Skills for Security Ltd

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

for S/NVQ's using

National Occupational Standards

This Assessment Strategy has been agreed to by all awarding bodies offering qualifications, for security related occupations, based on national occupational standards developed by Skills for Security Ltd, (formerly SITO Ltd). We confirm that this document contains all the criteria and requirements for awarding bodies to meet in the four key areas given on page 1 of this document. Furthermore, we undertake to not alter the requirements or content of this strategy without prior consultation and agreement with the relevant awarding bodies.

Final Version – November 2007

Introduction

This document gives a strategic overview of the arrangements required for the assessment of candidates against the national occupational standards developed by Skills for Security Ltd and SITO Ltd. These candidates would normally, but not exclusively, be employed in the following security related occupations: -

> Civil Enforcement
> Community Warden Schemes
> Design, Installation and Maintenance of Fire and Emergency Security Alarm Systems
> Door Supervision
> Investigation
> Locksmithing
> Parking Control
> Static and Patrol Guarding, including Retail Guarding, Port Security, Store Detection, Keyholding & Response, and Security Dog Handling
> Security Consultancy
> Close Protection
> Cash and Valuables in Transit
> CCTV Operations

The aim of this assessment strategy is to provide a framework for Skills for Security, as the standards setting body for the Security Business Sector, to work with awarding bodies to ensure robust, effective quality assurance arrangements for the qualifications based on Skills for Security's national occupational standards.

The assessment strategy detailed in this document sets out the requirements to be met by awarding bodies in four key areas, which are: -

1) external quality control of assessment;
2) which aspects of the national occupational standards must always be assessed through performance in the workplace;
3) the extent to which simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence and any characteristics that simulations should have, including definitions of what would constitute a 'realistic working environment' (RWE) for the qualifications concerned; and
4) the occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers.

This strategy is the result of:

- review of good practice
- consultation with and agreement of Awarding Bodies
- industry feedback
- comments from QCA and SQA

Skills for Security, as the standards setting body, has a role to monitor the effectiveness of the assessment strategy it has put forward. It is therefore recommended that all the appropriate awarding bodies meet within a forum set up by Skills for Security, on a frequency agreed between all parties, to discuss assessment and verification issues. Where amendments are necessary, approval from the regulatory authorities will be sought.

Any specific arrangements or requirements for particular suites of national occupational standards, or occupational areas, will be given in annexes to this strategy.

1.   External Quality Control

As the Standard Setting Body for the Security Business Sector, Skills for Security support the process of robust external quality control and recommend that independent assessment is employed to achieve this.

Independent assessment as a method of external quality control requires that a significant proportion of the assessment is carried out by an assessor other than the candidate's primary assessor and who does not have a vested interest in the outcome of the assessment.

The centre together with the Awarding body will determine which aspects of the qualification are to be independently assessed. However, Skills for Security recommend that at least one unit of the qualification is independently assessed.

Other approaches to external quality control are acceptable where it can be demonstrated that they are equally robust, have support from the centre and the Awarding Body and meet the statutory requirements of the Qualifications Regulators.

2.   Assessment Environments

Assessment of all S/NVQ candidates in security related occupations, against the national occupational standards developed by Skills for Security, will be undertaken in accordance with the following criteria: -
- Evidence of occupational competence should be generated and collected through real work activities in a realistic work environment.
- Real work activities are those undertaken to provide a security product or service under typical business conditions.
- A realistic working environment is one that reflects typical employment conditions relevant to the work activities being assessed.
- The evidence collected under these conditions should also be as naturally occurring as possible.

Taking account of the above, it is not acceptable to undertake assessments in a classroom, or similar environment that has been set up specifically for training. Where opportunities for evidence collection are not available at the workplace, simulation is permitted, in accordance with the criteria listed in section 3 below.

3   Situations Where Simulation is allowed

Simulation should only be used where it is impractical to gather evidence through a real work environment or within an acceptable time frame. Such instances are specified within each suite of NOS.

Awarding Bodies must issue adequate guidance to their centres as to how these simulations should be planned and organised with guidance ensuring that the demands on the candidate are no more or less that they would be in a real environment. This may include:-

- activities which are contingency, emergency situations etc. and are relatively rare events; and
- activities where mistakes by candidates in the workplace would be too hazardous or expensive to accommodate.

The simulation should match the conditions of a realistic working environment. In other words, the conditions should match those found in the workplace, including facilities, equipment and material, as well as relationships, constraints and pressures.

Where simulation is to be used to assess a complete element, we would consider it to be good practice for external verifier advice to be sought on the validity of any simulation scenario, prior to its implementation and use within an Approved Centre.

When simulation is to be used to cover part of an element, in the interests of assessment efficiency, assessors and internal verifiers should agree the circumstances and conditions under which this process is implemented.

4. Criteria for the Appointment of Assessors, Internal Verifiers and External Verifiers

4.1 Criteria for the Appointment of Assessors

The gathering and judging of evidence should be entrusted to personnel who are not only trained and qualified as assessors (appropriate to the qualification being assessed) but who are occupationally competent in the tasks that they are assessing.

To this end, Awarding Bodies must ensure that assessors are occupationally competent, and are suitably qualified, in accordance with all of the criteria specified below: -

a) hold verifiable, relevant, current industry experience and knowledge of the occupational working area at or above the level being assessed. This experience and knowledge must be of sufficient standing to be effective and reliable when judging candidates competence. Assessors experience and knowledge may be verified by among other things:
- Curriculum vitae and references
- Possession of a relevant qualification
- Corporate membership of a relevant professional institution

b) demonstrate their ability and commitment to maintain their occupational competence;

c) be able to relate the national occupational standards against which they will be assessing candidates, to activities in the workplace;

d) provide evidence that they,
- understand the structure of national occupational standards and qualifications;
- can interpret the standards in accordance with awarding body requirements;
- recognise acceptable sources of evidence for the qualification; and
- can implement the recording procedures required by the awarding body.
- can implement the awarding body quality assurance and administration procedures.

e) be in regular contact with the candidates and the internal verifier; and

f) hold the appropriate assessor award (as defined by the regulatory authorities) or

have a clear plan for achieving the award(s) within 18 months of commencing assessments.

Evidence of individuals meeting all of the above criteria should be confirmed by the awarding body, which may be through external verifiers. Evidence of meeting criteria c and d above may be provided as a result of successfully completing a relevant training course, on which attendance is not mandatory but is strongly recommended.

4.2   Criteria for the Appointment of Internal Verifiers

Awarding Bodies must ensure that internal verification is undertaken by persons who are able to make valid judgements on assessment decisions made by assessors.

To this end, Awarding Bodies must ensure that internal verifiers are occupationally competent and are suitably qualified, in accordance with all of the criteria specified below: -

a)   hold verifiable, relevant, current industry experience and knowledge of the occupational working area at or above the level being assessed. This experience and knowledge must be of sufficient standing to be effective and reliable when judging candidates competence. Internal verifiers experience and knowledge may be verified by among other things:
- Curriculum vitae and references
- Possession of a relevant qualification
- Corporate membership of a relevant professional institution

b)   demonstrate their ability and commitment to maintain their occupational competence;

c)   be able to relate the national occupational standards against which they will be assessing candidates, to activities in the workplace;

d)   provide evidence that they,
- understand the structure of national occupational standards and qualifications;
- can interpret the standards in accordance with awarding body requirements;
- recognise acceptable sources of evidence for the qualification; and
- can implement the recording procedures required by the awarding body.
- can implement the awarding body quality assurance and administration procedures.

e)   be in regular contact with the assessor or external verifier; and

f)   hold the appropriate verifier award (as defined by the regulatory authorities) or have a clear plan for achieving the award(s) within 18 months of commencing assessments.

It is recommended that internal verifiers hold the appropriate assessor qualification.

Evidence of individuals meeting all of the above criteria should be confirmed by the awarding body, which may be through external verifiers. Evidence of meeting criteria c and d above may be provided as a result of successfully completing a relevant training course, on which attendance is not mandatory but is strongly recommended.

4.3   Criteria for the Appointment of External Verifiers

Awarding Bodies must appoint suitably qualified external verifiers who are able to ensure that standards of assessment and verification are applied consistently across all Approved

Centres.

To this end, Awarding Bodies must ensure that external verifiers are occupationally competent and are suitably qualified, in accordance with the criteria specified below: -

a)   have a good knowledge and understanding of the sector and of current working practices;

b)   be independent of the assessment centres;

c)   hold the appropriate external verifier qualification (as defined by the regulatory authorities), or have a clear action plan for achieving this qualification within 12 months of beginning external verification;

d)   demonstrate their ability to maintain their occupational knowledge;

e)   demonstrate knowledge, understanding and application of the occupational standards they will be externally verifying; and

f)   demonstrate their commitment to continuous personal professional development.

External verifiers must hold the appropriate EV qualification or have a clear action plan for achieving the qualification within the set timescale.

Evidence of individuals meeting all of these criteria should be held and confirmed by the awarding body.

<p align="center">End</p>