



Higher National and Vocational Qualifications in session 2020–21

Update February 2021

HNC Social Services (GK89 15) and HNC Childhood Practice (GK9T 15)

This guidance provides options for candidates which have been agreed with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). It will not be appropriate for centres to apply a holistic approach to assessment for these awards.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 2020–21 academic session, SQA and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) have been collaborating with College Development Network representatives to monitor the ongoing situation regarding placements for direct-entry learners. By mid-December, the situation relating to COVID-19 was looking more positive. Since late-December, the situation has deteriorated, and SQA set up a Qualification Support Team (QST) to review the situation and to explore alternative arrangements.

The QST agreed that SQA should develop a series of case studies (see Appendix for a list of case study topics) to issue to centres to allow them to support learners who are unable to access the placement they need to complete the HN units within their award.

The QST also agreed that SQA should explore all available options to allow learners to complete their qualification, including providing learners with detailed Recognition of Prior Learning information if learners are expected to show evidence of their achievements to a new employer.

Members of the QST also agreed that Colleges should explore all available options to allow learners to complete their Group Award qualification, including providing learners with a detailed Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) portfolio. The RPL portfolio would contain detailed evidence that could match the evidence requirements specified in the HN Unit, demonstrate links to parts of the SVQ Common Knowledge and reflect the SCQF level and credit value attached to the HN Unit. There may also be opportunities to link some specific training received at college to the standards as well.

The RPL portfolio can help these individuals acquire the full group award over time and it will assist in demonstrating their knowledge and skills to potential employers. This will contribute to improving the student's employability and self-esteem, during these difficult times.

Summary of options for HNC candidates

Route 1 — existing group award with nine HN units and three 3 SVQ units leading to certification of an HNC as normal.

Route 2 — nine HN units only, supported by our case studies to enable interim registration with SSSC and two years to complete the three SVQ units.

Route 3 — 12 HN units, theory-only HNC with no SVQ unit component, for candidates seeking articulation to higher education.

Routes to completion

These options have been developed to allow learners to achieve their objectives and complete their award. There will be three routes available:

1 Traditional route

Some learners can continue with the existing course requirements because they have been able to secure sufficient placement experience to allow them to complete their group award. Other learners have been able to secure a placement and are either on placement now, or will be in the near future.

There are also several non-college centres that are able to continue to deliver as normal and complete the standard HNC award.

2 Case study route

During February 2021, SQA will provide a number of case studies which all centres will be able to use. The case studies will allow learners to meet the requirements of the nine HN units within the group award. They are in keeping with the integrated approach and ensure the continuation of acquiring knowledge/understanding/application. Within this short timescale, it has not been possible to provide case studies for all optional units. However, we are confident that there is a range of scenarios, sufficient to meet all learners' needs. These case studies **cannot be used for teaching** and must be issued at the point of each individual assessment.

The various case studies have also been designed to allow for further integration of the core and optional units. We have deliberately developed case study examples from across the range of service users, allowing learners a broad spectrum of assessment opportunities which should be an advantage when they seek future employment opportunities.

Learners with some placement experience

We are aware that some learners have accessed some placement experience, and SQA is encouraging learners to use the 'real work evidence' gained from the limited placement for part of the integrated assessment process. In effect, SQA acknowledges and accepts that some learners will have some of their assessments based on their placement work, and others through SQA-supplied case studies. This will reduce the assessment burden and learners will be able to capture valuable evidence for the three SVQ units.

SVQ units

During discussions with the SSSC, we recognised that the three SVQ units must be based on 'real work practice'. Therefore, learners who use the case study route must wait to complete the SVQ element of their HNC award after the academic year has ended, unless they have some placement activity which would allow them to cover the SVQ units.

Some colleges may agree to extend the academic year, so learners will still be able to access their centre's assessor. All learners will be allowed to join the SSSC after completing their HN units. They will then be able to register and be given two years to complete the three SVQ units.

3 Theory-only route for learners who intend to articulate to higher education

SQA is aware that there may be learners who will wish to articulate to higher education and to support these learners, SQA will be offering a 12-unit 'theory-only' HNC.

Learners completing the 'theory-only' HNC will still have the opportunity to complete the three SVQ units, should they wish to do so in the future. For those learners using this route, we will issue some further case study materials shortly so that learners can complete the 12 credits within the existing group award framework.

SQA is also aware that individual colleges have articulation arrangement agreements with specific higher education institutions with learners completing units outside the existing HNC framework. These existing pathways and arrangements should continue and will be at the discretion of the delivering centre.

Graded unit

In March, we will provide detailed case study guidance on the graded unit. There is still a possibility that learners will still access some placement experience. Centres may also wish to look at the assessment timing as this assessment can provide valuable evidence for the three SVQ units. The timing of all assessments does, however, remain with the centre.

The graded unit is a critical part of the group award and many learners are required to achieve a higher grade to gain access to a particular course they are aiming to articulate to. The existing marking schedule is based on 'real work practice' and we are going to make some changes in the marking schedule for learners who **have to use the graded unit case study option**. These changes create a level playing field for all learners — regardless of the route used.

Conclusion

This is a very difficult time for all involved, and it is important that we provide learners with all support possible to complete their HNC awards. Further guidance on graded units will be issued in February.

SQA and SSSC are committed to supporting learners to complete their award and the case studies have been designed to offer a range of scenarios for learners to select. SQA's approach also gives those learners with some existing placement experience (as well as

those able to access a future placement) a mixture of 'real work practice', as well as case studies. We are confident that this approach will maximise learners' chances of achieving their HNC awards.

Draft

Appendix

Social Services case study topics

- 1 Alan lives in a mental health setting and needs lots of support to re-establish relationships.
- 2 Douglas has a learning disability. Following the sudden death of his mother, he lives, temporarily, in a residential home for the elderly and needs support to plan ahead.
- 3 Jean has dementia, lives in very sheltered housing and her support plan needs to be reviewed.
- 4 Lenny has a learning disability and lives in supported accommodation, but he is currently experiencing problems with his mental health due to COVID-19 causing restrictions on his movement.
- 5 Mary has dementia and is currently in hospital awaiting discharge back to her own home.
- 6 John lives in a residential school and has challenging behaviour as well as being challenged by autism.
- 7 Sam lives in a secure unit as a result of his anti-social and distressing behaviours.
- 8 Jack is challenged by autism and attends an after-school programme, and you need to plan some support for him.
- 9 The McKay family has multiple issues and problems and face a number of challenges (topic for Case Study 2).
- 10 Research project (topic).

Case studies 7, 8, 9, and 10 can also be undertaken by Childhood Practice learners. Please note that further Childhood Practice case studies will be available shortly.