Recommendations and advice for delivering work-based learning in the current Covid-19 pandemic

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How can we deliver work-based learning assessments and engage our apprentices during the current Covid-19 pandemic?

Providers should, first and foremost, follow guidance issued by the UK and Scottish Governments and HMRC in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is signposted in our advice sections on Apprenticeships.scot:

Many of you are asking these questions as we know that you are facing a host of challenges, regarding access to learners and apprentices that make conventional approaches to delivery and assessment very difficult. For example:

- Some learners/apprentices are self-isolating or in furlough but could possibly be generating some evidence from home.
- Some assessors are being restricted or refused access to learners/ apprentices in their normal working environments.
- Some apprentices are being restricted in some of their normal job activities and so are struggling to generate evidence in the ways they normally would.

This short guide has been designed to support you to make confident decisions about what you can and cannot do to meet Awarding Body quality assurance requirements in terms of altering your delivery and assessment practice to minimise the impact on apprentice journeys of the current pandemic.

Keeping abreast of the Regulator and Awarding Body requirements and support they offer for distance learning in this emergency situation

SQA Accreditation is the regulatory body for SVQs in Scotland. They identify what quality principles have to be followed by Awarding Bodies that offer SVQs and other qualifications**.** Their current advice regarding the pandemic can be found on the SQA Accreditation website.

City and Guilds (C&G) Awarding Body have established a Covid-19 section on their website and offer free enhanced distance learning packages that anybody can register and request (even if you are not a C&G centre) by visiting their Emergency Learner Support webpage.

SQA Awarding Body have established a dedicated web section offering provider support in response to Covid-19. SQA also have a U-share website where you may find signposted resources to support your delivery.

If delivery of core skills is something that you can continue to work on, there are lots of different websites that could be used for learning purposes, particularly for Numeracy and Literacy. There are listed links to a few of these sites on the Core Skills section of SQA's main website (follow the link and scroll down to the bottom of the page to access).

There are also a few formative assessment questions available on the SOLAR website that some centres use.

Top Tips for consideration

- Stay up to date with the latest advice being shared by the regulator, SQA Accreditation, Awarding Body (AB)/SSC in relation to assessment of the qualification.
- Stay in touch with your Awarding Bodies and the Regulator SQA Accreditation by getting their latest newsfeeds relating to Covid-19.
- Consider what/where are the specific issues that you are going to face in terms of assessing candidates for each of the areas you are working in?
- Review your relevant assessment strategies and just remind yourself of what these say. Do any of the possibilities give you a potential solution to assessing your candidates remotely or by a different method for individual activities? (You will probably have quite a well-established approach to assessment that has been enhanced over the years. You might be surprised by how many creative methods using digital technology are already acceptable assessment practice even without asking ABs to be more lenient on the assessment strategy.)

Assessment strategies- a wee reminder

As you will be aware, for every SVQ that underpins a Modern Apprenticeship framework, there will be an associated assessment strategy. This document, amongst other things, sets out:

- which aspects must always be assessed through performance in the work place; and
- the extent to which a realistic work environment and simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence.

Whether or not a provider has adhered to the assessment strategy of an SVQ is checked by Awarding Body external verifiers on an annual basis as set out by the regulator body, SQA Accreditation.

Assessment strategies can be found on Awarding Body websites and on the sites of the developing organisations such as a sector skills organisation. They can vary quite considerably in their format and specificity, but it is vital that you are aware of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable evidence of assessment, particularly when you are considering alternative approaches to assessment through use of simulation and/ or use of realistic working environment. For example, Emergency First Aid at work and First Aid at Work can only be delivered by face to face teaching and assessment by observation.

Here are a few examples:

- [Assessment Strategy for SVQs in Management](#)

- [Assessment Strategy for land based qualifications](#)

- [CITB Assessment Strategy for Construction and the built environment](#).

The Use of Simulation

Firstly, you must ensure that the assessment strategy allows for simulation.

Remember that simulations MUST recreate the atmosphere, conditions and pressures of the real situation. They are suitable for focussing on activities that require the testing of behavioural, analytical and decision-making skills but you do have to give some realistic consideration. For example, if the task is dealing with an angry customer, it can be very difficult to create a realistic scenario that produces comparable 'pressures' of that situation.

Don't confuse simulation with assessment in a realistic working environment, such as a college workshop. Assessment strategies should set out whether, for a particular task, it is acceptable to assess by simulation, whether a realistic working environment can be used, or both.

You need to think about how *critical and routine* the activity is to decide whether simulation could be used. See illustrative scenarios below:

A **critical and routine** task for electrical installation might be installing power appliances every day but failure to meet health and safety requirements for this could be disastrous so simulation, **if it were deemed acceptable by the Awarding Body or Sector Body,** might need to have a lot of witness evidence etc from the workplace sitting behind it so that you can be certain of your judgement.

A **less critical but routine task** might be organising international travel for colleagues which would normally be naturally occurring evidence but that currently requires simulation because of the Covid-19 emergency. A well set up simulation exercise could potentially take someone through all of the necessary steps to demonstrate fully what is required. This could potentially be managed remotely.

Top tips for setting up a good simulation exercise remotely

- Make sure the situation is designed to represent real, credible circumstances.
- Make sure that you have created a clear brief for what you are asking of the candidate.
- Test out whether you can make it work remotely, e.g. video or creating a trail of evidence.
- Make sure that candidates are completing the tasks in the timescales that would be expected in the workplace, taking account of any regulation or legislation.
- Use a checklist in the same way you would with a face to face observation activity.

Using audio and video evidence for "live assessment" observations of performance evidence

Audio and video evidence **may** be accepted by your Awarding Body as a way of recording assessment of competence. You need to check the acceptability before proceeding. SQA Accreditation have issued guidance on some housekeeping requirements regarding this which can be found in their guidance document. This might include:

- observing live candidate performance through a video/audio link in 'real-time'; and
- watching recorded evidence at a later date.

The guidance stipulates that for video **link/recording**:

  o The assessor must introduce all members involved in the video/recording, their role, the qualification being assessed and purpose of the video/recording.
  o The date, time, location and purpose of the video recording must be stated.
  o The date and time must also be stated at the end of the video recording.
  o The assessor must have agreed a plan in advance of the video recording to ensure the outcomes are met.

And for **audio link/recording**:
  o The assessor must introduce all members involved in the call/recording, their role, the qualification being assessed and the purpose of the call/recording.
  o The assessor must have agreed a plan in advance of the call/recording to ensure the outcomes are met.

Tips for ensuring appropriate use of video and audio evidence for assessment purposes

- Check first that this is an acceptable approach for the individual qualification in the assessment strategy, or if SQA Accreditation has offered this as a dispensation.
- Use your normal "observation checklist" as if you were face to face to ensure the validity of your approach. This checklist should allow you to not only "tick off" performance, but also to comment on each of the assessment criteria.
- Make sure, as with face to face assessment, you can capture evidence that might pertain to other units.
- Think about what communication/digital resources are needed to plan this with the candidate, review the evidence and provide feedback to the candidate (For example, facetime/skype/email/text etc).
- Ensure that you have appropriate permissions from all parties that are recorded on the video/audio evidence and that they are fully aware of what the evidence will be used for.

- Ask the candidate to **test out** equipment and the approach that you intend to utilise. Most good quality smartphones will record high quality video/audio evidence but you then also have to consider how the files are transferred to you, for example, via WeTransfer (https://wetransfer.com/). Remember that the video quality and audio need to be of sufficient quality for an assessor or Internal/External Quality Assurer to make a valid judgement. This includes ensuring that the level of detail required by the qualification is clearly evident and that the learner's performance is original and not influenced by others in their remote location.
- If it is a 'real-time' approach, make sure that the assessor can communicate with the candidate to allow instructions to be followed, questions to be asked and feedback to be given.
- If questioning is unrealistic as a 'real-time' approach, to test the underpinning related knowledge requirement, be prepared to jot questions down that the candidate can answer soon after the video event or have standard ones that you can share. You may, of course, have standardised questions to use which can be done in the same way as usual.
- Consider how you will securely store the unedited evidence so that it will be available for review by internal and external quality assurance verifiers.
- Consider how you will index and store the files for future review in relation to the other evidence that the candidates have produced.

? Alternative ways of gathering knowledge evidence

In many instances, the underpinning knowledge evidence that is gathered for assessment is done so through oral questioning. It may be worth revising what knowledge evidence is gathered and identify whether remote working might allow your learners to produce this evidence in a different way.

Take a look at different knowledge evidence approaches in your Awarding Body's guide, e.g. SQA Guide to Assessment:

Recognised Prior Learning

We are all aware that Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) should be applied fully to learners when they start on a programme in any circumstances but gathering evidence and assessing it can sometimes be as difficult as "just getting them to do the assessments".

In these difficult times, we suggest that you revisit your application of RPL for some of your learners where you think there is a possibility that they will have sufficient evidence to demonstrate competence.

Take a look at the SCQF partnership RPL toolkit and identify whether there may be any possibilities for supporting assessment of any of your learners through this.

Familiarise yourself with what the Awarding Body says about the use of RPL.

For example, City and Guilds state:

> *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process which makes use of evidence of a learner's previous non-certificated achievements to demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification.*
> *Any evidence gained prior to the date of learner registration and assessment planning must be considered as RPL evidence and treated as such by the Assessor.*
> *The rules of evidence apply to RPL as with all other evidence types, i.e. if the evidence provides proof of the learner's competence, then it is acceptable.*

SQA states:

> *SQA recognises that candidates develop knowledge and skills through experience and achievements acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. It is possible to certificate this prior learning if it meets the standards of the contributing units of some qualification types.*

Appendix 1

Apprenticeship.scot Covid-19 FAQs
https://www.apprenticeships.scot/covid-19-faqs/

SQA Accreditation Covid-19 support page
https://accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/Qualifications/covid-19-sqa-accreditation-advice-accredited-qualifications

City and Guilds Covid-19 support page
https://www.cityandguilds.com/covid-19

City and Guilds emergency support page
https://www.cityandguilds.com/covid-19/emergency-learner-support

SQA Awarding Body Covid-19 support page
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93823.html

U-Share
https://ushare.education/Ushare/Home

SQA Core Skills section
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/37870.html

SOLAR
https://www.sqasolar.org.uk/mini/33142.1578.1580.html

Assessment Strategy for SVQs in Management
https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/SQA_AssessmentstrategySVQsinManagement2017.docx

Lantra Assessment Strategy for land based qualifications
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Lantra_Assessment_strategy_2016.01.27.pdf

CITB Assessment Strategy for Construction and the built environment
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/CITB_Consolidated_Assessment_Strategy_England_And_Wales.pdf

SQA Guide to Assessment
https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Guide_To_Assessment.pdf

Recognised Prior Learning Toolkit
https://scqf.org.uk/guide-to-rpl/rpl-tool/