



Semta

Engineering

NVQ Level 2, 3 and 4

QCF Unit Assessment Strategy

Version 4. 1st January 2011

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Assessor Requirements	4
Verifier Requirements	4
Technical Requirements for Assessors and Verifiers	5
Assessment Environment	6
Access to Assessment	6
Carrying Out Assessment	7
Performance Evidence Requirements	7
Assessing Knowledge and Understanding	8
Witness testimony	8
Quality Control of Assessment	9
Additional Notes	9

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

[Semta], the Sector Skills Council for the Science Engineering Manufacturing Technologies Sector, has produced this QCF Unit Assessment Strategy to:

- assist Assessors, Internal Verifiers and External Verifiers
- encourage and promote consistent assessment of NVQ units
- promote cost effective assessment plans

This document also provides definitions for:

- the qualifications and experience required for Assessors and Verifiers
- the assessment environment and notes on simulation/replication.
- access to units

and requirements relating to:

- carrying out assessments
- performance evidence
- assessing knowledge and understanding

The importance and value in which employers and learners place on undertaking NVQ units will provide a key measure of [Semta's] success with this unit assessment strategy. Another key success factor will be [Semta's] partnership with the relevant Awarding Organisations.

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Assessor Requirements to Demonstrate Effective Assessment Practice

Assessment must be carried out by competent Assessors that as a minimum must hold the QCF Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment. Current and operational Assessors that hold units D32 and/or D33 or A1 and/or A2 as appropriate to the assessment being carried out, will not be required to achieve the QCF Level 3 Award as they are still appropriate for the assessment requirements set out in this Unit Assessment Strategy. However, they will be expected to regularly review their skills, knowledge and understanding and where applicable undertake continuing professional development to ensure that they are carrying out workplace assessment to the most up to date National Occupational Standards (NOS)

Assessor Technical Requirements

Assessors must be able to demonstrate that they have verifiable, relevant and sufficient technical competence to evaluate and judge performance and knowledge evidence requirements as set out in the relevant QCF unit learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria.

This will be demonstrated either by holding a relevant technical qualification or by proven industrial experience of the technical areas to be assessed. The assessor's competence must, at the very least, be at the same level as that required of the learner(s) in the units being assessed.

Assessors must also be:

Fully conversant with the Awarding Organisation's assessment recording documentation used for the QCF NVQ units against which the assessments and verification are to be carried out, other relevant documentation and system and procedures to support the QA process.

Verifier Requirements (internal and external)

Internal quality assurance (Internal Verification) must be carried out by competent Verifiers that as a minimum must hold the QCF Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practices. Current and operational Internal Verifiers that hold internal verification units V1 or D34 will not be required to achieve the QCF Level 4 Award as they are still appropriate for the verification requirements set out in this Unit Assessment Strategy. Verifiers must be familiar with, and preferably hold, either the nationally recognised Assessor units D32 and/or D33 or A1 and/or A2 or the QCF Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment

External quality assurance (**External Verification**) must be carried out by competent External Verifiers that as a minimum must hold the QCF Level 4 Award in the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practices. Current and operational External Verifiers that hold external verification units V2 or D35 will not be required to achieve the QCF Level 4 Award as they are still appropriate for the verification requirements set out in this Unit Assessment Strategy. Verifiers must be familiar with, and preferably hold, either the nationally recognised Assessor units D32 and/or D33 or A1 and/or A2 or the QCF Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment

External and Internal Verifiers will be expected to regularly review their skills, knowledge and understanding and where applicable undertake continuing professional development to ensure that they are carrying out workplace Quality Assurance (verification) of Assessment Processes and Practices to the most up to date National Occupational Standards (NOS)

Verifiers, both Internal and External, will also be expected to be fully conversant with the terminology used in the QCF NVQ units against which the assessments and verification are to be carried out, the appropriate Regulatory Body's systems and procedures and the relevant Awarding Organisation's documentation, systems and procedures within which the assessment and verification is taking place.

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Specific technical requirements for internal and external verifiers

Internal and external verifiers of this qualification must be able to demonstrate that have verifiable, sufficient and relevant industrial experience, and must have a working knowledge of the processes, techniques and procedures that are used in the relevant sector/occupation.

The tables on the following page show the recommended levels of technical competence for assessors, internal verifiers, and external verifiers.

Technical Requirements for Assessors and Verifiers

Position	Prime activity requirements	Support activity requirements	Technical requirements (see notes)
Assessor	Assessment Skills	IV Systems	Technical <i>competence</i> in the areas covered by the QCF units being assessed
Internal Verifier	Verification Skills	Assessment Knowledge	Technical <i>understanding</i> of the areas covered by the qualifications
External Verifier	Verification skills	Assessment Understanding	Technical <i>awareness</i> of the areas covered by the qualifications

Notes

1. Technical *competence* is defined here as a combination of practical skills, knowledge, and the ability to apply both of these, in familiar and new situations, within a real working environment.
2. Technical *understanding* is defined here as having a good understanding of the technical activities being assessed, together with knowledge of relevant Health & Safety implications and requirements of the assessments.
3. Technical *awareness* is defined here as a general overview of the subject area, sufficient to ensure that assessment and portfolio evidence are reliable, and that relevant Health and Safety requirements have been complied with.
4. The competence required by the assessor, internal verifier and external verifier, in the occupational area being assessed, is likely to exist at three levels as indicated by the shaded zones in the following table.

Technical Competence required by:	An ability to <i>discuss</i> the general principles of the competences being assessed	An ability to <i>describe</i> the practical aspects of the competence being assessed	An ability to <i>demonstrate</i> the practical competences being assessed
Assessor			
Internal Verifier			
External Verifier			

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Assessment Environment

The evidence put forward for this unit can only be regarded valid, reliable, sufficient and authentic if achieved and obtained in the working environment and be clearly attributable to the learner. However, in certain circumstances, simulation/replication of work activities may be acceptable.

- The use of high quality, realistic simulations/replication, which impose pressures which are consistent with workplace expectations, should only be used in relation to the assessment of the following:-
 - rare or dangerous occurrences, such as those associated with health, safety and the environment issues, emergency scenarios and rare operations at work;
 - the response to faults and problems for which no opportunity has presented for the use of naturally occurring workplace evidence of learners competence;
 - aspects of working relationships and communications for which no opportunity has presented for the use of naturally occurring workplace evidence of learners competence.
- Simulations/replications will require prior approval from the specific Awarding Organisation and should be designed in relation to the following parameters: -
 - the environment in which simulations take place must be designed to match the characteristics of the working environment ;
 - competencies achieved via simulation/replication must be transferable to the working environment
 - simulations which are designed to assess competence in dealing with emergencies, accidents and incidents must be verified as complying with relevant health, safety and environmental legislation by a competent health and safety/environmental control officer before being used;
 - simulated activities should place learners under the same pressures of time, access to resources and access to information as would be expected if the activity was real;
 - simulated activities should require learners to demonstrate their competence using plant and/or equipment used in the working environment;
 - simulated activities which require interaction with colleagues and contacts should require the learner to use the communication media that would be expected at the workplace;
 - for health and safety reason simulations need not involve the use of genuine substances/materials. Any simulations which require the learner to handle or otherwise deal with materials substances/should ensure that the substitute take the same form as in the workplace

Access to Assessment

There are no entry qualifications or age limits required by learners to undertake the NVQ units unless this is a legal requirement of the process or the environment. Assessment is open to any learner who has the potential to achieve the assessment criteria set out in the units.

Aids or appliances, which are designed to alleviate disability, may be used during assessment, providing they do not compromise the standard required.

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Carrying Out Assessment

The NVQ units were specifically developed to cover a wide range of activities. The evidence produced for the units will, therefore, depend on the learners choice of “bulleted items” listed in the unit assessment criteria.

Where the assessment criteria gives a choice of bulleted items (for example ‘any three from five’), assessors should note that learners do not need to provide evidence of the other items to complete the unit (in this example, two) items, particularly where these additional items may relate to other activities or methods that are not part of the learners normal workplace activity or area of expertise.

Minimum Performance Evidence Requirements

Performance evidence must be the main form of evidence gathered. In order to demonstrate consistent, competent performance for a unit, a minimum of 3 different examples of performance must be provided, and must be sufficient to show that the assessment criteria have been achieved to the prescribed standards. It is possible that some of the bulleted items in the assessment criteria may be covered more than once. The assessor and learner need to devise an assessment plan to ensure that performance evidence is sufficient to cover all the specified assessment criteria and which maximises the opportunities to gather evidence. Where applicable, performance evidence may be used for more than one unit.

The most effective way of assessing competence, is through direct observation of the learner. Assessors must make sure that the evidence provided reflects the learner’s competence and not just the achievement of a training programme.

Evidence that has been produced from team activities, for example, maintenance or installation activities is only valid when it clearly relates to the learners specific and individual contribution to the activity, and not to the general outcome(s).

Each example of performance evidence will often contain features that apply to more than one unit, and can be used as evidence in any unit where appropriate.

Performance evidence must be a combination of:

- outputs of the learner’s work, such as items that have been manufactured, installed, maintained, designed, planned or quality assured, and documents produced as part of a work activity

together with:

- evidence of the way the learner carried out the activities such as witness testimonies, assessor observations or authenticated learner reports, records or photographs of the work/activity carried out, etc.

Competent performance is more than just carrying out a series of individual set tasks. Many of the units contain statements that require the learner to provide evidence that proves they are capable of combining the various features and techniques. Where this is the case, separate fragments of evidence would not provide this combination of features and techniques and will not, therefore, be acceptable as demonstrating competent performance.

If there is any doubt as to what constitutes valid, authentic and reliable evidence, the internal and/or external verifier should be consulted.

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Assessing knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and understanding are key components of competent performance, but it is unlikely that performance evidence alone will provide enough evidence in this area. Where the learners knowledge and understanding (and the handling of contingency situations) is not apparent from performance evidence, it must be assessed by other means and be supported by suitable evidence.

Knowledge and understanding can be demonstrated in a number of different ways. Semta expects oral questioning and practical demonstrations to be used, as these are considered the most appropriate for these units. Assessors should ask enough questions to make sure that the learner has an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding, as required by the unit. Awarding Organisations may choose other methods, which must be supported by a suitable rationale

Evidence of knowledge and understanding will **not** be required for those bulleted items in the assessment criteria that have not been selected by the learner.

The achievement of the specific knowledge and understanding requirements of the units cannot simply be inferred by the results of tests or assignments from other units, qualifications or training programmes. Where evidence is submitted from these sources, the assessor must, as with any assessment, make sure the evidence is valid, reliable, authentic, directly attributable to the learner, and meets the full knowledge and understanding requirements of the unit.

Where oral questioning is used the assessor must retain a record of the questions asked, together with the learner's answers.

Awarding Organisations may choose other methods, which must be supported by a suitable rationale.

Witness testimony

Where 'observation is used to obtain performance evidence, this must be carried out against the unit assessment criteria. Best practice would require that such observation is carried out by a qualified Assessor. If this is not practicable, then alternative sources of evidence may be used.

For example, the observation may be carried out against the assessment criteria by someone else that is in close contact with the learner. This could be a team leader, supervisor, mentor or line manager who may be regarded as a suitable witness to the learners competency. However, the witness must be technically competent in the process or skills that they are providing testimony for, to at least the same level of expertise as that required of the learner. It will be the responsibility of the assessor to make sure that any witness testimonies accepted as evidence of the learner's competency are reliable, auditable and technically valid.

QCF UNIT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Quality Control of Assessment

General

There are two major points where an Awarding Organisation interacts with the Centre in relation to the External Quality Control of Assessment for a qualification and these are:

- Approval - when a Centre take on new qualifications, the Awarding Organisation, normally through an External Verifier (EV) ensures that the Centre is suitably equipped and prepared to deliver the new qualification
- Monitoring - throughout the ongoing delivery of the qualification the Awarding Organisation, through EV monitoring and other mechanisms must maintain and the quality and consistency of assessment of the qualification

Approval

In granting Approval, the Awarding Organisation, normally through its External Verifiers (EV) Must ensure that the prospective Centre:

- Meets any procedural requirements specified by the Awarding Organisation
- Has sufficient and appropriate physical and staff resources
- Meets relevant health and safety and/or equality and access requirements
- Has a robust plan for the delivery, assessment and QA for the qualifications

Awarding Organisation's may decide to visit the Centre to view the evidence provided. The Awarding Body must have a clear rationale for the method(s) deployed

Monitoring

The Awarding Organisation, through EV monitoring and other mechanisms must ensure:

- that a strategy is developed and deployed for the ongoing Awarding Organisation monitoring of the Centre. This strategy must be based on an active risk assessment of the Centre. In particular the strategy must identify the learner, assessor and IV sampling strategy to be deployed and the rationale behind this
- that the Centre's internal quality assurance processes are effective in candidate assessment
- that sanctions are applied to a Centre where necessary and that corrective actions are taken
- by the Centre and monitored by the Awarding Organisation/EV
- that reviews of Awarding Organisation's external auditing arrangements are undertaken

Awarding Organisations are required to provide to SEMTA, on request, details of the strategies, rationales and reviews detailed above.

Notes:

- a) It is recognised that some Awarding Organisations provide supplementary guidance and documentation to centres to support the quality of assessment and verification practice of N/SVQs.