

N/SVQ guide for centres and candidates

Centre guide

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1 About this document

Introduction

The City & Guilds *N/SVQ guide* provides an introduction for any organisation wishing to offer City & Guilds National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). It is in 3 sections:

- this centre guide – for organisations (known as centres) wishing to offer City & Guilds N/SVQs (stock reference: EN-12-0001)
- a section for candidates (stock reference: TS-12-0001)
- Recording forms – containing sample forms for use by centres and candidates (stock reference: TS-33-0001).

It is designed to be a starting point for centres wishing to offer City & Guilds N/SVQs and provides advice on where to go for further information. For those already involved in the assessment and quality assurance of N/SVQs, it is a reference document on the provision of N/SVQs.

The guide gives an overview of N/SVQs including

- their structure and place in the qualifications system, including apprenticeships
- where funding may be available
- how they are administered
- the way they should be delivered and assessed
- how they are quality assured and regulated.

This guide is designed to be read in conjunction with the relevant City & Guilds *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*, which contains the national occupational standards and specific assessment requirements for a particular N/SVQ or group of N/SVQs.

Other relevant publications

This guide is not intended to provide answers to all the questions a potential centre may wish to ask. Throughout the guide, centres are referred to other City & Guilds' guidance, policy documents, resources and websites for more detailed information.

Detailed guidance on centre and scheme approval and roles and responsibilities is given in *Providing City & Guilds qualifications – a guide to centre and scheme approval*.

Regular updates on assessment and verification are given in *Ensuring quality*, a policy document for centres and external verifiers, identifying best practice and advising on any changes in delivery and assessment procedures.

Additional information on running City & Guilds qualifications is given in a CD-ROM, the *City & Guilds centre toolkit*, which links to the internet for access to the latest documents, reference materials and templates.

Details of general regulations, registration and certification procedures, and fees, are given

- in the City & Guilds Directory of Qualifications
- on the City & Guilds Walled Garden website at www.walled-garden.com.

These documents can be downloaded from the 'Centres' section of our website www.cityandguilds.com, or can be ordered from City & Guilds Publication Sales.

If there are any differences between the information in this Guide and the N/SVQ *Standards and assessment requirements* or the *Directory of Qualifications*, the *Standards and assessment requirements* and the *Directory* have the most up-to-date information.

Note:

These documents replace:

Centre Guide for N/SVQs, February 2003, stock reference: EN-11-0001

Candidate Guide for N/SVQs, February 2003, stock reference: TS-11-0001

Recording forms for N/SVQs, February 2003, stock reference: TS-22-0001.

2 Information for centres

Obtaining approval

In order to offer N/SVQs, organisations must meet a set of quality criteria and be able to demonstrate that systems and resources are in place to ensure that the qualifications will be delivered and assessed appropriately. This section provides an outline of the process of applying for approval as a centre. Full details of the procedures for applying for centre and scheme approval are given in *Providing City & Guilds qualifications – a guide to centre and scheme approval* which is also available on the *City & Guilds centre toolkit*, or downloadable from the City & Guilds website www.cityandguilds.com.

N/SVQs require candidates to be assessed in the workplace. Organisations will need to show that they can provide candidates with access to real work situations. This may mean working in partnership with employers.

An organisation that has not previously offered City & Guilds qualifications will have to apply for approval to become a centre. This is known as **centre approval**. They will also need approval to offer the specific N/SVQ. This is called **scheme approval**. Organisations which are not already City & Guilds centres, must apply for centre and scheme approval at the same time. Existing City & Guilds centres will only need to apply for scheme approval for the specific N/SVQ.

The quality criteria that must be met to gain approval as a City & Guilds centre include

- provision of adequate resources, both physical and human
- clear management information systems
- effective assessment and quality assurance procedures including candidate support and reliable recording systems.

Some N/SVQs have specific requirements for scheme approval set by the relevant sector body. These are explained in the *Standards and assessment requirements* for the particular N/SVQ.

Assessments must not be undertaken until centre approval and scheme approval have been obtained.

The centre and scheme approval process

Potential centres will need to contact their City & Guilds regional or national office who will provide them with the appropriate documentation including

- *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*
- centre approval form (Form CAP)
- scheme approval form (Form SAP).

Form CAP is normally completed with the assistance of a Quality Systems Consultant who is appointed by the regional/national office to guide the centre through the approval process.

The regional/national office will appoint an external verifier who will make a visit to check the information provided. They will recommend that approval is either

- granted – the centre is able to register candidates and, after external verification, apply for certification
- withheld – the centre is provided with an action plan with deadlines. Once this is completed the external verifier will visit again
- refused – the centre needs too much development and will have to make a new application.

Full details of the centre and scheme approval processes, including regional/national boundaries, are given in *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*.

Design and delivery of support programmes

Centres must decide the most appropriate method for delivery of a support programme for each N/SVQ offered. This may include a programme of skills and knowledge development to support their candidates. In all cases, the programme must include initial assessment to identify development needs and induction to the requirements of the national occupational standards, assessment requirements and the N/SVQ assessment process. For further information see Section 6 'Initial assessment and induction'.

When planning development, some centres integrate the N/SVQ standards into existing training and assessment schemes. Others devise specific training packages to support development, which may involve delivering skills and knowledge via their intranet and using separate assessment systems. Alternatively, some use external training providers to deliver development and/or conduct assessments.

The time it takes to achieve an N/SVQ will depend on the opportunities that individual candidates have to demonstrate their competence and to collect all of the evidence specified in the national occupational standards and assessment requirements. Where candidates are undertaking N/SVQs that are publicly funded, centres will need to check the funding arrangements – see Section 3 'N/SVQs and the National Qualifications Framework'.

Administration of N/SVQs

Registration

Once a centre has enrolled candidates on an N/SVQ programme, the candidates must be formally registered with City & Guilds. Candidates must be registered as near to the start of their assessment process as possible and prior to any formal assessment taking place. Candidates who are not registered with City & Guilds will not be considered by the external verifier. See also 'The 10-week rule' paragraph later in this section.

Registration is valid for a set length of time. This varies depending on the N/SVQ, but is usually between one and five years.

There are generally no entry qualifications or age limits for N/SVQs unless this is a legal requirement of the process or the environment. Assessment is open to any candidate who has the potential to reach the specified standards. However, candidates should not be registered for an award if they either already hold, or are registered with City & Guilds, or another awarding body for, an award of the same type, content and level.

A unique candidate enrolment number is issued when a candidate's details are supplied to City & Guilds for the first time. The enrolment number is a lifetime identification number for the candidate and is allocated only once for each person.

Centres can register candidates for an N/SVQ by completing Form S manually or online using the Walled Garden at www.walled-garden.com.

Online registration

The Walled Garden is a fast-track, online qualification administration service for City & Guilds approved centres. Further information on the Walled Garden is given in the *City & Guilds centre toolkit* and on the City & Guilds website.

Certification

As soon as a candidate's evidence has been assessed as having met the standards and has been both internally and externally verified, a centre may apply for certification using Form S or via the Walled Garden.

Candidates achieving all of the units required for the N/SVQ will be issued with the full Certificate, as well as a Certificate of Unit Credit listing the units achieved. Candidates who only complete some of the units will be able to claim these on a Certificate of Unit Credit (CUC).

If it is the first time that the centre has offered a particular N/SVQ, the full award must have been externally verified before the centre can apply for the full certificate.

The certificate is the property of the candidate and should be presented to the candidate as soon as possible when received by the centre.

Full details of registration and certification procedures, enrolment numbers, and fees for N/SVQs are given in the City & Guilds *Directory of Qualifications*, available online to City & Guilds registered centres at www.walled-garden.com.

The 10-week rule

City & Guilds is not permitted by the regulatory authorities to issue a full N/SVQ certificate until a candidate has been registered with City & Guilds for a minimum of 10 weeks. This is to allow sufficient time for the necessary quality assurance procedures to be carried out. For further information on the 10-week rule please see *Providing City & Guilds qualifications, City & Guilds Ensuring quality, edition 12*, page 36 or the *QCA NVQ Code of Practice 2001*.

3 N/SVQs and the National Qualifications Framework

What are N/SVQs?

National Vocational Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs) are national, work-based qualifications. They are available for many occupations and show that the certificate holders are competent in their jobs.

N/SVQs are measured against nationally recognised occupational standards. These standards are set by sector bodies made up of industry representatives, sometimes recognised as a sector skills council (SSC). The standards describe what is expected of people in a particular occupation. They are accompanied by assessment requirements known as the 'Assessment Strategy', which defines the type(s) of assessment and the conditions under which they will be used to assess a candidate's competence. Details are given in the *City & Guilds Standards and assessment requirements* for the specific N/SVQ.

NVQs are accredited (approved) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). In Scotland, SVQs are accredited and regulated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

N/SVQ accreditation is always for a set period of time, towards the end of which the sector body will review and if necessary update the occupational standards so that the N/SVQ can be revised to keep up to date with the changing demands within the occupational sector.

The *City & Guilds Directory of Qualifications*, available online to City & Guilds approved centres at www.walled-garden.com, provides the accreditation end date (last registration date) for each N/SVQ and the length of time a candidate, already registered for the qualification, has to complete it. Where an N/SVQ is in the process of being revised, details of both the new and the old qualification will normally be in the *Directory of Qualifications*.

N/SVQs have no set timescales for completion, other than those outlined above, and focus on the performance of an individual at work. They

- recognise the skills an individual has and build on those strengths
- focus training and development on skill areas that need to be improved
- help individuals to value their contribution to the workplace
- develop skills for the future.

N/SVQs are a vital development tool for any business striving for success and continuous improvement. They are a fundamental part of apprenticeships – see Section 4 'Apprenticeships' for further information. In a growing number of occupations and industries they provide a licence to practise, sometimes through statutory arrangements.

The National Qualifications Framework and credit frameworks

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels at which qualifications can be recognised for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It aims to help learners to make informed decisions on the qualifications they need by comparing the levels of different qualifications and identifying career progression routes. It is relevant to all stages of learning and is aligned with the Scottish Qualifications Framework. It recognises that lifelong learning takes place in many kinds of formal and informal settings. Qualifications such as N/SVQs are used to recognise that learning.

Further information about the NQF is given in Section 5 'The structure of N/SVQs'.

A framework for achievement

Credit frameworks are being established in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland already has a credit framework in place. The aim is to work co-operatively across the UK and align the framework with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and higher education credit principles.

The purpose of a unit-based credit framework is to help candidates gain recognition for their achievements and to help employers and others understand the relative value of those achievements. Such a system will make it simpler for candidates to plan their learning and report their achievements to employers and others. It will provide

- a set of specifications for recognising, measuring, valuing and comparing achievement by providing learners with credit based on a consistently derived value
- flexibility and choice for learners by recognising achievement across different mixes of knowledge and skills and cumulative achievement which supports progression to further learning
- flexibility for employers by allowing for customised awards that meet specific market needs
- qualifications that meet new or emerging learning and skills needs in a flexible and responsive way.

Further information on the benefits, principles and key features of the credit system proposed for England are set out in the QCA documents *Principles for a credit framework for England – March 2004* and *New thinking for reform 2004*.

Further information is also on the QCA website: www.qca.org.uk and the Learning and Skills Council website: www.lsc.gov.uk.

Regulatory authorities

Regulatory authorities have been set up in the four UK nations to **accredit** and **regulate** qualifications. Accreditation and regulation are the processes through which the regulatory authorities confirm that a qualification and the associated specification conform to the regulatory criteria.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

QCA is the accreditation and regulatory authority for all externally assessed qualifications in England, including NVQs. It also accredits qualifications for Wales. It is the accreditation and regulatory authority in Northern Ireland for NVQs only.

Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwn ac Asesu Cymru/The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC)

ACCAC is the regulatory authority for all externally assessed qualifications in Wales, and is responsible for the regulation of NVQs in Wales. Accreditation of NVQs in Wales is the responsibility of QCA.

The Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

CCEA is the regulatory authority for all externally assessed qualifications in Northern Ireland except for NVQs. QCA is responsible for the accreditation and regulation of NVQs in Northern Ireland.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

SQA is the regulatory authority for SVQs and is responsible for their accreditation.

SQA and QCA have agreed that from 1 April 2005, SQA act on behalf of QCA with respect to the monitoring of NVQs and NVQ centres in Scotland. SQA will be advised by QCA of the number of centres that it wishes SQA to visit and the awarding body or NVQs which it wishes SQA to consider.

Responsibilities of regulatory authorities

Regulatory authorities have a number of responsibilities which include

- developing and publishing criteria for the accreditation of qualifications
- accrediting qualifications developed from the national occupational standards. These qualifications will form part of the National Qualifications Framework in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Scottish Qualifications Framework in Scotland
- approving awarding bodies such as City & Guilds to offer N/SVQs and other regulated qualifications
- ensuring that consistent standards are maintained across the awarding bodies. City & Guilds' activities as an awarding body for N/SVQs are audited. This audit includes visits to centres to speak with the quality assurance staff and to look at the work of candidates.

The NVQ code of practice

The NVQ Code of Practice 2001 was developed by QCA and ACCAC to promote quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in the assessment and awarding of N/SVQs. It sets out

- how the two authorities will monitor awarding bodies, such as City & Guilds, to ensure they maintain the quality required and the standards across the NVQs they offer
- the responsibilities of awarding bodies and their centres when administering, assessing and verifying NVQs
- the ways in which the assessment and quality assurance of NVQs and NVQ units must be carried out.

The SQA equivalent for SVQs is the document *SVQ criteria and guidance*.

Sector skills councils

Sector skills councils (SSCs) are organisations developed by groups of influential employers in industry or business sectors of economic or strategic significance. They act as sector bodies for N/SVQs and other qualifications in their sector. They are set up to identify the skills and productivity needs of their sector in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

One of their goals is to improve the supply of learning opportunities. They are responsible for setting the national occupational standards and apprenticeship frameworks for their sector. They will play a key role in the development of the national credit framework. See the Sector Skills Development Agency website 'Skills for business' at www.ssda.org.uk for more details.

Further information on the role of SSCs in relation to apprenticeships is given in Section 4 'Apprenticeships'.

Funding bodies

In **England**, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds. Each year the LSC publishes guidance on funding methodology and rates. There is separate guidance for further education and work based learning. Further information on funding is available on the Learning and Skills Council website at www.lsc.gov.uk and, for funding for a specific qualification, on the Learning Aim Database <http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/lad>.

In **Scotland**, colleges should contact the Scottish Further Education Funding Council, at www.sfc.co.uk. Training providers should contact Scottish Enterprise at www.scottish-enterprise.com or one of the Local Enterprise Companies.

For **Wales**, centres should contact Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) at www.elwa.ac.uk or speak to one of the four regional branches of ELWa.

In **Northern Ireland**, funding information may be obtained from the Department for Employment and Learning at www.delni.gov.uk.

4 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are programmes which allow young learners (aged between 16 and 24 years) to be employed and earn a salary while they train. Apprenticeships are available in over 80 different sectors of industry, covering a wide range of subjects from engineering, retail, health and social care to business administration. Apprentices learn through a combination of on- and off-the-job education and training.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are two levels of apprenticeship:

- **Apprenticeships** (called **Traineeships** in Northern Ireland, **Foundation Modern Apprenticeships** in Wales). Apprentices work towards
 - a National Vocational Qualification at Level 2
 - key skills (two or more specified key skills qualifications at Level 1)
 - in most cases, a Technical Certificate, covering the knowledge required for the job role, as well as an understanding of the industry and the world of work
 - employment rights and responsibilities (usually covered in induction)
 - and possibly, other mandatory elements defined for the industry, such as units from another NVQ.
- **Advanced Apprenticeships** (called **Modern Apprenticeships** in Northern Ireland and Wales). Advanced apprentices work towards
 - a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3
 - key skills (two or more specified key skills qualifications at Level 2)
 - employment rights and responsibilities (usually covered in induction)
 - a Technical Certificate (details as above)
 - and possibly, other mandatory elements defined for the industry such as units from another NVQ.

There are plans to open the apprenticeship scheme to learners who are over 25 years and to introduce a new Young Apprenticeship programme for 14- to 16-year-old learners.

In Scotland, **Modern Apprenticeships** are available to learners who have the potential to achieve a Level 3 SVQ. Apprentices work towards

- a Scottish Vocational Qualification (or NVQ) at Level 3 (some apprenticeship frameworks may include a Level 2 SVQ as well)
- core skills (if these have not already been achieved in Standards or Highers)
- if required by the sector body – a Vocationally Related Qualification, covering the knowledge required for the job role, as well as an understanding of the industry and the world of work
- and possibly, other mandatory units defined for the industry such as units from another SVQ.

An apprenticeship does not necessarily last for a fixed length of time – it ends when all the required elements have been completed and the employer's requirements are satisfied. The pace of progress depends on the individual learner but, in most cases, apprenticeships last between one and three years, although the length of funding contracts will vary.

Who designs the apprenticeship frameworks?

Apprenticeship frameworks for individual sectors are designed by the sector body or sector skills council (SSC) to a model specified by the relevant regulatory authority as listed in Section 3 'N/SVQs and the National Qualifications Framework'.

The content of apprenticeship frameworks will vary from sector to sector. Each framework details the qualifications to be achieved and the levels to be reached (for example, the key skills component in programmes may cover more than one level).

Technical certificates

The Technical Certificate in each programme covers specialised occupational knowledge and its application in the relevant industry. It contributes to the underpinning knowledge for at least one NVQ, is delivered through a taught programme of 'off-the-job learning' and may be externally assessed. Technical Certificates are Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs) in the National Qualifications Framework. VRQs are not always part of a particular apprenticeship framework in Scotland.

City & Guilds offers a range of VRQs, many of which are recognised as Technical Certificates. They have been specifically designed to complement a range of NVQs, and are 'mapped' against them, but they can also be used as stand-alone qualifications.

Separate scheme approval must be obtained by centres wishing to offer a Technical Certificate. The approval process is outlined in Section 2 'Information for centres'.

Key and core skills

The City & Guilds *Standards and assessment requirements* for each N/SVQ include guidance to show where within the N/SVQ there are opportunities for learners to develop key/core skills. This is a useful tool if used to support the assessment of learners undertaking apprenticeships.

There are six key skills qualifications, each available at levels 1 to 4

- Communication
- Application of Number
- Information and Communication Technology
- Working with Others
- Improving Own Learning and Performance
- Problem Solving.

In Scotland, the Core Skills cover five areas, ranging from Access 3 to Higher levels

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Information Technology
- Working with Others
- Problem Solving.

Centres must obtain scheme approval before offering key/core skills with City & Guilds.

For the latest information on key/core skills, see the City & Guilds websites: www.key-skills.org or www.core-skills.org.uk or the QCA website: www.qca.org.uk.

Details of key and core skills are also included in the *City & Guilds Directory of Qualifications*.

Employment rights and responsibilities

Each apprenticeship framework (excluding Scotland) includes a requirement for the apprentice to develop knowledge and understanding about the world of employment. This includes

- the rights and responsibilities of workers
- the role of their organisation within the wider industry
- the effect of public law and policy on industry.

This knowledge and understanding can be achieved

- as part of the N/SVQ
- as part of the Technical Certificate
- as part of the employment (for example, through induction).

Registration for the apprenticeship certificate

Although City & Guilds offers many of the qualifications in apprenticeship frameworks, the apprenticeship completion certificates themselves are issued by other organisations.

In England, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) manages apprenticeships nationally through local offices. Learners have to be registered with the sector body, and have a training agreement with the LSC, if funded. Once they have been awarded certificates from City & Guilds for successful achievement of the NVQ, Technical Certificate and key skills qualifications, the Apprenticeship Certificate may be applied for. The application form will be countersigned by the local LSC to confirm that all the evidence is in place. The Apprenticeship Certificate is issued by the sector body responsible for the particular apprenticeship framework.

For Wales, Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) manages the Apprenticeship programmes. Learners must be registered with ELWa and the sector body. Once the component parts of the apprenticeship framework have been achieved, the sector body issues the Apprenticeship Certificate.

In Northern Ireland, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) manages apprenticeship programmes. Learners are registered through careers advisors and provided with a Training Credit. Once they have achieved all the components of the apprenticeship framework, the Apprenticeship Certificate is issued by the DEL.

Scottish Enterprise, in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, manages the delivery of apprenticeship programmes through the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland. Learners have to be registered with the appropriate sector body, and, if funded, the LEC. The sector body issues the Apprenticeship Certificate once the component parts of the apprenticeship framework have been achieved.

Links to useful information

There is further information on apprenticeships on the following websites

www.city-and-guilds-co.uk	the City & Guilds website
www.lsc.gov.uk	the website for the Learning and Skills Council
www.apprenticeships.org.uk	also a Learning and Skills Council website
www.qca.org.uk	the website for QCA

and, for details of Scottish apprenticeships

www.masot.uk.com
www.modernapprenticeships.com
www.scottishenterprise.com.

5 The structure of N/SVQs

N/SVQs are developed from, and measured against, national occupational standards. The standards describe what is expected of a person when performing a role at a particular level in an industry. Some of these expectations will not be entirely occupationally specific. Since everyone must understand and comply with health and safety regulations, for example, standards relating to this are found in all N/SVQs.

The level of the N/SVQ will be decided when the sector body is developing the national occupational standards for its sector.

Levels

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland came into effect on 1 September 2004 and has nine levels. The previous framework had Entry Level and Levels 1 to 5.

In the 2004 framework, Entry Level and Levels 1 to 3 remain the same, Levels 4, 5 and 6 correspond to the former Level 4 and Levels 7 and 8 to the former Level 5. Levels 4 to 8 have been brought into line with the five levels of the Framework for Higher Education (FHEQ) to help progression between NQF qualifications and university-awarded qualifications. The revised levels are currently not being implemented for NVQs. They are currently awarded at levels 1 to 5 reflecting the level of complexity, responsibility and autonomy of a job. See the QCA website www.qca.org.uk for the latest information.

The NQF levels and level indicators are shown at Appendix 1. The level indicators describe the learning and achievement that are expected at each level and show how the skills and knowledge relate to job roles.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework is also shown at Appendix 1.

Structure of an N/SVQ

The national occupational standards are grouped into the key activities that make up a role. Each grouping of the standards is usually called a unit (although for some N/SVQs they are known as 'areas of competence', they will be referred to as 'units' in this document). An N/SVQ is made up of a number of these units. A unit is the smallest part of an N/SVQ that an awarding body can certificate. The standards will specify how many units and which types a candidate must achieve to be awarded a full N/SVQ.

Types of units

- **Mandatory units** are the common core of the N/SVQ that all candidates must achieve to be awarded the qualification.
- **Optional units** provide candidates with the opportunity to tailor their qualification to meet the needs of the area of the industry in which they work. Optional units may be grouped in the national occupational standards to provide a particular occupational route to an N/SVQ.
- **Additional units** are not a requirement to achieve a full N/SVQ. They may be taken so that a candidate's work in a specialist or additional area is recognised. They will be recorded on the Certificate of Unit Credit issued by City & Guilds.

The structure of a unit

Each unit describes what a person must be able to do to show they are competent in an aspect of their job role. Competence is about being able to do something and understand how it is done in a particular way. Competence is about actual and not potential skill and ability. To achieve an N/SVQ, a candidate must show that they can perform a range of tasks competently and in line with the national occupational standards over a period of time.

The terms used to describe the structure of a unit are not the same in all N/SVQs. However, generally a unit will have

- a **description** that summarises what is covered by the unit and what evidence should be presented to demonstrate competence. It may define the terms used in the unit and/or key words and phrases. This description may be called the 'unit summary', 'unit description', 'notes' or 'what this unit is about'
- a number of **elements** or **outcomes** that break the unit down into smaller sets of tasks (although not all N/SVQs are broken down into elements or outcomes)
- **standards of performance** that state what must be demonstrated consistently by the candidate to achieve the unit. These may be called 'performance criteria' and may start with, for example, 'You must **show** that you ...'
- **statements** that set the standards of performance in context by indicating the **breadth** and **scope** of the performance and/or circumstances in which the performance must take place. These statements may be explanations of words or phrases in the standards of performance, often shown in bold type. They are sometimes called **range** or **range statements**
- the essential **knowledge and understanding** required to perform competently. This is sometimes called 'knowledge specification' or 'underpinning knowledge'
- **evidence requirements** that describe the types of, and minimum amount of, evidence candidates must produce to demonstrate that they are competent and the areas of the standards in which performance evidence is essential. These also explain when and under what conditions simulation and realistic working environments may be used to generate evidence of performance.

Recognising unit achievement

When a candidate has successfully completed all the mandatory and optional units that make up the qualification, the centre will be able to apply to City & Guilds for the N/SVQ Certificate. City & Guilds will also issue a Certificate of Unit Credit listing the units achieved for all candidates who successfully complete units.

Full details of the registration and certification fees for each N/SVQ are provided in the *City & Guilds Directory of Qualifications*, available online to City & Guilds approved centres at www.walled-garden.com.

6 Induction and initial assessment

Before starting work towards an N/SVQ, candidates will need support and guidance to enable them to

- identify which level of the N/SVQ, and, in some cases, which route within the N/SVQ is best suited to their needs
- understand what the chosen N/SVQ covers
- understand what will be required of them
- identify any training needs and how to access development
- understand the N/SVQ assessment process and identify the people who will be involved
- understand how to identify evidence from their performance at work
- understand how to compile their portfolio of evidence
- understand relevant centre policies and procedures, including health and safety, equal opportunities, appeals and, if appropriate, identify alternative assessment arrangements.

Effective induction and initial assessment will ensure that candidates get the very best start and will set them on the path towards a successful and rewarding development experience resulting in the achievement of their City & Guilds N/SVQ. Planned and comprehensive induction programmes will also help centres to deliver and assess N/SVQs to the quality standards required by City & Guilds. Candidates who are well informed from the outset are much more likely to progress quickly and achieve agreed targets.

The importance of initial assessment

Initial assessment is essential in order to ensure that centres place candidates on appropriate N/SVQ programmes. Candidates will assess their skills and knowledge against the requirements of the national occupational standards and the assessment requirements of their chosen N/SVQ. The process may involve a skills audit, where basic skills and other skills and knowledge related to the N/SVQ are assessed. After initial assessment candidates will know whether they are

- **competent** – they are able to generate evidence to meet the assessment requirements and should be registered for the N/SVQ and begin the assessment planning process
- **partially competent** – they are able to meet many of the assessment requirements and can access development and evidence-generating opportunities to enable them to meet the remaining ones. In this case they should be registered for the N/SVQ and begin a development planning process at the same time as embarking upon the assessment planning process for those units in which they feel confident
- **not competent or do not have the opportunities to perform the tasks involved in the N/SVQ** – they may need to select a different level of the N/SVQ against which to be assessed or even a different N/SVQ. The centre should either agree a programme of development for the potential candidate, to enable them to register for the qualification at a later date, or provide them with information on an award that is likely to be more suited to their current level of competence and work opportunities.

The centre must record the results of the initial assessment as part of an initial assessment and personal action plan, including any alternative assessment needs which are identified.

Induction

Induction is the process by which candidates are introduced to all the relevant information that will enable them to successfully achieve their chosen N/SVQ. Centres should make arrangements to induct candidates either individually or as a group following initial assessment. Candidates should be briefed (either face-to-face, and/or using written or online information) to ensure that they understand what they can expect of the centre and what is expected of them.

The *City & Guilds centre toolkit* provides further guidance on what an induction programme should contain.

The regular reviews of action and assessment plans provide opportunities for topping up induction information and checking that candidates are aware of the support available to them.

At the end of the induction process, the centre should have all the necessary information for its candidate tracking system and all the details required to register candidates with City & Guilds for the appropriate N/SVQ.

Further information on the role of key people within the process is given in Section 7 'Assessing and supporting candidates'.

Learning contracts

Before starting a learning and development programme and assessment towards an N/SVQ, it is important that candidates are fully aware of their responsibilities and those of other key people in the process. Although it is not a mandatory requirement, a learning contract between the centre and the candidate/employer can be extremely helpful.

The contract should be a simple and straightforward document that sets out what a candidate can expect in terms of support and assessment and what they will need to do in order to make the most of learning opportunities and achieve successful assessment outcomes. Generally, the learning contract will be signed by the candidate, the person conducting the induction and the candidate's manager or supervisor at work.

The format of this document may be developed in line with the centre house style. Further information and an example are given in the *City & Guilds centre toolkit*.

Action Plan

If induction and initial assessment are not recorded on a learning contract, then the centre must provide each candidate with an Action Plan which records as a minimum

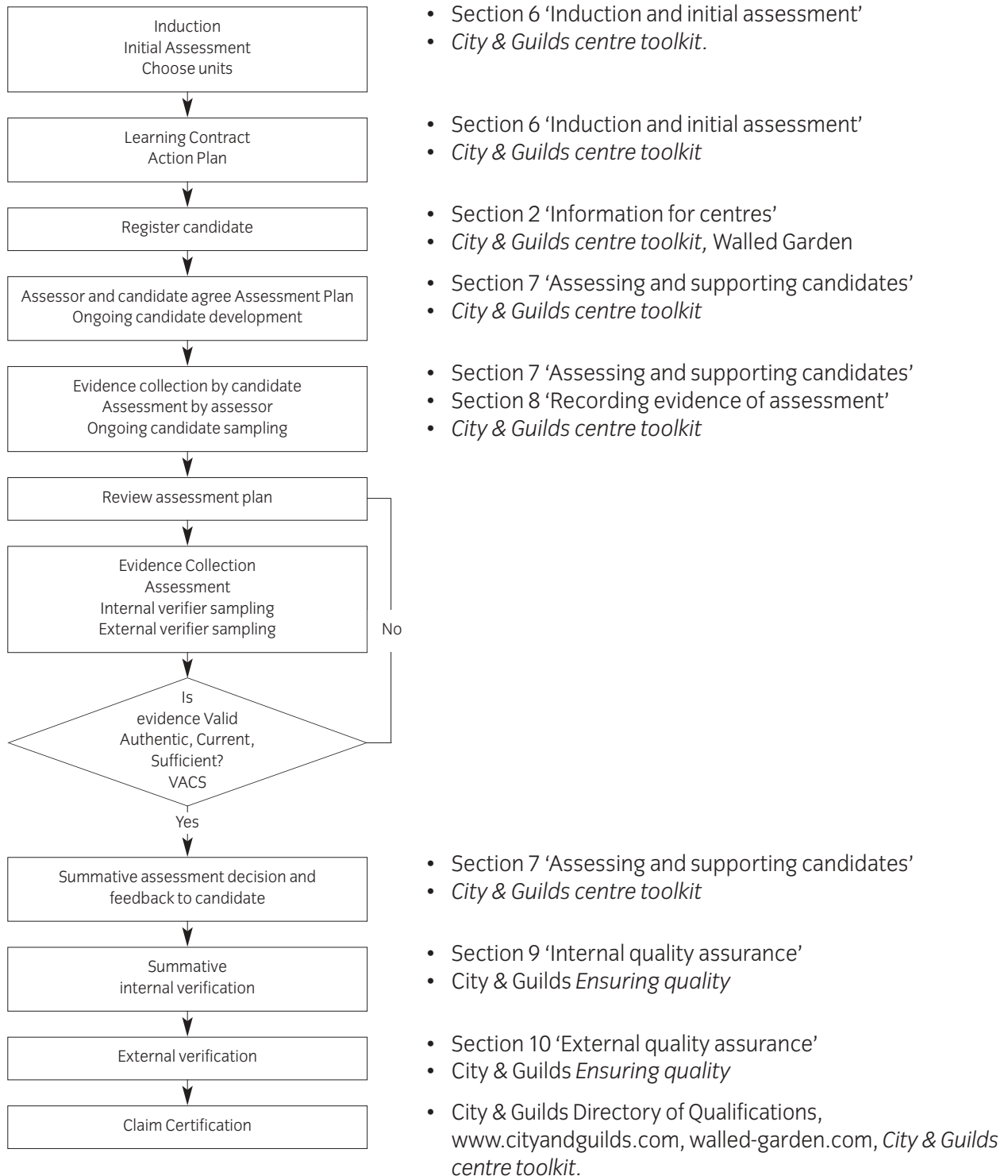
- the outcome of the initial assessment process or discussions of assessment of prior experience and learning (APEL)
- the learning and development needs identified and how and when they will be met
- a target date for completion of the N/SVQ and interim target dates for the completion of units.

The Action Plan should be reviewed regularly.

7 Assessing and supporting candidates

Support for candidates throughout the learning and assessment process is crucial if candidates are to achieve their N/SVQ. This section outlines the assessment process and the support that centres must provide.

The assessment and quality assurance process



For all stages, refer also to the relevant N/SVQ *Standards and assessment requirements*.

The purpose of assessment is to judge whether an N/SVQ candidate can consistently perform to the standard specified in the national occupational standards and meet the assessment requirements. N/SVQs may be candidate-led, assessor-led or a combination of the two, in order to decide when candidates have gathered sufficient evidence to demonstrate that they can competently perform a particular task and are therefore ready to be assessed.

Assessment planning and review

Effective planning for assessment by the candidate and their assessor is essential if the candidate is to succeed within an appropriate timescale. The purpose of assessment planning is to help candidates identify how and when they will provide the evidence required to demonstrate their competence. Planning should be a joint activity between the candidate and the assessor.

During initial assessment, the candidate will have developed an understanding of what each unit is about and the assessment requirements. If someone other than the assessor conducts the initial assessment, the assessor needs to develop a shared understanding with the candidate of what the units are about. This will enable them to identify the best types of evidence to meet the evidence requirements, if these are not specified in the national occupational standards. (Some national occupational standards specify the types of evidence required for a particular unit or element. If this is the case, details will be given in the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.)

Assessment planning will identify opportunities for evidence generation and assessment that occur naturally as the candidate carries out work and where opportunities might need to be created to allow the candidate to demonstrate competence. This could mean arranging, with their manager, for a candidate to exchange tasks with a colleague. The assessor will negotiate and agree with the candidate the types of work-based activity that will be observed and the products of that activity (eg articles, forms, reports) that will be presented as evidence. It is important that a realistic timescale is set for achievement of the first units or elements.

When planning assessments, the assessor should aim to identify opportunities for holistic assessment, that is, to assess across elements, a full unit or clusters of units. Assessing criterion by criterion is not good practice.

Although assessment plans are primarily the responsibility of the assessor, candidates must be involved in identifying opportunities to gather evidence. The candidate's manager or supervisor will be a valuable resource in the assessment planning process as they can validate the information provided by the candidate and assist in preparing the candidate for development and assessment. They are also able to assist in setting up opportunities for candidates to widen their role, if this will enable them to meet all the assessment requirements.

The assessment plan must include

- the units to be assessed
- the method of assessment that will be undertaken (further information on types of assessment follow in this section)
- the types of evidence to be collected
- the place, date and times of the assessments
- a note of any other people who need to be informed about or involved in the planned assessment
- space to review each assessment
- signatures of candidate and assessor.

A sample assessment plan and review form is provided in the *Recording forms* document.

Key people involved in supporting and assessing N/SVQ candidates

Assessors

The assessor assigned to an N/SVQ candidate is responsible for formally judging the candidate's evidence against the national occupational standards and assessment requirements. Assessors help candidates identify opportunities to demonstrate their competence and to produce evidence. Candidates may have more than one assessor, each assessing different units or aspects of those units.

The assessor is responsible for

- managing the assessment process
- agreeing, recording and reviewing assessment plans with the candidate
- judging the evidence against the national occupational standards
- using appropriate assessment methods
- ensuring that assessments are safe and fair
- recording the assessment process and all assessment outcomes
- providing feedback to the candidate following each assessment
- passing all assessment records, with recorded outcomes, to the internal verifier
- contributing to continuous improvements within the assessment process
- continually updating their occupational competence and assessment skills
- contributing to the evaluation of the assessment process
- contributing to standardisation meetings.

Assessors will need to achieve the relevant qualification for their role before they can be regarded as a qualified assessor. There are two assessor qualifications:

- A1 – Assess candidates using a range of methods
- A2 – Assess candidates' performance through observation.

The assessor qualifications must be achieved within 18 months of registering for the qualification.

Further information on these qualifications is given in *City & Guilds 7317 Assessor and Verifier Awards* and is also available via the *City & Guilds centre toolkit*.

Assessors working towards their qualification must have their assessment judgements checked and countersigned by a qualified assessor. Further guidance on the countersigning of assessments is given in *Ensuring quality, edition 14*, page 7.

The relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements* specifies the qualifications and/or experience that assessors must have in order to demonstrate their occupational competence.

In some organisations, a candidate may not have access to a work-based assessor. In this case, a **peripatetic** assessor will move between different assessment sites to carry out assessments.

Witnesses

It may not always be possible for the assessor to be present to observe a candidate's performance. For example, where their presence might be intrusive to the work being assessed or where an emergency incident occurs outside a planned assessment. If it is permitted by the standards, witness testimony may be used as an alternative means of collecting evidence.

Witness status lists should be provided by centres as a standard part of the candidate portfolio. Witness testimonies should identify the unit/element being claimed. (See Form N/SVQ5 'Expert/witness status list' in *Recording forms*.)

Any specific requirements on the use and role of witnesses for each N/SVQ is given in the *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.

There are two types of witness – the expert witness and the non-expert witness.

The expert witness

An expert witness is someone who regularly and systematically observes candidates performing tasks. They may be the candidate's line manager. They will be

- clear about the purpose and use of the testimony
- briefed by the internal verifier or assessor to ensure that they understand the standards to which the evidence relates.

Any details of the specific requirements, including occupational competence, of expert witnesses will be in the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.

The non-expert witness

People who are not occupationally competent and are therefore 'non-experts' may also be used as witnesses. They may be customers or peers. Their evidence may be less reliable than that of the expert witness as they are unlikely to be familiar with the standards being assessed. If non-expert witness testimony is allowed, this will be stated in the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.

Internal verifiers

The internal verifier appointed by the centre will sample the work of the assessor throughout the assessment process. Internal verifiers will conduct observations of assessors working with candidates and will need access to the candidate's workplace. They will internally verify the summative assessments carried out by the assessor.

Further information on the role of the internal verifier is given in Section 9 'Internal quality assurance'.

External verifiers

The City & Guilds external verifier is responsible for ensuring that assessment and quality assurance undertaken within a City & Guilds centre is fair, consistent and meets the requirements of the national occupational standards. External verifiers will sample decisions taken by the centre staff and also observe assessors carrying out assessments in the workplace as part of their sampling plan. Some candidates may meet the external verifier on these occasions. Further information on the role of the external verifier is given in Section 10 'External quality assurance'.

Other roles

People other than the assessor may also be involved in supporting an N/SVQ candidate, depending on the N/SVQ. Details on whether this is the case will be in the relevant N/SVQ *Standards and assessment requirements* document. If it is the case, it is essential that all involved know the assessment requirements of the N/SVQ and the assessment process.

Mentors

Mentors are valuable in providing support during the learning and assessment process. They may be either a workplace mentor or a 'non expert'. The use of workplace mentors is recommended when the assessor is not permanently at the candidate's place of work. The mentor may be able to provide a witness testimony for the candidate (see 'Witnesses' above).

Advisors

An N/SVQ advisor should be someone who is occupationally competent in the vocational area in which the qualification is based, is familiar with the candidate's job role and has an understanding of N/SVQ requirements and the assessment process. Guidance on occupational competence requirements is given in the relevant N/SVQ *Standards and assessment requirements*.

Note: Some N/SVQs require that the role of the advisor is separate from that of the assessor or internal verifier. Centres should check the relevant N/SVQ *Standards and assessment requirements* before allocating roles in relation to their candidates.

Further information on all of these roles is given in the *City & Guilds centre toolkit and Providing City & Guilds qualifications*.

Methods of assessment

N/SVQs are likely to call for a variety of assessment methods and the national occupational standards define what is to be assessed. For example, a practical activity at work may best be assessed by observation of the candidate carrying out the task, followed by questioning to check that the candidate understands why the task should be carried out in a particular way. Some activities, such as producing a training plan for an organisation, are mainly completed by thinking through ideas and then writing them up. In such cases, the assessor would read the training plan and ask the candidate questions about its contents.

Guidance on acceptable methods of assessment may be provided in the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.

Methods of assessment include:

Observation of performance

This is the main method of assessment for N/SVQs that involve practical activity and tends to generate the most valid type of evidence. Observation of the candidate performing normal work activities should be carried out in the workplace over a period of time and make use of assessment opportunities as they occur naturally. Observation should be unobtrusive. The assessor should not interrupt the work flow but rather make a note of any questions they may wish to ask to amplify what has been observed. Observation should be in the workplace unless the use of a realistic working environment is specified in the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.

Observation is always followed by a feedback session (see 'Providing feedback' below).

Observation of a simulated performance may only be used when the national occupational standards permit its use. For example, when it is difficult to collect evidence in a real work situation such as an emergency, unexpected problem or an activity that may give rise to a potentially dangerous or harmful situation. Simulation should never be the only method of assessment. Centres should first consider establishing arrangements with employers to provide assessment opportunities in the workplace to cover these requirements of an N/SVQ. Please check the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements* for details of where simulation is permitted.

If used, the demands on the candidate in a simulated exercise should always mirror the demands of the workplace. Role play, off-the-job projects based on hypothetical data and information, case studies, rehearsals in which the candidate tries out skills they have just learnt in training exercises are **not** acceptable forms of simulation. Any strategy for simulation must be agreed with the external verifier.

When observation is not appropriate, the national occupational standards will identify other more suitable methods of assessment.

Inspection of products

This method supports the observation of performance by providing additional performance evidence. Products may include

- objects created or repaired
- documents produced during the normal course of work activity
- reflective accounts
- work produced prior to starting the N/SVQ and presented for assessment of prior experience and learning (APEL).

Products must be endorsed by a reliable person in the workplace who is able to confirm that they were produced by the candidate.

In an instance where a candidate is required to work as part of a team (for example, an installation or maintenance process) the individual contribution and performance must be both significantly and clearly defined.

Questioning

Questioning is used to assess the knowledge and understanding that underpin competent performance, to review observed performance or to supplement the performance, thus filling any gaps between what was observed and the evidence requirements. For example, to extend the evidence across the range an assessor may ask 'What would you do if...?'

The benefit of asking questions orally is that they can be asked immediately, in a less formal situation. Assessors can rephrase questions to ensure that the candidate has understood or can ask subsidiary questions. Assessors may seek clarification or reassurance; for example 'Why did you do it that way?'

Questions should relate only to the standards being assessed. Open questions should be used to elicit full answers from the candidate and should start with 'Why?', 'What?', 'How?', 'Tell me about'. The questions and a summary of the candidate's response should be recorded by the assessor.

The relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements* may provide questions for assessors to use to check knowledge and understanding. Where these are not provided, centres are encouraged to build an agreed bank of questions that can be used by assessors.

Alternatively, the assessor may set written questions. Centres must take care to use appropriate verbs to identify the depth of answer required; good examples are 'list', 'state', 'describe', 'explain'. Questions should be broken down into discrete and easily identified parts. If sketches are required, it must be clear exactly what type of sketch, for example 'a simple line sketch', 'a block diagram', 'a section across'. If calculations are required then 'Calculate the cutting speed for... ' is much clearer than 'Estimate...' or 'Write down the cutting speed...' If units of measurement need to be given this should be made clear in the question.

Candidate responses, once assessed, should be placed in the candidate's portfolio, unless there are potential security risks in doing this.

This is general advice and may be overruled by the specific *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.

All assessment materials developed by centres must be approved by the external verifier.

Professional discussion

This method may be used to encourage a candidate to explain how they carry out their work. It is also a means of getting the candidate to explain certain behaviours and values relating to their work. Further guidance on the use of this assessment method is given in *Ensuring quality, edition 14*, page 16.

Assessment decisions

In reaching an assessment decision, the assessor must assess all evidence presented against the relevant units and the assessment specifications to decide if the evidence meets the VACS rule, in other words whether it is

- Valid – does it actually demonstrate what is claimed? Does it meet the minimum required standard? Does the evidence demonstrate competence? Has the knowledge and understanding been covered?
- Authentic – is it the real work of the candidate?
- Current – can it be inferred that the candidate would perform in this manner at the present time? This is particularly important with evidence that is presented for APEL
- Sufficient – does it cover all of the performance criteria, evidence requirements and knowledge requirements? Does it demonstrate that the candidate can, over time satisfy all the requirements of the national occupational standards? Sufficiency of evidence will largely depend on the quality of the individual items of evidence.

Evidence of knowledge and understanding may be derived from any of the assessment methods outlined above; although performance evidence should be the prime source.

Formative assessment is judging each piece of evidence on its own. Assessors should regularly inspect the candidate's portfolio of evidence, conducting assessments to check progress and using the outcomes to support further assessment planning. By doing this, the assessor can ensure that any gaps in the evidence are filled.

Summative assessment is judging the whole evidence for a unit for sufficiency. During this assessment, the assessor makes the final judgement on the competence of the candidate to perform to the national occupational standards. It is helpful to have the candidate available during this assessment to answer questions and clarify issues.

Assessment decisions will be either that the candidate is competent or not yet competent.

Providing feedback

Throughout the development and assessment processes candidates will need feedback on their development and competence. Candidates will not be motivated to make progress to meet their target completion date unless they receive regular feedback.

Feedback should be given immediately following an assessment, wherever possible, and time for this should be built into the assessment plan.

Feedback should be

- specific – relating to the standards that have been assessed
- holistic – indicating where there are other evidence opportunities
- constructive – giving information on how the standards were met or not met.
If the standards were not met, the assessor should be clear about what future developments are required and the actions that the candidate must take before repeat assessment to ensure that they are competent when next assessed
- recorded.

Assessment feedback should result in the review and updating of the current assessment plan, with projected dates for further or repeat assessments or a request for final internal and external verification. All these aspects of the assessment process should be recorded.

8 Recording evidence of assessment

Building a portfolio of evidence

The term portfolio is used to describe the organised collection of an N/SVQ candidate's evidence for assessment. Although candidates are generally responsible for gathering the evidence to demonstrate their competence, centres will need to provide guidance and support to help candidates develop the necessary skills to gather evidence. During induction, candidates will be taken through the process of building a portfolio of evidence, including the documentation that the centre is using. They will be shown how to log evidence and reference it to the national occupational standards.

Centres and individual candidates may prefer to collect and present their evidence electronically. City & Guilds endorses a number of systems, which can be tailored for use with any N/SVQ. Further details of these products can be gained via www.smartscreen.co.uk/e-portfolios and by following the links to providers of endorsed systems.

If portfolios are to be kept electronically, the practicality of this should be fully discussed within the centre and with the external verifier.

The level of involvement a candidate will have for gathering evidence will vary.

- At Level 1, the candidate's responsibility for the collection of evidence may involve little more than agreeing the action and assessment plans and making sure that their evidence includes appropriate signatures. The main method of assessment is likely to be observation by the assessor. In this case, it is the assessor who is responsible for recording observations and any questioning as evidence for the portfolio.
- At Level 2, the candidate will have more responsibility for identifying evidence. The main method of assessment will still be observation by the assessor, who will be responsible for recording observations and questioning.
- At Level 3 and above, the technical competence and skills, knowledge and understanding required are more demanding. At these levels, the candidate must take a greater share of the responsibility for identifying and gathering evidence.

As well as the evidence, the portfolio must contain full candidate details and those of the people involved in supporting and assessing the N/SVQ or providing testimonies.

There are advantages in providing a common structure for the layout of the portfolio for ease of access for the assessor, internal verifier and external verifier. Beyond this, candidates should be allowed to choose the way in which they structure their portfolio.

As a minimum, portfolios should contain

Introductory section

(form references are to the sample forms in *Recording Forms*)

- Candidate, centre and contact details (Form N/SVQ1)
- N/SVQ name and City & Guilds scheme number (Form N/SVQ1)
- City & Guilds enrolment number and date of registration (Form N/SVQ1)
- names and contact details of all the people involved in supporting, assessing and quality assuring the award (Form N/SVQ2)

- curriculum vitae/job description/relevant background information and a personal statement (Form N/SVQ3)
- name, status and contact details of witnesses (Form N/SVQ5)
- written declarations for assessed evidence (Form N/SVQ11).

Assessment section

- a summary of achievement (Form N/SVQ12)
- an evidence location and summary sheet (Form N/SVQ10)
- a skill scan (Form N/SVQ4)
- assessment plans and reviews (Form N/SVQ6) including
 - feedback to candidates
 - assessment decisions
- the national occupational standards and evidence requirements for the units the candidate aims to achieve

Evidence section

- the individual pieces of evidence
- performance evidence assessment records (Form N/SVQ7) including
 - results of questioning sessions (Form N/SVQ8)
 - observations, photos, professional discussion (Form N/SVQ9).

Recording forms

City & Guilds provides a set of sample recording forms for N/SVQs, together with completed examples of some of the forms. These can be used by centres and candidates as a basis for recording and presenting evidence. See *Recording forms*.

Some N/SVQs may have their own set of recording documents which will be indicated in the *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*.

Centres may develop their own recording forms but these need to be checked with the external verifier to ensure that the minimum requirements are covered.

Examples of other forms used by assessors and internal verifiers are in the *City & Guilds centre toolkit*.

Who owns the portfolio and how long should it be kept?

The candidate owns the portfolio throughout the assessment and quality assurance process and after certification. Assessors may review the portfolio at the centre following an assessment, returning it later to the candidate. It will be held at the centre for internal verification.

It is good practice to set up a signing in and out system for portfolios during the assessment and verification processes. This can help reduce the risk of portfolios being mislaid and any confusion about the location of a candidate's work at any given point in the process.

Portfolios of evidence may be returned to candidates after certification. The City & Guilds external verifier may however wish to see the portfolio during the visit that follows the award of the certificate. The centre must tell candidates that their portfolio may need to be retained by the centre or made available to the centre for this visit. See *Ensuring quality, edition 14*, page 9 for further details.

Although the evidence belongs to candidates, centres are responsible for the assessment and verification records and auditable records should be kept for 3 years after certification, see *Ensuring Quality, edition 13*, page 5.

Confidentiality

Some candidates may need to provide information on the location of pieces of relevant evidence instead of placing the actual documents in their portfolio. For example, they may use confidential work records to provide evidence for their N/SVQ. To safeguard organisational or client confidentiality, these records should **not** be included in the portfolio of evidence.

If evidence is not placed in the portfolio, access to the evidence must be made available to assessors, internal verifiers and, on a sample basis, to external verifiers. The portfolio should indicate where such evidence is located.

Please note that some occupational areas, such as Health & Social Care, may have additional guidance about protecting the privacy of children, clients and service users, with which centres must also be familiar. This guidance is given in the relevant N/SVQ *Standards and assessment requirements*.

Centres should consult with their external verifier before approving these arrangements.

9 Internal quality assurance

Quality assurance refers to the way in which assessment decisions and quality procedures are monitored. It is a way of ensuring that the day-to-day delivery and the assessment of N/SVQs are reliable. It is achieved by means of internal verification, which is carried out by centre staff, and external verification, which is carried out by external verifiers appointed by City & Guilds (see section 10 'External quality assurance').

A full explanation of the activities, tasks and responsibilities of quality assurance staff is given in the City & Guilds document *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*. For centres, these include

- quality assurance co-ordination
- internal verification
- assessing (see Section 7 'Assessing and supporting candidates').

The following tools and publications which support quality assurance should also be referred to

- City & Guilds' documents
 - *Ensuring quality, editions 12 onwards*
 - *Providing City & Guilds qualifications – a guide to centre and scheme approval*
 - *7317 Assessor and Verifier Awards*
 - *City & Guilds centre toolkit*
- QCA document
 - *NVQ Code of Practice (2001) (publication ref QCA/02/875)*
- DfES document
 - *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs.*

Quality assurance co-ordination

City & Guilds requires all centres to appoint a quality assurance co-ordinator who is

- accountable for the management and administration of the quality assurance systems for all City & Guilds qualifications throughout the centre
- responsible for liaising with City & Guilds external verifiers.

A full list of the responsibilities of the quality assurance co-ordinator is given in *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*.

Internal verification

Quality assurance, and the reliability of the systems which support it, ensure that City & Guilds qualifications are maintained to the highest standards. N/SVQs must have internal quality assurance. N/SVQ internal quality assurance staff are called internal verifiers. Internal verification is carried out within centres to ensure that all assessment decisions are valid and reliable and meet City & Guilds' requirements.

Internal verifiers are appointed by centres to ensure quality and consistency of assessment within the centre. Internal verifiers are responsible for

- supporting and co-ordinating the assessment team within the centre
- advising assessors
- maintaining the quality of assessment in a centre
- sampling assessments to confirm the quality and consistency of assessment decisions made by assessors.

The internal verifier must be occupationally competent in the vocational area being monitored. Details of what is regarded as occupational competence will be given in the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements* document. The internal verifier must also be a qualified internal verifier and assessor but **may not** perform the role of assessor and internal verifier in relation to the same candidate.

A detailed role description for the internal verifier is given in *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*. Full details of the assessor and verifier standards is given in *City & Guilds 7317 Assessor and Verifier Awards* and on the ENTO website www.ento.co.uk.

Sampling and supporting assessors

Sampling assessment activity must be proactive and take place throughout the assessment process. This will enable the internal verifier to be sure that assessors are complying with the assessment requirements and are demonstrating best assessment practice. The internal verifier should have a documented verification sampling strategy that the external verifier has agreed. Internal verifiers should sample assessors' assessment decisions. The internal verifier must select a suitable verification sampling strategy. The verification sample selected should be based on, over time, all

- assessors
- candidates
- units
- assessment methods
- types of evidence
- assessment records
- assessment locations.

An example of an internal verifier sampling plan is given on page 12 of the *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on the Internal Verification of NVQs*.

Internal verifiers for N/SVQs must observe assessors conducting assessments as part of the sampling plan. This sample should include observation of all stages of the assessment process

- action and assessment planning
- observation of candidate performance
- briefing a candidate
- questioning and giving feedback
- assessment of product evidence.

Records of observations by internal verifiers should be maintained for sampling by the external verifier. An example of an internal verifier report on an assessor performance is given on page 21 of the *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on the Internal Verification of NVQs*.

For further information on internal verification and sampling strategies see

- *Ensuring quality, edition 12*, page 8
- *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*
- *City & Guilds centre toolkit*.
- *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on the Internal Verification of NVQs*, page 9.

Both the *City & Guilds centre toolkit* and the *Joint Awarding Body Guidance on Internal Verification of NVQs* provide samples of forms which internal verifiers may use to observe assessors and sample assessment activity both formative and summative.

The continuing professional development of assessors and internal verifiers is the responsibility of the centre. There are many methods which may be used to support assessors, including feedback following sampling of assessment activity and discussions during assessor meetings. Centres are advised to ensure that the *City & Guilds document Ensuring quality* is discussed at assessor meetings. Records of continuing professional development must be kept and made available to the external verifier.

Tracking systems

The internal verifier will need to have access to, or establish, a database to record the assessment and verification information. This allows the external verifier to identify their sampling strategy and to produce a visit plan based on the individual centre's registered candidate group.

An example of a candidate tracking record is given in *Ensuring quality, edition 14*, page 12 and the *City & Guilds centre toolkit*.

Equal opportunities

It is a requirement of centre approval that centres have an equal opportunities policy (see *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*). The regulatory authorities require City & Guilds to monitor centres to ensure that equal opportunity policies are being followed.

The City & Guilds equal opportunities policy is set out on the City & Guilds website: www.cityandguilds.com, in *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*, in the *Directory of Qualifications*, and available from the City & Guilds Customer Relations department.

Access to assessment

City & Guilds' guidance and regulations on access to assessment are designed to facilitate access to assessment and qualifications for candidates who are eligible for adjustments in assessments. Access arrangements are designed to allow attainment to be demonstrated.

See *City & Guilds Access to assessment and qualifications*, available on the City & Guilds website, for further information.

Appeals

Centres must have their own, auditable, appeals procedure that must be explained to candidates during their induction. Appeals must be fully documented by the quality assurance co-ordinator and made available to the external verifier or City & Guilds.

Further information on appeals is given in *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*. There is also appeals information for centres and learners on the City & Guilds website or available from the Customer Relations department.

10 External quality assurance

External quality assurance is the responsibility of the awarding bodies. City & Guilds appoints external verifiers to approve centres to offer City & Guilds qualifications. External verifiers also monitor the assessment and internal quality assurance carried out by centres. External verification is carried out to ensure that there is validity, reliability and good practice in centres.

The role of external verifiers

External verifiers

- provide support and advice to centre staff
- ensure the quality and consistency of assessments within and between centres by the use of systematic sampling
- regularly visit centres to ensure they continue to meet the centre and scheme approval criteria.

To carry out their quality assurance role, external verifiers must have appropriate occupational and verifying qualifications and expertise. Any particular requirements of external verifiers will be detailed in the relevant *N/SVQ Standards and assessment requirements*. City & Guilds external verifiers attend training and development designed to keep them up-to-date, to facilitate standardisation between external verifiers and to share good practice.

The external verifier will develop a sampling plan for each centre to which they are appointed. The external verification sample selected will include, over time

- some units that have been internally verified and some that have not
- all assessors both qualified and unqualified
- all candidates at different stages of the assessment process
- all assessment locations
- all units
- all assessment methods
- all types of evidence
- all internal verifiers both qualified and unqualified
- assessment and internal verification records.

Centres are required to assist their external verifier to develop the sampling plan by providing detailed information when requested.

External verification visits

Using the information provided by the quality assurance co-ordinator, the external verifier will develop a visit plan. The centre will be sent a copy. The plan may include observation of assessors conducting assessments with candidates in the workplace, attending a meeting of assessors conducted by the internal verifier and the examination of portfolios and records. The external verifier may also select some candidates for the sample without prior notification. All visits will commence with a review of the previous visit action plan. During the visit, the external verifier will create a report and new action plan.

The centre records checked by the external verifier will include

- staff qualifications and staff development records
- candidate registrations, progress reports and certificate claims
- assessor and internal verifier team meeting minutes/notes
- centre procedures and other related documentation
- assessment records and verification records and reports
- dispute and appeal reports
- quality audit, monitoring and evaluation reports.

For further information on the role of the external verifier and sampling strategy, please see

- *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*
- *Ensuring quality, editions 12 onwards*
- *The NVQ Code of Practice.*

Regulatory authority tariff of sanctions

The regulatory authorities have in place a tariff of sanctions for dealing with centres whose NVQ quality systems fail to meet the approved centre criteria. Centres which consistently fail to meet these requirements will be subject to one of five levels of sanction recommended by the external verifier

- entry in action plan
- removal of direct claims status
- suspension of registration/certification
- withdrawal of scheme approval
- withdrawal of centre approval.

For further information please see

- *Providing City & Guilds qualifications*
- *The NVQ Code of Practice.*

Appendix 1

The National Qualifications Framework

The level indicators and examples of qualifications are subject to consultation. Check the QCA website: www.qca.org.uk for the latest information. Source: QCA.

Revised framework level	Level indicators	Examples of qualifications
Entry	Entry level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building basic knowledge and skills and is not geared towards specific occupations.	Qualifications are offered at Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3, in a range of subjects
Level 1	Level 1 qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision. Learning at this level is about activities which mostly relate to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence.	NVQ 1; Certificate in Plastering; GCSEs Grades D – G; Certificate in Motor Vehicle Studies.
Level 2	Level 2 qualifications recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work or study, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building knowledge and/or skills in relation to an area of work or a subject area and is appropriate for many job roles.	NVQ 2; GCSEs Grades A* – C; Certificate in Coaching Football; Diploma for Beauty Specialists.
Level 3	Level 3 qualifications recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills. It is appropriate for people wishing to go to university, people working independently, or in some areas supervising and training others in their field of work.	Certificate for Teaching Assistants; NVQ 3; A levels; Advanced Extension Awards; Certificate in Small Animal Care.
Note: Revised levels are currently not being implemented for NVQs. See the QCA website for the latest information: www.qca.org.uk .		
Level 4	Level 4 qualifications recognise specialist learning and involve detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study. Learning at this level is appropriate for people working in technical and professional jobs, and/or managing and developing others. Level 4 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education.	Diploma in Sport & Recreation; Certificate in Site Management; Certificate in Early Years Practice.

Revised framework level	Level indicators	Examples of qualifications
Level 5	Level 5 qualifications recognise the ability to increase the depth of knowledge and understanding of an area of work or study to enable the formulation of solutions and responses to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high levels of knowledge, a high level of work expertise in job roles and competence in managing and training others. Qualifications at this level are appropriate for people working as higher grade technicians, professionals or managers. Level 5 qualifications are at a level equivalent to intermediate Higher Education qualifications such as Diplomas of Higher Education, Foundation and other degrees that do not typically provide access to postgraduate programmes.	Diploma in Construction; Certificate in Performing Arts.
Level 6	Level 6 qualifications recognise a specialist high level knowledge of an area of work or study to enable the use of an individual's own ideas and research in response to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the achievement of a high level of professional knowledge and is appropriate for people working as knowledge-based professionals or in professional management positions. Level 6 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Bachelors degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas.	Certificate or Diploma in Management
Level 7	Level 7 qualifications recognise highly developed and complex levels of knowledge which enable the development of in-depth and original responses to complicated and unpredictable problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high level specialist professional knowledge and is appropriate for senior professionals and managers. Level 7 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.	Diploma in Translation; Fellowship in Music Literacy.
Level 8	Level 8 qualifications recognise leading experts or practitioners in a particular field. Learning at this level involves the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.	Specialist awards

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

The SCQF has been created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework – higher education qualifications; HNCs and HNDs; SQA National Qualifications; and SVQs. The positioning of SVQs in the table gives a **broad** indication of their place in the framework. A major project is underway to refine the position of SVQs in the framework within a UK context. Source: SQA.

SCQF levels	SQA National Units, courses and group awards	Higher Education (HE) qualifications	SVQs	SCQF levels
12		Doctorate		12
11		Masters	SVQ 5	11
10		Honours degree		10
9		Ordinary degree		9
8		HND Diploma of HE	SVQ 4	8
7	Advanced Higher	HNC Certificate of HE		7
6	Higher		SVQ 3	6
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit 5 Grade		SVQ 2	5
4	Intermediate 1/ General 5 Grade		SVQ 1	4
3	Access 3/ Foundation 5 Grade			3
2	Access 2			2
1	Access 1			1

Glossary

Accreditation – the process through which the regulatory authorities confirm that a qualification and the associated specification conform to the regulatory criteria.

APEL – the Assessment of Prior Experience and Learning. The facility for an individual to receive credit for previously acquired (and still current) competence.

Assessment – the process through which evidence of candidates' attainments is evaluated against agreed criteria to provide the evidence for an award.

Assessment strategy – a definition of the type(s) of assessment and the conditions under which they will be used to assess candidates' competence. Produced by the sector body.

Assessor – person appointed by the centre and responsible for the initial judgement of candidates' performance against defined standards. Experienced and qualified or working towards qualifications in assessing candidates.

Award – qualification certificate issued by awarding bodies to attest a candidate's competence.

Awarding body – an organisation such as City & Guilds recognised by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) or the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) for the purpose of awarding National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs) and other awards.

Candidate – employee or student/trainee registered with City & Guilds who wishes to be assessed in order to gain a qualification.

Centre – an organisation (such as a school, college or workplace) inspected, approved by and accountable to City & Guilds. Deemed to have the trained staff and resources for the assessment arrangements for a particular award.

Certificate of unit credit (CUC) – certification document issued by City & Guilds listing the units achieved.

Competence – the ability to carry out activities to the standard specified in the national occupational standards.

Evidence – the demonstration of ability by which an assessor, internal verifier or external verifier assesses that a candidate is competent.

External verifier – person appointed by, and accountable to, City & Guilds to ensure quality assurance in terms of accurate and consistent standards of assessment across centres and over time.

Internal verifier – person appointed by the centre to ensure quality assurance in terms of accurate and consistent standards of assessment and to co-ordinate the assessment process internally.

National occupational standards – the standards of competence defined by sector body.

National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) – a work-related, competence-based qualification accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as being relevant to the needs of industry and awarded by approved awarding bodies.

Portfolio – a structured collection of evidence from several sources, gathered together and referenced to the national occupational standards, in which a candidate's achievements are recorded.

Quality assurance – procedures that are implemented by centres (internal quality assurance) and awarding bodies (external quality assurance) to ensure that standards are maintained.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) – the government regulatory authority responsible for accrediting NVQs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and for their regulation in England and Northern Ireland.

Realistic working environment (RWE) – a model environment, having an acceptable level of appropriate equipment and operating continually to professional standards. It should provide the opportunity for candidate assessment under conditions approximating as closely as possible to the workplace, under the control of a qualified assessor.

Regulatory authority – a statutory body appointed to accredit and regulate qualifications.

Reliability – the extent to which assessment consistently measures what it is designed to measure.

Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) – a work-related, competence-based qualification accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) as being relevant to the needs of industry and awarded by approved awarding bodies.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) – the regulatory authority responsible for accrediting and regulating SVQs. SQA is also an awarding body.

Sector skills council (SSC) – a particular type of sector body, recognised by the regulatory authorities, as representing industry in determining national training needs and agreeing national standards. They also agree an ‘Assessment Strategy’ which outlines how the standards will be assessed and by whom. They are responsible for interpreting national guidelines on apprenticeships and for administering and awarding apprenticeships.

VACS – the rule that assessors use to determine whether assessment evidence is valid, authentic, current and sufficient.

Verification – a quality assurance procedure, that involves the internal and external monitoring of centres to ensure that the requirements of the scheme and assessment requirements are being adhered to.

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