OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT AND VERIFICATION GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

Purpose of Guidelines

These Competence Assessment and Verification Guidelines provide good practice guidance for the assessment and verification of competence within the oil and gas industry.

These Guidelines are particularly relevant to:
- organisations involved in the delivery of Vocational Qualifications based on National Occupational Standards (NOS);
- organisations implementing OPITO Industry Standards, or delivering programmes to OPITO Standards, where competence assessment is a requirement;
- organisations seeking OPITO approval for their Competence Management Systems;
- organisations implementing in-house competence assurance systems and/or Customised Awards.

The Assessment and Verification Guidelines are continually reviewed in parallel with the continuous improvement philosophy adopted by OPITO.

Application of Guidelines

Vocational Qualifications and National Occupational Standards (NOS)

These Competence Assessment and Verification Guidelines should be used by organisations who are delivering Vocational Qualifications within the upstream oil and gas industry which are based on National Occupational Standards (NOS). The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with any specific assessment guidance published within each National Occupational Standard (NOS) and the requirements of Awarding Bodies/Organisations.

Organisations/Approved Centres who are delivering upstream oil and gas Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) must comply with the OPITO Assessment and Verification Strategy for Upstream Oil and Gas SVQs which is based on these guidelines.

Organisation delivering Vocational Qualifications which are approved within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) should refer to the relevant Awarding Body/Organisation guidance.

Organisations delivering Modern Apprenticeships must comply with relevant guidance.

OPITO Industry Standards

Where a competence assessment is conducted against an OPITO Industry Standard (where competence assessment is a requirement), the Competence Assessment and Verification Guidelines must be read in conjunction with any specific assessment guidance published within each Industry Standard.
Organisations Seeking CMS Approval

Organisations seeking OPITO approval for their Competence Management Systems should use these Guidelines as good practice guidance.

Organisations should also refer to the following guide:

Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Assessment is the process of ensuring that individuals are competent to undertake their job roles in accordance with an agreed Standard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessor</td>
<td>An Assessor judges Candidate performance and evidence against a relevant Standard(s).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awarding Body/Organisation</td>
<td>Awarding Bodies/Organisations issue certificates for qualifications to formally recognise the achievements of individuals. They quality assure the delivery and assessment of those qualifications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candidate</td>
<td>Candidates are individuals who seek to be assessed as competent against a Standard(s).</td>
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<td>Competence</td>
<td>Competence is the ability to perform activities within an occupation to the standards expected within employment. Individuals must provide evidence that they have the required experience, technical skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour to perform a job role/function and that they apply them consistently, safely and in accordance with procedures and Standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customised Award</td>
<td>Customised Awards are Vocational Qualifications which have been developed to reflect specific competences defined by an individual organisation. Customised Awards are approved and awarded by Awarding Bodies/Organisations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQF</td>
<td>The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers’ and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Verifier</td>
<td>An Internal Verifier assures the quality and consistency of assessments carried out against the relevant Standard(s). Internal Verifiers may also be referred to as Internal Quality Assurers or Quality Monitors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Occupational Standard (NOS)</td>
<td>National Occupational Standards (NOS) describe the performance required of individuals when carrying out functions in the workplace. NOS are developed by employers through Standards Setting Bodies/Organisations and Sector Skills Councils. NOS can be used throughout the UK and form the basis of Vocational Qualifications such as SVQs and NVQs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVQs</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work-related, competence-based qualifications based on UK approved National Occupational Standards (NOS). They are regulated qualifications within the QCF.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<td>QCF</td>
<td>The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is the national framework and credit transfer system for qualifications in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.</td>
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<td>SCQF</td>
<td>The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland’s Lifelong Learning Framework and is used to help understanding and comparison of various Scottish qualifications such as SVQs, HNC/Ds and degree programmes.</td>
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<td>SQA</td>
<td>The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the national body in Scotland with responsibility for accrediting and awarding Vocational Qualifications such as SVQs, Customised Awards, HNC/HNDs.</td>
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| Standard | A Standard defines the expected level of performance, knowledge and understanding an individual must achieve when carrying out job roles/functions in the workplace. Examples of Standards within the oil and gas industry are:  
- OPITO Industry Standards  
- National Occupational Standards (NOS),  
- Vocational Qualification Competence Units eg SVQ Units, NVQ Units  
- Company Competence Standards. |
| Standards Setting Bodies/Organisations | Standards Setting Bodies/Organisations work with employers to develop National Occupational Standards (NOS) for the industries, sectors and occupations they represent. OPITO is the Standards Setting Body for the upstream oil and gas industry. |
| SVQ | A Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) is a specific Vocational Qualification which is based on National Occupational Standards (NOS). |
| Verification | Verification is the process of ensuring that all assessments have been fair, safe, valid, reliable and consistent across all assessment decisions. |
| Vocational Qualification | Vocational Qualifications provide recognition of an individual’s ability to work in real work conditions. Qualifications include SVQs, NVQs, HNC/Ds. Quality assured certificates of competence are issued by Awarding Bodies/Organisations. |
2. Principles for the Assessment and Verification of Competence

The Purpose of Assessment and Verification

To be competent, individuals must provide evidence that they have the required experience, technical skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour to perform a job role/function and that they apply them consistently, safely and in accordance with relevant procedures and Standards.

The purpose of the assessment process is to ensure that individuals are competent to undertake their job role or function within the oil and gas industry.

The purpose of the verification process is to ensure that all assessments have been fair, safe, valid, reliable and consistent.

Good Practice Guidance for the Assessment and Verification of Competence

1. The main means of assessing competence should be observation of Candidates performing tasks in the workplace to a specified Standard(s).

2. Observation should be supported by questioning of Candidates to ensure that they have, and can apply, relevant knowledge and understanding for the specified Standard(s).

3. Relevant workplace documents and job records can be used to support the assessment process. Additional supporting evidence could include witness testimony from individuals who are in a position to provide informed feedback on the performance of Candidates.

4. Where it is not possible or practical to have a qualified Assessor in the same location as Candidates, Expert Witnesses can be used to support the assessment process by carrying out on-the-job observations.

5. Simulation should only be used when it is not practical and/or safe to obtain direct evidence of Candidates’ performance and when expressly indicated by individual Standards.

6. All assessments should be subject to a valid verification process conducted by competent Internal Verifiers. Internal Verifiers should sample evidence across all Assessors and Candidates.

7. All Candidates should have access to fair and equitable assessment opportunities and have a right to appeal against any decision made by their Assessor.

8. Robust quality assurance systems should be implemented to ensure that the quality of the assessment and verification processes is maintained.
Roles & Responsibilities

Candidates

Candidates are individuals who are seeking to be assessed as competent against a Standard(s).

Candidates’ responsibilities are to:
- work with their Assessor(s) to identify opportunities where they can demonstrate their competence in accordance with the relevant Standard(s);
- perform agreed tasks in the workplace in accordance with all health, safety and environmental requirements;
- gather evidence (where required) to support their claim of competence in accordance with the relevant Standard(s).

Assessors

Assessors’ responsibilities are to:
- plan and manage the assessment process;
- carry out assessments of Candidates’ performance against the relevant Standard(s);
- ensure that Candidates’ evidence is relevant, valid, authentic, current and sufficient;
- make a judgement as to the competence of the Candidates;
- record assessment decisions.

Assessors must be competent and qualified to carry out the assessment process – they should meet the following minimum requirements:
- be technically competent in the discipline area of the Standards they are assessing against – this could be demonstrated in a number of ways:
  - they are an experienced practitioner or supervisor in the same discipline;
  - they have been assessed as competent for the relevant Standard(s) and/or have achieved an equivalent qualification;
  - they have previously performed or supervised the activities defined in the Standard(s) and can demonstrate that they have maintained their technical expertise and knowledge of current processes and practices;
- hold a recognised Assessor’s qualification (e.g. L&D9DI, L&D9D, A1, A2, D32, D33, L20, or the OPITO Approved Competence Assessor Certificate);
- fully understand the requirements defined in the Standard(s) for which they are carrying out the assessment process;
- comply with the required assessment and internal verification processes and quality procedures for the Standard(s);
- comply with the requirements for recording assessment decisions for the Standard(s);
- liaise with other Assessors and Internal Verifier(s) to ensure a consistent approach to assessment.
Assessors should maintain the currency of their skills:

- Assessor should participate in regular updates / training / Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities – typically on a minimum of an annual basis;
- Assessors who have not carried out any assessments for a period of 2 year or more should undertake refresher training before carrying out any assessment activities. This refresher training should ensure that they are fully conversant with the criteria defined in the Standards they will be assessing against and, if relevant, the current version of their Assessor qualification.

Additional notes on the requirements Assessors:

- the following are examples of individual disciplines for which Assessors would be required to demonstrate technical competence: offshore deck operations; processing operations: hydrocarbons; well services (coiled tubing); well services (mechanical wireline); well services (providing fluids); well services (providing nitrogen); maintenance (electrical); maintenance (mechanical); maintenance (instrument & control);
- should an Assessor also act as an Internal Verifier, the Assessor cannot take any part in the verification of the Candidates that they have assessed – this must be done by a different Internal Verifier;
- Assessors who are in training can undertake assessments but all assessments against Standard(s) should to be reviewed by a qualified Assessor and/or an Internal Verifier. Assessors in training would normally be expected to complete their own Assessor qualification within a year of their involvement in the assessment process.

**Internal Verifiers**

Internal Verifiers’ main responsibilities are to:

- ensure the quality and consistency of assessment decisions made by the Assessors;
- ensure that the assessment processes comply with required quality assurance systems;
- provide feedback to Assessors on the judgements they have made of Candidates’ competence.

Internal Verifiers must be competent and qualified to carry out the verification process – they should meet the following minimum requirements:

- have sufficient occupational expertise in the broad discipline area covered by the relevant Standard(s) to permit valid judgements about assessments and appeal decisions – typically this would be demonstrated by the Internal Verifier having worked at either operational or supervisory level in the broad discipline area;
- hold a recognised Internal Verifier’s qualification (e.g. L&D11, V1, D34 or the OPITO Approved Internal Verifier Certificate);
- fully understand the content of, and the assessment requirements for, the Standard(s) for which they have responsibility for verifying;
- sample evidence across all Assessors and Candidates;
- provide feedback, advice and support to Assessors;
- comply with the internal verification processes and quality procedures for the Standard(s);
- maintain records of internal verification activities for the Standard(s);
- conduct and/or participate in standardisation activities to ensure a consistent approach to assessment;
- participate in, and support, internal quality systems and ensure that any corrective actions and recommendations required following internal audits are carried out in a timely manner.
The Internal Verifier may also carry out the following additional activities, in accordance with their organisation's and, where relevant, the Awarding Body/Organisation's quality systems:

- implement an appeals procedure to settle any disputes between Candidates and Assessors;
- facilitate, or contribute to, the induction, training and development of Assessors;
- participate in, and support, external quality audits and ensure that any corrective actions and recommendations required following the audits are carried out in a timely manner.

Internal Verifiers should maintain the currency of their skills:

- Internal Verifiers should participate in regular updates/training/Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities – typically on a minimum of an annual basis;
- Internal Verifiers who have not carried out any verification for a period of 2 years or more should undertake refresher training before carrying out any internal verification activities. This refresher training should ensure that they are fully conversant with the Standard(s) they will be internally verifying and, if relevant, the current version of their Internal Verifier qualification.

Additional notes on the deployment of Internal Verifiers:

- the following are examples of the broad discipline areas for which Internal Verifier must demonstrate occupational expertise: processing operations: hydrocarbons; process engineering maintenance; well services; measurement processes; offshore deck operations. Internal Verifiers would not normally be expected to carry out internal verification of more than one broad discipline area, unless they have the relevant occupational competence. They could, however, carry out internal verification for all Standards within the broad discipline area, for example, for all Well Services Standards or all Maintenance Standards;
- Internal Verifiers would normally be expected to complete an Assessor qualification and have been actively carrying out assessments for 6 to 12 months before going on to become an Internal Verifier;
- should an Internal Verifier also act as an Assessor, the Internal Verifier cannot take any part in the verification of the Candidate that they have assessed – this must be done by a different Internal Verifier;
- should Internal Verifiers undertake Candidate assessments, they must meet all the requirements outlined above for an Assessor;
- should an Internal Verifier with sufficient occupational expertise in the broad discipline area not be available, internal verification could be carried out by an experienced Internal Verifier from a related discipline, in conjunction with a technical expert from the relevant technical discipline for the Standard - the comments of the technical discipline expert should be recorded in a signed statement along with details of the role of the individual. Alternatively, specific approval could be sought from an Awarding Body/Organisation and/or External Verifier/Auditor for the use of an experienced Internal Verifier from a related discipline.
Expert Witnesses

Where it is not possible or practical to have a qualified Assessor in the same location as a Candidate, an Expert Witness could be used to support the assessment process by carrying out on-the-job observations.

Expert Witnesses should meet the following minimum requirements:

- be discipline experts with typically a minimum of 2 years relevant experience in the discipline area;
- participate in a briefing session to ensure that they are familiar with the Standard(s) being assessed and that they understand their role.

An Expert Witness would be required to:

- agree a time with the Candidate for the observation to take place and advise the Assessor, where possible;
- observe the Candidate carrying out normal work tasks/activities;
- record details of each task/activity observed and confirm its completion according to the required Standard(s);
- authenticate any supporting documentation/job paperwork;
- comment on the Candidate’s technical ability, knowledge of equipment, team work, safe working practices, etc;
- make a recommendation to the Assessor on the Candidate’s ability to carry out the task/activity.

Where on-the-job observations are carried out by an Expert Witness, a qualified Assessor would continue to be responsible for all other assessment activities, including assessment planning, providing feedback, review of product evidence and questioning.

The Assessor would review all the evidence provided by the Candidate, including the observation by the Expert Witness, and make a judgement on the competence of the Candidate. It would be the responsibility of the Assessor to make sure that any testimony from an Expert Witness is reliable and technically valid.
3. Assessment Guidance

Assessment Methods for Assessing Competence in the Oil and Gas Industry

Observation of Performance

Observations are used to assess Candidates’ performance as they carry out normal work activities in accordance with the Standard(s). Observation can allow an Assessor to assess a range of criteria, for example:
- that the Candidates are following the correct procedures and job specifications;
- that Candidates are following safe systems of work;
- that interfaces are effective.

Record must be retained of what has been observed and how this relates to the Standard(s).

Typically it would be expected that observations would be carried out by a qualified Assessor. Where it is not possible or practical to have a qualified Assessor in the same location as a Candidate, Expert Witnesses can be used to support the assessment process by carrying out on-the-job observations.

Questioning

Assessment of knowledge and understanding will typically cover knowledge of facts and procedures; understanding of principles and concepts; application of principles and procedures; and inference.

Questions can be used to:
- confirm that the evidence collected by Candidates is valid and authentic;
- fill gaps in evidence where Candidates have not been able to demonstrate specific skills as they did not occur when they were being observed;
- confirm that Candidates knows why they are doing something;
- assess if the Candidates have relevant knowledge/experience to deal with non–standard or contingency situations.

Questions can be written and/or verbal. Assessors should retain a record of the all questions asked, together with the Candidates’ responses.
Product Evidence

Product evidence could include job related paperwork that has been generated as part of normal work activities e.g. operations reports, job logs, daily status reports, charts, handover reports.

Review of product evidence can allow Assessors to assess if Candidates have:

- carried out the required work activities in accordance with job requirements and procedures;
- made a relevant contribution to the overall job;
- completed the paperwork correctly e.g. recorded relevant information and completed all required sections.

Additional Supporting Evidence

Examples of additional evidence which may be collected to support the assessment process include:

- Candidate personal logs or personal statements which can be used to record activities over a period of time and explain evidence collected, including the context for the assessment and the Candidate’s role;
- witness testimony from individuals who are in a position to provide informed feedback on the performance of Candidates – this could include experienced colleagues, supervisors, mentors, technical specialists and clients;
- a CV or job history which can provide supporting evidence of Candidates’ job experience/history;
- completion of a relevant qualification/training course which can provide evidence that Candidates have relevant knowledge of operational theory and procedures, work methods, operation of the equipment and safety procedures.
Simulation Guidelines

Standards define the expected level of performance individuals must achieve when carrying out job roles/functions in the workplace.

The main means of assessing competence should involve collecting direct evidence through observation of Candidates performing tasks in the workplace to a specified Standard(s). This will be generally be supported by questioning and assessment of product evidence.

It is recognised that there can be situations where it can be difficult or dangerous to obtain direct evidence of Candidates’ performance. Examples of this include:

- health and safety considerations would prevent assessments being carried out in normal working operations;
- assessments would be disruptive to normal working operations;
- it would not feasible to replicate a situation such as emergency/critical conditions, adverse weather conditions or contingency scenarios;
- naturally occurring evidence is so infrequent that gathering evidence from normal working operations would be impractical;
- Candidates need to be assessed in controlled conditions, for example, to assess responses to various scenario situations.

The majority of the Candidates’ evidence should be drawn from their normal working activity and simulation should only be used to fill gaps in the direct evidence gathered.

When simulation has been used for assessment purposes, the following information should be recorded:

- reasons for carrying out the simulation in place of collecting direct evidence;
- how the simulation addressed the Standard(s) against which the Candidates was being assessed;
- how the simulation was conducted – including details of the equipment, facilities and physical environment used.

Simulation should take place in a realistic working environment. The environment and conditions for the assessment should reflect normal working situations; equipment should be the same or similar to that currently used in industry; and normal working procedures should be observed.

Simulation should only be used in when expressly indicated by individual Standards.