

Assessment Strategy



Assessment Strategy

For use with competency based qualifications
within the **Fashion and Textiles sector**

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Version 3

Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
1.1	The Assessment Strategy.....	3
1.2	The Awarding Organisation Forum.....	4
2	External Quality Control of Assessment.....	5
3	Workplace Assessment.....	6
3.1	Observation	6
3.2	Questioning.....	6
3.3	Internal competency assessments	6
3.4	Expert Witness.....	6
3.5	Simulation	7
3.6	Supplementary evidence	7
3.7	Recognition of prior learning.....	7
4	The role and occupational expertise of assessors, expert witnesses and verifiers	9
5	Annexes	12
5.1	Man Made Fibres.....	12
5.1.1	Simulation.....	12
5.1.2	Enhancement of External Quality Control	13
5.2	Textiles	15
5.2.1	Simulation.....	15
5.2.2	Guidance for Hand Weaving	16
5.3	Design.....	17
5.3.1	Simulation.....	17
5.4	Footwear & Leathergoods	18
5.4.1	Simulation.....	18
5.5	Apparel	19
5.5.1	Bespoke Cutting & Tailoring/Kilt Making	19
5.5.2	Simulation.....	19
5.5.3	Computer Aided Design / Computer Aided Manufacture (CAD/CAM) ..	20
5.5.4	Guidance for Kilt Making	20
5.6	Laundry & Dry Cleaning.....	21
5.6.1	Simulation.....	21
5.7	Realistic Work Environment (RWEs) and Simulation Criteria.....	22

1 Introduction

Creative Skillset is the Creative Industries' Sector Skills Council (SSC), including the fashion and textiles sector, and it represents the voice of approximately 79,000 fashion and textiles businesses on skills issues. Our mission is to ensure that the UK's education and training system delivers the skills that our sector employers need to create marketable products and compete successfully.

Creative Skillset interacts with the sector through various employers, skills agencies, providers and Awarding Organisation meetings. These stakeholders work in partnership to develop fashion and textiles National Occupational Standards (NOS) and supporting documents such as Assessment Strategies.

The NOS define the skills and knowledge functions across the sector footprint and the Assessment Strategy outlines the required assessment procedures for competency based qualifications based on the NOS. Both relate to the Occupational and Functional Map¹, which was revised in 2008, and will be used to inform future review and development of both the Standards and the Strategy.

This document sets out the Creative Skillset strategy for the assessment of National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications within the fashion and textiles sector and reflects the greater flexibilities which are now possible within qualification frameworks.

This Assessment Strategy supersedes previous assessment strategies.

1.1 The Assessment Strategy

The Strategy is designed to provide overarching assessment guidance across qualifications covering the whole of the fashion and textiles footprint and to meet regulatory authorities' assessment requirements and criteria. The Strategy was developed in consultation with employers, Awarding Organisations, Regulators and Providers to ensure reliable, effective assessment practises and quality assured sector qualifications.

The strategy has three key elements:

- External quality control of assessment;
- Workplace assessment;
- The role and occupational expertise of assessors, expert witnesses and verifiers.

The scope of this document covers the sub sectors below:

- Apparel (also Incl. Bespoke Cutting and Tailoring / Kilt Making);

¹ The Functional and Occupational map March 2008 identifies key functions and occupations across the Creative Skillset Fashion & Textiles footprint.

- Laundry & Dry Cleaning;
- Textiles and Technical Textiles;
- Footwear, Leather and Leather Goods.

Additional requirements related to specific sub sectors can be found in relevant annexes. This enables Creative Skillset and Awarding Organisations to take account of the changing environment linked to qualification delivery. Annexes will be updated following standard reviews as required.

1.2 The Awarding Organisation Forum

Effective working relationships between Creative Skillset and Awarding Organisations are crucial to the successful implementation of the Assessment Strategy, thus Creative Skillset work closely with Awarding Organisations through the Awarding Organisation Forum.

The forum meets yearly and works to establish a common approach to enhance quality control, reflecting the requirements of the sector as a whole. Both parties undertake the need to inform of compliance, and potential for variation of, the Assessment Strategy for relevant sector qualifications so ensuring the Quality Assurance requirements are maintained.

Creative Skillset also engage with Awarding Organisations to ensure early dialogue as part of the qualifications approvals process via on line communication and one to one meetings as required.

2 External Quality Control of Assessment

Competency based qualification assessment decisions are monitored and standardised through a robust verification system as outlined by regulators. Units of competence within these qualifications are based on National Occupation Standards (NOS) which are designed, in part, for use within competency based qualifications. Units of competence differ from NOS as they are assigned a level, a credit value and include evidence requirements and assessment guidance.

In addition to regulators requirements, the internal and external verification of the assessment process will be provided through the following:

- Awarding Organisations will carry out statistical monitoring and risk rating of all centres. This requires Awarding Organisations to carry out data collection, analysis, risk assessment and action planning. Awarding Organisations delivering the awards should provide adequate arrangements for fulfilling these requirements.

OR

- Awarding Organisations will carry out 100% external verification of one key unit in each qualification. This will cover the evidence assessed by each Assessor involved in the assessment of the critical unit over a twelve month period. This unit will relate to the performance of a major work activity involving a manufacturing process.

Creative Skillset identifies a shared, consistent unit within each qualification; HS1 'Health, safety and security at work'. The unit is vital to occupational competence and provides a standardised approach to the review of evidence. The unit also has the potential to form the basis of induction programmes for new staff.

Qualifications structures are developed by Creative Skillset in partnership with Awarding Organisations and employers. The Qualification structures provide rules of combination which place technical units within a broad range of options to reflect the diversity of both manufacturing and product serving processes. The structures provide significant flexibility and enable learners to select and combine units of competence to the appropriate level.

3 Workplace Assessment

Creative Skillset's fashion and textiles NOS are based on the need to demonstrate competence in the workplace. Therefore the workplace is the preferred primary location for assessment, enabling candidates to be assessed under normal commercial operating conditions; however simulation is acceptable under certain circumstances (see section 3.5)

The workplace is defined as an environment in which candidates operate prescribed machinery, equipment or processes under commercial operating conditions, and control systems after any training, induction or related probationary period has been completed.

It is accepted that some areas of knowledge and understanding may take place in a different environment i.e. training centre/area which is not the immediate workplace. However any knowledge and understanding assessments undertaken must be directly linked to workplace performance and should include performance evidence.

Primary sources of evidence are listed below.

3.1 Observation

Observation of candidates can only be carried out on-the- job and is the preferred source of evidence. This should include inspection and evaluation of products produced.

3.2 Questioning

Questioning of candidates to support performance or provide knowledge evidence can take place either on or off the job.

3.3 Internal competency assessments

Internal competency assessments carried out as part of a structured in-company approach to training by workplace personnel should be taken into account as contributory evidence of a candidate's performance. Where these assessment are recorded and subject to audit (i.e. ISO9000), and a significant amount of this type of evidence is present, Assessors should carry out only confirmatory observation and collect supplementary evidence as appropriate.

3.4 Expert Witness²

There are a number of different niche areas within Creative Skillset's fashion and textiles footprint and there are numerous occupations within these areas. A small number of specialist qualifications have been developed in order to reflect this i.e.

² An Expert Witness is an expert on the occupation to be assessed i.e. experienced line manager or peer, and not to be consulted as a professional Assessor.

bespoke shoe makers, bespoke tailors, saddlers, leather producers and garment/textile technicians.

These specialist roles are reflected in Creative Skillset's NOS and Occupational and Functional map and in many cases assessors, whilst demonstrating broad knowledge of the competencies required to meet the national occupational standards, will not be competent in meeting the requirements of the standards as demonstrated by these job roles. Employers within the sector have been consulted on this issue and trust the ability of experienced employees to contribute substantially to the assessment process as **Expert Witnesses**.

Therefore, to provide evidence to confirm the candidate's competence in these circumstances, the Assessor must use an Expert Witness. The use of the Expert Witness, in this instance, should be sufficient to confirm candidates' competence in their area of skill without observation by the Assessor. **However please note the Assessor will have overarching responsibility for the assessment and make the final judgment**

3.5 Simulation

Simulation is permitted in specific aspects of the standards relating to:

- performing health and safety operations where there could be major disruption to the work process or where events rarely occur;
- activities which would be very costly to perform in terms of time, materials and equipment;
- performing specific activities which would be considered non-routine under commercial working practices.

The use of appropriate simulations must be agreed with the External Verifier appointed by the Awarding Organisation prior to the simulation taking place and should be carried out within an agreed realistic working environment, please see Realistic Working Environment (RWE) Criteria Appendix 5.7.

3.6 Supplementary evidence

Supplementary evidence of performance is also recognised as valuable to demonstrate competence. In particular Witness Testimony may support situations where evidence from direct observation is deemed insufficient to fully meet the standards. Supplementary evidence must relate directly to the candidates performance on-the-job, and may include professional discussion, product and photographic evidence, relevant documentation, reports, presentations and work records etc.

3.7 Recognition of prior learning

Prior learning can be recognised and evidenced from past achievements may be included within the assessment methods. Evidence must be measurable and relate

to the individual learners current circumstances. Current competence in relation to learning outcomes must also be demonstrated. The Assessor must ensure that the most reliable and effective use is made of evidence relating to claims of prior learning.

4 The role and occupational expertise of assessors, expert witnesses and verifiers

The Creative Skillset fashion and textiles NOS are designed to be assessed by vocationally competent Assessors in the workplace, and backed up by consistent internal and external verification through the work of the Awarding Organisations. The overall criteria set out below and any criteria specific to individual sub-sectors indicated in the annexes will be kept under review.

The Awarding Organisations are requested to monitor the impact of these criteria on the quality of assessment.

4.1 Role of the Assessor

The role of an Assessor is to make accurate and objective decisions as to whether the candidate's performance meets the national standards. The Assessor is ultimately responsible for assessment of the candidate's competence and must collate the evidence of competence and understanding in the areas being assessed to the satisfaction of the Verifiers.

Where the Expert Witness concept is utilised the Assessor must:

- Request the company nomination of an appropriate person in line with Expert Witness criteria;
- Ensure the Expert Witness has the required competence and knowledge;
- Brief and support the Expert Witness as appropriate;
- Ensure the Expert Witness understands the differences in the roles of assessment and training;
- Ensure the Expert Witness understands the NOS and qualification being assessed, and his/her role in the assessment process.

Occupational Competence of Assessor

Required:

Provide current evidence of competence and understanding in the areas to be assessed to the satisfaction of the External Verifier. This may be achieved through experience or continual professional development.

Hold or be working towards achievement of the relevant assessor qualifications approved by the qualifications regulatory authorities and set out in national requirements and guidance.

Have a full understanding of the NOS and requirements of the qualification being assessed.

Hold or be working towards appropriate technical qualifications in addition to assessor qualifications.

Exceptions:

When utilising the Expert Witness concept, full competence and understanding in the areas being assessed is not required. **However this must be agreed with the relevant Awarding Organisation.**

4.2 Role of Expert Witness

This innovation has been demanded by employers in the sector in order to engage existing, experienced staff more closely in the process of developing highly trained and qualified workforce. The intention is to enhance the quality of assessment by 'lifting' the witness testimony process giving greater credibility to their contribution to the assessment process.

Who can be an expert witness? Expert witnesses are individuals who, through qualification or time served practical experience, can attest to performance in the workplace, and are likely to be the candidate's line manager and/or experienced colleagues from inside the candidate's organisation.

How will the expert witness be selected? It is anticipated that initially the employer or manager will nominate the expert witness. The expert witness should be considered competent in the unit that they will be witnessing by the assessor, and have a working knowledge of the National Occupational Standards for the unit on which their testimony is based. The assessor or the internal verifier will be responsible for ensuring that the expert witness is properly briefed and supported.

What part will the expert witness take in the assessment process? Expert witnesses will provide evidence of competence of the candidate. The assessor will have overall and ultimate responsibility for the assessment of this evidence. Where they are also involved in training, the differences in the roles of assessment and training should be clearly delineated by the assessor. The assessor should also be responsible for ensuring that the expert witness understands the NOS being assessed, and his/her role in the assessment process.

How will the expert witness record evidence? It is not intended to increase bureaucracy in assessment by introducing expert witnesses, rather to enhance the process, give support to assessors, and increase credibility with employers. It is anticipated that any documentation will be kept to its simplest format and be based on the relevant NOS. Questioning by the assessor is also likely to be a prime method of gathering evidence.

Occupational Competence of Expert Witnesses

Required:

Time served practical experience i.e. peer/supervisor/manager nominated by the company.

Possess occupational competence in the skills area to be assessed.

Possess a working knowledge of the NOS and qualification being assessed.

Desirable:

Hold or be working towards an appropriate unit of competence in the assessment of workplace performance, preferably L20 or current superseding qualifications.

4.3 Role of the Internal Verifier

Internal Verifiers (IVs) are appointed by approved centres to ensure consistency and quality of assessment. The IV monitors assessment activities and provides guidance, feedback and support to Assessors.

Occupational Competence of Internal Verifiers

Required:

Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the qualifications to be internally verified.

Hold or be working towards achievement of the relevant internal verification qualifications approved by the qualifications regulatory authorities and set out in national requirements and guidance.

Know where and how to access specialist advice when additional technical knowledge relating to the NOS and the qualification is being assessed.

4.3 Role of the External Verifier

External Verifiers (EVs) are appointed by Awarding Organisations to ensure quality assurance. EVs check the accuracy of assessment and verification decisions ensuring they comply with national standards and Awarding Organisation procedures and provide a supporting role for centres.

Occupational Competence of External Verifiers

Required:

Demonstrate occupational knowledge appropriate to the sector in which they are externally verifying.

Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the qualification to be externally verified.

Hold or be working towards achievement of the relevant external verifiers qualifications approved by the qualifications regulatory authorities and set out in national requirements and qualification guidance.

Know where and how to access specialist advice when additional technical knowledge relating to the NOS and the qualification is being assessed.

Exceptions:

Where there is a shortage of External Verifiers from the sector, an EV from a different sector background can be used provided that they are supported by a person who has current personal occupational knowledge. The person from this sector may be in the process of being qualified as an EV.

5 Annexes

5.1 Man Made Fibres

The primary source of evidence for the assessment is expected come from observation of the candidate in the workplace and the evaluation of products arising naturally from work activities.

Evidence for the assessment of the Level 3 will come from a wide variety of work based sources, with product evidence such as work documents providing a significant amount.

In relation to rare occurrences and contingency situations, there may be value in making use of recognition of prior learning. Wherever historical evidence is used, the body of evidence overall must be such as to demonstrate the candidate's current competence.

As with all assessment it is for the Assessor to agree with the candidate the most appropriate and cost effective sources of evidence to use in each assessment.

5.1.1 Simulation

Simulated activities can be used in situations where evidence of real work activity is difficult to gather for reasons such as safety or the infrequency with which it occurs. However a realistic working environment is required across all levels (see Annex 5.7).

In addition to the simulation guidance provided within the Assessment Strategy, assessment of man-made fibre qualifications must be designed in relation to the following parameters:

- Simulations must be designed to match the physical characteristics of an operational processing environment;
- Simulations must be verified as complying with relevant health, safety and environmental legislation by a competent health and safety/environmental control officer before being used;
- Simulated activities should require candidates to demonstrate their competence using real plant equipment;
- Simulated activities which require interaction with colleagues and contacts should require the candidate to use the communication media that would be expected at work;
- Simulations need not involve the use of genuine materials. Any simulations which require the candidate to handle or otherwise deal with materials should ensure that the 'dummy' materials take the same form as the real thing e.g. using water to mimic liquid spillage; using sand to mimic powder spillage;

- The use of observation as a method of assessment carried out in a RWE is permitted at Level 1 but not permitted at level 2 or above, unless units specifically state that simulation is acceptable.

5.1.2 Enhancement of External Quality Control

The recommended approach to external quality control consists of either of the following options:

a. Enhancement of the external verification system

This ensures that a consistent level and focus of external verification activity is maintained. The following parameters should be maintained:

- Each active centre is subject to a minimum of two external verification interventions in each approval year (twelve months period). Interventions may take the form of visits and/or other forms of audit of centre practice;
- The annual programme of external verification interventions is designed to cover the following:
 - o interviews with the centre co-ordinator, and examination of centre records, resources, management systems and candidate support procedures;
 - o interviews with a selected sample of candidates and examination of their portfolios to ensure completeness and the validity of the evidence put forward;
 - o interviews with a selected sample of Assessors and evaluation of their occupational competence, their application of appropriate assessment methods and the reliability of their decision-making;
 - o interviews with a selected sample of Internal Verifiers and evaluation of their occupational competence and the rigour of their practice in internal verification;
 - o the dissemination of best practice in all aspects of centre operation, as identified by the specific Awarding Organisation and/or the Awarding Organisation Forum for Process Operations – Man Made Fibres;
 - o assessment of the centre's status in relation to the factors specified in the agreed risk rating system;
 - o prompt and effective action in line with the risk Assessment Strategy in response to centres where unacceptable risks are identified; this could include the centre being subject to an additional external verification visit conducted at short notice;
 - o on-going action planning and review of progress on any actions, in relation to any aspect of centre approval, outstanding from previous interventions.
 - o a critical mandatory unit is sampled at all external verification interventions. This is unit **HS1** 'Health, safety and security in the workplace'.

b. The introduction of a common approach to statistical monitoring and risk analysis.

Statistical monitoring and the use of a common risk rating system is a means of identifying, over time, centres, Assessors and/or internal and External Verifiers whose practice differs from expected patterns. The Awarding Organisation Forum for Process Operations – Man Made Fibres will work to establish and agree common approaches in these areas and should monitor their implementation at its meetings.

5.2 Textiles

The primary source of evidence for the assessment is expected come from observation of the candidate in the workplace and the evaluation of products arising naturally from work activities.

Evidence for the assessment of the Level 3 will come from a wide variety of work based sources, with product evidence such as work documents providing a significant amount.

In relation to rare occurrences and contingency situations, there may be value in making use of recognition of prior learning. Wherever historical evidence is used, the body of evidence overall must be such as to demonstrate the candidate's current competence.

As with all assessment it is for the Assessor to agree with the candidate the most appropriate and cost effective sources of evidence to use in each assessment.

5.2.1 Simulation

Simulated activities can be used in situations where evidence of real work activity is difficult to gather for reasons such as safety or the infrequency with which it occurs. However a realistic working environment is required across all levels (see Annex 5.7).

In addition to the simulation guidance provided within the Assessment strategy assessment of textiles qualifications must be designed in relation to the following parameters:

- Simulations must be designed to match the physical characteristics of an operational processing environment;
- Simulations must be verified as complying with relevant health, safety and environmental legislation by a competent health and safety/environmental control officer before being used;
- Simulated activities should require candidates to demonstrate their competence using real plant and equipment;
- Simulated activities which require interaction with colleagues and contacts should require the candidate to use the communication media that would be expected at work;
- Simulations need not involve the use of genuine materials. Any simulations which require the candidate to handle or otherwise deal with materials should ensure that the 'dummy' materials take the same form as the real thing e.g. using water to mimic liquid spillage; using sand to mimic powder spillage;
- The use of observation as a method of assessment carried out in a RWE is permitted at Level 1 but not permitted at Level 2 or above, unless units specifically state that simulation is acceptable.

5.2.2 Guidance for Hand Weaving

The Manufacturing Textile Products NOS are primarily targeted towards candidates working in industry using industrial scale motorized / computerised machinery and equipment.

Please find additional guidance relating to standards which cover hand weaving, operation of hand looms, making repairs by hand and inspection of cloth below:

TEX2

- Loom may not have a pre-loaded sett value, thus Assessor must seek candidate understanding of how to achieve required sett during weaving.

TEX3

- As weaving not carried out on site where warp prepared, assess candidate knowledge of weavers' work areas, resources and equipment to promote and maintain efficiency

TEX4

- Whilst an understanding of production cycles and downtime is required, it should be relative to individual capabilities
- Production problems need to be resolved by the weaver wherever possible

TEX6

- Issues surrounding activities such as shift change need not be assessed
- Compressed air machinery may or may not be used
- Loom changeover is not a requirement, however beam changeover does occur
- Loom pick rate and tension needs to be set by weaver themselves and monitored throughout process
- Loom repairs will be made when necessary

TEX 9 / MSP2

- Processing and product quality issues will have to be resolved by the individual weaver
- Assessment of maintaining the continuity of production will have to be relevant to an individual weaver
- Record keeping and storage best suited to weaver

5.3 Design

The primary source of evidence for the assessment is expected come from observation of the candidate in the workplace and the evaluation of products arising naturally from work activities.

Evidence for the assessment of the Level 3 will come from a wide variety of work based sources, including product evaluation with product evidence such as work documents providing a significant amount.

In relation to rare occurrences and contingency situations, there may be value in making use of recognition of prior learning. Wherever historical evidence is used, the body of evidence overall must be such as to demonstrate the candidate's current competence.

As with all assessment it is for the Assessor to agree with the candidate the most appropriate and cost effective sources of evidence to use in each assessment.

5.3.1 Simulation

Simulated activities can be used in situations where evidence of real work activity is difficult to gather for reasons such as safety or the infrequency with which it occurs. However a realistic working environment is required across all levels (see Annex 5.7).

5.4 Footwear & Leathergoods

The primary source of evidence for the assessment is expected come from observation of the candidate in the workplace and the evaluation of products arising naturally from work activities. A large number of footwear producers follow a common skills grading system, if available this may be used to inform assessment.

Evidence for the assessment of the Level 3 will come from a wide variety of work based sources, including product evaluation with product evidence such as work documents providing a significant amount.

In relation to rare occurrences and contingency situations, there may be value in making use of recognition of prior learning. Wherever historical evidence is used, the body of evidence overall must be such as to demonstrate the candidate's current competence.

As with all assessment it is for the Assessor to agree with the candidate the most appropriate and cost effective sources of evidence to use in each assessment.

5.4.1 Simulation

Simulated activities can be used in situations where evidence of real work activity is difficult to gather for reasons such as safety or the infrequency with which it occurs. However a realistic working environment is required across all levels (see Annex 5.7).

In addition to the simulation guidance provided within the Assessment Strategy assessment of textiles qualifications must be designed in relation to the following parameters:

- Simulations must be designed to match the physical characteristics of an operational processing environment;
- Simulated activities should require candidates to demonstrate their competence using real plant and equipment;
- Simulated activities which require interaction with colleagues and customers should require the candidate to use the communication media that would be expected at work;
- Simulations need not involve the use of genuine materials. Any simulations which require the candidate to handle or otherwise deal with materials should ensure that the 'dummy' materials take the same form as the real thing e.g. using water to mimic liquid spillage; using sand to mimic powder spillage;
- The use of observation as a method of assessment carried out in a RWE is permitted at Level 1 but not permitted at level 2 or above, unless units specifically state that simulation is acceptable.

5.5 Apparel

5.5.1 Bespoke Cutting & Tailoring / Kilt Making

The primary source of evidence for the assessment is expected come from observation of the candidate in the workplace and the evaluation of products arising naturally from work activities.

Evidence for the assessment of the Level 3 will come from a wide variety of work based sources, including product evaluation with product evidence such as work documents providing a significant amount.

In relation to rare occurrences and contingency situations, there may be value in making use of recognition of prior learning. Wherever historical evidence is used, the body of evidence overall must be such as to demonstrate the candidate's current competence.

As with all assessment it is for the Assessor to agree with the candidate the most appropriate and cost effective sources of evidence to use in each assessment.

5.5.2 Simulation

Simulated activities can be used in situations where evidence of real work activity is difficult to gather for reasons such as safety or the infrequency with which it occurs. However a realistic working environment is required across all levels (see Annex 5.7).

In addition to the simulation guidance provided within the Assessment Strategy, assessment of apparel qualifications must be designed in relation to the following parameters:

- Simulations must be designed to match the physical characteristics of an operational environment;
- Simulated activities should require candidates to demonstrate their competence using real equipment;
- Simulated activities which require interaction with colleagues and customers should require the candidate to use the communication media that would be expected at work;
- Simulations need not involve the use of genuine materials. Any simulations which require the candidate to handle or otherwise deal with materials should ensure that the 'dummy' materials take the same form as the real thing e.g. using water to mimic liquid spillage; using sand to mimic powder spillage;
- The use of observation as a method of assessment carried out in a RWE is permitted at Level 1 but not permitted at level 2 or above, unless units specifically state that simulation is acceptable.

5.5.3 Computer Aided Design / Computer Aided Manufacture (CAD/CAM)

Where apparel qualifications are split into specific pathways, it is envisaged that two additional and separate pathways will be created to cover the functions carried out by pattern technologists who use CAD/CAM technology:

- CAD CAM Pattern and Grading Technologist (Computer + Manual) – in this pathway a combination of manual and computer pattern creating, grading and lay planning techniques are carried out;
- CAD CAM Pattern and Grading Technologist (Computer) – if this pathway is to be undertaken, the learner must demonstrate competence and understanding in the relevant manual activities.

5.5.4 Guidance for Kilt Making

Please find additional guidance relating to the range of kilts to be made as evidence for the SVQ3 in Kilt Making (SCQF Level 6) below.

Candidates must complete a minimum of six kilts of commercial quality of which:

- One must be a solid block single colour;
- Five must be of different tartans, to show an understanding of the tartan sett, must include heavy weight, medium weight, symmetrical and asymmetrical fabrics;
- Each of the pleating options must be covered — knife pleat, box pleat, to sett and to stripe;
- All customer types must be covered — adult, lady and child.

5.6 Laundry & Dry Cleaning

The primary source of evidence for the assessment is expected come from observation of the candidate in the workplace and the evaluation of products arising naturally from work activities.

In relation to rare occurrences and contingency situations, there may be value in making use of recognition of prior learning. Wherever historical evidence is used, the body of evidence overall must be such as to demonstrate the candidate's current competence.

As with all assessment it is for the Assessor to agree with the candidate the most appropriate and cost effective sources of evidence to use in each assessment.

5.6.1 Simulation

Simulated activities can be used in situations where evidence of real work activity is difficult to gather for reasons such as safety or the infrequency with which it occurs. However a realistic working environment is required across all levels (see Annex 5.7)

In addition to the simulation guidance provided within the Assessment Strategy assessment of textiles qualifications must be designed in relation to the following parameters:

- Simulations must be designed to match the physical characteristics of an operational environment;
- Simulated activities should require candidates to demonstrate their competence using real equipment;
- Simulated activities which require interaction with colleagues and customers should require the candidate to use the communication media that would be expected at work;
- Simulations need not involve the use of genuine materials. Any simulations which require the candidate to handle or otherwise deal with materials should ensure that the 'dummy' materials take the same form as the real thing e.g. using water to mimic liquid spillage; using sand to mimic powder spillage.

Realistic Work Environment (RWEs) and Simulation Criteria

In a sector as diverse as the fashion and textiles industry there are work environments that are difficult to simulate i.e. bespoke production, high volume manufacture, automated production.

High quality RWEs and simulations are accepted in various circumstances across all levels as detailed below:

- performing health and safety operations where there could be major disruption to the work process or where events rarely occur - this includes dealing with rare or dangerous occurrences, environmental issues, emergency scenarios and rare operations at work;
- performing specific activities which would be considered non-routine under commercial working practices such as the response to faults and problems for which no opportunity of naturally occurring workplace evidence has been presented;
- activities which would be very costly to perform in terms of time, materials and equipment.

However, the RWE and simulation must impose pressures which are consistent with workplace expectations and, it is essential to provide an environment which allows the learner to experience and perform work activities using tools and equipment, procedures and accommodation which are similar to those found in a place of work.

RWEs and simulations must be designed to match the physical characteristics of an operational processing environment as detailed below:

- same pressures of time, access to resources and access to information as would be expected if the activity were real;
- use real plant and equipment were possible;
- provide interaction with colleagues and contacts using the communication media that would be expected at work (if relevant);
- need not involve the use of genuine materials, simulations which require the candidate to handle or otherwise deal with materials should ensure that the 'dummy' materials take the same form as the real thing e.g. using water to mimic liquid spillage; using sand to mimic powder spillage.

The use of appropriate simulations and RWEs must be agreed with the External Verifier appointed by the Awarding Organisation prior to the simulation taking place.

Please note: The use of observation as a method of assessment carried out in a RWE is permitted at Level 1 but not permitted at Level 2 or above, unless units specifically state that simulation is acceptable