



ENERGY &  
UTILITY SKILLS

ATTRACT › DEVELOP › ASSURE

# Final Assessment Strategy for Vocational Qualifications

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## Version Control

V8.6	December 2014	NL	Updated table to show requirements for Independent Assessor
V8.5	September 2014	CD	Updated to include Learning and Development (L and D) Units (replacing A and V Units)
V8.4	April 2012	CD	Updated to include QCF and Scottish TQSE Assessor Qualifications and to remove references to Programme-Led Apprenticeships (no longer available)
V8.3	January 2010	RS	Agreed final version of overarching assessment strategy post February 2010 consultation process incorporating administrative adjustments from SQA

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## The Energy & Utilities Assessment Strategy in the Gas, Power (including renewable), Water and Waste Management Sectors

This strategy consists of the core requirements, common across the footprints, covering competency based qualifications.

Sector specific requirements are specified in appendices E (Water), F (Gas), G (Network Construction Operations), H (Power), I (Waste)

### Principles for assessment of evidence

Awarding bodies/organisations should:

1. Ensure the learner's workplace is used as the predominant assessment location and naturally occurring workplace evidence is the primary source for determining competence. EU Skills will specify any exceptions to this position. An environment similar to the learner's own workplace (such as another site, plant etc) can be used to demonstrate experience where it is not possible within the learner's own workplace.
2. Incorporate systems, within the external verification processes, which ensure learners evidence reflects adequate performance of competence 'over time'
3. Ensure the assessment methods in the vocational qualifications reflect requirements for the different types of evidence likely to be generated at appropriate levels in line with regulatory bodies and nations. For example, more use of observation may be appropriate at lower levels but used less in higher levels. Observation will not be the sole method of assessment.
4. Be able to make use of assessment carried out in a realistic work environment in <sup>1</sup> situations where a learner's inexperience might result in danger or seriously compromise other aspects of the organisation and its work.
5. Control the use of simulation as supporting evidence for performance in the workplace.
6. Reserve the right to refuse the use of assessment in a realistic work environment or other simulated environment where it considers the rigour and integrity of assessment could be compromised. The centre should be provided with a written explanation.

7. Promote the use of high quality witness testimony as a means of value-added and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy in the assessment process. EU Skills provide further details about witness testimony <sup>2</sup>
8. Ensure performance evidence is supported by the required knowledge evidence. Assessors should be guided on the use of oral and written assessment to cover fully the area being assessed and to satisfy the reliability of evidence from non-observed sources or witness testimony. The awarding body should provide if appropriate a template specification for assessment questioning. This will offer consistency across centres and flexibility for centres to use questions relevant to their own situations. Where there is industry requirements for external assessment of a specified vocational qualification, EU Skills and the awarding body will work together and agree the appropriate method.
9. Support the use of other qualifications as valuable contributions to evidence of competence
10. Work with other awarding bodies where appropriate (and EU Skills where relevant) to develop materials to enable consistent interpretation of the national occupational standards. For example, question banks, common vocational qualifications, assessment and evidence requirements or other materials with sheets and responses to questions identifying key points or preparing a glossary of terms to support the qualification where appropriate.
11. Identify and utilise any appropriate prior leaning and experience which is current as evidence for the qualification.

## Independent Assessment

Awarding bodies/organisations will:

- 12 Preserve a measure of independence across all assessment locations and situations and maintain rigour in assessment practices, by adopting industry requirements. Industry requirements will be included in the appropriate sector appendix.

<sup>1</sup> Specified in APPENDIX A 2

Specified in APPENDIX D

## Assessment in a realistic work environment <sup>3</sup>

Awarding bodies/organisations will:

- 13 Provide centres with a specification for a realistic work environment which meets the requirements of this assessment strategy. See Appendix A
- 14 Operate systems which ensure on-site inspection is carried out to confirm the environment meets the specification.
- 15 Ensure the external verification process incorporates ongoing monitoring to ensure the facilities remain compliant with the specification.
- 16 Ensure the external verification process incorporates procedures centres can use to get prior confirmation on the appropriateness of using planned assessment in a realistic work environment.

## Simulation

Awarding bodies/organisations will:

17. Provide centres with guidance on where simulation can be used. See appendix B. Guidance on simulation will also be highlighted in the appropriate sector appendix.
18. Ensure the external verification process incorporates procedures which centres can use to get prior confirmation on the appropriateness of using a planned simulation outside E U Skills specification <sup>4</sup>

## Enhanced external quality assurance of assessment

Awarding bodies/organisations will:

19. Use analytical monitoring to provide information on the performance of centres and assessors over time to inform external verification visits and training and development events.
20. Carry out a risk assessment of organisations seeking to be approved centres.
21. Apply risk assessed quality assurance and control to all approved centres.

<sup>3</sup> To carry out assessment in a realistic work environment the guidelines shown at APPENDIX A must be used.

<sup>4</sup> See APPENDIX B Simulated Activities for Vocational Qualifications



22. Operate a system for succession planning of its pool of external verifiers.
23. Operate a system for monitoring continuing professional development for both newly appointed and existing external verifiers.
24. Incorporate standards and relevant industry documentation within the vocational qualification where there is such statutory requirements to be satisfied (e.g. HSE, OFWAT, OFGEN).
25. Operates systems for sharing best practice with and between centres.
26. Offer opportunities for centres to contribute to, or keep up-to-date with, latest developments in qualifications' matters.
27. Operate a system which ensures there is consistency across geographical spread of approved centres.
28. Provide feedback, at least annually, to centres and EU Skills of issues related to the national occupational standards and their effectiveness in vocational qualifications.
29. Attend and contribute to the EU Skills Awarding Body Forum



## Realistic Work environment (RWE) for Vocational Qualifications

Organisations wishing to operate a Realistic Work Environment must operate an environment which reflects a real work setting. This will ensure any competence achieved in this way will be sustained in a real employment. Where new national occupational standards are developed, EU Skills will use a decision matrix to determine the units where assessment of this type can be carried out.

The following contexts are illustrations where assessment in a realistic work environment might be used:

- Where demonstration of emergency shutdown and related safety procedures would be dangerous and /or disruptive to plant/environment/individuals; too costly such as total plant shutdown or dealing with spillage of dangerous substances; where issues of confidentiality restrict access to real work opportunities
- Demonstrating specific aspects of the operation which rarely or never occur because of effective quality assurance systems
- The capacity to integrate disparate knowledge to cope with unforeseen events and to solve problems
- Aspects of working relationships and communications where no opportunity has been presented for the use of naturally occurring workplace evidence of learner's performance

### Conditions of assessment in a RWE:

To undertake the assessment in a RWE the following conditions must be met:

1. Assessments must be carried out under realistic work pressures that are found in the normal industry workplace
2. Assessments must be carried out in conditions and facilities which are typical of those encountered in the normal industry workplace
3. The range of materials, equipment and tools that learners use must be up-to-date and be of the type routinely found in the normal industry workplace environments
4. All work carried out should be completed in a way, and to a timescale, that is acceptable in the normal industry workplace

5. Learners must interact with the range of personnel and contractors found in the normal industry workplace
6. Learners must be expected to achieve a volume of work comparable to that expected in the normal work situation being replicated
7. Learners must be given workplace responsibilities that will enable them to meet the requirements of the national occupational standards
8. Learners must show their productivity reflects that found in the work situation being replicated
9. The RWE must take into account legislation, regulations, codes of practice, etc, which pertain to the regulated environment
10. The RWE must be managed as a real work situation

## Simulated activities for Vocational Qualifications

Energy & Utility Skills defines simulated activities as those which are carried out without the environment resources or equipment found within the workplace and involve acting or other scenarios which are not 'real' work tasks. Where new national occupational standards are developed, EU Skills will advise where simulation might be used.<sup>5</sup>

### Conditions for simulation

The simulated situation can represent situations which rarely occur or are exceptional in any other way.

The people taking part in the simulation must have a brief which gives sufficient information to them to recognise the equivalent real situation and decide what they would do and say.

The people taking the parts of other personnel or contractors or customers must be credible for the situation that is being simulated

The simulated situation should not require the learners to experience unusually difficult circumstances which are outside the normal scope of the job role.

<sup>5</sup> See Sector specific APPENDICES E-I for qualifications requirements



Assessors, independent assessors, internal verifier, external verifier competence requirements

The Assessor, independent Assessor, internal verifier, external verifier must:	Core Requirements			
	A	IV	E V	IA
Demonstrate a high level of interpersonal and communication skills	•	•	•	•
Have up-to-date knowledge of current practice and emerging issues within their industry and be aware there may be differences between the 4 UK countries	•	•	•	•
Have a thorough understanding of the national occupational standards for the qualifications they are assessing or verifying and be able to interpret them and offer	•	•	•	•
Show experience and working knowledge of the assessment and verification processes relating to the context in which they are working	•	•	•	•
Demonstrate relevant, current and credible experience and knowledge with a requirement for evidence of CPD and occupational skills	•	•	•	•
Show they are able to act as an emissary of the awarding body and be able to facilitate consistency across centres			•	
Have – or be working towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being qualified –Assessor or Verifier units plus CPD and operate to L and D standards (L and D units; A or V units; D units; QCF Awards/Certificates; TQSE/TQFE<sup>1</sup>)</li> <li>• Qualifications/Training that has been mapped to L and D standards by awarding bodies</li> </ul>	•	•	•	•

<sup>1</sup> These awards, recognised in Scotland are acceptable providing they are the versions that are recognised as equivalents to the L & D award plus appropriate CPD

<p>An employer direct model as an alternative to assessors and D standards (excludes D units) can be used.</p> <p>This model allows employer/alternative training, which is endorsed by the awarding body, to be used as a means of demonstrating assessor and verifier competence.</p> <p>Where this model is used E U Skills would require awarding bodies to have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mapped the training against the L and D standards (excludes D units) competences to ensure that there is a direct match.</li> <li>• identified any gaps and ensured that alternative evidence to demonstrate full competence is provided.</li> <li>• provide written endorsement which indicates acceptance of the training as a direct equivalent to the L and D standards (excludes D units)</li> </ul> <p>Both the letter of endorsement and mapping of the employer/alternative training to the L and D standards (excluding D units) will be required and reviewed by EU Skills and will also be reviewed by SQA Accreditation during the awarding body audit activity.</p> <p><b>See appropriate Sector Strategies (Appendices E, F, G, H &amp; I) for specific requirements</b></p>				
<p>Demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional development and to keeping abreast of the changing environment and practices in their industry</p>	•	•	•	•

## Witness testimony

EU Skills supports the use of witness testimony as a natural and effective way of contributing to a candidate's source of evidence of competence. Nonetheless, the quality of this type of evidence will be affected by knowledge the witness has about the vocational qualification requirements and their own competence in the occupational role.

As a minimum, witness should be:



Fully briefed and clear about the purpose and use of the testimony



Able to demonstrate that they have the necessary expertise in the occupational area for which they are providing testimony

Expert witnesses should be:



Occupationally competent in the functions covered by the units to which they are contributing. This competence will have been gained by working in the energy and utilities sector.



Maintaining their occupational competence by engaging in continuing professional development activities to keep up-to-date with developments and changes taking place within energy and utilities sector



Working currently, or within the last year, in a post directly related to the vocational qualification units they are witnessing



Familiar with the national occupational standards and be able to interpret current working practices and technologies within the area of work



Have had an appropriate induction to the Energy & Utility Skills national occupational standards, the awarding body and assessment centre requirements and have ongoing support by way of access to updating and other issues connected with the qualifications.