, concerns or worries you have before you attend the induction, so that you remember to ask the assessor and don’t leave the session with the same worries!

3. How do I know which level SVQ is right for me?

Level 2 (SCQF 6) – Workers who work alongside others, usually in teams, where the worker has little or no autonomous authority. This worker does not have responsibility for the work of others.

Level 3 (SCQF 7)– this is suitable for those who will register as support workers in housing support services or residential services or care at home services. Often has responsibility for working alone, but does not have responsibility for the work of others.

Level 4 (SCQF 9/10)– This is for managers or senior team leaders in social care settings who have a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for others and allocation of resources is usually required.

4. How often will I meet my Assessor?

After the induction, your assessor will leave you with your portfolio and a small amount of research or a short piece of work to do. You will be given all the guidance you need and a date for your next meeting with the assessor. Your assessor will also give you their contact details and let you know how often they will expect contact.

We encourage all our candidates to contact their assessor as often as they wish rather than leave worries until the next pre-arranged meeting.

Meetings are arranged for planning the work, observing you at work and providing you with feedback. These arrangements are very individual and will not necessarily be the same as your colleagues doing the same award.

5. How much time am I expected to spend on my SVQ?

Your assessor will give you an idea about this, and depends on the level of award, but an average of a couple of hours a week may be necessary, especially at the start of your award. This will be for things like finding out about a workplace policy or procedure or writing about experiences you have had in your job, what you have learnt from these and the reasons why you do what you do. You will find that reflective writing becomes easier after a while and your assessor will give you detailed guidance after you have submitted your first piece of work. This will help you to spend your time effectively. Your assessor will be writing up observations of you, which will cover a lot of the requirements.

6. How long does it take to complete an SVQ award?

It is usual for a candidate to complete a level 2 award within 6 to 9 months and a level 3 or 4 award within 12 months. However, there is no timeframe stipulated by the awarding body and a realistic expected completion date is decided between the assessor, the employer and the candidate at induction, taking the individual candidate circumstances into account.

7. When can I start?

Candidates can start SVQ at any time mutually agreed between the assessor the candidate and the employer. There are usually no classroom type attendances required and no terms or holidays. The candidate and assessor agree at induction the frequency of their meetings.

8. Is it acceptable to handwrite the work produced as evidence or do I have to type?

Handwritten work is acceptable as long as it is legible and is the candidates own work. Typed work is preferred as it is more easily added to or remediated, can be sent for assessment as an email attachment and usually looks more professional. The candidate is expected to demonstrate the level of I.T. skill required that they need to use in their job.

9. Does the portfolio belong to the candidates, the centre or the employer?

The portfolio is the property of the candidate, the evidence within it confirms their competence only. The assessment and verification records are the property of the centre but the portfolio is the candidate's. If there are documents that are confidential, these should not be in the portfolio but remain with the employer.

10. Can candidates get their SVQ when they look after only a single individual?

Yes. Candidates can use evidence solely from only one service user, where the candidate works with no other individual. However these circumstances must be discussed and agreed with the Awarding Body prior to candidate registration.

11. How many times will I be observed in the workplace?

Workplace observation is a mandatory source of evidence and the assessor and candidate will plan for suitable opportunities to observe a variety of normal workplace activities. The observation will usually meet the evidence requirements for more than one unit so the frequency of observation will depend on the activity and the competences that the assessor feels has been demonstrated to the required standard.

12. Can candidates write their own observations?

No. Candidates are not permitted to write their own observations as this would be a reflective account.

Assessors themselves need to be competent in the units they are assessing, qualified in assessment and have sufficient time to undertake their role. They need to make the observation, draw judgements from the performance, and elicit any knowledge evidence from the practice they have observed.

13. How do I provide evidence when the information is confidential?

Confidential records belong to the employer and must not be included within the candidate's portfolio. Clear reference must be made as to where the information can be located.

14. What is the difference between witness testimony and expert witness testimony?

It is best to avoid the term 'expert witness testimony' and use instead 'expert witness evidence', which may or may not be testimony.

Within the new Social Services and Health Care Awards, the use of Expert Witnesses is encouraged as a contribution to the assessment of evidence of the candidate's competence. Expert Witnesses are used where there are no occupationally competent assessors for occupationally specific (optional)

units. Evidence from Expert Witnesses can only be used as supplementary evidence for the mandatory/core units.

Expert witnesses are identified and trained by the centre and must meet the criteria stated in the Assessment Strategy; witnesses are other people who may have been present at a particular incident, or able to provide evidence of consistency of practice, but not on the centre register as experts.

15. Why can't expert witnesses provide evidence for the mandatory/core units?

This was a decision made by the Sector Skills Councils and forms part of the Assessment Strategy. Assessors are expected to be occupationally competent and to take the lead role in the assessment of the mandatory/core units of the qualification.

Assessment evidence identified by the expert witness can be considered by the qualified assessor for inclusion towards the mandatory/core units but only as supplementary evidence.

16. Will the achieved qualification belong to the candidate or the employer?

The award is achieved through the candidate demonstrating their knowledge and practical competence so it is their personal achievement and belongs to them.

