Covid 19 – SQA Accreditation Advice on Accredited Qualifications

Since the physical closure of colleges and training providers, we have been carefully considering the delivery and assessment of the qualifications that we accredit. We all know that the vocational qualification landscape is large and complex; from our internal and external discussions, we have come to the conclusion that there is no single solution that we can put in place to allow the delivery and assessment of all accredited qualifications to continue in the current circumstances.

However, we do believe that it might be possible to put in place some form of adaptation for many accredited qualifications. Accredited qualifications fall into one of three categories:

♦ SVQs (and Workplace Core Skills)
♦ qualifications required for licencing or by regulation
♦ other accredited qualifications

The SVQ brand is owned by SQA Accreditation, and SVQs can be awarded by multiple awarding bodies. Qualifications required for licencing or by regulation can be awarded by multiple awarding bodies, and there is an overarching body which sets out the requirements for these qualifications. Other accredited qualifications are normally owned and awarded by a single awarding body, although there are some exceptions to this, particularly where it is a competence-based qualification developed for use in Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks.

We are proposing the following actions:

1 SVQs (and Workplace Core Skills)

We will begin a dialogue with individual awarding bodies and Sector Skills Councils/Standard Setting Organisations and delivery partners to discuss options for adaptations for SVQs. Every effort will be made to find other suitable alternative assessment models that do not impact on the validity and reliability of the SVQs. We do recognise that, for some SVQs or for some units within SVQs, it may not be possible to identify an appropriate adaptation.

Where two or more awarding bodies offer the same SVQ, we will seek to secure adaptations that work for all the relevant awarding bodies, although we do recognise that what works for one awarding body may not work for another. All adaptations will be submitted for approval by the Accreditation Coordination Group (ACG).

The adaptations will be in place for a specific period of time, and this will be reviewed on a regular basis. We will be guided by the Scottish Government's advice on Covid-19.

To avoid unnecessary bureaucracy, we will not ask SSCs/SSOs and delivery partners to update their assessment strategy where the adaptation would normally have necessitated a change. We will be creating a new section on our website, and we will update it on a regular basis to advise of approved adaptations. We will also using a range of stakeholders, such as

the Scottish Training Federation, Colleges Scotland, and the Federation of Awarding Bodies, to communicate the decisions that have been made.

2 Qualifications required for licencing or by regulation

First Aid qualifications: these qualifications are not being delivered at this time, and it is unlikely that adaptations will be possible. However, we will continue to have discussions with the First Aid Awarding Organisation Forum (FAAOF) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and provide further information and guidance as and when it becomes available.

Security licence related qualifications: we are in discussions with the Security Industry Authority (SIA) and the awarding bodies which offer these qualifications to determine whether adaptation is possible. There is an issue for the Door Supervision qualification in that the vital safety critical element (practical physical intervention) can't be adapted, though learners can complete the theory units as proposed and do the physical intervention at a later date (and then apply for the licence).

Scottish Certificate for Personal Licence Holders: we are currently in discussion with the Scottish Government about this.

3 Other accredited qualifications

Given that these qualifications are often owned by a single awarding body, we will be having similar discussions to determine whether adaptation is possible. Where this can be carried out without impacting on the validity or reliability of the qualification, we will agree the approach with the awarding body and we would ask that the awarding body communicate this to its approved providers.

For accredited qualifications where there are multiple bodies involved (including SSCs/SSOs and delivery partners), we will engage in discussions along the same lines as for SVQs, and will communicate the outcome via our website as well as via stakeholders, including the training providers who deliver these qualifications as part of Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks.

Next Steps

We are still in the process of gathering intelligence from a wide range of sources, and would encourage awarding bodies, SSCs/SSOs and delivery partners to share their initial thoughts and suggestions by emailing us at accredquals@sqa.org.uk. We will start reviewing these initial responses next week (beginning 20 April) and thereafter will be contacting awarding bodies, SSCs/SSOs and delivery partners to discuss possible adaptations.

Finally, we would ask that, once an agreed adaptation is in place, initial efforts are focused on those learners who are close to completing their qualification.