

## SQA - SVQ REVIEW CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Engenuity's response was made via an online survey. Most questions required a choice between: Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, while some required a written response.

### Relationship between National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) units

SVQ units have always had a one-to-one relationship with an individual NOS — the whole NOS is imported into the SVQ unit. In the workshops, there were some suggestions that greater flexibility might be achievable if the one-to-one relationship with between a NOS and SVQ unit was removed although there would still be a relationship between the NOS and the SVQ unit i.e., some of the NOS is used to inform the content of the SVQ unit, but elements from elsewhere can be added to the SVQ unit.

**4.** Moving to a system where the one-to-one relationship between a NOS and an SVQ unit is removed would create more flexibility.

Strongly agree.

**5.** Moving to a system where the one-to-one relationship between a NOS and an SVQ unit is removed would benefit employers.

Strongly agree.

**6.** Moving to a system where the one-to-one relationship between a NOS and an SVQ unit is removed would benefit learners.

Strongly agree.

**7.** Please note any additional comments below:

SVQs are a good product and should be retained. Likewise, NOS is an invaluable source of information. However, the 1:1 relationship between SVQs and NOS should be amended to make SVQs more flexible. NOS are not as current as they used to be because of the increasing rate of technological and industrial change and the lack of regular reviews due to constraints on public funding. Some NOS have not been reviewed for as long as nine years. For example, the Rail Engineering Overhead Line Equipment Construction Suites were last reviewed in 2013, while the Mechanical Manufacturing Engineering Suite 3 has just recently been reviewed for the first time since 2016.

It is also important to note that employers, especially SMEs, have limited time and resources to engage in the creation of NOS content and cannot always make a contribution, so their value is not always included in the content. The NOS will be

less effective in cases where employers are not able to be sufficiently active in the NOS consultation activity and arrangements.

As a result, continuing with a 1:1 correspondence between SVQs and NOS could lead to the inclusion of unnecessary tasks in qualifications, as well as qualifications which do not reflect the pace of technological and industrial change or align with the actual skills needs of industry.

**8.** Please let us know any other impacts of this proposed change where the one-to-one relationship between a NOS and an SVQ unit is removed.

Removing the 1:1 relationship between SVQs and NOS should not have negative impacts on employers, learners, or training providers, as long as it is managed correctly. It is important for SVQs to reflect industry practice. In moving away from a 1:1 relationship with NOS, there is a danger that units which do not reflect industry practice, or are knowledge only, could be included in qualifications. To avoid this, rules will be required to ensure that any units that do not align with NOS are still closely aligned to the needs of industry and sufficiently up-to-date.

#### **Inclusion of units not based on NOS within an SVQ**

SVQ units are designed to measure competence as well as knowledge and understanding. The majority of SVQs include only units based on NOS. In the workshops, there were some suggestions that greater flexibility might be achievable if SVQs could include units that are not based on NOS.
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**9.** The inclusion of units not based on NOS in an SVQ would increase flexibility.

Strongly agree.

**10.** The inclusion of units not based on NOS in an SVQ would benefit employers.

Strongly agree.

**11.** The inclusion of units not based on NOS in an SVQ would benefit learners.

Strongly agree.

**12.** If this change goes ahead, there should be a requirement that the majority of units included in an SVQ are SVQ units.

Disagree.

**13.** Please note any additional comments below:

The SVQ product should be retained but with greater flexibility focussed on a core and options approach. Qualifications require a core value but also greater flexibility to align with employer needs.

In respect of question 12, the majority of units do not necessarily need to be SVQ units. For example, as long as the predominant content remained competency based, SVQs could incorporate a majority of units from CBQs, and other competency based units.

**14.** Please let us know any other impacts of this proposed change where units not based on NOS could be included in SVQs.

If not managed correctly, there is a risk that the proposed change could impact the balance between competency and knowledge, and lead to SVQs that are less competency based than at present. There is also the risk of a dramatic increase in the number and size of units included in SVQs by Awarding Bodies. This outcome will be avoided by putting in place rules to ensure that SVQs remain predominantly competency based.

### **Removal of end-tests**

A small number of SVQs contain what are known as end-tests. These can be found in SVQs such as the Construction Craft SVQs, Heating & Ventilation SVQs etc. These are sat by learners once they have completed all of the SVQ units in the qualification. The end-test is normally conducted in a simulated environment and assesses the competence of the learner once they have completed the SVQ.

Some respondents felt that because achievement of the SVQ units cannot be used as evidence towards the end-test, this test duplicates some or all of the assessment requirements in the SVQ units.

**15.** End tests duplicate assessment already undertaken in an SVQ.

Strongly agree.

**16.** The inclusion of end tests in SVQs are beneficial to employers.

Neither agree nor disagree.

**17.** The inclusion of end tests in SVQs are beneficial to learners.

Neither agree nor disagree.

**18.** Please note any additional comments below:

We would support the complete removal of end-tests. It is best practice only to test competent performance and knowledge application once, and end-tests generally duplicate testing performed during the qualification. Working with training provider professionals, employers are best placed to judge when a learner is competent in the workplace setting.

**19.** Please let us know any other impacts of this proposed change where end-tests would be removed.

In the very limited situations where the qualification underpins a license to practice product, consideration could be given to retaining end-tests. However, the circumstances requiring this should be minimal, and end-tests should be retained only where absolutely necessary.

### Structure of SVQs

Some members of the focus groups suggested removing pathways from SVQs where there are multiple pathways. Instead, a larger selection of optional units would aid small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who would be able to select those optional units that best fit their working practices.

At the moment, structures can contain pathways to indicate mandatory and optional units for sub-functions within the qualification. For example, the SVQ in Construction Site Supervision at SCQF level 7 includes pathways for 'Highway Maintenance', 'Building and Civil Engineering' and 'Residential Development'. Any pathways should be named in the qualification structure, and should be comparable in terms of the level of demand. It is possible for the same unit to appear in different pathways.

**20.** The removal of multiple pathways in an SVQ and replacing these with a larger number of optional units would improve flexibility for employers.

Strongly agree.

**21.** The removal of multiple pathways in an SVQ and replacing these with a larger number of optional units would improve flexibility for learners.

Strongly agree.

**22.** Please note any additional comments below:

We recommend removing constraints in qualification structures, whether pathways or core requirements. In developing new units for the apprenticeship system for Engineering, Engenuity and SDS have moved away from the pathway structure and role discipline pathways, which are being replaced with task orientated activities in any type of engineering discipline or environment.

Qualifications require a small minimum Core value and content that is applicable to all learners, such as health and safety. However, the greater emphasis should be on the flexible content and choices where learners can clearly align their learning, knowledge, and competence to their work requirements.

**23.** Please let us know any other impacts of this proposed change where multiple pathways would be removed and replacing these with more optional units.

In terms of impacts on structure, incorporating units that are not NOS might have an impact on the assessment for SVQs. In this case, it might be necessary to review the assessment strategy. For example, units which allow simulated or realistic working environment practice, would require an alteration to the assessment practice.

### **Promotion of individual SVQ units**

Another suggestion was about flexibility in general rather than specifically in relation to SVQs. Some of the groups suggested that flexibility could be increased if SQA Accreditation encouraged awarding bodies to promote the use of individual SVQ units or groups of SVQ units. It is worth noting that awarding bodies offering SVQs can already certificate individual SVQ units or groups of SVQ units, but the workshops felt that this was not promoted by awarding bodies.

**24.** The promotion of individual SVQ units or groups of SVQ units, in addition to the promotion of the full SVQ would provide flexibility for employers.

Strongly agree.

**25.** The promotion of individual SVQ units or groups of SVQ units, in addition to the promotion of the full SVQ would provide flexibility for learners.

Strongly agree.

**26.** Please note any additional comments below:

It is becoming increasingly important to have the ability to upskill people quickly, especially older workers. Greater flexibility, including upskilling units in addition to full qualifications, would make SVQs more conducive to upskilling existing workers and provide a better alignment to the skills employers need to underpin business growth and technological change. Importantly, learners would not be required to gain unnecessary skills and knowledge which could not be applied in the specific workplace of their employer.

**27.** Please let us know any other impacts of this proposed change if Awarding Bodies are encouraged to promote individual SVQ units or groups of SVQ units.

The potential cost impact and increased administrative burden on Awarding Bodies would need to be considered, including the cost to rationalise their SVQ portfolios

and update their systems to incorporate the awarding of individual units, in addition to full qualifications. Awarding Bodies are unlikely to be able to absorb these additional costs, so they are likely to be passed onto the consumer.

### **Inclusion of meta skills within the SVQ**

Scottish Government continues to support and value Core Skills in the Education and Skills system. Workplace Core Skills will continue to be available for inclusion in Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks. Further information on Workplace Core Skills can be found at [https://accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/Qualifications/Workplace\\_Core\\_Skills](https://accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/Qualifications/Workplace_Core_Skills)

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has introduced meta skills in the new apprenticeship model. Further information about meta skills can be found at [https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40\\_a-skills-model.pdf](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40_a-skills-model.pdf)

It was suggested by some that meta skills should be included in an SVQ.

In some of the qualifications developed via SDS's new model for apprenticeships, there is a unit relating to meta skills. The meta skills are then assessed holistically across the qualification, and the evidence for the meta skills unit will come from throughout the qualification. It is proposed that a similar approach be adopted for SVQs.

**28.** Meta skills should be included in SVQs and assessed holistically.

Strongly agree.

**29.** Including meta skills to the SVQ would benefit employers.

Strongly agree.

**30.** Including meta skills to the SVQ would benefit learners.

Strongly agree.

**31.** Are there other models that could be considered. If so, what are they?

One alternative model would be to have a specific competency unit on meta-skills, which included all 12 meta skills. The appropriate meta skills for an SVQ, sign-posted through-out SVQ units, could be drawn from the meta skills unit. For example, 'Engineering Design' might sign-post meta skills in communications, and creativity and innovation, but not feeling, while 'Team Leading' might sign post feeling and communications, but not creativity and innovation. Evidence could be

generated against the meta-skills unit, where evidence for success for the unit would be driven from practice and knowledge applied, or written reflective practice.

**32.** Please note any additional comments below:

Including meta skills in competency based programmes would support employer concerns on the need to improve meta-skills. Meta skills are vital to ensure that young people can hit the ground running in their new roles.

**33.** Please let us know any other impacts of the proposed change to include meta skills in SVQs.

No response.

**34.** If you have any other suggestions which would improve SVQs, then please add these and set out your reasons for the suggestions.

We support greater flexibility within the SVQ product to better underpin and support learners' skills and knowledge and align with the skills needs of employers. There is an important role for enhanced use of the SVQ product for upskilling and reskilling.