

**Assessment Strategy**

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| **Sector** | **N/A** |
| **Qualification Title(s)** | **Overarching Assessment Strategy for Competence-based Qualifications**  |
| **Developed by** | **Skills Development Scotland** |
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**Overarching Assessment Strategy for Competence-based Qualifications**

**Produced by: Skills Development Scotland**

**Approved by: Accreditation Coordination Group**

**Date: 16/03/2022**

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# 1. Purpose and use

This assessment strategy sets out general principles for the assessment of **the qualifications listed in the appendix only.**

It applies only to those qualifications which have a specific appendix to this strategy.  In the main these qualifications are developed to support apprenticeships in Scotland and are also available out with apprenticeships to any learner who can demonstrate the required competence.

The purpose of this assessment strategy is to provide awarding bodies with an appropriate and consistent approach to assessment and it should be used by them as the basis for developing and defining evidence requirements and assessment methods.

This assessment strategy specifies first the general requirements of quality assurance of assessment applicable to competence-based qualifications. Thereafter, the assessment strategy appendices to this document set out the additional specific assessment and quality assurance requirements of individual competence-based qualifications.

This assessment strategy has been agreed with relevant awarding bodies and other relevant stakeholders as part of the qualification design process.

# 2. Generic requirements for competence-based qualifications

## 2.1 Quality assurance requirements

### **External quality assurance of assessment**

Awarding bodies must apply a robust model of external quality assurance to competence-based qualifications that includes external verification. They are responsible for the competence of those involved in external verification activities and for ensuring that external verification monitors centre performance in accordance with regulatory requirements, sampling all aspects of qualification delivery.

External verification will include both assuring the quality of the centre that is responsible for undertaking the assessment and sampling from the judgments made on a number of learners to ensure they are of consistent quality. Awarding Bodies must ensure that:

* the level of sampling undertaken in external verification is sufficient to guarantee consistent standards across centres
* external verification includes both scrutiny of documentation and of the assessment and verification practices in assessment centres
* external verification is planned based on a risk assessment and taking account of both volume of activity and centre performance
* external verifiers are required to take part in regular standardisation activities

Workplace assessment

It is critical to the validity of the competence-based qualifications that performance is assessed in the workplace. Learners must therefore be in a relevant job role throughout the period in which they undertake the qualification. All the units of competence are designed to reflect the expected performance of practitioners in real workplace situations and settings. Where, for reasons of safety or security, or in exceptional circumstances a learner is not in a position to provide evidence within their current role, the learner will need to negotiate with their assessor suitable alternative opportunities to generate evidence. This might be through an alternative work placement or through simulation within a realistic working environment – but must be both planned and agreed with the assessment centre. *See section realistic environment and simulation below for further details.*

Learners will gather evidence of their competence in the workplace and this will be assessed within an awarding body approved centre by qualified and experienced staff. Evidence that is sourced from the working environment must be naturally occurring and can be generated by:

* direct observation of performance in the workplace by a qualified assessor
* testimony from an expert witness to the activity being assessed
* reflective accounts of performance from the learner
* professional discussion
* questioning
* evidence of work plans and work-based products produced by the learner

Generating evidence of workplace competence to meet assessment requirements will require initial discussions and planning between the learner and assessor.

Awarding Body arrangements should also ensure that competence can be demonstrated over a period of time, rather than simply for the purposes of a single assessment.

### Expert witnesses

The use of expert witnesses is encouraged as a contribution to the provision of performance evidence presented to the assessor for assessment judgements. The role of the expert witness is to provide evidence for the assessor as to the competence of the learner in any given unit. This evidence must directly relate to the learner’s performance in the workplace as seen by the expert witness. It is not necessary for expert witnesses to hold an assessor qualification as the qualified assessor makes all assessment decisions about the acceptability of evidence regardless of source.

**In all cases**, it is the assessor who is responsible for judging the evidence from expert witnesses and making all assessment decisions about the acceptability of evidence.

All expert witnesses must:

* be occupationally competent in the area being assessed. This means that each expert witness must, according to current sector practice, be competent in the functions covered by the units to which they are contributing
* maintain their occupational competence by actively engaging in relevant continuous professional development activities in order to keep up to date with developments
* provide current records of their skills and the current supporting knowledge and understanding in the context of a recent role directly related to the qualification unit that they are witnessing
* be familiar with the qualification units; and must be able to interpret current working practices and technologies within the area of work
* be inducted by the Centre so that they are familiar with the standards for those units for which they are to provide expert witness evidence. They must also understand the Centre’s recording requirements and will need guidance on the skills required to provide evidence for the qualification

It will be the responsibility of the Assessor to make sure that any Expert Witness testimonies accepted as evidence of a learner’s competency meet the requirements of validity, authenticity, reliability, currency and sufficiency.

Further details on any specific requirements of expert witnesses can be found in the relevant qualification assessment strategy appendices to this document.

### Simulation in a realistic work environment

Simulation may be undertaken only where there is a potential risk to the learner or others. Evidence of competence in such situations is viewed as essential to ensure best practice and confidence in the learner’s ability to act appropriately.

The use of simulation to provide performance evidence (and support assessment) should be agreed in advance by the assessor and learner at the assessment planning stage. Those involved in the assessment process must be satisfied that the use of simulation does not compromise the rigour and integrity of assessment.

Simulation should not be used as the sole source of evidence **for any one unit of** competence. Other types of evidence will need to be sourced to support the evidence derived from simulation.

Simulation may be **mandatory** for the assessment of safety-critical activities, and/or for other activities if specified in the qualification specific appendix to this strategy.

Simulation may also be **permissible** in those circumstances where the opportunities to collect naturally occurring evidence are limited or absent, and the learner lacks evidence for completion of the unit.

In all cases, simulation must take place in a Realistic Work Environment (RWE) which re-creates the environment, tools, equipment and time pressures found in a typical work environment.

Further details of where simulation is permitted and specific requirements for individual qualifications can be found in the relevant qualification assessment strategy appendices to this document.

### Evidence of prior achievement

The achievement of the specific knowledge, understanding and skills requirements of Units cannot simply be inferred by the results of tests or assignments from other qualifications or training programmes. Where evidence is submitted from these sources, the assessor must, as with any assessment, make sure the evidence is valid, reliable, authentic, directly attributable to the learner, and meets the full knowledge, understanding and skills requirements of the unit.

## 2.2 Occupational expertise and qualification requirements for those assessing or undertaking quality assurance of assessment

Occupational expertise of assessors

Assessors must:

* have occupational experience equivalent to or beyond the level of the qualification being assessed
* be occupationally competent and knowledgeable in respect of the units they are assessing
* have thorough understanding of the units of the competence-based qualifications they are assessing in order to be able to interpret and make judgements on current working practices and technologies within the area of work
* have sufficient time to carry out the role
* actively engage in relevant, industry specific continuing professional development activities to keep up-to-date with developments relating to the practice in which they are assessing
* hold or be working towards an appropriate assessor qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation the qualification regulator. Assessors holding older assessor qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to the current standards

Assessors’ experience and knowledge could be verified by CV and references, possession of a relevant qualification, or membership of a relevant professional body.

### Occupational expertise of internal verifiers

Internal verifiers must:

* have occupational expertise and experience appropriate to the competence-based qualifications that they are internally verifying
* hold or be working towards an appropriate internal verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation, the qualification regulator. Internal verifiers holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are verifying to the current standards
* stay up-to-date with relevant developments in both occupational practice and assessment practice
* have a thorough understanding of the units making up the competence-based qualifications which they are internally verifying and be able to provide advice upon the interpretation of the units

### Occupational expertise of external verifiers

External verifiers must:

* hold or be working towards an appropriate external verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation the qualification regulator
* have a thorough understanding of the units making up the competence-based qualifications which they are externally verifying
* be able to demonstrate that they are verifying to the current standards
* have sufficient occupational knowledge and experience in their subject area.
* stay up-to-date with relevant developments in both occupational practice and assessment and verification practice

# 3. Meta-skills

A key aspect of these qualifications is that they support the development of a learner’s **meta-skills** and the development of their awareness of the importance of these in becoming effective in their current work role, and in supporting continued personal and career development.

Meta-skills sit alongside and complement technical knowledge, skills and behaviours. As technology, society and the way we work change at an ever-increasing pace, meta-skills are the over-arching and future-focused attributes that enable other skills to be developed through consideration, reflection and implementation.

Meta-skills support improved performance and productivity, greater adaptability and resilience to change.For learners, meta-skills are a critical asset, supporting their ability to cope and excel in the face of change, to solve problems, to collaborate with others and to create successful futures. There are three categories, each with four meta-skills.

* **Managing yourself** – focus, integrity, adaptability and initiative
* **Connecting with others** – communication, feeling, collaboration and leadership
* **Interacting with change** – curiosity, creativity, sense-making and critical thinking

Self-reflection and self-evaluation on performance and on the skills used or developed is central to the development of meta-skills. Therefore regular reflective accounts which demonstrate the meta-skills utilised and/or developed through the learners work activities are a key source of evidence to be assessed.

These reflective accounts must be supported by professional discussion with an assessor, supervisor or work colleague who can:

* observe and offer constructive feedback
* encourage self-reflection by the learner
* encourage and promote professional discussion
* provide challenge for the learner’s learning and development

**In all cases**, it is the assessor who is responsible for judging that appropriate professional discussion has taken place, and that the requirements of the qualification have been met.

For the learner these discussions support a three-stage process:

* undertake an initial meta-skills self-assessment
* identify and set goals to inform development action planning for own meta-skills
* regularly reflect on practice and collect evidence
* complete an end of qualification self-evaluation, and self-reflection on the development of meta-skills,providing clear evidence ofthe meta-skills developed

In order that the initial self-assessment and ongoing professional discussions are meaningful, the learner will also require to have an initial discussion with the assessor, supervisor or experienced work colleague that helps them to define, exemplify and understand meta-skills within the context of their work role.

The role of the assessor is to ensure that the reflective practice and associated processes have been conducted as appropriate to the level of the qualification.

As is the case more widely, a holistic approach to assessment is therefore encouraged. Using larger pieces of work to evidence several learning outcomes or performance and knowledge requirements will more naturally provide opportunities to reflect on how meta-skills as well as technical or vocational knowledge and skills have been applied or developed.

Further details of how meta-skills are assessed can be found in the relevant qualification assessment strategy appendices of this document.

A fuller description of meta-skills can be found [here](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40_a-skills-model.pdf).

Skills Development Scotland have additionally produced a range of tools which may be used to support assessment.

* Meta-skills self-profiling tool
* Meta-skills self-assessment tool
* Meta-skills development plan
* QA Guidance for Meta-skills Delivery
* Guidance on level of reflective practice expected for different SCQF levels

The meta-skills tools are available from Skills Development Scotland by request to apprenticeshipdevelopment@sds.co.uk

# Appendix 1 Assessment strategy appendices covered by this assessment strategy

The following approved list of appendices set out the additional specific assessment and quality assurance requirements of the individual competence-based qualifications.

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| **Name of assessment strategy appendix** | **Version** | **Date Approved** | **Amendments** |
| Assessment Strategy Appendix for the Certificate for Customer Service in the Financial Services Sector SCQF Level 6 | 1 | 20/10/21 | 1st Version |
| Assessment Strategy Appendix for the Diploma in Engineering and Digital Manufacturing SCQF Level 8  | 1 | 3/11/21 | 1st Version |
| Assessment Strategy Appendix for the Diploma in Digital Technology at SCQF Level 8 | 2 |  | Minor amends to V1 27/10/21 for consistency with overarching assessment strategy |