

The fundamental principles and beliefs relating to assessment of competence in Nutritional Therapy are:

- 1 A desire to ensure that consistent standards are achieved and maintained across all Awarding Bodies and training providers delivering Nutritional Therapy practitioner training and qualifications. [Nutritional Therapy is defined as the application of nutritional science in the promotion of optimal health and peak performance, disease prevention and patient care].
- 2 Assessment must be conducted by suitably qualified and experienced individuals who engage in relevant continuing professional development activities.
- 3 The form of assessment of an individual's competence should be fit for purpose, i.e. it should be the most valid, reliable, fair and practical form of assessment for the knowledge, understanding and skills that are being assessed.
- 4 Assessments should be carried out over a period of time and in some situations assessments may need to be carried out simultaneously across two or more units.
- 5 Assessments should be carried out in the workplace, formative assessments may be carried out in a realistic working environment. This can include the use of simulation to increase access to assessment. Achieving competence in clinical practice in a realistic working environment has to be seen as different from training and formative assessment. (See additional paragraph on the use of simulation).
- 6 There should be a range of assessment processes, tailored where acceptable, to meet individual needs and taking account of prior learning and achievement.
- 7 Well written and clearly defined National Occupational Standards and qualifications clearly linked to the National Occupational Standards establish a sector's benchmark of competent performance.
- 8 National Occupational Standards together with clear evidence requirements and guidance to assessors on certain aspects of the standards provide the basis of consistent assessment practices.
- 9 There should be equality of access to assessment to all candidates eligible to work in the occupational role who can provide evidence of the ability to perform to the National Occupational Standards. [Legislation may restrict practice].

Training is extremely important for individuals to develop the skill and abilities, and knowledge and understanding to fulfil the role of a Nutritional Therapy practitioner. However, training is only part of the equation in establishing credible qualifications and methods of developing individuals.

Assessment is the key.

Without some valid measure of achievement there is no way of being sure that all individuals completing their training have acquired the requisite skills, abilities, knowledge and understanding. The credibility of all training and qualifications is dependant on the quality of assessment and quality assurance procedures.

National Occupational Standards

A set of National Occupational Standards has been developed for Nutritional Therapy practitioners, which can be used as the basis for the development of training and qualifications. National Occupational Standards set out the activities that Nutritional Therapy practitioners may be involved in. They identify the performance criteria i.e. what individuals must be able to do and the underpinning knowledge and understanding i.e. what individuals must know.

National Occupational Standards are useful to many different people and organisations - they can inform the development of training and training materials, they can assist with the development of job descriptions and with organisation development, they can be used as the basis for staff appraisals. They are often used as the basis for developing new qualifications and for mapping against existing qualifications.

Awarding Body

The Awarding Body(ies) for Nutritional Therapy practitioner qualifications must demonstrate that they:

- a) will develop and implement valid, reliable, practical and cost effective monitoring systems and quality assurance procedures.
- b) will consult with the Skills for Health Sector Skills Council on the development of Evidence Requirements to support the National Occupational Standards.
- c) will consult with the Skills for Health Sector Skills Council on the acceptability of training courses and qualifications for assessors.
- d) will consult with the Skills for Health Sector Skills Council on the development and refinement of technical and occupational criteria for the appointment of Verifiers/Moderators and Assessors.
- e) will comply with the guidance provided by the Skills for Health Sector Skills Council for the selection and appointment of the External Verifiers/Moderators.
- f) will liaise with the Skills for Health Sector Skills Council to develop a programme of professional development for the Verifiers/Moderators and Assessors.
- g) will provide the opportunity for External Verifiers/Moderators to participate in sector specific reviews and Awarding Body specific training events for continuous professional development on a regular basis.
- h) will liaise with the Skills for Health Sector Skills Council on the acceptability of any qualifications submitted by Assessors and Verifiers/Moderators as proof of their occupational competence other than any qualifications that can be approved at the launch of the qualification.

It is expected that Awarding Bodies will ensure:

- the design of assessment practices does not discriminate between those taking full qualifications and individual units or groups of units
- that assessment instruments do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any particular group of people other than where legal restrictions apply
- where appropriate, suitable arrangements are in place for re-assessment of those areas where candidates have been shown to have 'not yet achieved'
- that the qualifications and occupational expertise requirements of all involved in the assessment and verification process will be regularly monitored and recorded.

Occupational Expertise of Assessors (see Annexe A on the role of Assessors)

Assessors for the qualifications must provide evidence of competence, which is defined as:

Holding/having held a position of nutritional therapist with a minimum of 500 client hours over not less than two years. Their experience must be current to within the last two years. This means that each assessor must be capable of carrying out the functions covered by the units they are assessing to the standards described within them, according to current sector practice.

AND

Holding a suitable qualification in the vocational area e.g. a Diploma, BSc, MSc etc.

Assessors must have a full understanding of the National Occupational Standards (or the content of the qualification if NOS are not used) and requirements of the qualification being assessed; they must also understand the Awarding Body policies and procedures.

Quality Control on Assessment – Nutritional Therapy

All Assessors must either undertake approved training for their role as an Assessor OR must hold a recognised Assessor qualification prior to registration as an Assessor and prior to carrying out any Assessor duties.

Assessors must only assess in their acknowledged area of professional competence.

Assessors must be registered with their Approved Centre and be accountable to that organisation for their assessment practice.

Assessors must demonstrate a commitment to uphold the integrity of the qualification and of the National Occupational Standards and their assessment practices.

Assessors must be prepared to participate in continued professional development of their assessment skills.

Assessors must provide evidence of maintaining professional competence. Assessors must be able to demonstrate to their Awarding Body that they engage in appropriate continuing professional development activities as indicated by their professional body e.g. BSc/MSc/PhD in Nutrition, Food Science, Chemistry or Bio Sciences, Herbal medicine, Homeopathy, Sports Science, Naturopathy, Kinesiology, Iridology, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Counselling.

Internal Verifiers/Moderators (see Annexe A on the role of Internal Verifiers/ Moderators)

Internal Verifiers/Moderators must be occupationally competent and knowledgeable in respect of the units for which they are going to verify assessment decisions. This is defined as not less than three years experience as a practitioner or an educator/trainer, which was gained no longer than two years prior to registration as an Internal Verifier/Moderator.

AND

Internal Verifiers must hold an appropriate professional qualification. This is defined as a professional qualification in Nutritional Therapy which has been externally validated by a recognised examining/ awarding body and which meets as a minimum the National Occupational Standards.

Internal Verifiers must be in a position to contribute to and influence an Approved Centre's assessment policy and give constructive feedback on the way in which the policy operates in practice. They should be EITHER:

- employed by the same organisation as the Assessors OR
- accountable to the Approved Centre and have access to the evidence used by the Assessors.

All Internal Verifiers must either undertake approved training for their role as an Internal Verifier OR must hold a recognised Internal Verifier qualification prior to registration as an Internal Verifier and prior to carrying out any Internal Verifier duties.

Internal Verifiers must have a full understanding of the National Occupational Standards and the qualification requirements for the assessments they are verifying. They must also understand the Awarding Body policies and procedures.

Internal Verifiers must demonstrate a commitment to uphold the integrity of the qualification and of the National Occupational Standards and their assessment and verification practices.

Internal Verifiers must be prepared to participate in continued professional development of their verification practice.

Internal Verifiers must provide evidence of their ability to maintain professional competence. Internal Verifiers must be able to demonstrate to their Awarding Body that they engage in appropriate continuing professional development activities as indicated by their professional body e.g. BSc/MSc/PhD in Nutrition, Food Science, Chemistry or Bio Sciences, Herbal medicine, Homeopathy, Sports Science, Naturopathy, Kinesiology, Iridology, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Counselling

External Verifiers/Moderators (see Annexe A on the role of External Verifiers/ Moderators)

External Verifiers must have at least three years employment experience in nutritional therapy or a related discipline. This may have been gained as a practitioner or as an educator/trainer. The experience should be current i.e. gained within a five year period prior to beginning to externally verify.

All External Verifiers must either undertake approved training for their role as an External Verifier OR must hold a recognised External Verifier qualification prior to registration as an External Verifier and prior to carrying out any External Verifier duties.

External Verifiers must demonstrate a commitment to uphold the integrity of the qualification and of the National Occupational Standards and their assessment and verification practices.

External Verifiers must be prepared to participate in continued professional development of their verification practice.

External Verifiers must demonstrate their ability to maintain credibility with the sector and to retain the confidence of the sector through commitment to ongoing professional development.

Assessment

A range of evidence sources may be used including observation, case studies, professional discussion, written tests, pre-set tests, presentation, professional learning log, tape/video, testimony. Because of the need to maintain client confidentiality assessment permission from the client must always be sought prior to assessment.

Clients must be real i.e. external/not known to the candidate/student therapist in all summative assessments.

Summative assessments must be conducted by Assessors who have not been involved in the training and education of the candidate they are assessing. Simulation may be used for formative assessments.

It is recommended that independent assessment is achieved through use of standardised case studies which would be submitted to the Awarding Body(ies) via national sampling.

No individual unit of competence should be assessed using only one form of assessment.

Simulation

Simulations should not be used for summative assessment purposes although they can be used during training for formative assessment. Where simulations are used they should be set up to replicate the real working environment and real work activities as closely as possible. Realistic simulations are defined as:

- Having a comprehensive range of demands, activities and constraints that are the same as/very similar to those that would be met in a real work situation.
- Enabling candidates to access the normal facilities, support and advice that are the same as/very similar to those that would be met in a real work situation.
- Putting candidates under time pressures, working demands and resource constraints that would normally apply in a real work situation.

Annexe A

The role of the Assessor

Assessors are responsible and accountable for:

- managing the system of assessment from assessment planning through to making and recording assessment decisions as required by the awarding body;
- assessing evidence of candidate competence against the National Occupational Standards within the qualification;
- ensuring the validity, authenticity and sufficiency of evidence produced by candidates;
- maintaining accurate and verifiable candidate assessment and achievement records as required by the awarding body.

The role of the Internal Verifier/Moderator

Internal Verifiers/Moderators are responsible and accountable for:

- regularly sampling evidence of assessment decisions made by all assessors across all aspects of the assessments in order to monitor, and ensure, consistency in the interpretation and application of standards within the centre. Sampling must include direct observation of assessment practice;
- maintaining up-to-date records of internal verification and sampling activity and ensuring that these are available for the purposes of external verification;
- establishing procedures to develop a common interpretation of the National Occupational Standards between assessors;
- monitoring and supporting the work of assessors within the centre;
- facilitating appropriate staff development and training for assessors;
- providing feedback to the external verifier on the effectiveness of assessment;
- ensuring that any corrective actions required by the awarding body are implemented within agreed timescales.

The role of the External Verifier/Moderator

External Verifiers/Moderators are responsible and accountable for:

- visiting centres to monitor the quality and consistency of assessment practices and procedures against the National Occupational Standards contained within the award;
- providing feedback to the awarding body on the performance of its centres in maintaining the consistent application of the National Occupational Standards;
- providing assurance to the awarding body that approved centres are continuing to operate in accordance with the requirements of the approved centre criteria;
- recommending to the awarding body the imposition of an appropriate sanction or penalty, in cases where a centre is failing to comply with the requirements of the approved centre criteria. Awarding bodies must monitor the consistency of external verifiers in applying sanctions and penalties.