

Consolidated Assessment Strategy for Construction and the Built Environment – Craft, Supervisory, Technical, Managerial and Professional National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

Introduction

This assessment strategy¹ provides principles and guidance to awarding organisations so the assessment of units within qualifications denoted as NVQs in the ²Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) and SVQs in the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) is valid, effective and consistent, and has credibility across the Construction and Built Environment sector. This is a consolidated ConstructionSkills Assessment Strategy covering construction and the built environment – craft, operative, supervisory, technical, managerial and professional NVQs and SVQs.

These principles are in addition to the requirements that awarding organisations must meet for the delivery of qualifications as required by the qualification regulators' documentation.

This consolidated assessment strategy provides the overarching principles as systems may vary from one awarding organisation to another. Awarding organisations must consistently put these principles into practice.

Appendix A provides guidance to help awarding organisations incorporate relevant parts of these principle requirements in their documentation.

Appendix B provides additional information on assessment guidance for awarding organisations relevant to specific NVQ or SVQ qualifications and units.

Appendix C provides guidance on the use of simulation; it is a SSC's responsibility to define the acceptability of evidence from simulation in the context of National Occupational Standards (NOS) and NVQs/SVQs. Simulation will only usually apply as a result of one or more of the listed constraints.

Awarding organisations must make this Strategy and the appendices available to assessors, verifiers, candidates and assessment centres.

¹ Please note that there is now a separate Assessment Strategy for Construction and the Built Environment – Plant and Lifting Operations. This assessment strategy will also apply where plant or lifting units, sourced from the Plant Operations or Controlling Lifting Operations' suite of units, are used in other NVQs and SVQs

² Please note that the Consolidated Assessment Strategy will also apply to existing learners currently registered to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) until they achieve their qualification.

Principles

1. External quality control of assessment

- 1.1 Awarding organisations must use risk management for external quality control of assessment. They must evaluate all external verification reports and other data relating to assessment centres. Awarding organisations must address any risks relating to quality control, considering the sector assessment strategy requirements for:
 - workplace evidence
 - the use of simulation
 - the occupational competence of assessors and verifiers.
- 1.2 The monitoring and standardisation of assessment decisions must be achieved by robust and strong internal and external verification systems that meet the requirements of the qualification regulators' documentation.
- 1.3 Awarding organisations must be members of the sector's Built Environment Awarding Body Forum. Members will be expected to provide feedback on National Occupational Standards (NOS), NVQs or SVQs, including aspects informing incremental change.
- 1.4 The Forum will, in respect of this strategy:
 - build on the good relationships with awarding organisations
 - provide opportunities to identify and address particular issues of external quality control
 - contribute to improving quality and consistency
 - support awarding organisations to monitor assessment centres' performance to identify areas and levels of risk
 - provide information and statistics about take-up and completion, as well as trends and developments that can be used by ConstructionSkills and awarding organisations to identify any problem areas and agree remedial action
 - discuss matters concerning quality assurance, as well as providing the opportunity to identify issues arising from implementation of NOS and related vocational qualifications
 - inform the continuous improvement of NOS, and awards derived from them
 - identify and share best practices to build a whole industry approach to pursue excellence in education and work-based learning and assessment process to achieve competence.
- 1.5 Awarding organisations and their partners, assessment centres, verifiers and assessors must maintain robust and transparent operational arrangements. They must preserve independence in assessment, certification and quality assurance processes. Awarding organisations must ensure clear separation of their NVQ/SVQ assessment responsibilities from their industry, training, membership, certification, accreditation and commercial interests and resolve any conflicts of interest.
- 1.6 Where e-assessment is used, it must meet the requirements of the qualification regulators' documentation.

2 Aspects to be assessed through performance in the workplace

- 2.1 Direct evidence produced through normal performance in the workplace is the primary source for meeting the requirements. This includes naturally occurring documentary evidence (hard copy and electronic), direct observation of activities and witness testimony as relevant. ConstructionSkills' National Working Groups will specify any exceptions to this position (see section 3).
- 2.2 Workplace evidence must be supported by the required evidence of knowledge and understanding. This evidence may be identified by:
- questioning the candidate
 - recognised industry education and training programme assessment or professional interview assessment that has been matched to NOS requirements
 - performance evidence.
- 2.3 A holistic approach towards the collection of evidence should be encouraged. The focus should be on assessing activities generated by the whole work experience rather than focusing on specific tasks. This would show how evidence requirements could be met across the qualification to make the most efficient use of evidence. Appendix A suggests standard evidence notes for awarding organisations.

3 How simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence

- 3.1 Simulations (designed situations for producing artificially generated evidence) may only be used where candidates are prevented from gathering direct evidence from the workplace in the normal way because:
- there are hazards
 - it is difficult to distinguish individual performance in team situations
 - circumstances occur infrequently or long term results are involved
 - confidentiality is important
 - there are organisational constraints.
- 3.2 Any instances where simulation is considered to be acceptable as an alternative (to direct workplace evidence) means of generating evidence, will be determined by the relevant ConstructionSkills National Working Group and stated in the unit. Appendix A suggests standard evidence notes for awarding organisations.
- 3.3 The ConstructionSkills National Working Group will determine and specify on the required realistic working environment and context to be adopted. This could include appropriate:
- tools, equipment and instruments
 - materials
 - types of contingencies
 - standards and quality specifications
 - real timescales
 - quantities of work
 - physical conditions
 - relationships with people
 - types of interaction
 - communication methods and media
 - information and data.

- 3.4 Where simulated evidence is stated as acceptable in the unit, the circumstances and requirements for the simulation needs to be confirmed by discussions between the candidate and the assessor, and which are then agreed by the internal and external verifiers.
- 3.5 Where other Standard Setting Bodies' units are imported into a ConstructionSkills suite, the evidence requirements of the originating body will be adopted and specified.

4 Occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers

- 4.1 Awarding organisations must ensure that **assessors**:
- 4.1.1 have sufficient, verifiable, relevant current industry experience, knowledge and understanding of the occupational working area at, or above, the level being assessed. This must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when judging candidates' competence. Assessors' experience, knowledge and understanding could be verified by a combination of:
- curriculum vitae and employer endorsement or references
 - possession of a relevant NVQ/SVQ, or vocationally related qualification
 - corporate membership of a relevant professional institution
 - interview
- (The verification process must be recorded and available for audit)
- 4.1.2 have sufficient occupational expertise so they have up to date experience, knowledge and understanding of the particular aspects of work they are assessing. This could be verified by records of continuing professional development achievements
- 4.1.3 only assess in their acknowledged area of occupational competence
- 4.1.4 have a sound, in-depth knowledge of, and uphold the integrity of, the sector's NOS and the Assessment Strategy (this document)
- 4.1.5 are prepared to participate in training activities for their continued professional development
- 4.1.6 hold, or are working towards, a qualification as listed within 'Assessing and Assuring Quality of Assessment', either in the RQF or the SCQF:
- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
 - Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement
 - Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement
 - Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
 - an appropriate Assessor qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation
- or hold one of the following
- A1 Assess candidates using a range of methods
 - D32/33 Assess candidate performance, using differing sources of evidence
- Holders of A1 and D32/33 must assess to the current National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Learning and Development.
- In Scotland, approval for exemptions must be obtained from the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

4.2 Awarding organisations must ensure that **internal verifiers**:

4.2.1 have sufficient, verifiable, relevant up to date experience, knowledge and understanding of the occupational working area at, or above, the level being verified. This must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when verifying judgements about assessors' assessment processes and decisions. Internal verifiers' experience, knowledge and understanding could be verified by a combination of:

- curriculum vitae and employer endorsement or references
- possession of a relevant NVQ/SVQ, or vocationally related qualification
- corporate membership of a relevant professional institution
- interview

(The verification process must be recorded and available for audit)

4.2.2 have expertise so they have up to date experience, knowledge and understanding of the particular aspects of work they are verifying. This could be verified by records of continuing professional development achievements

4.2.3 have a sound, in-depth knowledge of, and uphold the integrity of, the NOS and the Assessment Strategy (this document)

4.2.4 are prepared to participate in training activities for their continued professional development

4.2.5 hold, or are working towards, a qualification as listed in 'Assessing and Assuring Quality of Assessment', either in the RQF or the SCQF:

- Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process and Practice
 - Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Process and Practice
 - an appropriate Internal Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation
- or hold one of the following
- VI Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process
 - D34 Internal verify the assessment process

Holders of V1/D34 must quality assure to the current National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Learning and Development.

It is strongly recommended that within the role of Internal Quality Assurance one of the following qualifications is held.

- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
 - Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
 - an appropriate Assessor qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation
- or one of the following
- A1 Assess candidates using a range of methods
 - D32/33 Assess candidate performance, using differing sources of evidence.

4.3 Awarding organisations must ensure that **external verifiers:**

4.3.1 have sufficient, verifiable, relevant experience, knowledge and a broad understanding of the occupational working area at, or above, the level being verified. This must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when verifying judgements about internal verification and assessment processes and decisions. External verifiers' experience, knowledge and understanding could be verified by a combination of:

- curriculum vitae and employer endorsement or references
- possession of a relevant NVQ/SVQ, or vocationally related qualification
- corporate membership of a relevant professional institution
- interview

(The verification process must be recorded and available for audit)

4.3.2 have sufficient expertise so they have an up to date experience, knowledge and understanding of the particular aspects of work they are verifying. This could be verified by records of continuing professional development achievements

4.3.3 have a sound, in-depth knowledge of, and uphold the integrity of, the NOS and the Assessment Strategy (this document)

4.3.4 are prepared to participate in training activities for their continued professional development

4.3.5 hold, or are working towards, a qualification as listed in 'Assessing and Assuring Quality of Assessment', either in the RQF or the SCQF:

- Level 4 Award in the External Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process and Practice
 - Level 4 Certificate in Leading the External Quality Assurance of Assessment
 - an appropriate External Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation
- or hold one of the following
- V2 Conduct external quality assurance of the assessment process
 - D35 Externally verify the assessment process

Holders of V2/D35 must quality assure to the current National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Learning and Development.

It is strongly recommended that within the role of External Quality Assurance one of the following qualifications is held at Level 3 and Level 4.

Level 3:

- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
 - Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
 - an appropriate Assessor qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation
- or one of the following
- A1 Assess candidates using a range of methods
 - D32/33 Assess candidate performance, using differing sources of evidence

Level 4:

- Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process and Practice
- Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Process and Practice
- an appropriate Internal Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation
- VI Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process
- D34 Internal verify the assessment process

4.4 Selection and appointment of **assessors and verifiers**

All applicants should be advised that they may be interviewed. Applicants' CVs should be profiled against the activities and range of the NVQ/SVQ(s) they will assess/verify to check that the applicant has the relevant current experience, knowledge and understanding of the occupational working area:

- at, or above, the level they will be assessing
- of sufficient depth to credibly verify judgements and assessments
- to uphold the integrity of the NOS and this Consolidated Assessment Strategy.

All assessors should have experience as well as, not in lieu of, qualifications. Where there seem to be gaps in a potentially suitable applicant's experience and knowledge, the applicant should be interviewed. Successful applicants' CVs, profiling, reasons for not needing to interview and interview records should be available for audit.

APPENDIX A

Appendix A

ConstructionSkills' standard evidence notes for awarding organisations

These guidance notes have been produced to ensure consistency in interpreting the principles set out in sections 2 and 3 of the ConstructionSkills Assessment Strategy. The notes should help awarding organisations incorporate relevant parts of the assessment strategy principles' requirements in their documentation for construction and built environment – craft, supervisory, technical, managerial and professional NVQs/SVQs. The following general standard notes are strongly recommended for adoption by awarding organisations in their assessment specification:

Standard note 1:

"Taken as a whole, the evidence must show that the candidate consistently meets all the following performance criteria/learning outcomes and assessment criteria across the scope/range."

Standard note 2:

"There must be workplace evidence against each performance criterion/learning outcome and assessment criterion. Where the workplace evidence does not cover the whole scope/range, knowledge evidence must be provided to cover the remaining items of scope/range for each relevant performance criterion/learning outcome and assessment criterion."

Standard note 3:

"Knowledge evidence may be established from questioning the candidate, or from industry recognised industry education and training programme assessment, or professional interview assessment, that has been matched to the requirements of the National Occupational Standards. Such assessments should also have their own independent external assessment, moderation or verification. A candidate's knowledge and understanding can also be demonstrated through presented performance evidence."

Standard note 4:

Either:

"Simulations are not considered to be acceptable for producing this evidence."

OR

"Simulations are considered to be an acceptable alternative for producing evidence for the following item(s) which is/are considered to be rare/infrequent, but key/critical to demonstrating competence. The following realistic working environment and context must be adopted for the simulation, with appropriate: tools, equipment and instruments; materials; types of contingencies; standards and quality specifications; real timescales; quantities of work; physical conditions; relationship with people; type of interaction; communication methods and media; information and data."*

*[*include as appropriate]*

See also Annex C: 'Guidance on the use of simulation' which also includes guidance on the acceptable use and characteristics of simulation within N/SVQs during the current economic climate.

APPENDIX B

Appendix B

Additional Information on the Assessment of CITB NVQ Units

The information below should help awarding organisations incorporate relevant parts of the assessment strategy principles' requirements in their documentation for construction and built environment NVQs. The following guidance is strongly recommended for adoption by awarding organisations in their assessment methodology.

- CITB NVQ Unit Ref: 641 – Assessment Criteria 2.3 and 2.4
 - 2.3 – 'List the current Health and Safety Executive top ten safety risks' should be assessed as 'List the current common safety risks'.
 - 2.4 - 'List the current Health and Safety Executive top five health risks' should be assessed as 'List the current common health risks

- All CITB NVQ units – Assessment Criteria 1.4
 - 1.4 – 'State why and when health and safety control equipment, identified by the principles of protection' should be assessed as 'State why and when health and safety control equipment, identified by the principles of prevention'.

THERMAL INSULATION NVQ AND SVQ UNITS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Training Providers offering Thermal Insulation NVQ and SVQ units and qualifications:
 - must ensure that their Thermal Insulation assessors are registered with the Thermal Insulation Contractor Association (TICA) and are Thermal Installation installers with at least 5 years verifiable, relevant, current industry experience, knowledge and understanding of the occupational area at, or above the level being assessed. This must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when judging candidates' competence. Assessors' experience, knowledge and understanding could be verified by a combination of:
 - curriculum vitae and employer endorsement
 - references
 - possession of a relevant NVQ/SVQ, or vocationally related qualification
 - interview(The verification process must be recorded and available for audit)
 - will provide opportunities to identify and address particular issues of external control, including the assessment of Thermal Insulation NVQ qualifications and Apprenticeship Standards.

APPENDIX C

Appendix 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 (NVQs/SVQs) that are competence based qualifications and demand assessment in a workplace environment.

Assessment of NVQs/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 (NVQs/SVQs). The ConstructionSkills Consolidated Assessment Strategy provides this guidance.

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

Due to the UK's economic recession over the past few years, ConstructionSkills had implemented flexibilities relating to simulation of NVQs/SVQs for displaced apprentices and although there were small signs of a recovery in 2014 ConstructionSkills' agreed to extend these flexibilities for a further twelve months.

Now that the construction industry has shown definite signs of growth, these flexibilities were withdrawn on 31st March 2015. However in regard to Apprentices registered before the 1st January 2015 the flexibilities will remain in place until their completion date.

Therefore **only** for Apprentices who registered before the 1st January 2015 the following can apply:

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.