

**CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY COUNCIL STANDARDS
COMMITTEE
ASSESSMENT STRATEGY
COVERING THE HIGHER LEVEL SVQ FRAMEWORK FOR THE
BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

SVQ CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT AT LEVEL 5

AND

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTING OPERATIONS AT LEVEL 3

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE
ASSESSMENT STRATEGY
COVERING THE HIGHER LEVEL NVQ/SVQ FRAMEWORK FOR THE BUILT
ENVIRONMENT

Overall Implementation:

1. The proposals contained in this document provide an overarching structure for the higher level technical, managerial and professional Built Environment sector NVQ/SVQ Framework as a whole. The Assessment Strategy will be applied to all new Accredited NVQs/SVQs, and also to existing NVQ/SVQs until they are reformed under the agreed programme of QCA/SQA funded work. The Assessment Strategy will be applied by sector Working Groups for individual NVQ/SVQ developments and reviews. They will make recommendations about industry specific requirements for assessment, from which the Awarding Bodies will develop detailed assessment guidelines. The Assessment Strategy requirements will apply generically to all NVQ/SVQs in the Framework. However, the requirements for Occupational expertise for assessors and verifiers (4,5,6 below) may be extended to give more specific requirements for industrial experience, where this is deemed necessary due to the specialised nature of the functions being covered in a qualification. An industry Validation group will give sector validation to the NVQ/SVQ. NVQs/SVQs will be finally validated by the CIC Standards Committee, which will also consider criteria relating to the Assessment Strategy. The overall development process is set out in the *Annex A*.
2. To supplement the Assessment Strategy principles set out here, Good Practice Guidance, that can be applied by Working Groups and Awarding Bodies in the development of awards, has been included in the Annexes .
3. There should be an ongoing mechanism for sharing best practice, to discuss and review assessment issues that arise, ensure consistent interpretation and maintain the Assessment Strategy. To this end, it was considered that an annual forum for these purposes could be established in conjunction with the new arrangements for ongoing review of the industry higher level Occupational Standards and Framework.

Occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers

4. Requirements for Assessors:
 - Possession of relevant current industry experience and knowledge at or above the level being assessed. The experience and knowledge must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when making judgements about candidate competence. The industry Working Group should identify acceptable indicators of experience and knowledge See *Annex B*. Internal Verifiers should review staff development papers and verify the currency of qualifications.
 - Should hold Units D32 'Assess Candidate Performance', D33 'Assess Candidate Using Differing Sources of Evidence', and should be encouraged to hold D36 'Advise and Support Candidates to identify Prior Achievement'. These will have successor awards in 2002. New Assessors, should have an assessment plan and be working towards achieving these Units within 18 months of beginning assessment. In the latter case, Assessor decisions should be supported by an accredited Assessor or Verifier. The progress of the Assessor should be reviewed on a regular basis by the Internal Verifier.
 - Acquisition of a sound understanding of the relevant National Occupational Standards and the NVQ/SVQ assessment requirements.
5. Requirements for Internal Verifiers:
 - Possession of relevant industry experience and current knowledge at or above the level being verified. The experience and knowledge must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when making judgements about Assessors' decisions. The industry Working Group should identify acceptable indicators of experience and knowledge. See *Annex B*. External Verifiers should review staff development papers and verify the currency of qualifications.
 - Should hold Units D32 'Assess Candidate Performance', D33 'Assess Candidate Using Differing Sources of Evidence' and D34 'Internally Verify the Assessment Process', and should be encouraged to hold D36 'Advise and Support Candidates to identify Prior Achievement'. These will have successor awards in 2002. New Internal Verifiers, should have an assessment plan and be working towards achieving these Units within 18 months of beginning internal verification. In the latter case, Internal Verifier decisions should be supported by an accredited Internal Verifier. The progress of the Internal Verifier should be reviewed on a regular basis by the External Verifier.
 - Acquisition of a sound understanding of the relevant National Occupational Standards and the NVQ/SVQ assessment requirements.

6. Requirements for External Verifiers:
 - Possession of relevant industry experience and knowledge at or above the level being verified. The experience and knowledge must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when making judgements about Assessors' and Internal Verifiers' decisions. The industry Working Group should identify acceptable indicators of experience and knowledge. See *Annex B*. Awarding Bodies should review staff development papers and verify the currency of qualifications.
 - Should hold Units D32 'Assess Candidate Performance', D33 'Assess Candidate Using Differing Sources of Evidence' and D35 'Externally Verify the Assessment Process', and should be encouraged to hold D36 'Advise and Support Candidates to identify Prior Achievement' (or in Scotland, in accordance with Scottish Qualification Authority accreditation requirements). These will have successor awards in 2002. New External Verifiers, should have an assessment plan and be working towards achieving these Units within 12 months of beginning external verification. In the latter case, Awarding Bodies should regularly review the progress of the External Verifier.
 - Acquisition of a sound understanding of the relevant National Occupational Standards and the NVQ/SVQ assessment requirements.
7. The Scottish Qualifications Authority will also recognise the Teaching Qualification for Further Education, or the Teaching Qualification for Secondary Education as exempting awards for Assessors and Internal Verifiers.

Aspects of National Occupational Standards to be assessed through performance in the workplace

8. The normal position is that direct performance evidence produced through performance in the workplace is the primary choice in each case. The industry Working Group will specify any exceptions to this position. The workplace requirements will be based on the generic basic products and processes which have been derived directly from the performance criteria and cross-referenced to them. The requirements should consider the relative criticality of required workplace evidence as set out in *Annex C*. The process for identifying acceptable sources of evidence is set out in *Annex D*. Awarding Bodies are encouraged to produce an Evidence Matrix for the NVQs/SVQ based on the evidence requirements developed by the industry Working Group. This would show how evidence requirements could be met across the qualification in order to make the most efficient use of evidence.
9. Performance evidence must be supported by the required knowledge evidence which will be based on the generic knowledge specification which has been derived directly from the range and performance criteria and cross-referenced to them. The direct use of evidence assessed from underpinning knowledge qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework can be adopted, and should be encouraged by Awarding Bodies. Evidence from this source would need to pass the effective assessment process conditions that are outlined in *Annex E* and then be mapped to the particular NVQ/SVQ award as indicated. Such qualifications should also have their own independent external assessment, moderation or verification.
10. To ensure consistency between NVQs/SVQs in the Framework, basic standardised guidance notes will be adopted to cover interpretation of assessment requirements. These are set out in *Annex F*. Individual Standards in each qualification will indicate the requirement for assessment through performance in the workplace and also instances where simulated working conditions may be used as an alternative.

How simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence

11. Simulation is defined here as 'designed situations for producing artificially generated evidence'. Artificially generated evidence should only be used where this is unavoidable (see previous section 8). The circumstances in which this alternative means of generating evidence may be used are set out in Guidance in *Annex G*. The acceptability for using simulated working conditions should be specified by the industry Working Group, together with the required context and necessary 'realism' factors. See *Annex H*. Individual Standards in each qualification will indicate the requirement for assessment through performance in the workplace and also instances where simulated working conditions may be used as an alternative.
12. Where imported Standards from other Standards Setting Bodies are incorporated within an award, the requirements of the originating body regarding the source of evidence should be adhered to, unless this presents difficulties or needs clarification, in which case there must be liaison via CIC Standards Committee to resolve the issue with the originating body.

13. In any assessment case where simulated evidence is considered, the circumstances and requirements will need to be confirmed through discussions between candidate and assessor. Where there is any doubt, internal verifiers and then, if necessary, External Verifiers should be consulted for formal confirmation. Simulation assessment must be in accordance with 'D' Unit requirements.

Principles for defining External quality control of assessment:

14. It is recognised that there is a need to have some element of independence within the assessment processes across the Framework. This independence is necessary, particularly in relation to trust, ethics, the authenticity of evidence and also the consistency of assessment, in order that candidates and employers have confidence in NVQs/SVQs. This means that Awarding Bodies and their partners, Assessment Centres, Verifiers and Assessors must maintain robust and transparent arrangements to ensure clear separation of their Awarding Body Assessment responsibilities from their industry, training, membership and commercial interests, in order to preserve independence in assessment and quality assurance processes, and to resolve any conflicts of interest.
15. It is proposed that quality control should be further strengthened to ensure that full and proper application of, and adherence to, 'D Unit' processes are adopted for all key aspects of the assessment arrangements for each qualification and across Assessment Centres. It is proposed that Awarding Bodies specify enhanced sampling by External Verifiers (more than required by current QCA guidance) in order for them to effect a strategic external intervention into the assessment process. A lead verifier should adopt this mechanism for ensuring consistency of verification practice. The findings of the External Verifiers could be centrally moderated to enable the awarding body to issue directives for action to achieve consistent good practice across assessment centres. The feedback from this process should be available for review as part of the annual forum proposed under para. 3 above.
16. The External Verifier should intervene in the assessment process:
- of all current candidates up to 12 or 15% of all current candidates, whichever is the greater,
 - at each individual Centre,
 - for each individual NVQ/SVQ,
- by examination of their portfolios to judge the conduct of one or more of the assessment process actions

ie.:

- Planning evidence collection
- Judging performance evidence
- Judging knowledge evidence.

The evidence proposed in the assessment plan, or that judged in the other stages of the assessment can be evaluated for its:

- Reliability
- Validity
- Sufficiency

to prove the quality of assessment.

There should be some flexibility for the awarding bodies to determine the emphasis to be placed on these different qualities and how the scrutiny is to be applied to one or more of the assessment actions given above. As with all quality control systems the objective should be to provide a quantifiable, cost effective intervention that can be shown to influence the overall assurance of quality. This process can be enhanced and focused by the further application of Risk Assessment to identify those aspects needing greatest attention. See Annex I. It will also be noted that the implementation of such directed scrutiny will oblige Assessment Centres to adhere to the prescribed evidence assessment process and thereby automatically achieve a process consistency.

Construction Industry Council Standards Committee - May 2002

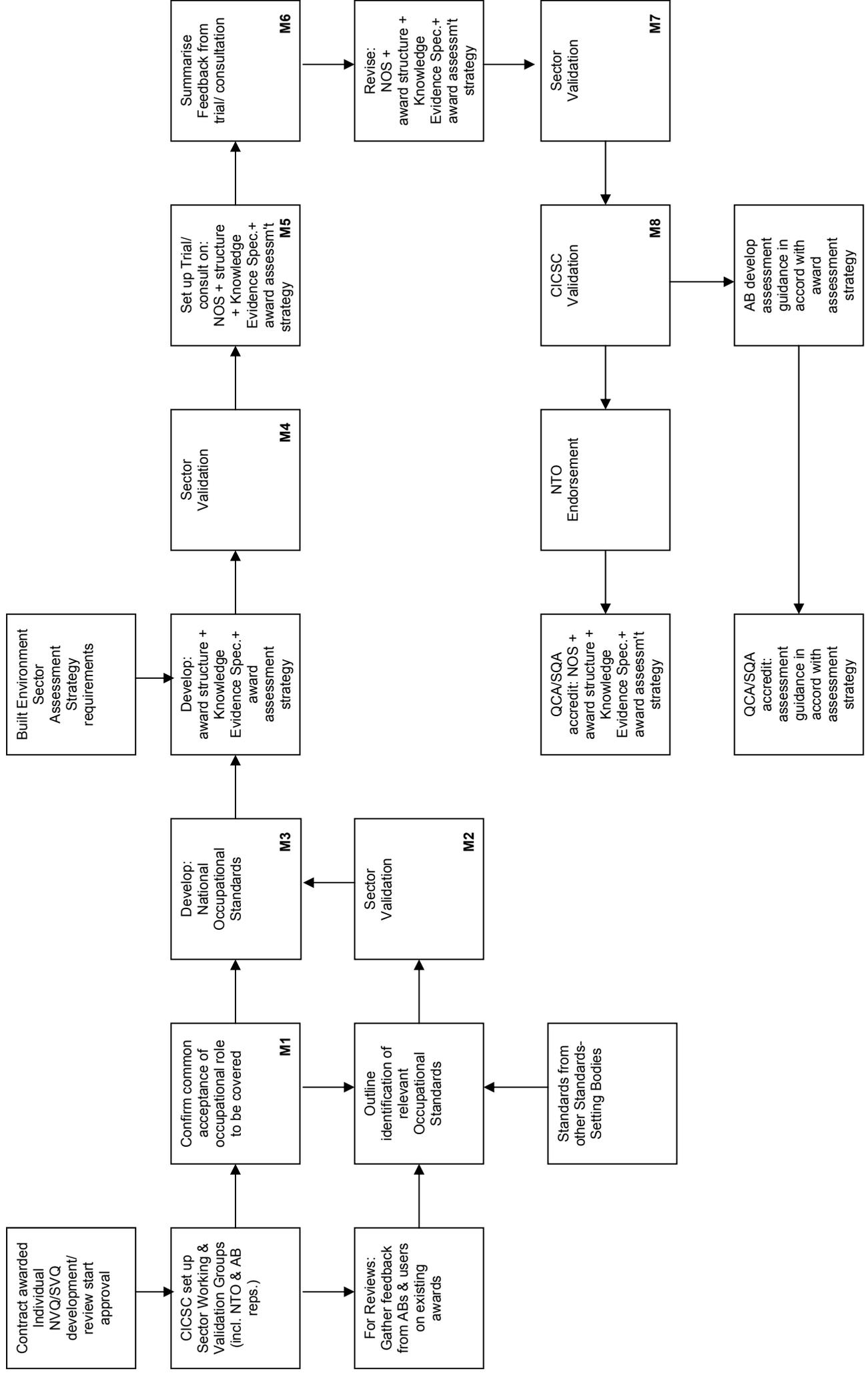
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ANNEX A Reference para. 1 Revised CICSC Built Environment NVQ/SVQ DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:



ANNEX B

Reference paras. 4-6 Evidence of occupational expertise for Assessors and Verifiers:

Examples may include:

- Relevant NVQ/SVQ
- Corporate membership of a relevant Professional Institution

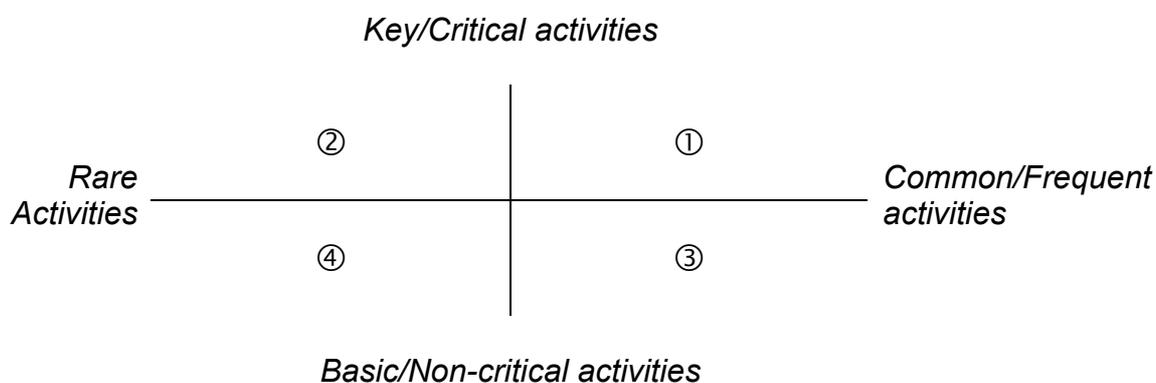
When determining the requirements, consideration should be given to the need for assessors and verifiers to have sufficient occupational expertise to ensure:

- an up to date working knowledge and experience of the particular aspects of work they are assessing (currency can be shown through Continuing Professional Development achievements), occupational experience in the area of the qualification would normally be expected to have been gained within the previous ten years;
- a sound, in-depth knowledge of the National Occupational Standards and the NVQ/SVQ assessment requirements;
- sufficient depth of occupational knowledge and experience to be effective and reliable when making judgements about candidate competence.

ANNEX C

Reference para. 8 Workplace Assessment

The following diagram and information is intended as guidance for NVQ/SVQ Development Working Groups (WGs) and Awarding Bodies for focusing on critical evidence and good practice:



Key: ① = degree of priority for assessment of competence

For efficiency and effectiveness, the assessment should be focused by concentrating on ① as critical evidence – which would need to come from the workplace wherever possible - Key evidence to be identified by WGs.

② simulation could be acceptable as an evidence source - to be identified by WGs.

③ minimal levels of workplace evidence could be acceptable with some use of inference.

④ could be dealt with by questions (knowledge).

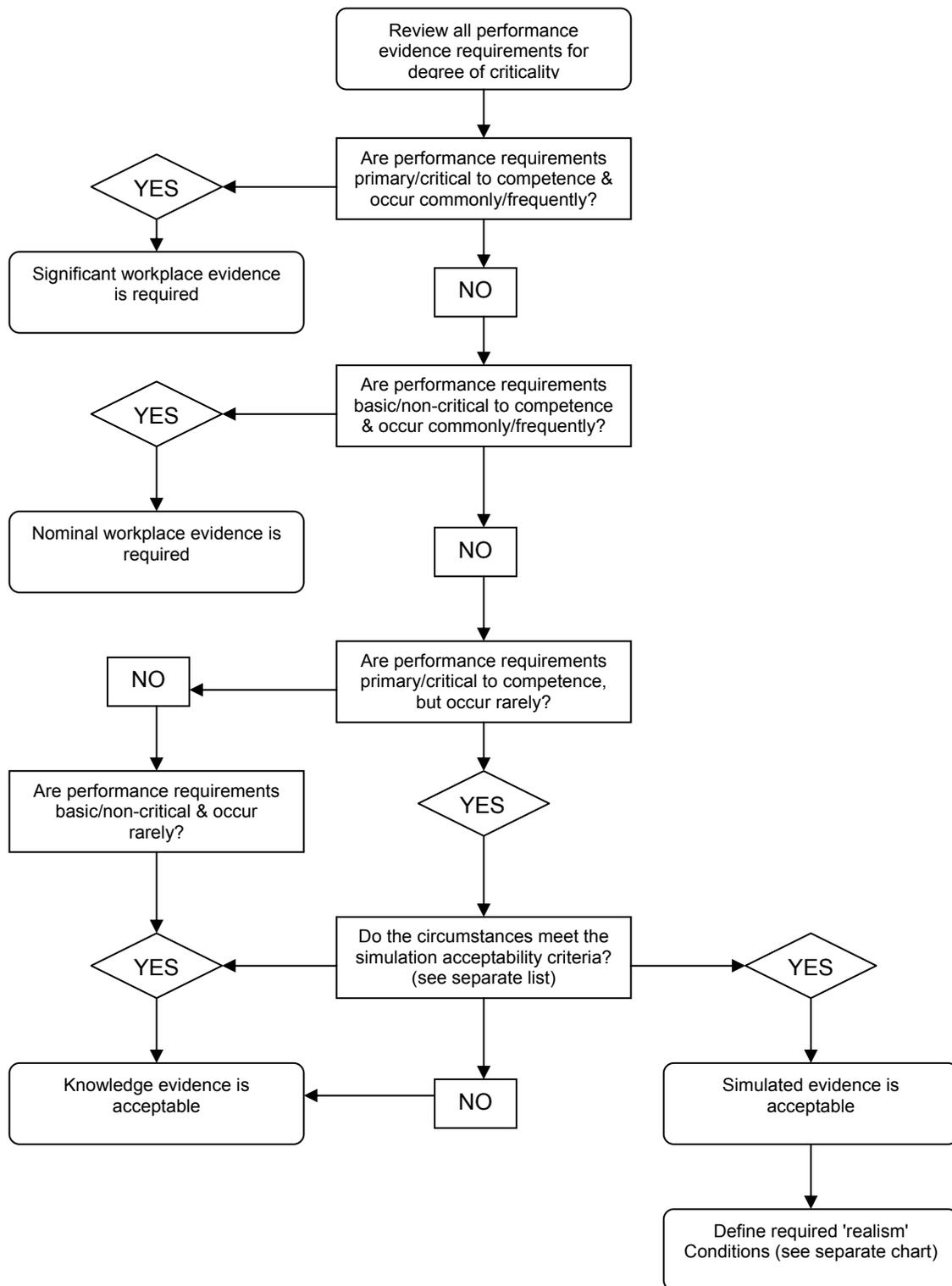
Knowledge evidence would always be needed for underpinning and complete range coverage.

Considerations relating to workplace evidence:

- Assessment planning for Performance and Knowledge Evidence - the Assessor/Candidate planning process is critical. The respective roles of candidates Assessors and Employers is significant in enabling appropriate evidence to be targeted and efficient assessment to take place. It is important to link to employers for workplace experience broadening opportunities to be identified.
- It is important for the Assessor to understand the Candidate's workplace context in order to maximise the opportunities for gathering diverse evidence.
- It is important to identify the potential with candidates for the efficient use of valid evidence from previously acquired competence.
- It is important to identify with the candidate the opportunities for the efficient use of evidence across Elements/Units.
- It is important to provide Candidate briefing/guidance on Assessment processes and portfolio building.
- It is important to consider Reliability, Validity and Sufficiency for evidence.
- The evidence and assessment method must be appropriate to the industrial context.

ANNEX D

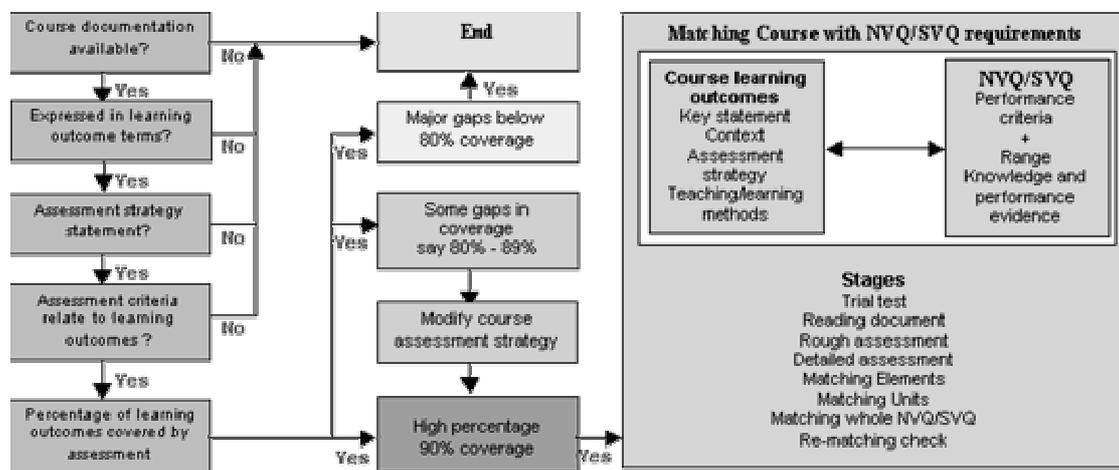
Reference para. 8 Development guidance on identifying acceptable sources of evidence:



ANNEX E

Reference para. 9 Workplace Assessment

Awarding Bodies need to identify, in conjunction with academic institutions, how the use of Standards-matched courses for Knowledge (and some Performance Evidence) can be exploited to aid candidate development, provision of evidence and progression. See diagram below which sets out the developed methodology for reviewing and matching academic/vocational courses with a view to establishing if, and to what degree, assessed outcomes from courses can be used as valid evidence. (Further information from CICSC).



Awarding Bodies are also encouraged to identify any existing industry testing/assessment mechanisms that could be used to assist with knowledge evidence assessment. This facility could be adopted provided the system correlates with the NVQ/SVQ requirements. An example might be The Construction Skills Certification Scheme, which uses an obligatory computer-based multiple choice question bank covering health and safety - a common feature in many NVQs/SVQs.

ANNEX F

Reference para. 10 General Design of assessment:

In order to ensure consistency of format across Accredited versions of NVQs/SVQs across the higher level Framework, the following general approaches will be adopted in the Assessment Specification of each CISC originated Occupational Standard, for adoption by the Development Working Group and the Awarding Body:

General statement:

"Taken as a whole, the evidence must show that the candidate consistently meets all the performance criteria, across the ranges for the element."

Product Evidence Specification:

"The candidate must produce documentary evidence from the workplace covering:"

"The following item(s) are considered to be common and key/critical to demonstrating competence:"

"The following item(s) are considered to be common and basic to demonstrating competence:"

"The following item(s) are considered to be rare and basic to demonstrating competence and could be demonstrated through evidence of knowledge and understanding:"

"Simulations are not considered to be acceptable as the medium of producing evidence for this element."

Or

"The following item(s) are considered to be rare, but key/critical to demonstrating competence and simulations are considered to be acceptable as the medium of producing evidence for it/them. (The following conditions of realism should be present.....)."

Knowledge Evidence:

"Established from questioning the candidate or from matched industry recognised education and training course assessment. A candidate's knowledge and understanding can also be revealed through presented performance evidence."

ANNEX G

Reference para. 11 Considerations of circumstances for adoption of simulation:

Simulation may be acceptable where the following circumstances make the gathering of normal workplace evidence impractical:

- Where hazards are present
- Where costly mistakes may occur
- Where genuine delays are unacceptable
- Where it is difficult to distinguish individual performance in team situations
- Where long term results are involved
- Where confidentiality is important
- Where new technology is involved
- Where a situation occurs Infrequently
- Where critical emergency outcomes are involved
- Where geographical constraints are present.

ANNEX H

Reference para. 11 Considerations of realism and types of simulation:

| Type of Conditions | Models | Test Rigs | Rehearsals | Role Play | Project (Work based) | Project (Off job) | Paper exercises | Job placements | Work placements |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Tools, equipment & instruments | Y | Y | Y | N | P | P | P | Y | Y |
| Materials | | Y | Y | | P | P | P | Y | Y |
| Contingencies | Y | Y | Y | Y | P | P | P | O | O |
| Standards & quality specifications | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | O | O |
| Timescales | Y | O | Y | Y | | | | O | O |
| Quantities | | O | Y | | | | | O | O |
| Physical conditions | | | Y | | | | | Y | Y |
| Relationship with people | P | P | Y | Y | P | P | | O | O |
| Type of interaction | P | P | Y | Y | Y | P | | O | O |
| Communication methods & media | P | | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Information & data | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |

Key

- Blank this would not normally be a critical realism factor for this type of simulation
 Y this would normally be a critical realism factor for this type of simulation
 P this could be a critical realism factor depending on the occupation/qualification
 O this could be critical, but is often omitted from this type of simulation
 N not normally critical except for 'scene setting'.

ANNEX I

Reference para. 16 Principles for defining External quality control of assessment:

Sampling of assessment by the External Verifier for a qualification will need to cover a minimum of 12 candidates or 15% of all candidates whichever is the greater. The focus would need to be on the effectiveness of assessment and its reliability, validity and sufficiency against Evidence assessment planning, Judging performance evidence and Judging knowledge evidence. Awarding Bodies should consider the matrix formed from these assessment process actions. From that determine the areas for scrutiny by External Verifiers and the quantity of portfolios to be scrutinised to provide effective control of the quality of assessment. The sampling needs to cover all the categories in the table below, but the distribution may be selected variably to focus on particular aspects as required to give flexibility of intervention.

Risk assessment can be used to identify aspects of assessment that need particular attention in external quality control sampling. This would involve:

- Identification of all potential problems associated with delegating assessment to approved Centres
- Evaluation of the probability of these risks and problems occurring in different aspects of assessment (as above)
- Placing Centres in categories of risk ('risk banding') for each aspect of assessment.

| FACTOR | Evidence Assessment Planning | Judging Performance Evidence | Judging Knowledge Evidence |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Reliability | | | |
| Validity | | | |
| Sufficiency | | | |

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY
COVERING THE HIGHER LEVEL NVQ/SVQ FRAMEWORK FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Project objectives:

1. To review, consult on and develop, in conjunction with Awarding Bodies, National Training Organisations and representative industry bodies, an Assessment Strategy covering the higher level technical, managerial and professional Framework which will meet the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and Scottish Qualifications Authority requirements for defining:

- The occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers,
- Aspects of National Occupational Standards to be assessed through performance in the workplace,
- How simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence,
- External (independent) quality control of assessment,
- The design of assessment,

The Assessment Strategy must be acceptable to industry and the Awarding Bodies. The Assessment Strategy will be validated/endorsed by the Construction Industry Council Standards Committee and the Qualifications and Standards Panel of the Strategic Forum of Construction NTOs. The Assessment Strategy will then be submitted for QCA/SQA accreditation. It will then be published for dissemination and subsequent take-up by the industry sectors involved.

Industry context:

2. This Consultation Draft Assessment Strategy document has been prepared on behalf of the Strategic Forum of Construction National Training Organisations, including the Construction Industry Training Board, to cover the technical, managerial and professional NVQ/SVQ Framework for the Built Environment Sector.
3. From 1990 to 1999, the former Construction Industry Standing Conference (CISC) was responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing a comprehensive map of generic Occupational Standards and a Framework of NVQs/SVQs covering all technical, managerial and professional roles across the higher levels of the built environment sector. From 1999 the National Training Organisations (now represented through the Strategic Forum of Construction NTOs and its Qualifications and Standards Panel), hold the responsibility for the Standards and NVQs/SVQs. However, the NTOs have delegated responsibility for maintaining and validating the higher level Standards and NVQ/SVQ Framework to the Construction Industry Council Standards Committee (CICSC), which has superseded CISC.
4. The sector has a precedent in terms of collectively reviewing assessment arrangements across the industry. Between 1998-9, the sector conducted a DfEE ('Awarding Body Infrastructure and Guidelines') project in conjunction with the industry's Awarding Bodies and their Professional Institution partners. The project looked at common issues in implementing, assessing and awarding NVQs/SVQs in the industry. This assessment Strategy is a natural successor and outcome from that work.
5. The Framework of NVQs/SVQs has been developed from a common 'menu' of generic Occupational Standards. The sector functional map includes Standards imported from other Standards Setting Bodies. The original Standards were published in 1994. These were revised in post-Beaumont format in 1998. The revision reproduced the generic Occupational Standards in an interactive Database format that enables the Standards to be developed and edited into context for a variety of uses, including for the development, in particular, of NVQs/SVQs. The basic components of the generic Occupational Standards follow a structured pattern:
 - Individual Standards grouped in Units.
 - 'Active-voice' performance criteria.
 - Ranges that expand key words highlighted in performance criteria.
 - Performance evidence - basic products and processes derived directly from the performance criteria and cross referenced to them.
 - Knowledge evidence - Topic areas derived directly from the ranges, and a taxonomy of knowledge 'depth' derived directly from the performance criteria and cross-referenced.

The generic Occupational Standards are reviewed on a continuing basis to reflect feedback from industry on their use in NVQs/SVQs and for other purposes and also to account for changes in industry practice. The database of Occupational Standards will be updated on an annual basis. This means that whenever a new NVQ/SVQ is developed or an existing one is due for review, the qualification can be based on generic Occupational Standards that are current.

6. The original sector NVQ/SVQ development process has involved:
- A Working Group of industry practitioners (that includes industry stakeholder representatives) who have developed the qualification from the generic Occupational Standards, including the specification of required evidence within awards. This has included outline guidance about the acceptable form and amount of evidence required.
 - A Validation Group of interested industry bodies, (that encompasses industry stakeholder representatives) including NTOs, Professional Institutions, Awarding Bodies, QCA and SQA that validate award proposals for the sub-sector of the industry.
 - Industry consultation/trialling of award proposals.
 - The CIC Standards Committee validates proposals in relation to the NVQ/SVQ Framework on behalf of the industry before submission to QCA/SQA for Accreditation. Validation criteria include consideration in relation to the Framework and industry needs, content, structure, assessment specification and sufficiency, criticality and validity of evidence requirements. In order to ensure industry support, the validation also considers the Awarding Body(s) for an award, including their coverage of all relevant sectoral interests; necessary resources; national assessment infrastructure and delivery strategy; recognition by Industry. In this way consistency of NVQ/SVQ coverage, content and assessment has been monitored.

Development of the Consultation Draft Assessment Strategy

7. This has been prepared with reference to the Accrediting Body publications:
- 'Developing an assessment strategy for NVQs and SVQs' (1999).
 - 'Arrangements for the statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland' (2000).
 - 'Good practice in the development of assessment strategies for NVQs and SVQs' (2000).
 - 'The Awarding Bodies' Common Accord' (1997).
 - NVQ/SVQ 'D' Units (and any successor) for Assessors and Internal and External Verifiers.
8. The development of the Consultation Draft Assessment Strategy for the higher level Framework has included to date:
- A desk review of QCA/SQA Assessment Strategy requirements, existing sector procedures and parallel developments in other sectors. The review of existing policies and practices has included the development of a matrix to compare the Strategies currently developed by NTOs in some adjoining sectors against the Assessment Strategy requirements and the current arrangements within this sector. Particular note was paid to the Strategy developed by the Property Services NTO, whose requirements share some common interests within the overall sector Framework. Also, a matrix has been developed to compare the current assessment policies of all the Awarding Bodies that currently deliver higher level NVQs/SVQs in the sector. This has enabled common features and issues to be identified and taken into account.
 - CICSC has established a Consultation Group to which all key Stakeholders were invited. This includes the sector NTOs, Awarding Bodies and Professional Institutions. Professional Institutions are central to higher level work in the sector and have been integrally involved in setting the Standards, participating in joint awarding arrangements and also introducing NVQs/SVQs into their Membership structures. The group has been involved in all stages of the development of the Strategy.
 - Development of Assessment Strategy proposals from analysis of existing sector procedures, parallel developments and consultation on requirements and options. The proposals set out in this document have been progressively evolved through iterative discussions that stemmed from consideration of the comparative work referred to above.
9. This Draft Assessment Strategy will now be subject to:
- Consultation with a wide audience of industry interests (including NTOs, Professional Institution members of CIC, Employer Federations, employers via existing Awarding Body networks, Awarding Bodies, Assessment Centres, Assessors and Verifiers) and consideration of any feedback received to produce a final Assessment Strategy document.
 - Endorsement by CICSC, NTOs, QSP, and Awarding Bodies, and submission to QCA/SQA for approval.
 - Reproduction and dissemination of the approved Assessment Strategy for implementation during ongoing NVQ/SVQ reviews and developments.

Industry considerations in determining the Assessment Strategy proposals:

10. When developing this Draft Assessment Strategy, consideration has been given to the sector's circumstances and the following factors which are important in selecting appropriate measures:
11. In relation to Occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers:
 - The Consultation Group considered that quality processes are only as effective as the Assessors and Verifiers who implement them. The Awarding Bodies, including their professional and industry partners, have been very concerned to see that only the highest quality industry people with the necessary experience and qualifications are recruited to operate the assessment and verification processes.
 - There is also broad agreement about the nature of qualification and experience requirements for assessors and verifiers.
12. In relation to aspects of National Occupational Standards to be assessed through performance in the workplace:
 - There is already broad agreement about the preeminence of performance in the workplace. Employers and individuals are concerned to have effective workbased assessment so that efficient use is made of normal work activities to produce performance evidence.
 - The Consultation Group, and industry and employer groups generally involved in NVQ/SVQ developments, are very concerned that the main assessment requirements should be determined by industry. However, it is also recognised that Awarding Bodies, as the organisation responsible for delivering the NVQ assessment, need to be consulted to ensure that the strategy and requirements desired by the industry are deliverable by the Awarding Body and its centres. The Group consider that industry practitioners are in the best position to understand and identify evidence that should be produced by candidates.
 - Evidence for higher level awards is primarily documentary in nature. There is some use of process evidence to demonstrate best practice.
 - For higher level awards, a considerable amount of knowledge evidence is required – to demonstrate the width and depth of competence in a wide range of settings/circumstances.
 - It is recognised that there is value in candidates providing evidence from completed academic/vocational qualifications that potentially support NVQs/SVQs. The sector has already undertaken a substantial amount of groundbreaking research and development work investigating and developing the relationship between Occupational Standards and academic/vocational qualifications and curriculum development. The sector recognises that there is considerable scope for developing closer links and dual-value assessment between academic, vocational and professional qualifying systems.
13. In relation to how simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence:
 - Simulation is seen as having only a secondary place in the production of evidence. It has been employed on a comparatively limited scale to date and has been identified by industry Working Groups where deemed necessary. Establishing an Assessment Strategy provides an opportunity to formalise arrangements for the identification of its use.
14. In relation to external (independent) quality control of assessment:
 - Currently, the infrastructure for higher level NVQ/SVQ assessment generally has irregular coverage. Some qualifications have an extensive range of assessment centres, whilst others rely on a small number of centres, which effectively act on a national basis.
 - The types of potential NVQ/SVQ candidates at the higher levels cover a wide variety of backgrounds and needs. Many candidates do not possess, or have not had access to, appropriate academic/vocational qualifications, but need to progress within the industry. Many have considerable and varied work experience and knowledge that requires assessment - for these reasons, high value is placed on the assessment of evidence of previously acquired competence, including Accreditation of Prior Learning, but this must be appropriate to the shelf life of the qualification and currency of the competence. There are those who possess or aspire to a wide variety of established academic/vocational and professional qualifications - for this reason, high value is placed on the assessment of evidence of previously acquired knowledge.
 - The nature of higher level candidate's activities and aspirations is such that there is likely to be as much interest in attaining individual Units for particular areas of personal development, as for whole qualifications. This has implications for forms of assessment that may rely in part on award-wide assessment methods.
 - The direct and indirect costs of assessment at higher levels are already comparatively high. By their nature, higher level occupations and NVQs/SVQs have smaller numbers to address than those at lower levels. Additional assessment requirements would undoubtedly make higher level NVQs/SVQs too costly to deliver and, therefore, potentially unsustainable.
 - Hitherto, the numbers of candidates at the higher levels have been modest, although recent months have shown an increase in interest in the qualifications. The Awarding Bodies have therefore been able to exercise comprehensive quality control by thorough sampling whilst establishing their approved centres and assessment and quality assurance arrangements.

- The Professional Institutions have been centrally involved in NVQ/SVQ development, validation and joint awarding arrangements. They have considerable expertise in accrediting vocational awards and moderating the training and assessment provision against the requirements of the industry's professional standards. Their interests are concerned with the output from NVQs/SVQs and are bound up with the competence of individuals and their acceptability for professional Membership. Increasingly, the Institutions are recognising the NVQs/SVQs as exempting awards for membership purposes. Their involvement in the development, validation and delivery of these awards is a further industry safeguard to the independence and consistency of assessment. The link between NVQs/SVQs and Professional Membership requirements presents the opportunity for dual-value assessment to be exploited.
- In catering for assessment requirements across the higher levels of the sector, there has to be recognition of the need to maintain quality, whilst minimising cost and maximising access. Because of the relatively small numbers involved in individual areas, the costs of developing and maintaining assessment methods and provision must be sustainable. There is, therefore, a concern that additional burdens should not be placed on the Awarding Bodies who are trying to introduce new products into an already delicate and complex market.
- It is not considered necessary to require additional independent assessment by the introduction of qualified independent visiting assessors. The distribution of candidates throughout the UK requiring assessment in the range of, often specialist occupational areas, means that it is unlikely to be practical and cost effective to require additional assessment in this way. There is also a finite number of people who have, or who can develop, the assessor and verifier expertise essential for quality assessment.
- It is not considered necessary to require additional independent assessment by the use of local, regional or national assessment centres to assess a specific area of competence in a standardised way. This is considered inappropriate given the wide diversity of specialisms, circumstances and additional cost involved.
- It is not considered necessary to require additional independent assessment by using externally set independent assessments (eg. question banks). It is considered expensive to develop, operate and maintain such systems and could lead to candidates and assessors focusing undue attention on 'known' areas. However, this approach is being adopted by the PSNTO and their experience of implementation will be kept under review. Also, there is one possible exception where externally set question banks might be used. The Construction Skills Certification Scheme, has been introduced to cover the competence of construction site-based disciplines. This uses NVQs/SVQs as a means of recognition and also includes an obligatory computer-based multiple choice question bank covering health and safety - a key issue for industry and a common feature in many NVQs/SVQs. This facility could be adopted provided the system correlates with the NVQ/SVQ requirements.
- An important factor that lends itself to control of quality is that all the NVQs/SVQs in the industry Framework have a common format and are, therefore, amenable to a common assessment and verification processes specified by the D32, D33 and D34 Units and their successors. As previously indicated, the development and validation of NVQs/SVQs already follows a common pattern which ensures, amongst other matters, that a consistent approach is required for assessment of evidence. The intention is, therefore, to exploit this commonality in establishing a system of quality control for the assessment process.

The broad conclusions for the Assessment Strategy proposals

15. Drawing together all the foregoing, it is clear that the existing common format, development and validation processes and award implementation, already present a rigorous and demanding set of targets for controlling the assessment of competence. Similarly, the existing verification procedures and the integral involvement of the Professional Institutions give substantial confidence in the dependability of current assessment arrangements. However, QCA/SQA criteria require the quality of assessment to be controlled, by external influence, to a measurable and auditable extent. The Consultation Group therefore, recognises that the development of the Strategy provides an opportunity to address and be more explicit about, the sector's requirements for any new assessment requirements that will add value to the existing system.
16. Having examined the existing industry context, structures and processes and considering the suggested alternatives for assessment requirements and external quality control, the Consultation Group proposes the following recommendations for an Assessment Strategy for the sector's higher level Framework. This is based on:
 - Assessment by expert industry assessors supported by industry-competent Verifiers.
 - The use of workplace performance evidence wherever possible. Simulation will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances where identified by the industry Working Group. Performance evidence should be supported by knowledge evidence, which could include that from academic, vocational and training course assessment which is mapped to industry Occupational Standards.
 - The use of enhanced Awarding Body sampling that strengthens the assessment system by considering the sufficiency, criticality and validity of assessment planning, performance evidence and knowledge evidence based on the principles set out in the Assessor/Verifier Standards and NVQ Code of Practice.
 - Best practice guidance for Working Groups and Awarding Bodies for the implementation of Assessment Strategy requirements for individual awards.
 - The development of a mechanism for CICSC to monitor and maintain the implementation of the Assessment Strategy across the sector Framework.
17. Further consultation with the sector, Awarding Bodies and QCA/SQA officers has identified that the Assessment Strategy can be applied as overarching both existing and new NVQ/SVQs without further elaboration. The only exception to this is in instances where the requirements for Occupational expertise for assessors and verifiers may be extended to give more specific requirements for industrial experience, where this is deemed necessary due to the specialised nature of the functions being covered in a qualification.

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