

# Assessment Strategy for Operations in the Community Level 3 N/SVQ

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Standards Setting Body (SSB) for these qualifications is SkillsPlus UK, currently partnered with Skills for Justice. The development work for the qualifications has been managed by the Fire and Rescue Sector Vocational Standards Group (FRSVSG) which represents all key stakeholders across the UK.
- 1.2 The UK Fire Services are principally drawn from four occupational groups;
- ♦ The Local Authority Fire Services
  - ♦ Rescue and Firefighting Services provided at airports licensed by Civil Aviation Authority
  - ♦ The Ministry of Defence Fire Services
  - ♦ Occupational brigades provided by, and to protect, private companies.
- 1.3 Representatives from all these major stakeholders and from relevant statutory and regulatory bodies are members of the FRSVSG.

## 2 Principles of assessment for N/SVQs

- 2.1 It is the view of the FRSVSG that assessment of competence, for the purpose of achieving N/SVQs, should be undertaken in the workplace. The primary form of evidence of competence will therefore be actual work-based activities. The primary methods of assessment will be observation of performance, questioning, professional discussion and review of products of work. In the case of some units, the use of simulation is acceptable. Use of simulation is covered in Section 4 and Annex A below.

## 3 Use of Subject Experts/Expert Witnesses

- 3.1 The FRSVSG has identified the need to operate an assessment structure in which 'subject experts' or 'expert witnesses' will play an important role in supporting practical and reliable assessment in the workplace. The nature of the work, volume of candidates and the practicalities involved in all managers undertaking formal assessor training and certification require that a flexible system is implemented. FRSVSG therefore expect to work with awarding bodies to develop and maintain an operational structure in which:
- ♦ Only 'designated assessors' (who meet the requirements in 7.2 below) will have the authority to make judgements on candidates' evidence and performance against the standards
  - ♦ Only 'subject experts/expert witnesses' (who have adequate and up-to-date occupational experience and knowledge of the approved NOS), will provide witness testimony and observation reports to supplement the assessor's own observations.

## 4 Simulation

- 4.1 It is the view of the FRSVSG that simulation may form an integral part of assessment within the N/SVQs. Effective use of simulation in risk-critical areas may be essential to confirm competence in some areas of operational performance. Units where simulation is allowed are shown in Annex A.
- 4.2 ALL simulations must conform to the principles outlined below. This will ensure standardisation and maintenance of quality for N/SVQ assessment. This includes Centre

devised, IT simulations and commercially developed simulated packages. Simulated work activities will be sampled by the relevant Awarding Body who will issue guidance on whether this approval should be undertaken at national level or locally by their appointed External Verifier.

- 4.3 The FRSVSG has agreed the following principles and guidelines for the approval of simulations.
- 4.4 ALL simulations used to assess against approved national occupational standards for the purpose of achieving Operations in the Community N/SVQs will clearly demonstrate compliance with the following principles and guidelines to ensure that they take place in a realistic working environment (RWE). Simulations must:
- ◆ Include a comprehensive range of demands, activities and constraints relevant to those that would be met in a real working context.
  - ◆ Provide individuals with access to the normal facilities, support and advice that would be available in the context, and type of working situation
  - ◆ Ensure formative assessment and advice is available from people with current experience of work being undertaken
  - ◆ Realistically reflect normal working contexts and conditions
  - ◆ Place individuals under pressure of time, resources and working demands that would operate in a normal working environment.
  - ◆ Be used in accordance with guidelines at unit level in N/SVQs (Please see Annex A).
  - ◆ Be planned, developed and documented by the Centre in a way that ensures simulations correctly reflect what the standard seeks to assess (validity)
- 4.5 In addition:
- ◆ A Centre's overall strategy for simulation must be examined by the Awarding Body's External Verifier and their approval recorded
  - ◆ There should be a number of different simulations to cover the same aspect of standards in order to reduce the risk of collusion.

## **5 External Quality Control**

- 5.1 The FRSVSG has agreed that methods of External Quality Control are essential to strengthen and ensure quality and consistency of assessment and verification across the sector.
- 5.2 The FRSVSG is concerned to ensure that all methods of External Quality Control clearly demonstrate
- ◆ Added-value
  - ◆ Cost-effectiveness
  - ◆ Adhering to safe practices
  - ◆ Realistic use of resources in context (practicality)
- 5.3 SkillsPlus and FRSVSG have agreed that external quality control can best be achieved by:
- ◆ The monitoring and standardisation of assessment decisions
  - ◆ A component of independent assessment

### **6.1 Standardisation of assessment decisions**

FRSVSG will work in partnership with Awarding Bodies to achieve the following quality goals:

- ♦ All assessment centres new to the awarding body will be quality assured by an Awarding Body representative during an initial approval visit and on one more occasion during their first year of operation. In subsequent years, a minimum of one EV visit a year will be conducted.
- ♦ External Verifiers will sample across all aspects of the assessment process, including observation of the Centre's assessment, sampling of evidence and interviews with candidates, assessors and internal verifiers. External verifiers will also check and compare the outcomes of independent assessment (see Section 6.2 below).
- ♦ SkillsPlus and FRSVSG insist that External Verifiers appointed by Awarding Bodies will meet the criteria set out in this assessment strategy.
- ♦ SkillsPlus and FRSVSG also believe that regular contact with the FRSVSG and its representatives for the review of consistency in practice and continuous improvement would enhance external quality control measures.
- ♦ SkillsPlus and FRSVSG insist that Awarding Bodies operate a 'risk rating' system for centres and, where necessary, have appropriate control measures to maintain and improve quality.

## **6.2 Independent assessment**

This will be achieved by the use of an independent assessor. The independent assessor must assess one of the mandatory units in the candidate's N/SVQ. It is recommended that independent assessors assess unit FF2; however, individual assessors may wish to select another mandatory unit, if appropriate to circumstances. The verification process must check that the outcomes of assessment carried out by the candidate's regular assessor align with those of the independent assessor. Where judgments of competence differ, centres must take measures to ensure the alignment of assessments.

The independent assessor must meet all the requirements for assessors spelt out in Section 7.2 below. In addition, they must not otherwise be involved in the assessment of other units in the candidate's N/SVQ.

## **7 Occupational Expertise of Assessors and Verifiers**

7.1 FRSVSG has agreed that the following criteria will apply to the approval of assessors and verifiers.

### **Assessors**

7.2 It is a requirement that all those undertaking the role of assessor will:

- ♦ Be working with an approved assessment centre.
- ♦ Have work-based operational experience for the occupational area in which they assess; such experience should be current and substantial.
- ♦ Hold unit A1 OR a recognised equivalent (D32, or in Scotland the Teaching Qualification in Further Education and Teaching Qualification in Secondary Education for SVQ Assessment) OR be registered for A1 and working towards its achievement. The timescale for achievement must be in accordance with current QCA and SQA requirements. (Assessors who are working towards the achievement of A1 must be supervised by a qualified A1 assessor when they are assessing.)
- ♦ Have an up to date and working knowledge of all the specific functions or aspects of work they are assessing.
- ♦ Have an in-depth knowledge of the relevant national occupational standards.
- ♦ Have sufficient depth of occupational knowledge and experience to be effective and reliable when making judgements about candidates' competence, as well as paying attention to risk critical factors and maintaining safety.

### **Internal Verifiers**

7.3 It is a requirement that those undertaking the role of internal verifier will:

- ♦ Have work-based experience in the occupational area in which they verify; such experience should be current and substantial.
- ♦ Hold V1 (or D34) OR be registered for V1 and working towards its achievement – the timescale for such achievement to be in accordance with current QCA and SQA requirements. Internal verifiers who are working towards V1 must be supervised by a qualified VI assessor.
- ♦ Have an up to date and working knowledge of the specific functions or aspects of work they are verifying.
- ♦ Have an in-depth knowledge of relevant approved national occupational standards.

### **External Verifiers**

7.4 It is a requirement that those undertaking the role of external verifier will;

- ♦ Hold V2 (or D35) OR be registered for V2 (or equivalent) or be working towards its achievement– timescales for achievement to be in accordance with current QCA and SQA requirements.
- ♦ Have an up to date and working knowledge of the specific functions or aspects of work they are verifying
- ♦ Have an in-depth knowledge of relevant approved national occupational standards

**Annex A**

Unit	Use of simulation
FF1 Inform and educate your community to improve awareness of safety matters	Simulation is not acceptable for this unit. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF2 Take responsibility for effective performance in fire and rescue	Simulation is not acceptable for this unit. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF3 Save and preserve endangered life	Simulation is acceptable for this unit, in the absence of opportunity for demonstration of competence through actual work performance. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF4 Resolve fire and rescue operational incidents	Simulation is acceptable for this unit in the absence of opportunity for demonstration of competence through actual work performance. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF5 Protect the environment from the effect of hazardous materials	Simulation is acceptable for this unit in the absence of opportunity for demonstration of competence through actual work performance. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF6 Support the effectiveness of operational response	Simulation is not acceptable for this unit. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF7 Support the development of colleagues in fire and rescue	Simulation is not acceptable for this unit. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF8 Contribute to fire safety solutions to minimise risks to your community	Simulation is not acceptable for this unit. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.
FF9 Drive, manoeuvre and re-deploy fire service vehicles	Simulation is not acceptable for this unit. Assessment should be conducted on a sufficient number of occasions, over time, to ensure consistency of competence against the specified standards.