



SFJ Awards Level 5 Certificate in Fire Investigation



Qualification Handbook

SFJ Awards Level 5 Certificate in Fire Investigation

Qualification Number: 603/4951/7

Version	Date of issue	Amendment(s)	Page
V1	01.08.19	N/A	

Contents

1	Introduction	4
1.1	About us	4
1.2	Customer Service Statement	4
1.3	Centre support	4
2	The Qualification	5
2.1	Qualification objective	5
2.2	Pre-entry requirements	5
2.3	Qualification structure	5
2.4	Age restriction	7
2.5	Opportunities for progression	7
2.6	Use of languages	7
3	Qualification Units	8
4	Centre Requirements	25
5	Assessment	26
5.1	Qualification assessment methods	26
5.2	Assessor and internal quality assurer and requirements	26
5.3	Expert witnesses	28
5.4	Assessing competence	28
5.5	Methods for assessing competence	29
5.6	Assessing knowledge and understanding	31
5.7	Methods for assessing knowledge and understanding	31
5.8	Assessment planning	32
5.9	Standardisation	32
5.10	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	32
5.11	Equality and diversity	33
5.12	Health and safety	33

1 Introduction

1.1 About us

SFJ Awards is part of the Workforce Development Trust, together with Skills for Justice and Skills for Health. For over 10 years **Skills for Health** and **Skills for Justice** have been working with employers, Governments of the UK and agencies within the skills system, to better equip workforces with the right skills now and for the future.

During this time both Skills for Health and Skills for Justice have earned an enviable reputation for their knowledge of the health and justice sectors and their proactive approach to the development of skills and qualifications, along with an ability to deliver genuinely workable solutions for the employers they represent.

SFJ Awards is an awarding organisation that builds upon this reputation. We work with employers in the policing, community safety, legal, armed forces and health sectors and understand their specific challenges, enabling us to quality assure learning outcomes that are suited to the needs of the sectors.

Customer satisfaction is the cornerstone of our organisation, and is delivered through an efficient service, providing excellent value for money.

1.2 Customer Service Statement

Our Customer Service Statement is published on SFJ Awards website giving the minimum level of service that centres can expect. The Statement will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary in response to customer feedback, changes in legislation, and guidance from the qualifications Regulators.

1.3 Centre support

SFJ Awards works in partnership with its customers. For help or advice contact:

SFJ Awards
Consult House
Meadowcourt Business Park
4 Hayland Street
Sheffield
S9 1BY

Tel: 0114 284 1970

E-mail: info@sfjawards.com

Website: www.sfjawards.com

2 The Qualification

2.1 Qualification objective

This handbook relates to the following qualification:

SFJ Awards Level 5 Certificate in Fire Investigation

This qualification is a work-based qualification and has been designed to accredit the knowledge and skills of learners who investigate, report and present evidence related to incidents involving fire and/or explosion.

2.2 Pre-entry requirements

Learners who wish to undertake this qualification must be experienced fire investigation practitioners. It is difficult to define a precise time period or a number of incidents each practitioner needs to investigate in order to gain appropriate experience. However to give an indication, it is anticipated that the length of time needed to gain the required experience could range from a minimum of one year in post as a 'full-time' investigator with a large UK Metropolitan Fire & Rescue Service (F&RS), to a number of years for a practitioner (F&RS, police or other service) working in a quieter part of a rural region with fire investigation as an "add on reference" to their role.

Learners with queries as to whether their level of experience is sufficient for starting this qualification should contact their prospective centre for further guidance.

2.3 Qualification structure

The qualification consists of four mandatory units, which give learners a total of 22 credits.

Mandatory Units					
Unit Number	Odyssey Reference	Unit Title	Level	GLH	Credit Value
J/617/5816	1386	Prepare to investigate an incident involving fire and/or explosion	5	10	6
L/617/5817	1387	Investigate an incident involving fire and/or explosion	5	23	8

Mandatory Units					
Unit Number	Odyssey Reference	Unit Title	Level	GLH	Credit Value
R/617/5818	1388	Report on the investigation of incidents involving fire and/or explosion	5	9	4
Y/617/5819	1389	Present evidence related to fire investigations in court and at other hearings	5	8	4

2.4 Total Qualification Time (TQT)

Values for Total Qualification Time¹ including Guided Learning, are calculated by considering the different activities that Learners would typically complete to achieve and demonstrate the learning outcomes of a qualification. They do not include activities which are required by a Learner's Teacher based on the requirements of an individual Learner and/or cohort. Individual Learners' requirements and individual teaching styles mean there will be variation in the actual time taken to complete a qualification. Values for Total Qualification Time, including Guided Learning, are estimates.

Some examples of activities which can contribute to Total Qualification Time include

- Independent and unsupervised research/learning
- Unsupervised compilation of a portfolio of work experience
- Unsupervised e-learning
- Unsupervised e-assessment
- Unsupervised coursework
- Watching a pre-recorded podcast or webinar
- Unsupervised work-based learning
- All Guided Learning

Some examples of activities which can contribute to Guided Learning include:

- Classroom-based learning supervised by a Teacher
- Work-based learning supervised by a Teacher
- Live webinar or telephone tutorial with a Teacher in real time
- E-learning supervised by a Teacher in real time

All forms of assessment which take place under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training, including where the assessment is competence-based and may be turned into a learning opportunity.

The Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning Hours for this qualification are as follows:

¹ Total Qualification Time, Ofqual November 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications>

Qualification Title	TQT	GLH
SFJ Awards Level 5 Certificate in Fire Investigation	220	50

2.4 Age restriction

This qualification is available to learners aged 18 years and over.

2.5 Opportunities for progression

This qualification creates a number of opportunities for progression from, and into, existing fire and rescue related qualifications.

2.6 Use of languages

SFJ Awards business language is English and we provide assessment materials and qualification specifications that are expressed in English. Assessment specifications and assessment materials may be requested in Welsh or Irish and, where possible, SFJ Awards will try to fulfil such requests. SFJ Awards will provide assessment materials and qualification specifications that are expressed in Welsh or Irish and support the assessment of those learners, where the number of learners makes it economically viable for SFJ Awards to do so. More information is provided in the SFJ Awards' Use of Language Policy.

For learners seeking to take a qualification and be assessed in British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language, please refer to SFJ Awards' Reasonable Adjustments Policy. A learner may be assessed in British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language where it is permitted by SFJ Awards for the purpose of Reasonable Adjustment.

Policies are available on our website www.sfjawards.com or on request from SFJ Awards.

3 Qualification Units

Title	Prepare to investigate an incident involving fire and/or explosion	
Level	5	
Unit Number	1	
Credit Value	6	
GLH	10	
Learning Outcomes <i>The learner will:</i>	Assessment Criteria <i>The learner can:</i>	Guidance
1. Understand the principles of investigation of fire and/or explosion	1.1 evaluate the levels and types of investigation of fire and/or explosion	
	1.2 explain the purposes and priorities of fire investigation in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community fire safety • Criminal proceedings • Insurance considerations • Civil litigation 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and potential outcomes 	
	1.3 summarise the principles of hazard identification, risk assessment and management in the context of fire and/or explosion investigation	
	1.4 summarise the principles of the investigative process based on scientific method	
	1.5 explain the use of science to determine the origin, cause and behaviour of fire and/or explosion	
	1.6 summarise how the principles of fire and/or explosion dynamics are applied to an investigation	
	1.7 explain the use and application of resources typically used in an investigation of fire and/or explosion	Learners must be able to explain the use and application of a minimum of 5 resources
	1.8 determine factors and actions which influence the potential and actual contamination of a scene	
2. Understand the legal and organisational requirements in relation to investigation of fire and/or explosion	2.1 explain the powers of entry for fire investigation personnel	The powers will differ between organisations, ie Fire and Rescue Services will have different powers of entry to private Fire Investigation organisations, therefore the learner should relate to their

		own role/organisation
	2.2 summarise the legislative and organisational requirements when dealing with members of the public	
	2.3 explain the necessity for sub-judice within an investigation	
	2.4 summarise the requirements for obtaining consent to carry out a scene investigation	The requirements will be different depending on the organisation, therefore learner should relate to their own role/organisation
	2.5 evaluate the benefits of taking an interagency team approach	
	2.6 summarise the relevant standard protocols and joint memorandums of understanding in relation to fire and/or explosion investigation	This should include reference to Codes of Practice for Fire Investigators
	2.7 summarise relevant health and safety legislation and its application to fire/explosion investigation	
	2.8 summarise the role, responsibilities and limits of authority of specialists and other agencies involved in fire/explosion investigation	Consider who has primacy at a Fire/explosion Investigation Consider the different levels and types of specialisms available to the investigator

3. Understand the requirements for Continuing Professional Development within the Fire Investigation role	3.1	explain the importance for a Fire Investigation Officer to carry out Continuing Professional Development	
	3.2	summarise the activities which can count towards a Fire Investigation Officer's Continuing Professional Development	
	3.3	explain the process for recording Continuing Professional Development	Including when should it be carried out, how should it be recorded, what should be recorded?
	3.4	evaluate the benefits of self-reflection within the Continuing Professional Development process	
4. Be able to determine the nature and scope of the investigation	4.1	confirm the type, location, extent and circumstances of the incident	
	4.2	determine scene priorities in relation to the fire and/or explosion investigation	
	4.3	evaluate available information relevant to the incident	
	4.4	establish the need for the involvement of specialists and other agencies in the investigation	Consider the fact that these "specialists" could range from utilities groups to building surveyors to forensic scientists

5. Be able to set up working arrangements to carry out an investigation	5.1	<p>agree with internal and external personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrangements for the safety and security of the scene • the methodology, timing, people and resources required for the investigation • primacy, roles, responsibilities and levels of authority and confidentiality for those involved • arrangements for the preservation, recovery and storage of evidence 	
	5.2	obtain relevant consent for the investigation to go ahead	This may vary depending on the type of investigation and the primacy involved
	5.3	confirm all agreements and arrangements are recorded	
Additional information about the unit			
Unit aim(s)	This unit is about preparing to investigate an incident involving fire and/or explosion		
Assessment guidance	<p>For the knowledge and understanding component of the unit, assessment from a learning and development environment is allowed.</p> <p>For the practical components, simulation or scenario-based evidence in a learning and development environment is recommended.</p>		

Title	Investigate an incident involving fire and/or explosion		
Level	5		
Unit Number	2		
Credit Value	8		
GLH	23		
Learning Outcomes <i>The learner will:</i>		Assessment Criteria <i>The learner can:</i>	Guidance
1 Understand the methods and science of fire/explosion investigation	1.1	explain the methods and equipment for handling and storing evidence to preserve continuity, avoid damage and any cross contamination	Consider both physical and documentary evidence, ie contemporaneous notes, photos, items sampled from the scene, etc.
	1.2	explain the purpose of gathering information from victims and witnesses of incidents	
	1.3	compare methods of gathering information from victims and witnesses	
	1.4	explain the fire science used in fire investigation	Consider the fire tetrahedron, pyrolysis, science of combustion, etc.
	1.5	analyse the process for identifying, eliminating and confirming potential ignition sources	Where the cause of ignition is suspected to be electricity consider how you would identify localised heating, short circuit, inline arcing, etc to provide further evidence Where the cause is considered to be an

		item of electrical equipment consider whether this was actually the case or whether the damaged was caused by external heat...what signs would you expect to see?
	1.6 explain the principles of correlating burn patterns to identify area of origin and evaluate fire/explosion behaviour	Consider burn patterns caused by fires involving accelerants and how these differ on different surfaces
	1.7 analyse the structural and environmental factors which may influence fire suppression and development	Consider the building layout, ventilation methods and types of integral fire suppression and reasons for rapid fire development
	1.8 evaluate the potential and actual contribution of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structure • finishes • fittings • equipment, and • processes to the development of an incident	
2 Understand the requirements of working on scene	2.1 summarise the benefits of conducting an internal and external survey of the structure and surrounds in relation to the investigation of fire development	Consider fire spread from other locations, housekeeping and accumulations of fuel loading

	2.2	explain the process for identifying and recording evidence for either accidental or deliberate causes of fire	
	2.3	explain the principles of fire scene reconstruction	
	2.4	explain the importance of maintaining continuity and integrity of evidence	
	2.5	evaluate techniques for excavating fire debris whilst preserving key evidence	
	2.6	explain methods for recovering evidence from incidents including fatalities	
	2.7	explain the requirements for dealing with the deceased in a dignified manner whilst giving due regard to the objectives of the investigation and the nature of risk	
	2.8	explain methods for recording the scene	
	2.9	analyse the behaviours of people involved in fire	
3 Be able to recover and preserve physical and documentary evidence relevant to the investigation	3.1	evaluate those factors that may have a bearing on the origin, cause and development of the incident	
	3.2	protect, recover and preserve evidence	

	3.3	confirm the investigation processes using relevant Personal Protective Equipment and resources identified during the risk assessment process	
4 Be able to manage the collection and preservation of evidence	4.1	liaise with individuals and agencies to achieve the handover of all relevant information and evidence where the responsibility for investigation is beyond own legitimate scope	
	4.2	comply with relevant legal, ethical and regulatory requirements in relation to fire/explosion investigation	
	4.3	organise evidence in a way that will assist analysis	
	4.4	confirm all evidence is accurately preserved and stored	
5 Be able to collect witness evidence relevant to the investigation	5.1	confirm details of people who may have information about the incident and their involvement	
	5.2	gather information from relevant people to support the investigation	Consider internal colleagues, police and other agencies.
	5.3	carry out planned collection of data and information from witnesses and victims in accordance with relevant legislation and organisational requirements	

	5.4 gather information in a way that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotes co-operation • encourages open and honest response 	
6 Be able to compile and provide available evidence	6.1 confirm the validity, relevance and sufficiency of evidence	
	6.2 confirm available evidence is complete to resolve discrepancies where possible	
	6.3 record and disclose discrepancies, omissions, anomalies or inconsistencies in the evidence	
	6.4 confirm the specified requirements for labelling, storing and forwarding evidence	Consider reports, photographs, physical evidence, etc
	6.5 confirm that intended recipients receive compiled evidence and supporting report	
Additional information about the unit		
Unit aim(s)	This unit is about investigating an incident involving fire and/or explosion	
Assessment guidance	<p>For the knowledge and understanding component of the unit, assessment from a learning and development environment is allowed.</p> <p>For the practical components, simulation or scenario-based evidence in a learning and development environment is recommended.</p>	

Title	Report on the investigation of incidents involving fire and/or explosion		
Level	5		
Unit Number	3		
Credit Value	4		
GLH	9		
Learning Outcomes <i>The learner will:</i>	Assessment Criteria <i>The learner can:</i>	Guidance	
1 Understand the requirements for reporting on the investigation of incidents involving fire and explosion	1.1 explain legal and organisational requirements for the recording and secure storage of information relating to incidents	Consider GDPR	
	1.2 explain the purpose and importance of samples recovered from the scene		
	1.3 explain the contribution of fire and explosion debris analysis to a report	Consider what tests are available	
	1.4 explain the relevance of reporting the contribution of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structure • finishes • fittings • equipment, and • processes to the incident		

	1.5	explain the relevance of reporting the contribution of, or the lack of, Fire Safety measures and practice, in relation to the incident	
	1.6	explain the process for forming and testing hypotheses in relation to the scientific methodology	Use of another person's work to prove a hypothesis is acceptable but this work must be referenced and credit given
	1.7	explain the principles of developing and presenting a final hypothesis and conclusions	
2 Be able to evaluate the results of an investigation	2.1	record information relating to the investigation in a way that supports validation and scrutiny	
	2.2	classify records and supporting information in a logical sequence for evaluation	
	2.3	review information to identify any adaptations to accepted working procedures and practices	
	2.4	analyse numerical data for its relevance and support to the investigation outcomes	One type of evidence could be an accurate floor plan showing "to scale" room sizes, etc
	2.5	clarify access to and availability of supplementary materials that support the report in accordance with the rules of disclosure	

	2.6	confirm records and supporting materials relating to the investigation are maintained in a durable and retrievable form	
3 Be able to report the conclusions of an investigation	3.1	confirm the report includes information that is accurate, current, valid and relevant to the investigation	
	3.2	confirm the report conforms to legal requirements with reference to case notes and related materials	
	3.3	present hypotheses and conclusions in clear and unambiguous terms	
	3.4	support conclusions with factual evidence and reasoned, impartial arguments	
	3.5	clarify reasoning for discounting or eliminating specific hypotheses	
	3.6	produce the report in a format agreed within own organisation	
	3.7	provide a disclosure list containing material not contained within the report	
	3.8	confirm receipt of report by all intended authorised recipients	

Additional information about the unit	
Unit aim(s)	This unit is about reporting on the investigation of incidents involving fire and/or explosion.
Assessment guidance	<p>For the knowledge and understanding component of the unit, assessment from a learning and development environment is allowed.</p> <p>For the practical components, simulation or scenario-based evidence in a learning and development environment is recommended.</p>

Title	Present evidence related to fire investigations in court and at other hearings		
Level	5		
Unit Number	4		
Credit Value	4		
GLH	8		
Learning Outcomes <i>The learner will:</i>	Assessment Criteria <i>The learner can:</i>	Guidance	
1. Understand legal and organisational requirements relating to presenting evidence in court and at other hearings	1.1 explain rules of evidence applicable to cases involving fire investigation		
	1.2 summarise procedures, practice and protocols in courts and hearings involving fire investigation		
	1.3 explain disclosure rules in relation to evidence and unused materials		
	1.4 summarise key features of legislation, organisational requirements and guidelines in relation to presenting evidence in court and at other hearings	Consider reference to the Forensic Science Regulator legal guidelines	
	1.5 explain reasons why it is important to present evidence in accordance with relevant legal and organisational requirements		

	1.6	explain the roles and responsibilities of the agencies and personnel involved in courts and hearings	
2 Understand the requirements for providing evidence relating to fire investigations	2.1	explain the importance in keeping up to date in own field of expertise	
	2.2	explain how opinion is used in courts and hearings in relation to fire investigation	
	2.3	explain how to compile factual statements and reports for use in courts and hearings	
	2.4	explain the importance of presenting evidence in courts and hearings which is consistent with written materials provided	
3 Be able to prepare for court or other hearings	3.1	respond promptly to any warnings, citations or notifications received from courts or other hearings	
	3.2	compile all evidence in accordance with conventions for recording, labelling and presentation	Evidence will include documents, notes, records and interview transcripts
	3.3	maintain an audit trail of information and materials requested by and provided to the court or hearing	
	3.4	make available relevant exhibits, maintaining their continuity and integrity at all times	

	3.5	review all evidence in advance of the hearing in order to identify the relevant issues, facts and opinion	
	3.6	liaise with agencies and individuals involved in the case	
4 Be able to present evidence relating to fire investigations to court or other hearings	4.1	appear at court in accordance with court protocols, procedures and practice for attendance and behaviour	
	4.2	provide oral evidence that is consistent with written evidence provided as part of the case	
	4.3	provide opinion when requested, based on the facts established in the investigation	
	4.4	respond to questions in accordance with court proceedings and protocols	
	4.5	liaise with court officials in accordance with court protocols	
Additional information about the unit			
Unit aim(s)	This unit is about presenting evidence related to fire investigations in court and at other hearings.		
Assessment guidance	<p>For the knowledge and understanding component of the unit, assessment from a learning and development environment is allowed.</p> <p>For the practical components, simulation or scenario-based evidence in a learning and development environment is recommended.</p>		

4 Centre Requirements

Centres must be approved by SFJ Awards and also have approval to deliver the qualifications they wish to offer. This is to ensure centres have the processes and resources in place to deliver the qualifications. Approved centres must adhere to the requirements detailed in the SFJ Awards Centre Handbook, which includes information for centres on assessment and internal quality assurance (IQA) processes and procedures and is available in the centres' area of the SFJ Awards website <http://sfjawards.com/approved-centres>.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that their assessor and internal quality assurance staff:

- are occupationally competent and/or knowledgeable as appropriate to the assessor or IQA role they are carrying out
- have current experience of assessing/internal quality assuring as appropriate to the assessor or IQA role they are carrying out, and
- have access to appropriate training and support.

Information on the induction and continuing professional development of those carrying out assessment and internal quality assurance must be made available by centres to SFJ Awards through the external quality assurance process.

This qualification handbook should be used in conjunction with the SFJ Awards Centre Handbook, the SFJ Awards Assessment Policy and the SFJ Awards Quality Assurance (Internal and External) Policy. All policies are available on the website www.sfjawards.com or on request from SFJ Awards.

5 Assessment

5.1 Qualification assessment methods

Assessment methods that can be used for the SFJ Awards Level 5 Certificate in Fire Investigation are as follows:

- Coursework
- E-assessment
- Multiple Choice Examination
- Portfolio of Evidence (including for example records of professional discussions, question and answer sessions, reflective accounts)
- Practical Demonstration / Assignment
- Written Examination

5.2 Assessor and internal quality assurer and requirements

5.2.1 Occupational knowledge and competence

All assessors, internal and external quality assurers must:

- be occupationally knowledgeable across the range of units for which they are responsible prior to commencing the role
- engage in continuous professional development activities to maintain:
 - occupational competence and knowledge by keeping up-to-date with the changes taking place in the sector(s) for which they carry out assessments
 - professional competence and knowledge.

Assessors must also:

- be occupationally competent in the functions covered by the units they are assessing
- have gained their occupational competence by working in the sector relating to the units or qualifications they are assessing. This means they must be able to demonstrate consistent application of the skills and the current supporting knowledge and understanding in the context of a recent role directly related to the qualification units they are assessing as a practitioner, trainer or manager
- be able to interpret and make judgements on current working practices and technologies within the area of work.

Internal quality assurers (IQAs) must also:

- understand the nature and context of the assessors' work and that of their learners. This means that they must have worked closely with staff who carry out the functions covered by the qualifications, possibly by training or supervising them, and have sufficient knowledge of these functions to be able to offer credible advice on the interpretation of the units

- understand the content, structure and assessment requirements for the qualification(s) they are internal quality assuring*.

**Centres should provide IQAs with an induction to the qualifications that they are responsible for quality assuring. IQAs should also have access to ongoing training and updates on current issues relevant to these qualifications.*

Approved centres will be required to provide SFJ Awards with current evidence of how each member of their team meets these requirements, for example certificates of achievement or testimonials.

5.2.2 Assessor competence

Assessors must be able to make valid, reliable and fair assessment decisions. To demonstrate their competence, assessors must be:

- qualified with a recognised assessor qualification, or
- working towards a recognised assessor qualification, or
- able to prove equivalent competence through training to appropriate national standards, for example, National Occupational Standard 9: Assess learner achievement² or Police Sector Standard for the Training of Assessors, Assessor Standard.

Approved centres will be required to provide SFJ Awards with current evidence of how each assessor meets these requirements, for example certificates of achievement or testimonials.

5.2.3 Internal Quality Assurer competence

IQAs must occupy a position in the organisation that gives them the authority and resources to:

- coordinate the work of assessors
- provide authoritative advice
- call meetings as appropriate
- conduct pre-delivery internal quality assurance on centre assessment plans, for example, to ensure that any proposed simulations are fit for purpose
- visit and observe assessment practice
- review the assessment process by sampling assessment decisions
- ensure that assessment has been carried out by assessors who are occupationally competent, or for knowledge-based qualifications occupationally knowledgeable, in the area they are assessing
- lead internal standardisation activity
- resolve differences and conflicts on assessment decisions.

To demonstrate their competence, IQAs must be:

² National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development, LLUK 2010
<https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/>

- qualified with a recognised internal quality assurance qualification, or
- working towards a recognised internal quality assurance qualification, or
- able to prove equivalent competence through training to appropriate national standards, for example National Occupational Standard 11: Internally monitor and maintain the quality of assessment³ or Police Sector Standard for the Training of Internal Verifiers, Internal Verifier Standard.

Approved centres will be required to provide SFJ Awards with current evidence of how each IQA meets these requirements, for example certificates of achievement or testimonials.

5.3 Expert witnesses

Expert witnesses, for example line managers and supervisors, can provide evidence that a learner has demonstrated competence in an activity. Their evidence contributes to performance evidence and has parity with assessor observation. Expert witnesses do not however perform the role of assessor.

5.3.1 Occupational competence

Expert witnesses must, according to current sector practice, be competent in the functions covered by the units for which they are providing evidence.

They must be able to demonstrate consistent application of the skills and the current supporting knowledge and understanding in the context of a recent role directly related to the qualification unit that they are witnessing as a practitioner, trainer or manager.

5.3.2 Qualification knowledge

Expert witnesses must be familiar with the qualification unit(s) and must be able to interpret current working practices and technologies within the area of work.

5.4 Assessing competence

The purpose of assessing competence is to make sure that an individual is competent to carry out the activities required in their work. Assessors gather and judge evidence during normal work activities to determine whether the learner demonstrates their competence against the standards in the qualification unit(s). Competence should be demonstrated at a level appropriate to the qualification. The skills required at the different qualification levels are defined in Ofqual's level descriptors.⁴ Further information on qualification levels is included in the SFJ Awards Assessment Policy.

Evidence must be:

³ National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development, LLUK 2010
<https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/>

⁴ Qualification and Component Levels, Ofqual November 2018,
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications>

- Valid
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Current
- Reliable.

Assessment should be integrated into everyday work to make the most of opportunities that arise naturally within the workplace.

5.5 Methods for assessing competence

Qualifications may be assessed using any method, or combination of methods in Section 5.1, which clearly demonstrate that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met.

Assessors need to be able to select the right assessment methods for the competences that are being assessed, without overburdening the learner or the assessment process, or interfering with everyday work activities. SFJ Awards expects assessors to use a combination of different assessment methods to make decisions about an individual's occupational competence. Further information on assessment methods is provided below and in the SFJ Awards Assessment Policy.

5.5.1 Observation

SFJ Awards believes that direct observation in the workplace by an assessor or testimony from an expert witness is preferable as it allows for authenticated, valid and reliable evidence. Where learners demonstrate their competence in a real work situation, this must be done without the intervention from a tutor, supervisor or colleague.

However, SFJ Awards recognises that alternative sources of evidence and assessment methods may have to be used where direct observation is not possible or practical.

5.5.2 Testimony of witnesses and expert witnesses

Witness testimonies are an accepted form of evidence by learners when compiling portfolios. Witness testimonies can be generated by peers, line managers and other individuals working closely with the learner. Witnesses are defined as being those people who are occupationally expert in their role.

Testimony can also be provided by expert witnesses who are occupationally competent and familiar with the qualification/unit(s)/criteria. Expert witnesses are the preferred witness type recommended by SFJ Awards as they provide a stronger form of evidence which is more easily authenticated and verified.

The assessor should consider witness testimonies of either type as a typical form of evidence. Assessors are therefore responsible for making the final judgement in terms of the learner meeting the evidence requirements of the qualification/unit(s)/criteria.

5.5.3 Work outputs (product evidence)

Examples of work outputs include plans, reports, budgets, photographs, videos or notes of an event. Assessors can use work outputs in conjunction with other assessment methods, such as observation and discussion, to confirm competence and assure authenticity of the evidence presented.

5.5.4 Professional discussion

Professional discussions are a free-flowing two-way dialogue between the assessor and learner. It should not be confused with questioning where the assessor asks specific questions and the learner provides answers. Discussions allow the learner to describe and reflect on their performance and knowledge in relation to the standards. Assessors can use discussions to test the authenticity, validity and reliability of a learner's evidence.

Written/audio/electronic records of discussions must be maintained.

5.5.5 Questioning the learner

Questioning can be carried out orally or in written form and used to cover any gaps in assessment or corroborate other forms of evidence. Written/audio/electronic records of all questioning must be maintained.

5.5.6 Simulations

Simulations may take place either in an operational or non-operational environment, for example a training centre, or in the learner's workplace. Proposed simulations must be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose as part of the IQA's pre-delivery activity.

Simulations can be used when:

- the employer or assessor consider that evidence in the workplace will not be demonstrated within a reasonable timeframe
- there are limited opportunities to demonstrate competence in the workplace against all the assessment criteria
- there are health and safety implications due to the high risk nature of the work activity
- the work activity is non-routine and assessment cannot easily be planned for
- assessment is required in more difficult circumstances than is likely to happen day to day.

Simulations must follow the principles below:

1. The nature of the contingency and the physical environment for the simulation must be realistic

2. Learners should be given no indication as to exactly what contingencies they may come across in the simulation
3. The demands on the learner during the simulation should be no more or less than they would be in a real work situation
4. Simulations must be planned, developed and documented by the centre in a way that ensures the simulation correctly reflects what the specific qualification unit seeks to assess and all simulations should follow these documented plans
5. There should be a range of simulations to cover the same aspect of a unit and they should be rotated regularly.

5.6 Assessing knowledge and understanding

Knowledge-based assessment involves establishing what the learner knows or understands at a level appropriate to the qualification. The depth and breadth of knowledge required at the different qualification levels are defined in Ofqual's level descriptors.⁵ Further information on qualification levels is included in the SFJ Awards Assessment Policy.

Assessments must be:

- Fair
- Robust
- Rigorous
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Transparent
- Appropriate.

Good practice when assessing knowledge includes use of a combination of assessment methods to ensure that as well as being able to recall information, the learner has a broader understanding of its application in the workplace. This ensures that qualifications are a valid measure of a learner's knowledge and understanding.

A proportion of any summative assessment may be conducted in controlled environments to ensure conditions are the same for all learners. This could include use of:

- Closed book conditions, where learners are not allowed access to reference materials
- Time bound conditions
- Invigilation.

5.7 Methods for assessing knowledge and understanding

Qualifications may be assessed using any method, or combination of methods in Section 5.1, which clearly demonstrate that knowledge-based learning outcomes and assessment

⁵ Qualification and Component Level, Ofqual November 2018
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications>

criteria have been met. Evidence of assessment, examples listed below, can be included in a portfolio of evidence.

- a) Written tests in a controlled environment
- b) Multiple choice questions
- c) Evidenced question and answer sessions with assessors
- d) Evidenced professional discussions
- e) Written assignments (including scenario-based written assignments).

Where written assessments are used centres must maintain a bank of assessments that are sufficient to be changed regularly.

5.8 Assessment planning

Planning assessment allows a holistic approach to be taken. Holistic assessments are those which focus on assessment of the learner's work activity as a whole. This means that the assessment:

- reflects the skills requirements of the workplace
- saves time and streamlines processes
- makes the most of naturally occurring evidence opportunities.

Planning assessment enables assessors to track learners' progress and incorporate feedback into the learning process. By effectively planning assessors can therefore be sure that learners have had sufficient opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge to perform competently and consistently to the standards before being assessed. As a consequence the assessment is a more efficient, cost effective process which minimises the burden on learners, assessors and employers.

5.9 Standardisation

Internal and external standardisation is required to ensure the consistency of evidence, assessment decisions and qualifications awarded over time. Written/audio/electronic records of all standardisation must be maintained, including records of all involved parties.

IQAs should facilitate internal standardisation events for assessors to attend and participate to review evidence used, make judgments, compare quality and come to a common understanding of what is sufficient. In addition, it is also good practice to participate in external standardisation activities. SFJ Awards will facilitate external standardisation events which are open to centres and their teams.

Further information on standardisation is available in the SFJ Awards Quality Assurance (Internal and External) Policy and the SFJ Awards Standardisation Policy.

5.10 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is the process of recognising previous formal, informal or experiential learning so that the learner avoids having to repeat learning/assessment within a new qualification. RPL is a broad concept and covers a range of possible approaches and outcomes to the recognition of prior learning (including credit transfer where an awarding organisation has decided to attribute credit to a qualification).

The use of RPL encourages transferability of qualifications and/or units, which benefits both learners and employers. SFJ Awards supports the use of RPL and centres must work to the principles included in Section 6 Assessment and Quality Assurance of the SFJ Awards Centre Handbook and outlined in SFJ Awards Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

5.11 Equality and diversity

Centres must comply with legislation and the requirements of the RQF relating to equality and diversity. There should be no barriers to achieving a qualification based on:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation

Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that learners who have specific learning needs are not disadvantaged in any way. Learners must declare their needs prior to the assessment and all necessary reasonable adjustment arrangements must have been approved by SFJ Awards and implemented before the time of their assessment.

Further information is available in the SFJ Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy and the SFJ Awards Equality of Opportunity Policy.

5.12 Health and safety

SFJ Awards is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners, employees and volunteers and expect everyone to share this commitment.

SFJ Awards fosters an open and supportive culture to encourage the safety and well-being of employees, learners and partner organisations to enable:

- learners to thrive and achieve
- employees, volunteers and visitors to feel secure
- everyone to feel assured that their welfare is a high priority.

Assessment of competence based qualifications in the justice sector can carry a high-risk level due to the nature of some roles. Centres must therefore ensure that due regard is taken to assess and manage risk and have procedures in place to ensure that:

- qualifications can be delivered safely with risks to learners and those involved in the assessment process minimised as far as possible
- working environments meet relevant health and safety requirements.

Copyright

The content of this document is, unless otherwise indicated, Copyright © SFJ Awards and may not be copied, revised, reproduced or distributed, without prior written consent from SFJ Awards.

However, approved SFJ Awards centres may use and reproduce this document free of charge when teaching/assessing learners working towards SFJ Awards qualifications, or for SFJ Awards related administration purposes. Learners may copy the document for their own use only when working towards SFJ Awards qualifications via an approved SFJ Awards centre.