



Candidates Handbook **2008/2009**

“the future’s in your hands”

www.vtct.org.uk



VTCT Candidates' Handbook

Web site: www.vtct.org.uk

Your questions answered

This book is designed to assist you as a new candidate registered with VTCT. It covers the questions we are asked most often and is to be used as a reference guide. If further clarification on any subject is required, your tutor should be your first point of contact.

The handbook is accessible on our Web site as above, found under the tab marked 'Students'.

We wish you every success in your qualification with VTCT.

What is VTCT?

VTCT is an approved awarding body offering N/SVQs and vocational related qualifications in the beauty therapy, nail services, hairdressing, holistic, health & fitness and sports therapy industries. To accompany these, support subjects such as key skills, customer service and business start up have been added to our offer. As an approved awarding body, we register and certificate candidates on completion of their courses. VTCT is also the first non-unitary awarding body accredited to offer the new Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies.

What is an N/SVQ?

An NVQ is a National Vocational Qualification approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) which is the regulatory body for qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and an SVQ is a Scottish Vocational Qualification approved by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) which is the regulatory body for qualifications in Scotland.

What are VRQs?

VTCT awards its own Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs), which are assessed to competence standards similar to N/SVQs, but tend to cover more specialised areas.

What are competence based qualifications?

These are qualifications which confirm that the holder is fully competent to perform the stated skills to the level required by industry. It is not academic and only incorporates the theory that is essential to the application of specific skills. This is called a vocational qualification.

What is the Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies?

The Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies is offered at levels 1 to 3 and is designed for young people who are interested in exploring the potential of the hair, beauty and spa industries. It is not a vocational qualification and does not represent a commitment to a career in these industries, but it does develop transferable skills that will enable progression in whatever career direction is chosen.

What are the entrance requirements for VTCT qualifications?

Some VTCT qualifications require a 'pre-requisite' qualification to be completed or studied simultaneously to practical study. Your centre will advise you of these requirements on enrolment.

How can I get funding for the course I want to study?

Most VTCT qualifications are accredited by the regulatory authorities and will therefore attract funding. Currently, funding is usually achieved through local Learning Skills Councils (LSCs) and may vary depending on where you live and your personal circumstances. In the future the LEA and the sector skills councils and standard setting bodies will have a bigger input into qualification funding. Your centre will be able to advise you.

How long will my course be?

Your centre will advise you on this, taking into account whether your course is a short course, full time, part time, evening, day release whilst working, or a long course.

Do I have to pay a separate registration fee additional to every qualification I take?

No, we offer a lifetime registration fee. You are given a unique number and this appears on all certificates awarded to you by VTCT. It is important to quote this number on induction to every new course you may undertake with us.

The qualifications carry their own fees, which may alter over the years.

If you are taking a qualification in Scotland, you will need to quote your Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) on your registration form. VTCT do not issue these numbers and your centre should apply on your behalf if you do not have one.

Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs) are being introduced in England, Wales and Northern Ireland currently. These will initially only be required by VTCT if you are studying the Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies. Your centre will apply on your behalf for this number.

What books do I need to buy for the course?

VTCT make no specification regarding books and this is an individual matter for each centre or candidate. The VTCT Record of Assessments book, which will be provided to you, states in detail areas in which competence must be achieved and the essential knowledge and understanding you require.

What is a portfolio?

This is a record of supporting information to confirm that you have the skills necessary to complete the qualification. A full explanation is included in the front page of the Record of Assessments booklet. At the end of your course, your portfolio will become your property to show to potential employers.

Are there age limits for N/SVQs or VTCT VRQs?

Some VTCT qualifications have lower age limits where centres are claiming funding. The centre will clarify these when you enquire about qualifications.

What does “assessed and verified” mean?

Because N/SVQs and VRQs are based primarily upon practical performance, they use a system in which you are assessed (judged) continuously against the requirements as laid down in the Record of Assessments book for that qualification.

If you take a formal assessment and the assessor believes you are not yet competent, you will be told what it is you have to do and advised how to do it before re-assessment. You must achieve 100% competence in a particular skill and at a particular level.

Verification is the process used by VTCT to check that the assessments have been undertaken properly and in accordance with our requirements. It is only when the VTCT external verifier is satisfied that all the proper procedures have been undertaken that a certificate can be issued.

What is independent or external assessment?

Independent assessment is a set of questions set by VTCT, taken in your centre under exam conditions and marked in your centre. It then forms part of your portfolio to be verified by an external verifier.

External assessment is a set of questions supplied by VTCT, taken under exam conditions in your centre and marked externally by VTCT.

How many assessments do I have to do?

This is a matter for your assessor to decide. You can have as many assessments as necessary until you have satisfied the assessor that competence has been achieved.

What happens if I don't agree with the assessment and I want to complain?

Every centre has an appeals procedure in place so that you can appeal against an assessment decision or unfair treatment. This will be explained to you on induction. If you are unable to resolve your problem through the centre procedures, then you can appeal to VTCT. The procedure is detailed at the end of this booklet.

What is the pass mark for VTCT qualifications?

Most VTCT qualifications are competence based and to obtain one it is necessary to achieve 100% competence in practical performance. There may also be an independent assessment or external assessment requirement. The arrangements and pass marks for these will be notified to you by your centre.

How do I find someone to take me on for workplace experience?

Workplace arrangements will be discussed with you and made by your training centre.

I am expected to take part in a commercial salon/clinic session at College. Why is this?

You cannot be signed off for a qualification until everything is completed and this includes sufficient practical performance to show you are fully competent. It is also vital to keep practising your skills so you are ready to go out to work.

I have been told I have to practise on real clients and I am worried whether it is safe for me to do this.

If you are practising on real clients in the workplace then adequate treatment liability insurance is essential. It is vital as a candidate and also when you go on to practise that you have appropriate treatment liability insurance to cover you whilst working on clients. Your centre will usually have insurance to cover work undertaken within the centre.

VTCT is an introducer appointed representative for Stuart Alexander Ltd through our subsidiary company Vocasure. If you would like an insurance quote, please go to www.vocasure.co.uk.

What does it mean to be qualified?

To be qualified means that you have achieved full competence in particular skill areas. When you have done this, VTCT will issue you with a certificate. If you have not completed a full qualification, you will be issued with a certificate of unit credit covering what you have achieved.

What level qualifications will I get?

VTCT qualifications are provided at a number of different levels. The levels are a way of indicating the complexity of the tasks covered.

What letters can I put after my name, after qualifying?

Once you have received your certificate, you can use the awarding body initials and the words "qualified in ..." after your name if you so wish as follows:-

VTCT Qualifications	VTCT Qualified in ...
VTCT, National Vocational Qualifications or Scottish Vocational Qualifications	VTCT (NVQ) (SVQ) Qualified in ...
VTCT – Beauty VRQs (International Health and Beauty Council)	VTCT (IHBC) Qualified in ...
VTCT– Holistic VRQs (International Institute of Health and Holistic Therapies)	VTCT (IIHHT) Qualified in ...
VTCT – Sports VRQs (International Institute of Sports Therapy)	VTCT (IIST) Qualified in ...

Can I join VTCT after qualifying?

No. VTCT is an awarding body issuing qualifications and is not a membership body.

I have been told that whilst under training I can't wear nose studs and other jewellery. Why not?

VTCT makes no specific requirement regarding dress, but we do offer guidelines which can be found in this book. Your centre will advise you on appropriate dress and this must be adhered to.

I already have some qualifications/learning and I understand part of these duplicate what is in the qualification I want to complete. Can I get any credit for what I have already done?

You may be able to. The process used is one known as APL, or Accreditation of Prior Learning. Your centre will be able to advise you on how an APL assessor can arrange for you to have credit for anything suitable as a result of previous qualifications or experience.

If I lose my registration card or certificate, can I get another one to replace it?

You may apply in writing to VTCT for a replacement card or certificate. VTCT will check entitlement and issue a replacement, which will be marked as a duplicate. Employers can check at any time with VTCT regarding the authenticity of any certificate.

If I marry or change my name, can I obtain a replacement certificate in my new name?

In most circumstances, the regulatory authorities do not allow the issue of replacement certificates. If exceptional circumstances apply, you must put your request in writing to VTCT, enclosing any evidence and supporting documentation.

If you change your name before your certificate has been issued, then you must write to VTCT including your registration number. You must also include a photocopy of appropriate documentation (e.g. marriage certificate/deed poll).

I have been told I have to be at my centre on a day I don't usually have to go because an external verifier will be there. Do I really have to go?

Yes. As is explained on induction for a course, you must attend on specific occasions when required to do so by the VTCT external verifier. The names of those to be checked are chosen at random and the continuing approval of your training centre partly depends upon this. Normally the external verifier will give 4 weeks notice for a session of this type.

I want to work abroad when I'm qualified. Will the N/SVQs or VRQs be recognised?

VTCT vocational qualifications are widely recognised internationally and you should find no difficulty in transferring your skills. We strongly recommend that you contact the embassy or high commission of your intended destination country, as they will be able to advise you about the transferability of qualifications and any other evidence which may be needed to work and to gain insurance.

I'm moving. Can I attend a different centre to the one at which I started my course?

Yes, provided you go to another VTCT approved centre. You may need to negotiate any training fees with your new centre, but will not need to re-register your qualification with VTCT.

I don't want to finish my course, can I still have a certificate?

Yes. Any units in which you have achieved competence can be recorded on a certificate of unit credit.

If I come across anything that may contribute to the award of fraudulent certificates, what can I do?

You can write, marking the envelope 'Confidential', direct to the VTCT Chief Executive. We guarantee that we will not disclose the origin of your communication to your centre.

If I have a complaint against my training centre, what can I do?

A candidate having a complaint against the training centre must exhaust the centre complaints procedure first and may wish to keep VTCT informed of progress. The candidate's contract is with the training centre and VTCT cannot be involved in contractual disputes.

If the complaint relates to qualification assessment, use may be made of the appeals procedure described at the end of this booklet.

Codes of Ethics

Codes of Ethics are rules of conduct binding on those who join Professional Bodies. Infringements of these Codes are taken very seriously by Professional Bodies and can result in penalties up to and including expulsion from membership.

As an awarding body we cannot make it mandatory upon those taking our qualifications to abide by a Code of Ethics. We expect that all educational services using our qualifications and the candidates undergoing training take account of appropriate Codes of Ethics in training centres and the way in which treatments are performed on models or clients. Most standards setting bodies or sector skills councils issue a Code of Ethics which may be found on their websites.

The term 'appropriate Codes of Ethics' in our qualifications covers the fact that many individuals who are themselves members of medical professional bodies take VTCT qualifications to provide for extra specialist skills. In such cases, it is their medical memberships which have precedence with regard to Codes of Ethics.

Candidate Dress

VTCT expects any candidate working in a salon or clinic to wear the appropriate uniform as specified by the centre.

Clothing must be comfortable and always look clean and neat.

Appearance and uniform requirements must also conform to the accepted standard of the industry.

It is essential that the uniform is thought of as representing an acceptable professional image, but also as protective wear. This can be adapted to the environment and the service being offered and to the potential client. Clients expect a certain appearance and behaviour for those working in a professional capacity. If they are satisfied, they will return and also recommend the business to others.

Health, safety and hygiene must be considered. For instance, the candidate's hair, jewellery and clothing should never come into contact with the client. It spoils the treatment/service and is distracting. The products being used may soil the clothing and jewellery and provide a potential contamination risk. It must also be considered that touching hair or jewellery during a treatment/service and then touching the client is unhygienic.

The effect of wearing facial and other jewellery should be considered, as what is acceptable in some instances may be less acceptable in others. This may make clients feel uncomfortable and discourage them from returning. Jewellery should be kept to a minimum for most treatments.

Your centre will advise you on the specifics of what you must wear throughout your training.

Diversity Statement

VTCT and its Board of Trustees value diversity and believe that people from differing backgrounds can bring different ideas, perspectives and experiences *to all aspects of learning and development.*

VTCT is fully committed to treating everyone fairly, with respect and with dignity *in their employment and in their learning.*

VTCT requires its approved centres to have their own Diversity/ Equal Opportunities Policy, to make sure that all candidates and those who have responsibility for the recruitment, teaching and the assessment of *these candidates*, can enjoy a positive learning environment whilst at the same time safeguarding the integrity of VTCT qualifications.

VTCT is committed to developing and promoting an understanding of diversity throughout all products and activities relating to our qualifications. This includes *our* curricula, publications, training and assessment procedures *to support candidates to have a positive and inclusive learning experience.*

VTCT is committed to continue helping everyone who works in the industry to work towards a truly diverse and inclusive society.

The Trustees and staff at VTCT are fully committed to *complying* with any future legislation and requirements from regulators *on diversity and inclusion.* *VTCT will continue to support our approved centres to provide an enriched and inclusive learning experience for all candidates.*

This VTCT statement *is dynamic and evolving.*

Appeals Procedures

General

All VTCT approved centres are required to publish their appeals procedures which must ensure that the centre operates a system for reviewing the quality and fairness of the assessment procedure for the candidates.

The procedure will outline how the appeals process is made known to candidates and how an appeal is to be recorded and processed, including the provision of a quality assurance committee to hear the appeal.

The VTCT quality assurance department maintains records of all appeals received, recording outcomes. Details will be reported annually to the chief executive officer, who will in turn report to the board of trustees.

Candidate appeal against an internal assessment decision.

In the first instance, appeals must be made following the centre's appeals procedures which must be fully exhausted before VTCT may become further involved.

A candidate appeal may be placed against

- assessment decisions affecting candidates' results
- other decisions affecting centres and candidates where appropriate

Where a candidate is not satisfied with the outcome of an internal appeal, VTCT must be notified by the centre.

Centre Action

In the event that a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved the centre must notify VTCT that the candidate may seek advice from VTCT by appealing in writing, by e-mail or by telephone.

The centre will also confirm that the candidate has exhausted the centre appeals procedure.

Candidate Action

Candidates who choose to appeal to VTCT following the outcome of the centre's investigation must provide written confirmation of their intent within fourteen working days following the centre's decision.

In all such cases the following information must be provided

- name of centre
- candidate name
- candidate registration number
- title of qualification undertaken
- details relating to the candidate appeal

The VTCT external verifier will liaise with the centre contact, who will provide a copy of the centre's initial report following the candidate's appeal. The external verifier will make recommendations to VTCT within seven working days. It may be necessary for further enquiries to be carried out before VTCT is able to provide a written report to the candidate and the centre. The report will include recommendations and details of any decision taken and will be complete within four weeks.

This may result in the candidate returning to the centre within a further eight weeks to be reassessed by the VTCT external verifier.

If necessary a further appeal may be made to VTCT's chief executive and either the Educational and Vocational Advisory Committee (EVAC) or the Scottish Educational and Vocational Advisory Committee (SEVAC). These committees involve in the decision making at least one independent member, who is not, and has not been at any time during the past seven years, a member of the awarding bodies board or committees, or an employee or examiner of the awarding body. The chief executive and the advisory committee will review the appeal and determine VTCT's final response, which will be communicated to the candidate in writing within eight weeks from the date that the appeal was received.

If the candidate is still not satisfied with the appeal decision, an independent review will be conducted. The independent review will confirm that all procedures have been followed and make recommendations to EVAC or SEVAC whose decision will be final.

Where the outcome of an appeal brings into question the accuracy of other results, VTCT will take all necessary steps to protect the interests of other candidates.

Candidate appeal against an external assessment decision (Key Skills)

A candidate who is dissatisfied with the enquiry decision made by their centre, may appeal against the external assessment decision in writing to VTCT's chief executive within seven working days of the enquiry decision given by VTCT to the centre.

The chief executive will:

- acknowledge, in writing by recorded post, that a further letter of appeal has been received within seven working days of receipt
- review the appeal and report his decision to the candidate within a further eight weeks

If an appeal against the chief executive's decision is necessary, the candidate must write to the chief executive within a further seven working days of receiving the original appeal decision letter, requesting an independent review be conducted.

The chief executive will:

- acknowledge, in writing by recorded post, that a further letter of appeal has been received within seven working days of receipt
- indicate the period within which the appeal will be considered by an independent review. This will not exceed a further eight weeks

VTCT will make the necessary arrangements for an independent review to be conducted. The independent review will involve in the decision making at least one independent member, who is not, and has not been at any time during the past seven years, a member of the awarding bodies board or committees, or an employee or examiner of the awarding body. Once the review is completed, VTCT will provide a written report of their recommendations to the centre and the candidate.

Fees

There are no charges for candidate appeals and this is to ensure that no unnecessary barriers prevent the candidate from appealing against an assessment decision.

Contact

VTCT invites candidates to provide written feedback, which we will keep a record of, and react to, when necessary, to maintain or improve quality.

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