

## Annex C

### Guidance on the use of simulation

#### Introduction

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are developed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and describe the level of occupational competence required of a particular job role. NOS are then used to build National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs) that are competence based qualifications and demand assessment in a workplace environment.

Assessment of N/SVQs through simulation is indicated where the achievement of valid and reliable assessment calls for evidence of performance under workplace conditions, but where it will be difficult to assess through normal working practice. This will usually apply as a result of one or more of the following constraints:

- activities which are inherently hazardous and where mistakes made in carrying them out would pose unacceptable risks to the candidate, other people, animals or property (e.g. electricity and gas sectors, fire service etc.)
- the costs incurred would be unacceptably high if mistakes were made during an activity and a candidate would therefore be required to 'prove' competence before progressing onto the actual work (e.g. handling rare or precious objects)
- situations where the qualities and outcomes of the candidate's behaviour are almost impossible to distinguish from those of their peers or colleagues, making authenticity uncertain (e.g. in some teamwork contexts)
- activities or situations which are sufficiently rare (e.g. where processes, such as a 'shut-down', may only occur on an annual basis)
- when the collection and/or review of evidence of workplace performance would intrude unacceptably on personal privacy or confidentiality, or would significantly alter the nature of an interaction or relationship (e.g. in some health care settings)
- a requirement to work with new techniques and/or work practices which may not be available in all workplaces.

Where permitted, simulation can take one or a combination of the two following forms:

- the candidate is presented with an activity to perform using equipment and/or in a location which replicates that found in the workplace
- the candidate is presented with a situation to which they must respond; taking and playing the role they would expect to play in the workplace.

It is a SSC's responsibility to define the acceptability of evidence from simulation in the context of National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs). The ConstructionSkills Consolidated Assessment Strategy provides this guidance.

## Guidance on the acceptable use and characteristics of simulation within N/SVQs during the current economic climate

Due to the current economic climate and its impact on construction industry apprentices, ConstructionSkills as the SSC for construction has agreed that there can be some flexibility around the use of simulation when assessing construction craft NVQs. This is set out as follows and applies up until the end of December 2011.

In situations where a displaced or employed apprentice (this does not apply to full-time learners) will not be able to demonstrate evidence in the workplace within an acceptable time span, Awarding Bodies can arrange with their centres to apply the following principles.

- 1 Units cannot be assessed using simulation alone – there must be some supporting work-based evidence.
- 2 A centre's strategy for simulation must be examined and approved by the external verifier.
- 3 The location and environment of simulation must be agreed with the internal verifier prior to taking place, and must be checked by the internal verifier.
- 4 The **nature of the contingency** and the **physical environment must be realistic** and candidates should not be given any indication as to exactly what contingencies they may come across.
- 5 All simulations must be planned, developed and documented by the centre in a way that ensures the simulation correctly reflects what the unit seeks to assess, and all simulations must follow these documented plans.
- 6 There should be a range of simulation to cover the same aspect of the unit so that the risk of candidates successfully colluding is reduced.
- 7 All simulation must reflect the urgency with which the activity would normally be carried out and the normal time needed to complete it, including the usual complexity of factors affecting the activity.
- 8 All simulation should involve the same personnel as would normally be included (e.g. bricklayer, supervisor, labourer etc.) and also similar realistic facilities.
- 9 Any instances of insufficient work-based evidence must be supported by adequate supplementary evidence which might include questioning; interviews with professional discussion; work projects; case studies; special assignments; self-testimony.

ConstructionSkills would strongly recommend that centres explore strategies with the candidate's employers for obtaining work-based evidence before considering the use of simulation. Examples might include using Group Training Associations, thereby carrying out real jobs within the college/training centre and/or involvement with community projects.

Group Training Association (GTA) is the government term for a training group which also shares apprentices. The GTA model is where a number of like minded employers come together to create a separate business entity, which sources appropriate training and delivers apprenticeships by providing work experience across the range of engaged businesses.