

# **Consolidated Assessment Strategy for Construction and the Built Environment – Craft, Supervisory, Technical, Managerial and Professional Units and Qualifications with NVQ in the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) title and SVQs.**

## **Introduction**

This assessment strategy provides principles and guidance to awarding organisations so the assessment of units and qualifications with NVQ in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) title and SVQs 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, supervisory, technical, managerial and professional NVQ and SVQ units and qualifications. This assessment strategy is one of the strands of the ConstructionSkills' Construction Qualification Strategy.

These principles are in addition to the requirements that awarding organisations must meet for the delivery of NVQ and SVQ units and 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.

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

Annex B provides a list of sub annexes relevant to specific NVQ or SVQ qualifications and units, these sub annexes contain additional information for awarding organisations where National Working Groups or Awarding Body Fora have identified the need for specific clarification. Clarification may be about the terminology of the content of the unit (ref. section 2.1), or specific occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers (ref. section 4).

Awarding organisations must make this Strategy and the relevant annexes available to assessors, verifiers and candidates.

## **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, of which the qualification regulators are members. Members will be expected to provide feedback on National Occupational Standards (NOS), NVQ or SVQ units and qualifications, 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. Annex 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. Annex 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
- 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 this 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 Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF):
- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
  - Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
  - SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
  - SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Vocational Achievement
- 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 reviewed 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
  - 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 this 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 Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (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
- SVQ(SCQF level) in the Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process and Practice
- SVQ (SCQF level) in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Process and Practice

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 reviewed 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
- SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
- SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Vocational Achievement

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
- 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 this 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 Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (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
- SVQ (SCQF level) in the External Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process and Practice
- SVQ (SCQF) in Leading the External Quality Assurance of Assessment

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 reviewed 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
  - SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
  - SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Vocational Achievement
- 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
- SVQ(SCQF level) in the Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process and Practice
- SVQ (SCQF level) in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Process and Practice
- 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.

## **Annex B1**

### **Additional Information to the Consolidated Assessment Strategy from the National Working Group for Controlling Lifting Operations**

#### **Part A: Clarification and guidance notes**

This additional information has been produced to ensure consistency in interpreting the occupational expertise requirements for assessors as described in paragraph 4.1 of the ConstructionSkills' Consolidated Assessment Strategy. This should help awarding organisations incorporate relevant parts of the assessment strategy principles' requirements in their documentation for the Controlling Lifting Operations units and qualifications with NVQ in the QCF title and SVQs .

#### **Additional requirements for assessors of planning and supervising lifting operations**

Assessors must be competent and have an up-to-date working knowledge of the occupation and sector. Assessors must have had active involvement in lifting operations and on each endorsement for which they wish to assess. The awarding body must ensure that all assessors are competent on each endorsement for which they intend to assess.

#### **Supplementary guidance**

In order to meet contractual and regulative requirements, many sectors of industry require lift planners and supervisors to possess certification from recognised industry approved bodies. The awarding body should ideally encourage all assessors to hold appropriate registration cards or certificates to support industry initiatives for a qualified workforce.

Where lifting experience was gained within the armed forces, applicants for assessor status should ideally gain external work experience within industry, or be able to demonstrate knowledge of relevant industry working practices outside the armed forces.

#### **Part B: Clarification on standards (NOS) content terminology**

Various sectors of industry, supported by the Health and Safety Executive, requested national occupational standards for the safety critical occupations of lift planner and lift supervisor. Standards from the suite of National Occupational Standards for Construction Site Supervision and Construction Site Management were identified by the National Working Group (NWG) as conveniently defining the job roles of planner and supervisor.

Certain standards (NOS), however, use terminology particular to, or make reference to, the construction sector, limiting the scope of the standards. Clarification of NOS terminology has been produced (Annex B1, page ii), by the NWG, for awarding organisations, which provides interpretation and meaning of selected words that are used in lifting operations within other industrial sectors. Provision of this clarification further avoids a proliferation of new standards.

Awarding organisations need to ensure that candidates, employers, assessment centres, assessors and those involved in the verification process for this qualification are informed of the clarification of NOS terminology for planning and supervising lifting operations.

## Clarification of NOS terminology for controlling lifting operations

<b>‘construction operations’</b>	Includes lifting operations within other sectors of industry.
<b>‘decision-makers’</b>	This refers to the client, customer or their representative, senior/contracts manager, project team, consultants or in VR 705 the lift planner.
<b>‘ensure notice has been given to all the people who will be affected...’</b>	This means as dictated by the lift plan.
<b>‘lines’, ‘levels’, ‘angles’</b>	This includes load levels, ground levels, lines for placing loads and lifting accessory angles
<b>‘near neighbours’</b>	This can include other structures and a workforce in a different part of the project.
<b>‘organise and control the site’</b>	The lifting activity and the immediate surrounding area
<b>‘position, align and/or level the work’</b>	This refers to items being moved and placed and the equipment used to attach and move the loads.
<b>‘produce clear requests for plant, equipment or machinery’</b>	This means those specified by the lift plan.
<b>‘place and maintain notices’</b>	This means ensuring that the correct notices (for the lifting activity) are in place prior to the commencement of the lifting activity, and checked throughout the duration of the activity.
<b>‘plan how the work will be undertaken’</b>	This means as dictated by the lift plan.
<b>‘programmes and schedules’</b>	This refers to either components part of, or the complete lift plan.
<b>‘project’</b>	A lifting operation that is taking place within an overall contract, project or work activity.
<b>‘project plan’</b>	This refers to either components part of, or the complete lift plan.
<b>‘site’</b>	A lifting operation that is taking place within an overall contract, project or work activity.
<b>‘site plan’</b>	This refers to either components part of, or the complete lift plan.
<b>‘vehicular access’</b>	This can comprise of all forms of transport, including waterborne and airborne craft.

## **Annex B2**

### **Additional Information to the Consolidated Assessment Strategy from the Awarding Body Forum for Plant Operations**

#### **Clarification and guidance notes**

##### **Aspects to be assessed through performance in the workplace**

This additional information has been produced to ensure consistency in aspects to be assessed through performance in the workplace as described in paragraph 2.1 of the ConstructionSkills' Consolidated Assessment Strategy. This should help awarding organisations incorporate the guidance into their assessment methodology for Plant Operations units and qualifications with NVQ in the QCF title and SVQ in the SCQF.

##### **Additional requirements for assessment in the workplace**

Direct evidence produced through normal performance in the workplace is the primary source for meeting the requirements. This direct evidence must be met using a combination of the following methods.

- direct observation by the assessor
- witness testimony by an expert witness related to the occupational area
- professional discussion.

Workplace evidence must be supported by the required evidence of knowledge and understanding gained from at least three month's work-based experience.

##### **Occupational expertise requirements for assessors**

This additional information has been produced to ensure consistency in interpreting the occupational expertise requirements for assessors as described in paragraph 4.1 of the ConstructionSkills' Consolidated Assessment Strategy. This should help awarding organisations incorporate relevant parts of the assessment strategy principles' requirements in their documentation for Plant Operations units and qualifications with NVQ in the QCF title and SVQs.

##### **Additional requirements for assessors of plant operations**

Assessors must be competent and have an up-to-date working knowledge of the occupation and sector. Assessors must have had active involvement in plant operations and on each endorsement for which they wish to assess. The awarding organisation must ensure that all assessors are competent on each endorsement for which they intend to assess in accordance with requirements of the qualification regulators' guidance for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

##### **Supplementary guidance**

In order to meet contractual and regulative requirements, many sectors of industry require operators of plant and equipment to possess certification from recognised industry approved bodies. The awarding organisation should ideally encourage all assessors to hold appropriate registration cards or certificates to support industry initiatives for a qualified workforce.

Where plant operating experience was gained within the armed forces, applicants for assessor status should ideally gain external work experience within industry, or be able to demonstrate knowledge of relevant industry working practices outside the armed forces.

## 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.