

General Guidance for Centres and Learners 2016-17

Pearson NVQs and SVQs

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Section I: General information about National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

This publication gives you all the basic information you need to know about National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) & Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ). It includes:

- NVQ & SVQ levels, design and unit structure
- NVQ & SVQ assessment
- presentation of learner evidence
- administrative information and processes
- policy matters
- further information and support materials available
- recording forms for candidates.

This publication incorporates the latest thinking on NVQs & SVQs and is intended to help those of you who may be new to, or are coming back to, NVQs & SVQs .

What are NVQs & SVQs?

- Both NVQs and SVQs are work-based qualifications used to assess the skills and knowledge people need to perform their job roles effectively. NVQs are used in England, Wales and N Ireland, whereas SVQs are used in Scotland
- NVQs are regulated by Ofqual, whereas SVQs are regulated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- Both NVQs and SVQs are based on National Occupational Standards (NOS), which define what employees or potential employees, must be able to do and know, how well they must do these things and the circumstances in which they have to use the skills or carry out the activities
- The NOS are usually defined by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) or Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) which are made up of representatives, including employers, from the relevant occupational sector
- NVQs & SVQs are open to all. There are no entry requirements, no prescribed methods of delivery, no time constraints for completion and normally no age limits. Candidates do not have to achieve their SVQ all at once; unit accreditation is available for those wishing to achieve an SVQ unit by unit over a period of time (normally related to the life of the qualifications)
- Occasionally, special assessment arrangements are needed in order to provide equal opportunities to candidates with special requirements. Information on special assessment arrangements can be found on our website.

Explanation of levels

NVQs & SVQs are available at eight levels and five levels, respectively, reflecting the range of technical and supervisory skills, knowledge and experience that employees should have as they progress in their industry.

NVQ & SVQ levels	Candidates must show their competence:
Level 1	At level 1 (Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework - SCQF level 4), competence involves the application of knowledge and skills in the performance of a range of varied work activities, most of which may be routine or predictable.
Level 2	At level 2 (SCQF level 5), competence involves the application of knowledge and skills in a significant range of varied work activities, performed in a variety of contexts. At this level there will be activities which are complex or non-routine and there is some individual responsibility and autonomy. Collaboration with others, perhaps through membership of a work group or team, is often a requirement.
Level 3	At level 3 (either SCQF level 6 or 7), competence involves the application of knowledge and skills in a broad range of varied work activities, most of which are complex and non-routine. There is considerable responsibility and autonomy and control or guidance of others is often present.
Level 4	At level 4 (either SCQF level 8 or 9), competence involves the application of knowledge and skills in a broad range of complex technical or professional work activities, performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources is often present.
Level 5	At level 5 (SCQF level 11), competence involves the application of skills and a significant range of fundamental principles across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of substantial resources feature strongly, as does personal accountability.

Who is involved in NVQs & SVQs?

A number of individuals and organisations are involved in NVQ & SVQ assessment. Their roles have been designed to guarantee fair, accurate and consistent assessment.

	Who are they?	What is their role?
Centres	Organisations that offer NVQs & SVQs on behalf of Pearson. They could be training providers or employers, or, further education colleges, private colleges, universities, or, occasionally, schools	They are responsible for the quality of the qualification. They must work within Pearson's policies and guidelines, for example to provide a realistic working environment (RWE) where simulation is permitted by the standards Centres appoint Assessors and Internal Verifiers Once a year, centres must review the operation of the programme and candidates' performance (see <i>Review and evaluation</i> in Section 4)
Employers	Employers in this context may represent the actual employer of an employee who is being assessed or they might be a provider of work experience opportunities to candidates who are based in a centre Employees can be permanent or temporary, paid or voluntary	Employers play a key role in the delivery of NVQs & SVQs. They work with centres to define the training needs of an individual, negotiating or defining as needed, levels, options and pathways. The agreed programme will depend on the nature of the environment and the sector needs, as well as the needs of the individual Employers work with Assessors to support learners by providing training and experience opportunities while they are working towards their NVQ or SVQ Employers provide assessment evidence through mechanisms such as expert witness statements or observations
Expert witnesses	Occupationally competent people with expertise in specific units of the NVQ or SVQ, they can give a professional opinion as to the competence of a learner Their professional role must involve evaluating the everyday practice of staff	Expert witnesses contribute to the evidence of competent performance in the workplace, especially where there are no occupationally competent Assessors for specific option units
Assessors	The people who assess the learners and decide if they have met the required standard, e.g. supervisors. They must hold a qualification in assessment	Assessors judge a learner's evidence of performance, knowledge and understanding against the national standards and decide whether they have demonstrated competence
Learners	The people who want to achieve the NVQ or SVQ, e.g. employees	They need to show that they can perform to national standards to be awarded a NVQ or SVQ or unit(s)

Witnesses	Line managers, colleagues or customers with whom the learner interacts	Witnesses provide the evidence of a specific aspect of the learner's achievements. This must be authenticated by the Assessor or an expert witness
Internal Verifier (IV)	People appointed by the centre, e.g. supervisor's line manager, who ensure that Assessors apply the standards consistently	IVs advise and support Assessors and maintain the quality of assessment in a centre They sample assessments systematically to confirm the quality and consistency of assessment decisions
Standards Verifier (SV)	People appointed by Pearson to ensure that standards are being applied uniformly and consistently across all centres offering NVQs and SVQs	SVs check the quality and consistency of assessments, both within and between centres by systematically sampling evidence They make regular visits to centres to ensure that they continue to meet the centre recognition & approval criteria
Pearson	Your awarding body, approved by the regulator to offer qualifications and awards. Pearson provides qualifications throughout the world	Issues learners' certificates so that employers can be sure the qualification has been gained after a rigorous and effective assessment process

Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Standards Verifiers need to have occupational expertise in the NVQs and SVQs they are assessing and verifying. The SSC/SSB will normally specify the level of occupational expertise required within the standards and the Assessment Strategy.

Assessors and Verifiers are expected to obtain an appropriate qualification in assessment and verification. This can take the form of the QCF Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement for NVQ Assessors and Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice for NVQ Verifiers (or an alternative qualification that the SSC/SSB recognises or specifies).

For SVQs this can take the form of unit Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct Methods (FD40 04) or unit Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct and Indirect Methods (FD41 04) for SVQ Assessors and Internally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment (FD43 04) for Verifiers (or an alternative qualification that the SSC/SSB recognises or specifies).

Expert witnesses should have a working knowledge of the NOS, and be occupationally competent in the units to which they are contributing evidence. They do not require a qualification in the assessment of workplace performance, but they are encouraged to obtain one. The NOS and Assessment Strategy will normally define any level of occupational expertise required.

Pearson expects all Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Standards Verifiers to obtain SSC/SSB recognised qualifications for their roles. For NVQs, the appropriate qualification should be gained within 18 months of starting the role of Assessor and 18 months of starting the role of Internal Verifier for the purpose of internal quality assurance.

Section 2: Assessment

This section gives practical advice on all aspects of assessment, from planning assessment opportunities to recording evidence. It should help to ensure that assessment is effective, rigorous and appropriate. The section outlines an approach to assessment based on good practice.

You should read this document in conjunction with the SSC's/SSB's Assessment Strategy (AS). Evidence requirements can be found in the subject-specific *Pearson Edexcel NVQ & SVQ qualification specifications*.

What is assessment?

Assessment is the key to achieving NVQs & SVQs. An Assessor's role is vital in helping learners to achieve their award and in ensuring that the requirements of the occupational standards are met. Assessors need to be clear about what is meant by assessment and what they are assessing.

In deciding whether a learner should be awarded a NVQ or a SVQ, they need to go through the following stages:

- becoming familiar with the standards
- planning for assessment
- collecting evidence of the candidate's performance
- judging the learner's evidence against the SVQ standards and making an assessment decision
- recording the assessment decision.

Roles in assessment

Before beginning the assessment process, both the Assessor and the learner should be clear about their roles and the roles of others involved in the process.

The Assessor's role

An Assessor must:

- ensure that learners understand what is expected of them and what and how it is to be assessed
- ensure that the conditions and materials required for assessment are available
- observe and record learners carrying out the activities described in the standards — records should say what has been observed, how it was carried out, and what it demonstrated
- know who will act as an Internal Verifier and ensure that the learner understands the IV's role
- know who will be the expert witness(es) and ensure that the learner understands the role of the expert witness(es)
- question learners and record results
- help learners to gather and provide evidence
- judge all evidence, including that from expert witnesses
- authenticate the evidence that learners provide
- record achievement
- identify gaps or shortfalls in learners' competence
- give learners feedback.

Multiple Assessors

Where more than one Assessor is involved, assessment needs to be coordinated. One Assessor should draw together all the assessment decisions made by specialist Assessors and the contributions from expert witnesses, across the whole qualification.

The Learner's role

Learners must:

- prepare for assessment by familiarising themselves with the standards, what is to be assessed and how it will be assessed
- ensure that they understand the processes of assessment and play a positive and active role in it
- carry out activities and/or answer questions
- gather and present evidence for assessment
- receive and act on feedback from the Assessor and expert witnesses (where appropriate).

Approaches to assessment

Learners can approach assessment for NVQs and SVQs through a variety of routes. Two of the main ways are through work (paid or voluntary) or through a training programme.

- **Work (paid or voluntary)** — when learners approach assessment through work it will be the Assessor's job to help them plan the sequence of assessment, give feedback on how they are performing and arrange for them to acquire any missing competence.
- **Training programmes** — for training programmes a series of educational or training events in a realistic working environment (RWE), linked to assessment opportunities, will already have been planned. It will be the Assessor's job to monitor how the candidates are performing, assess their evidence and provide feedback on their progress. If any gaps or potential problems are found with the training programme, Assessors should ensure that remedial action is taken so that the learners are safeguarded. For RWEs, it is essential that Assessors ensure that the RWE properly reflects and provides conditions the same as the normal day-to-day working environment, with a similar range of demands, pressures and requirements for cost-effective working.

Holistic and integrated assessment

The collection and assessment of evidence is often perceived to be an onerous task for all involved. Learners are often tempted to produce unique evidence for each unit. This is not always necessary or appropriate — evidence should be drawn from real work activities and events that would not normally neatly reflect the requirements of a specific unit.

National Occupational Standards (NOS) combined with the sector Assessment Strategy (AS) provide an opportunity for a more integrated and holistic approach to the assessment of NVQs and SVQs.

NOS, Assessment Strategies, NVQs and SVQs contain some of the following components, although the format might vary, which can contribute to a holistic and integrated approach to learners assessment:

- identified links with other units
- definition of the skills needed

- types of evidence requirements which occur in more than one unit
- availability of some units in qualifications at multiple levels.

An Assessment Strategy's key principles and requirements for workplace assessment can provide a basis from which the candidate's assessment plan can be designed. Please read this guidance on holistic and integrated assessment in conjunction with the qualification specification and sector Assessment Strategy for the specific NVQs and SVQs.

Benefits of an integrated and holistic approach to assessment

Below are some of the benefits to taking a more integrated and holistic approach to evidence collection and assessment. This approach:

- *for learners, holistic assessment*
- helps them manage the perceived assessment burden
- helps them recognise how skills and knowledge support more than one aspect of their working life
- ensures evidence collection is a natural part of everyday working life for them
- provides them with a more holistic view of a unit-based qualification
- motivates them in their evidence collection
- *for employers, holistic assessment*
- shows how the NVQ or SVQ relates to the events and activities within the workplace
- enables them to contribute to the learners' evidence and assessment
- reassures them that the NVQ or SVQ complements and underpins the learners' work role and will have a positive impact on productivity and motivation
- *for Assessors, holistic assessment*
- provides an effective structure to planning and organising the learners' assessment and achievement targets
- reduces the potential assessment burden
- reduces the possibility of overassessing learners
- puts the emphasis on the quality of evidence to be assessed rather than the quantity.

An integrated approach — some points about planning

When Assessors and learners plan assessment, it is important to first consider the links across units, the skills/knowledge and the potential for making use of similar evidence requirements to meet more than one element and/or unit.

Joint planning between Assessors and learners can show how the linked units might be assessed and evidenced in a more integrated/holistic way, which builds into and supports the learners' workplace responsibilities and activities. The integrated/ holistic approach to defining the timeframes for learners' achievement will ensure it is firmly based on their planned work events/activities.

The process of jointly planning targets for assessment and timeframes for achievement will encourage Assessors and learners to look holistically at what both of their roles involve. They can then identify the activities, skills and knowledge — and the associated evidence that can be provided — that will meet the needs of the individual unit and some of the needs of other linked units.

This will encourage both Assessors and learners to use whole work activities as evidence, across the SVQ units, reflecting the reality of the workplace.

Forms of assessment

Both learners and Assessors need to agree the methods for assessment and the formats for evidence of achievement that can be used across units. These do not need to vary significantly from the normal methods but do need to take account of the needs of the Assessment Strategy. Assessment methods are covered in more detail in *The five steps to assessment* below.

The forms of assessment most likely to involve Assessors include observation, questioning, discussion/interview, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of recognised knowledge and skill qualifications (such as a BTEC qualification) and through authenticating evidence of successful application of work tasks.

Guided discussions/interviews should be used over a period of time to assess the progress of learners through linked units and/or the planned work event/activity.

The bringing together and coordination of all evidence plays an important part in making assessment decisions, especially where personal testimony, witness testimony and work products all contribute to the evidence. For the validity, reliability, consistency and sufficiency of evidence, Assessors will be required to show that they have used a range and variety of assessment methods rather than relying exclusively on any one method.

Evidence

In moving to a more holistic and integrated approach to assessment, it is important to consider how evidence might be presented and where it could be located.

Learners will need a logbook or portfolio, which can be in either electronic or paper form.

The most likely forms of evidence provided by learners in their portfolios/logbooks, include personal statements, witness and expert witness testimony and work products. The logbooks/portfolios should also contain the statements of the Assessors' observations in the workplace.

Work product evidence — electronic, paper or other — can stay in the workplace. The location must be specified in the logbooks/portfolios and the Assessors will need to view and authenticate the evidence on visits. Digital forms of evidence - including audio and video clips - can facilitate both holistic assessment and reduce the assessment burden. The security of electronic logbooks/portfolios must be maintained and ensured by centres and learners. Where evidence is located in the workplace it is expected that Assessors will be able to access several examples of work products and that they will have been identified in the assessment plan.

During their meetings with learners the Assessors will be expected to ask structured questions relating to the evidence being presented. There may also be some unstructured questions that arise from the structured questions. The approach to these discussions/interviews will depend on the learners and the form of their evidence. Assessors should be flexible when asking unstructured follow-up questions so that a genuine dialogue can be developed during the discussions/interviews.

Timing

Learners can begin their NVQ or SVQ at any time, provided the necessary preparations and plans have jointly been made between Assessors and learners.

There is no limit on the time learners may take to gain the whole qualification or individual unit(s) (other than the life of the qualification). Some learners will take longer than others, depending on their understanding of the qualification, their work setting and their personal circumstances.

Assessors should, therefore, organise and arrange assessment that is appropriate to each learner, although there must be an agreed target date for completion.

However it is important that the evidence submitted demonstrates current competence of the task being assessed, particularly if the evidence is from the past.

The five steps to assessment

If the following five steps are identified and followed, Assessors should be able to ensure that learners move efficiently and effectively towards achievement of the NVQ or SVQ.

Step 1: Plan and organise assessment

Learners must receive induction and guidance before starting NVQs and SVQs. Learners need advice to ensure that their existing job remit, skills, experience and plans for progression are matched to the NVQ or SVQ selected. Assessors do not have to be those that conduct the matching exercise. This part of the process is often carried out during induction but whoever has responsibility for it should ensure that the assessment opportunities available to the learners are also considered.

Assessors and learners will need to work out how much time they are both able to devote to the NVQ or SVQ. This is likely to be limited by the demands of a busy workplace. As far as possible, sessions need to be agreed in advance and a mutual commitment made to them whilst making allowance for review and evaluation sessions in addition to assessments. On agreement, planning can begin.

Planning takes place at two levels:

- the overall plan when Assessors and learners look at the whole qualification and set targets for achievement
- individual plans when Assessors and learners look for assessment opportunities. There is no limit to the time it takes for learners to complete a unit or the full NVQ or SVQ (other than the life of the qualification). However, Assessors and learners should set target dates for completing each unit. The learners' jobs or training programmes must be taken into account to reach agreement for and to mark out clearly the points of decision for the assessment of each element and unit.

Overall assessment planning

It is good practice for Assessors and learners to agree an overall assessment plan. An overall assessment plan should include:

- the overall programme for assessment, identifying how and when each part of the NVQ or SVQ will be assessed

- target dates for completing each unit. There are no time limits on the amount of time learners can take to complete a unit or a NVQ or SVQ but target dates will motivate learners and help Assessors to monitor progress
- opportunities for feedback to be given and received
- provision to mitigate potential disagreements between learners and Assessors. Producing an overall assessment plan is the ideal time for Assessors and learners to
- identify opportunities for integrating assessment. This is when a piece of evidence generated from one activity is used to prove competence across different elements, performance criteria and/or units. Assessors and learners will need to maximise the opportunities for integration to ensure the NVQ or SVQ builds from real work activities and events.

Producing the overall plan provides opportunities to identify job activities that the learners currently perform that match the standards and that can be planned to be assessed immediately. Planning may also identify evidence that can be used from learners' past achievements (see *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* on page 18).

Learners providing evidence from the workplace, may not immediately cover all the standards during the normal course of work, due to their job role. Assessors and learners may need to create new opportunities, such as arranging a move to a different department, so that different activities can be performed or different skills used. Learners might also need to attend a college or training course to gain additional knowledge or skills.

Learners - and Assessors - may feel overwhelmed by the apparent amount of evidence that needs to be produced but Assessors should provide assurance that with effective planning the process can be made much easier for both Assessors and learners, alike. Mutual agreed planning is more likely to lead to success.

Individual assessment planning

Both Assessors and learners will need to plan each individual assessment carefully. Both will need to decide which methods will be used to carry out the assessment, where and when the assessment will take place and who will be present. Both Assessors and learners should agree a unit assessment plan that specifies the tasks to be carried out, the time they will take and the parts of the standards that will be covered.

Step 2: Decide on the assessment methods

The methods of assessment used must lead to evidence that is valid, reliable, practicable, authentic and sufficient.

- By 'valid' it means that the assessment should be appropriate to the standards.
- By 'reliable' it means that the assessment method should ensure consistent results when used with different candidates, different Assessors and on different occasions.
- By 'practicable' we mean that the method should ensure the assessment takes account of available resources, equipment and time.
- By 'authentic' we mean that the evidence produced is that of the candidate's alone.
- By 'sufficient' we mean that there must be enough evidence available to assure the Assessor that the learner is competent on a consistent basis.

Assessors are responsible with familiarising themselves with the standards they will be assessing and the associated evidence requirements or evidence guidance provided. In doing so, Assessors

will be able to identify the skills that need to be demonstrated and the types of evidence that learners need to generate in order to complete all units of the NVQ or SVQ concerned.

Once Assessors are familiar with the assessment or performance criteria, range and evidence requirements in all the units of the NVQ or SVQ they will find it easier to determine what is acceptable evidence and how it should be produced by learners.

Both Assessors and learners must agree the methods of evidence collection that are most appropriate to the learners' work settings and patterns. Evidence must be precisely and directly relevant to the particular standards for which learners seek credit; it cannot be just a general indication of acceptable practice. Both Assessors and learners can then determine and agree the form of the assessment process.

Assessment methods

All methods of assessment fall under one of three categories: **observation, product evaluation and questioning.**

Observation

Observing performance will be the most common method used in assessing NVQs or SVQs.

Observation can be organised in a variety of ways:

- Assessors continuously working alongside learners
- Assessors arranging to work alongside the learners at specific times
- visits planned for when particularly relevant activities are scheduled
- both Assessors and learners arranging for particular activities to take place. Learners will be able to supplement direct observation of performance with other
- types of evidence, e.g. personal statements or witness testimonies. It is also possible to use digital means - video and/or audio recordings - to provide evidence should it not be possible for Assessors to attend the workplace.

Observation by an Assessor is considered to be the most valid and reliable method of assessment and there will be many naturally arising opportunities for it to be used.

Expert witnesses can provide observational evidence as guided by the NOS, but assessors will need to decide whether this evidence is acceptable.

Assessors complete an observation record to demonstrate to the Internal and Standards Verifiers how you reached a decision on learners' competence.

Product evaluation

This involves judging products that learners have produced during the course of their work. Product evidence will be used a great deal. The exact nature of this evidence will depend on what the learners' job entails.

Questioning

Learners have to prove that they have the required knowledge and understanding for each unit. Learners will often demonstrate knowledge and understanding through producing evidence, although in some cases this will not be possible.

Questioning is the ideal way of proving whether or not learners have the necessary knowledge and understanding. Questions can be given in many forms, for example professional discussion, short-answer questions, projects, case studies, assignments.

There may be more emphasis on questioning to prove knowledge in areas where evidence is generated through practical working activities and where there is no product evidence. Visiting Assessors might use questioning to prove the learners' competence and the authenticity of the evidence provided.

Questioning is a powerful means of checking the knowledge and understanding that lies behind performance. It is also a useful tool for exploring why learners acted in a certain way or to identify what learners would have done if circumstances had been different.

Questions, whether oral or written, should not require learners to apply their knowledge and understanding in ways that are either more complex or more simplistic than is necessary to meet the standards.

Step 3: Judge the evidence

The following criteria must be used when evaluating a piece of work to see if it can be put forward as evidence (including supporting evidence):

- **Relevance:** the degree of 'match' between the item of evidence and the required competence, range statement and underpinning knowledge for a unit. If the evidence does not match, it is not relevant.
- **Validity:** the evidence must relate to a specific part of the appropriate NVQ or SVQ standards.
- **Authenticity:** the evidence must be the work of learners as individuals and not that of someone else or a group of people. Assessors may need confirmation from the learners' professional colleagues.
- **Currency:** the evidence must show the present ability of learners to perform to the national standards. Assessors should judge the acceptability of evidence from the past by the length of time that has elapsed since the performance described took place. Judgements should take into account the 'perishability' of the skill involved, as well as 'watershed' or 'landmark' occurrences in the sector, such as changes in the law, philosophy or practice. (If the competence is demonstrated in a skill test or simulation then it becomes evidence of current competence rather than evidence from the past.)
- **Sufficiency:** performance to the required standard must be consistent, i.e. it should be achieved on more than one occasion. There must be evidence of performance in differing contexts or situations as required by the standards. The evidence must cover all the performance and knowledge requirements laid down in the standards.

Assessors have to be certain that learners have demonstrated competence. Even though all the assessment or performance criteria have to be met, when making judgments about sufficiency Assessors should concentrate on the elements and units as they describe more fully what is required. Assessors do not need to observe each performance criterion several times but it is necessary to record all evidence that has been taken into account so that it can be identified by Internal and Standards Verifiers, if necessary. Evidence will have different values — some will leave no doubt about competence, while in other cases further evidence may be required before Assessors are confident that performance has demonstrated consistency.

The evidence requirements or guidance in the standards will also help Assessors to form their

views and make their decisions.

In short, Assessors must be satisfied that your learners can work consistently to the required standard and that evidence is not simply an isolated event unlikely to be repeated.

Step 4: Record

For each unit both Assessors and learners must ensure there is a verifiable record of:

- the assessment activities carried out, showing the methods used and evidence produced
- the date and people involved in the assessment
- the Assessors' judgement of the learners' competence
- The location of each piece of evidence within the learners' portfolios or in their workplace.

The record sheets provided in the *SVQ Candidate Logbook* will allow all of this information to be recorded and we recommend their use. However, centers may use their own recording documentation. This is acceptable as long as it contains all the required information and is passed by your Standards Verifier as fit for purpose.

Insufficient evidence

Where insufficient evidence has been presented or where learners have not met the performance criteria at the end of the targeted assessment period Assessors will indicate that learners are not yet competent. Feedback to learners must include providing the reasons why the decision has been made, which should be recorded along with a plan to enable learners to attain competence.

Step 5: Provide feedback

Learners will need to understand Assessors' judgments and the reasons for them. Time should be set aside for feedback that conforms to the following general principles:

- feedback should relate the learners' evidence to the NOS, assessment or performance criteria
- Assessors should agree with learners the form the feedback will take, written notes are always useful as a record but learners should be given time to reflect on assessors' comments and feedback
- Assessors should ensure that their comments and feedback have been understood
- and that they listen to learners' views
- finally, both Assessors and learners should agree what happens as a result of the feedback — its purpose is to help learners make the necessary adjustments, whether this means supplying more evidence, trying again or taking steps to develop the competence that is missing.

Evidence supporting assessment

Testimony — personal and witness

It is inevitable that Assessors will not be able to observe everything learners do. On such occasions, statements (testimonies) from other people who have seen your learner working can be useful sources of evidence for the NVQ or SVQ as they can describe each activity in detail.

Generally, testimonies are used to support other evidence produced. Assessors and learners should bear in mind that the strength of evidence will vary depending on the knowledge and

expertise of the person providing the testimony. Several factors must be taken into account to make a judgment on a line from strongest to weakest.

Strongest	Stronger	Weaker	Weakest
Professional worker in senior position in same type of work with knowledge of the standards e.g. expert witness	Professional worker in senior position but with limited or no knowledge of the standards	Colleague with equal experience but no knowledge of the standards	Person with experience of the workplace or knowledge of the standards

Expert witness evidence

The use of expert witnesses is encouraged as a contribution to the assessment of evidence of learners' competence in some NVQs and SVQs, especially where there are no occupationally competent Assessors for certain occupationally-specific units.

Expert witnesses must have:

- a working knowledge of NOS for the units on which their expertise is based
- current expertise and occupational competence, i.e. within the last two years, either as a practitioner or manager, for the units on which their expertise is based. This experience must be credible and clearly demonstrable through continuing learning and development
- either qualification in assessment of workplace performance applicable to the sector or a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff.

The NOS and Assessment Strategy for specific NVQs and SVQs normally provide clear guidance or requirements for expert witnesses. Please refer to the assessment strategy included in the relevant qualification specification.

Work products

A number of items could be produced by learners as evidence, for example spreadsheets and databases used to support work, copies of records or reports that learners have compiled, letters and memos, minutes of meetings, leaflets or booklets that provide information to clients, photographs, audio-visual evidence of work which the learner has carried out. Work products can be located in the learners' portfolios or in the learners' workplaces and they should be cross-referenced to the assessment or performance criteria/elements to which they apply.

Work products must be wholly or partially the result of work undertaken by individual learners. To ensure authenticity, the products should be countersigned by a person in a position of responsibility who is able to vouch that the products are the unaided work of the learners concerned.

Using simulation

In NVQs and SVQs, the emphasis is on learners being able to carry out real work activities so assessment will normally be carried out in the workplace itself.

On some occasions, however, it might not be appropriate for assessment of learners while they are working. For example, where the NVQ or SVQ requires learners to carry out emergency or contingency procedures, for safety or confidentiality reasons and/or where learners current job roles do not cover all aspects of the qualification. In these circumstances, and if learners have no

other means of generating evidence, simulation might be appropriate where permitted by the relevant assessment strategy.

Simulation is any structured exercise involving a specific task that reproduces real- life situations. If simulation is used, particular care must be taken to ensure that:

- the conditions for assessment of learners mirror the work environment, i.e. it is a realistic working environment (RWE)
- the simulation allows learners to demonstrate competence across the full range specified in the learning outcomes
- the evidence generated is sufficient to demonstrate learners have achieved the required standard of competence and that learners are capable of sustaining that performance.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Assessment of learners for a NVQ or a SVQ can use evidence relating to past performance as well as that relating to current performance.

Recognition of Prior Learning is a method of assessment that considers whether learners can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

The competence basis of NVQs and SVQs means that evidence must always relate to performance, not just knowledge. The evidence of performance must always be valid and relevant to specific standards.

Disagreement

Centres must have an appeals procedure that is used by learners if they disagree with assessment decisions Assessors have made. Both learners and Assessors should be familiar with the procedure and to know how to use it.

The appeals procedure should make it clear how complaints will be dealt with and what the outcome might be.

Both learners and Assessors should ensure they have a route through which they can express their concerns and reservations, whether about working with a particular Assessors or learners, respectively, or about an aspect of the standards and assessment methods.

Section 3: How should evidence be presented?

While some Assessors and learners will opt for alternative methods of gathering and presenting evidence, such as an e-portfolio, others will continue to use the traditional portfolios and logbooks. This section gives guidance on presentation of evidence. Centres can devise their own approaches as long as they agree them with the Standards Verifier and check that all standards have been met.

Candidates and centres can choose from a range of models for the storage of evidence linked to the Edexcel logbook.

Evidence requirements can be found in the subject-specific Pearson Edexcel NVQ Specification or the Pearson Edexcel SVQ Candidate Logbook. The structure of the portfolio, whatever the format, must contain a minimum of the following:

- index of evidence
- 'qualification summary and sign-off' form showing units undertaken with signing-off facility by Assessors and Verifiers
- learner's declaration of evidence authenticity, which is built into the unit summary form
- witness status list and sample signatures
- unit tracking sheets
- unit evidence. This might be evidence presented as a paper portfolio with copies of the evidence, but learners should be encouraged to leave easily-accessible evidence in its natural location and index it rather than duplicating it in the portfolio. Centres can use alternative models including storing the evidence and unit summary sheets as electronic files.
- Learners and Assessors are advised not to separate evidence for each unit as this can lead to duplication and there is a tendency to miss the potential for evidence to be relevant across units. This tends to defeat the benefits of holistic assessment.

We recommend that portfolios are compiled in the following order:

1. Portfolio title page
2. Personal profile
3. Contents checklist
4. Index of evidence
5. Unit assessment plan
6. Unit progress and sign-off record
7. Learning Outcome/Element achievement record
8. Knowledge evidence record (SVQ only)
9. Personal statement
10. Observation record
11. Witness testimony
12. Expert witness evidence
13. Record of questions and learner's answers

Portfolio recording forms — explanation

Examples of some of these forms can be found on the Pearson qualifications website.

Portfolio title page

The portfolio title page includes learner's details and the unit titles in the learner's portfolio.

Personal profile

This includes the learner's personal details and details of the learner's work environment - learners could use their current CV.

Contents checklist

Learners might find it useful to complete the checklist as progress is made through the portfolios. This will help to make sure that the relevant items have been included. Once the portfolio is complete, the checklist can be used as a contents page, by inserting the relevant page or section numbers in the right-hand column.

Index of evidence

The index of evidence should be at the front of the portfolio. As pieces of evidence are produced, they should be given a unique number. Learners then complete the index of evidence so that the evidence can be easily located. Every piece of evidence should be numbered and referenced on the index, including evidence that is not located in the portfolio, such as confidential material which has been left in situ in the workplace. If the evidence is sampled the final column of the *Index of evidence* should be completed by the Internal Verifier

Unit assessment plan

Prior to the collection of any evidence it is helpful for the learners and Assessors to mutually agree and compile an assessment plan. The plan should identify normal work routines, defining the tasks to be carried out, how long the tasks will take and the evidence that will be generated. The tasks should be 'normal working activities' and part of the day-to-day job role, or 'activities needing to be performed', which means that opportunities to carry out the tasks need to be generated.

Producing an assessment plan will help to identify:

- suitable opportunities for integrating assessment of different units
- any activities and tasks that may need to be undertaken through simulation
- any competences that may require specific assessment opportunities.

Unit progress and sign-off record

This form enables both learners and Assessors to see at a glance what stage learners are at in their progress towards the qualification. Each time a unit is achieved, learners should put their signature and the date next to the relevant unit title, ensuring that the evidence can be easily located. Before signing against a unit title, learners will need to make sure that Assessors have completed the recording documents.

Learning Outcome/Element achievement record

This lists the assessment or performance criteria and scope in a learning outcome or element for which learners need to prove competence. Each time learners meet the requirements of an outcome, they should write the date in the relevant box. The National Occupational Standards (NOS) or evidence requirements will normally indicate how many times learners need to provide performance evidence to show consistency.

On completion of each element, Assessors will give learners feedback about their performance, informing them if they have been successful in achieving the required level of competence for individual outcomes. There is space on the back of the form for Assessors to make comments and/or notes from the feedback session. Learners should be clear about the assessment decision and understand fully what has been said. Assessors and learners should both then sign and date the form before filing it in the relevant section of the portfolio/logbook.

Knowledge evidence record - only applicable to SVQs

This lists all the knowledge and understanding requirements that learners need to demonstrate for a unit. It is important that learners understand the knowledge requirements relating to their expectations and the requirements of their job role.

While working through individual elements, learners should tick the appropriate boxes on the form to show which type of evidence has been collected and to prove that learners have the required level of knowledge and understanding.

Once learners are satisfied that they have achieved the knowledge and understanding requirements for the whole unit, Assessors should, as with the competence element achievement record, note their comments from the feedback session on the form. Learners and Assessors should then sign and date the form before filing it in the portfolio. Please note that on completion of the unit Assessors should complete learners' unit progress records.

Personal statement

Learners should use personal statements to record their experience of something, such as how they handled a specific situation. They should describe what they did, how they did it and why they did it. They can refer to other people who were present. Those people might provide a 'witness testimony' which should be noted in the 'Links to other evidence' column on the statement form.

Learners might also use their personal statements to put pieces of evidence in context for Assessors to help in deciding if it is relevant to the NVQ or SVQ. For example, learners may refer to paperwork that is used in their organisation to pass information to a colleague. It may not be clear to the Assessors why they are communicating in this way and a brief explanation from the learners of its relevance may be required.

Observation record

Assessors should record observations of learners as they work, and:

- describe the skills used
- describe the activities performed
- specify the units or parts of the units that are covered by the observation
- provide details of the knowledge and understanding apparent from performance and any questions asked during or after performance

- list the other units/elements to which the evidence may contribute 'integration of assessment'.

Assessors should keep a record of their comments and feedback to learners. Once completed, the record of the observation should be referenced as evidence and included in the portfolio.

Witness testimony

There may be occasions when Assessors are unable to observe learners carrying out certain aspects of their job. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate for another person to comment on learners' performance by completing a statement called a 'witness testimony'.

Witness testimony should be used only to support other forms of evidence — such as a product. It should:

- be provided by a person who is not related to the individual learners and who is in a position to make a valid comment about their performance, e.g. a supervisor, line manager, a client, a customer
- contain comments that relate learners' performance specifically to the NVQ requirements or SVQ NOS
- be authenticated by the inclusion of the witness's signature, role, contact details - address, phone number, email address and the date.

Expert witness evidence

Where there are no occupationally competent Assessors for occupationally-specific units, the use of expert witnesses is encouraged in contributing to the assessment of evidence of competence.

Expert witnesses must have:

- a working knowledge of the requirements of, and, NOS for the units on which their expertise is based
- current expertise and occupational competence, i.e. within the last two years, either as practitioner or manager, for the units on which their expertise is based. This experience must be credible and clearly demonstrable through continuing learning and development. Centres must retain records of the expert witnesses, CVs and continuing professional activities. Expert witnesses must hold a qualification in assessment of workplace performance, relevant NVQ or SVQ qualifications, or a professional qualification work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff. The SSC/SSB will normally specify their requirements in their Assessment Strategy and this means that expert witnesses may need to hold appropriate subject-specific qualifications.

Record of questions and learners' answers

This form is used to record any questions Assessors ask learners to establish that they have the underpinning knowledge and evidence required for a unit. The learners' answers, or a précis and/or bullet points regarding the issues discussed should also be noted. Both learners and Assessors should sign and date the form.

Portfolio/logbook recording forms

Samples of all the forms mentioned in this section are available on our website.

Section 4: Further information

How does an organisation become a Pearson centre?

Organisations can offer NVQs and/or SVQs either by becoming an approved centre in their own right or by working with another organisation that has this status.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that internal quality control mechanisms are in place. Specifically, a centre needs to:

- develop a physical resource within the centre that addresses the needs of learners and the requirements for the NOS and delivery of qualifications
- select and train Assessors and Internal Verifiers according to the relevant SSC/SSB requirements
- provide access to appropriate assessment opportunities for learners, e.g. a suitable number at suitable times
- provide learners with copies of the units of the specification appropriate to their qualification, e.g. through a paper or electronic logbook
- provide Assessors and Internal Verifiers with copies of the appropriate standards, including the Assessment Strategy.

Anti-discriminatory practices

As part of the approval process, centres are required to ensure that they have an equal opportunities policy in place that covers all aspects of assessment, including access to assessment and taking into account the timing and frequency of assessments. Internal Verifiers have a key role in their work with Assessors to ensure that assessments do not discriminate against any learners.

Details of approval procedures are available from Customer Services, on the Pearson Qualifications website and at Edexcel Online.

Risk identification and management

Pearson will manage how centres approach risk identification. This is done at the time the centre is given their original approval and monitored twice a year by the appointed Standards Verifiers to ensure that quality requirements are maintained.

Risks are rated during the centre approval visit and reported to Pearson with a recommendation for approval or further work. Centres with a poor rating will not be approved but be given an action plan detailing what they need to do to achieve approval.

When centres apply to offer new NVQs and/or SVQs, provided the centre does not have a recent history of quality issues, these may be approved against the existing centre approval and qualification approval may be given based on these overall centre quality systems and policies. Standards Verifiers then monitor these twice a year and report to Pearson and the centre.

In addition, centres offering BTEC qualifications are also subject to annual visits by Centre Quality

Reviewers for the purpose of Quality Review and Development.

For further information on Pearson's Quality Review and Development policy please refer to the Quality Assurance Handbook on the Pearson Qualifications website.

Review and evaluation

The effective development of NVQ and SVQ delivery programmes depends on a full review of its operation and Assessors' and learners' performance. The review should be structured to allow all interested parties both learners and Assessors to contribute. The review should evaluate:

- success in meeting and the continuing relevance of the aims of the programme
- previous action plans
- admission, induction, advice and exit arrangements
- the programme of activities and arrangements for all learners
- the assessment strategies and methods
- resource needs and availability of the resources to learners
- the relevance, currency and effectiveness of support materials
- the Standards Verifiers' comments
- future resource requirements, including staff development.

A review should take place at least annually during each programme of delivery. A report and an action plan describing the findings and actions to be taken should be produced after each review.

Registration

All learners must be registered through an assessment centre that has been approved to deliver the NVQ or SVQ for which the learners intend to complete.

Registrations may be submitted through Edexcel Online or by EDI, JCQ or EDIFACT format. Edexcel Online (EOL) is the secure portal to our IT systems. Centres will need to have EOL logins and permission to register learners.

Once they have been registered, **Learners should check their details to ensure that these are all correct. The registration details will show learners' names as it will appear on any qualification certificates they receive.** If there are any errors, these should be corrected immediately through EOL.

Registrations for NVQs or SVQs are accepted for a full award or on an individual unit basis. Registration of learners on NVQs or SVQs must be made within one month **at a maximum** of the start of the assessment of learners.

Certification process

Individual NVQs and SVQs must be subject to standards verification before claims for certification can be made by centres for the qualifications concerned. Once centres have demonstrated that the delivery and assessment of NVQs and SVQs meet national standards and individual learners have provided evidence of achievement of the NVQs or SVQs concerned, Standards Verifiers will

release claims for certification.

So that learners receive their qualification certificates without error or delay it is essential that centres are familiar with Pearson's certification procedures.

As learners achieve units and the unit achievement forms in learners' portfolios are countersigned by the Internal Verifier, the centre should claim achievement of the units concerned on an ongoing basis via EOL or Qualifications Management Application (QMA) system.

When learners have achieved an eligible combination of units for a particular NVQ or SVQ, if the qualifications concerned have been recommended for release to claims for certification by a Standards Verifier, centres are able to claim certification for the learners concerned via EOL or Qualifications Management Application (QMA) system.

Details of the NVQ and SVQ standards verification process are provided in the Pearson Edexcel NVQ-SVQ Quality Assurance Handbook available from the Pearson Qualifications website.

Please note that for SVQs claims for certification for learners who have completed their SVQs must not be made within 10 weeks of learners being registered on the qualification. **Certification will not be released within this period for the learners concerned.**

Please note that the release for claims to certification for both NVQs and SVQs will expire after 365 days, unless there has been a further recommendation for release to claims for certification by an allocated Standards Verifier through the submission of a further report. Centres must engage with the standards verification process to maintain the release of claims for certification and direct claims status.

New fees for work-based learning centres and colleges

Pearson has introduced two new fees from 1 August 2014: a centre approval fee, and a minimum spend threshold for centres.

Centre approval fee

Pearson charges a one-off fee of £400 upon successful approval as a brand new Pearson UK college or work-based learning centre.

Minimum spend threshold

Pearson has a minimum annual spend requirement of £1000 for all UK colleges and work-based learning centres. This will be calculated based on a year running from 1 August to 31 July. If a centre does not meet the £1000 threshold in a given year, an invoice will be raised by 1 September for the difference between the actual spend and the minimum threshold.

Access and special assessment arrangements

Edexcel's policy on access arrangements and special considerations for BTEC and SVQ qualifications aims to enhance access to the qualifications for learners with disabilities and other difficulties without compromising the assessment of skills, knowledge, understanding or

competence.

Candidates with a physical disability, a sensory impairment, a specific learning difficulty, or a temporary disability at the time of the assessment may be eligible for special assessment arrangements.

Special assessment arrangements are intended to enable candidates to demonstrate their level of competence in relation to the qualification standards. They are not intended to compensate for lack of competence and should not:

- give an unfair advantage to candidates
- reduce the validity and reliability of the assessment or compromise the credibility of the award
- mislead users of Edexcel certificates about candidates' competence.

It is important to note that where special assessment arrangements are applied, they may result in an amended certificate being issued. Any requests for special assessment arrangements need to be submitted to Edexcel at the earliest possible date and separately from the entry itself.

Appeals

All centres should publish an appeals procedure, which is made available to staff and candidates.

How do you contact us?

Contact details pages from the Pearson website can be found here:
qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/contact-us.html