Level 3 Award in Using Breathing Apparatus in Fire and Rescue Responses

Qualification Handbook

SFJ Awards Level 3 Award in Using Breathing Apparatus in Fire and Rescue Responses

Qualification Number: 603/7812/8

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V1	19.08.21	N/A	

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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, security, 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 3 Award in Using Breathing Apparatus in Fire and Rescue Responses

The objective of this qualification is to develop the knowledge and skills of learners in the use of breathing apparatus (BA). Achievement of the qualification will confirm that operatives are ready to work with breathing apparatus.

2.2 Pre-entry requirements

There are no pre-entry requirements for enrolling on this qualification. However, centres must ensure that learners are able to complete this qualification, for example, through completing a skills scan to ensure they can work at the appropriate level.

2.3 Qualification structure

This qualification is made up of 5 mandatory units. To be awarded this qualification the learner must achieve all units as shown in the table below.

Mandatory Units				
Unit Number	Odyssey Reference	Unit Title	Level	GLH
BA1	5917	Understand how to use breathing apparatus for respiratory protection in risk areas	3	15
BA2	5918	Work as a breathing apparatus team member	3	5
BA3	5919	Lead a breathing apparatus team	3	3
BA4	5920	Carry out the duties of a breathing apparatus entry control operative	3	2
BA5	5921	Use breathing apparatus to deal with hazardous substances and rescue response	3	5

2.4   Total Qualification Time (TQT)

Values for Total Qualification Time[1], 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:

Qualification Title	TQT	GLH
SFJ Awards Level 3 Award in Using Breathing Apparatus in Fire and Rescue Responses	110	30

2.5   Age range and geographical coverage

This qualification is available to learners aged 18 years and over and is regulated in England and Wales.

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[1] Total Qualification Time, Ofqual
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications

2.6   Opportunities for progression

This qualification creates a number of opportunities for progression into other qualifications in the fire and rescue sector. With further experience, learners could for example train others in the use of breathing apparatus and undertake the SFJ Awards Level 3 Award in Breathing Apparatus Instruction.

2.7   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	Understand how to use breathing apparatus for respiratory protection in risk areas		
Level	3		
Unit Number	BA1		
GLH	15		

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	Assessment Criteria *The learner can:*		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Understand the anatomy and physiology of respiration	1.1	Explain the breathing process	
	1.2	Describe the composition of inspired and expired air	
	1.3	Explain the effects of exertion in relation to consumption of air and the use of breathing apparatus (BA)	
2. Understand the breathing apparatus (BA) set	2.1	Explain how the BA set manages inspired and expired air	
	2.2	Explain: • the capabilities and limitations of the BA set	

		• ancillary equipment	
		• communications equipment	
		• BA entry control recording equipment	
	2.3	Define: • cylinder capacity • full duration • working duration • safety margin • turnaround points	
3. Understand how to use a BA set	3.1	Explain: • the psychological effects of working in BA and their impact on air consumption • how psychological effects may be controlled and managed	
	3.2	Explain what testing and checks apply to the BA set and its ancillary equipment	
	3.3	State the responsibilities of a BA wearer	
	3.4	Explain how risk is managed through the systems of BA control	
4. Understand the chemistry of combustion	4.1	Explain the chemistry of combustion	
	4.2	Explain different types of combustion	

		4.3	Explain the processes and products of combustion	
5.	Understand compartment fire behaviour	5.1	Explain the principles of compartment fire behaviour	
		5.2	Explain the key stages and processes in the development of a compartment fire	
		5.3	Explain the factors which affect the development and spread of a compartment fire	
6.	Understand the hazards and risks associated with compartment fire	6.1	Explain the hazards and risks of the combustion process	
		6.2	Explain the hazards and risks in relation to the products of combustion	
		6.3	Explain the signs and symptoms of, and hazards and risks, associated with flashover and backdraughts	
7.	Understand how to extinguish compartment fires	7.1	Explain the theory and methods of extinguishing compartment fires	
8.	Understand how to use BA during structural fires	8.1	Explain the capabilities and limitations of: • personal protective equipment • rescue equipment • communications equipment • BA ancillary equipment • navigational techniques and equipment when used in conjunction with BA	

		8.2	State the responsibilities of a BA team leader	
		8.3	Explain the actions to be followed in the event of a team member having a 'distress to wearer' event	
		8.4	Explain the methods that a firefighter and the team can apply to return along a path of entry	
9.	Understand the hazards and risks associated with structural fires	9.1	Explain the hazards and risks associated with extinguishing fires and rescuing casualties within burning buildings	
		9.2	Explain the actions to take to deal with the hazards and risks associated with entering a burning building to extinguish a fire and rescue casualties	
10.	Understand how to extinguish structural fires	10.1	Explain the application of extinguishing media for dealing with structural fires	
11.	Understand the BA control systems and their application	11.1	Explain the capabilities and limitations of BA entry control procedures	
		11.2	Explain what testing and checks apply to BA control boards	
		11.3	Explain the responsibilities of a BA entry control operative	
12.	Understand the equipment used to deal with hazardous substances incidents and the signage identifying such substances	12.1	Explain the capabilities and limitations of the specialist equipment used for hazardous substance incidents	
		12.2	Explain the reasoning for shortened working durations for wearers of personal protection suits at hazardous substance incidents	

	12.3	Interpret hazardous substance signage and information	The learner should interpret least three signs

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	Assessment from a learning and development environment is allowed. Assessment methods used should be appropriate for assessing knowledge and understanding.
Links / relevant national occupational standards / sector information	Skills for Justice Fire and Rescue NOS FF3: Save and preserve endangered life FF4: Resolve Fire and Rescue operational incidents Fire Service Guides to Risk Assessments Generic Risk Assessments Specific Risk Assessments Standard Operating Procedures Technical Bulletins and Fire Service Circulars Fire service training programmes in BA Instruction Fire Service Manual - Volume 4: Fire Service Training: Guidance and Compliance Framework for Compartment Fire Behaviour Training National Operational Guidance: Breathing Apparatus operational procedures – all incidents UKFRS National Operational Guidance Programme Training Specification Breathing Apparatus UKFRS Foundation for Breathing Apparatus

Title	Work as a breathing apparatus team member
Level	3
Unit Number	BA2
GLH	5

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	Assessment Criteria *The learner can:*		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Be able to commence use of a breathing apparatus (BA) set for respiratory protection	1.1	Follow the correct procedures to: • don a BA set • start up a BA set	
2. Be able to work in risk areas when wearing BA	2.1	Check in through the BA entry control as designated by incident commander	
	2.2	Enter into the risk area as a team member	
	2.3	Use techniques to move within the risk area using assessment of risk and as a member of a team	
	2.4	Use approved methods to search for fire and casualties, and communicate findings to own team leader	
	2.5	Use navigational techniques and equipment to meet a specific casualty search	

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		2.6	Communicate progress/liaise with the team, other teams and BA entry control	
3.	Be able to extinguish a fire as a member of BA team	3.1	Demonstrate how to apply the appropriate cooling techniques in compartments adjacent to the fire compartment	
		3.2	Demonstrate how to apply the appropriate techniques to prevent further pyrolysis	
		3.3	Demonstrate how to enter into a fire compartment and use the appropriate extinguishing techniques within the fire compartment	
4.	Be able to exit the risk area as a member of BA team	4.1	Monitor own BA pressure gauge to determine own withdrawal time and return to BA control before time of whistle with the team	
		4.2	Update the relevant persons of progress throughout exit of the risk area and checkout through the BA entry control with the team	
		4.3	Provide feedback to the BA entry control operative and relevant incident commander	
5.	Be able to complete the use of a BA set	5.1	Follow the correct procedures to remove the BA set	
		5.2	Confirm that the BA set is available for future use	

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed through a range of assessment methods, but must include observation/expert witness testimony of learner performance
Links / relevant national occupational standards / sector information	Skills for Justice Fire and Rescue NOS

FF3: Save and preserve endangered life

FF4: Resolve Fire and Rescue operational incidents

Fire Service Guides to Risk Assessments

Generic Risk Assessments

Specific Risk Assessments

Standard Operating Procedures

Technical Bulletins and Fire Service Circulars

Fire service training programmes in BA Instruction

Fire Service Manual - Volume 4: Fire Service Training: Guidance and Compliance Framework for Compartment Fire Behaviour Training

National Operational Guidance: Breathing Apparatus operational procedures – all incidents

UKFRS National Operational Guidance Programme Training Specification Breathing Apparatus

UKFRS Foundation for Breathing Apparatus |

Title	Lead a breathing apparatus team
Level	3
Unit Number	BA3
GLH	3

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	Assessment Criteria *The learner can:*		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Be able to lead a team when wearing breathing apparatus (BA) in a limited visibility environment	1.1	Check in through the BA entry control	
	1.2	Lead the team to move a hose and branch to extinguish a fire, rescue casualties and return to BA control	
	1.3	Use communications equipment to communicate with relevant people throughout the operation	
	1.4	Lead the team in order to withdraw from the risk area and return to BA entry control	
	1.5	Check out through the BA control	
	1.6	Provide feedback to the BA entry control operative	
2. Be able to deal with emergencies when wearing	2.1	Follow the correct procedures in the event of becoming entrapped	
	2.2	Prepare as a member of an emergency crew	

BA in a limited visibility environment	2.3	Rescue a colleague, when committed, whilst wearing BA	

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed through a range of assessment methods, but must include observation/expert witness testimony of learner performance
Links / relevant national occupational standards / sector information	Skills for Justice Fire and Rescue NOS

FF3: Save and preserve endangered life

FF4: Resolve Fire and Rescue operational incidents

WM7 Lead and support people to resolve incidents

Fire Service Guides to Risk Assessments

Generic Risk Assessments

Specific Risk Assessments

Standard Operating Procedures

Technical Bulletins and Fire Service Circulars

Fire service training programmes in BA Instruction

National Operational Guidance: Breathing Apparatus operational procedures – all incidents

UKFRS National Operational Guidance Programme Training Specification Breathing Apparatus

UKFRS Foundation for Breathing Apparatus |

Title	Carry out the duties of a breathing apparatus entry control operative
Level	3
Unit Number	BA4
GLH	2

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	Assessment Criteria *The learner can:*		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Be able to operate breathing apparatus (BA) control	1.1	Establish a BA entry control point	
	1.2	Check in BA wearers through a BA entry control point	
	1.3	Check out BA wearers through a BA entry control point	
	1.4	Monitor feedback from BA teams	
	1.5	Record feedback from BA teams	
	1.6	Provide the relevant incident/sector commander with up-to-date information	
	1.7	Implement emergency procedures when necessary	
	1.8	Support BA sector operations	
	1.9	Carry out the additional duties appropriate to each level of BA entry control	Duties may include: • guidelines and branch lines

			• communications equipment
			• synchronisation of clocks
			• telemetry
			• radiation monitoring equipment

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed through a range of assessment methods, but must include observation/expert witness testimony of learner performance
Links / relevant national occupational standards / sector information	Skills for Justice Fire and Rescue NOS
	FF3: Save and preserve endangered life
	FF4: Resolve Fire and Rescue operational incidents
	Fire Service Guides to Risk Assessments
	Generic Risk Assessments
	Specific Risk Assessments
	Standard Operating Procedures
	Technical Bulletins and Fire Service Circulars
	Fire service training programmes in BA Instruction
	National Operational Guidance: Breathing Apparatus operational procedures – all incidents
	UKFRS National Operational Guidance Programme Training Specification Breathing Apparatus
	UKFRS Foundation for Breathing Apparatus

Title	Use breathing apparatus to deal with hazardous substances and rescue response
Level	3
Unit Number	BA5
GLH	5

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	Assessment Criteria *The learner can:*		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Be able to look after chemical incident equipment	1.1	Follow the correct procedures to move the chemical incident equipment	
	1.2	Test and check the chemical incident equipment and chemical protection suits	
	1.3	Identify chemical incident equipment and chemical protection suit defects, faults and deficiencies	
	1.4	Record and report chemical incident equipment and chemical protection suit defects, faults and deficiencies	
2. Be able to commence use of breathing apparatus (BA) and chemical protection equipment	2.1	Follow the correct procedures to don and start up a BA set and chemical protection suit	

3.	Be able to work in a hazardous chemical environment while wearing BA and chemical protection suit	3.1	Check in through the BA entry control	
		3.2	Move with purpose using assessment of risk and as a member of a team	
		3.3	Communicate progress with the team and BA control, whilst maintaining physical contact with own team throughout	
		3.4	Capture and communicate hazardous substance information to enable an incident response to be determined	
		3.5	Use the pressure gauge reading to determine when to withdraw from the risk area and return to the decontamination area with the team	
		3.6	Enter the decontamination area with the team and check out through the BA entry control	
		3.7	Provide feedback to the decontamination team and relevant incident commander	
		3.8	Implement emergency procedures when necessary	
		3.9	Clean/replenish equipment as appropriate to ensure it is available for use	
4.	Be able to complete the use of BA and chemical protection equipment	4.1	Follow the correct procedures to remove BA and chemical protection equipment	
		4.2	Ensure that the BA and chemical protection equipment is available for future use	

5.	Be able to decontaminate people and resources	5.1	Set up a decontamination area as part of a team	
		5.2	Check in through the BA entry control	
		5.3	Communicate the details of the decontamination process to those requiring decontamination	
		5.4	Decontaminate: • a contaminated person rescued from an incident • an exiting chemical protection suited team • contaminated resources	
		5.5	Augment the air supply for exiting team members who are low on air	
		5.6	Implement emergency procedures when necessary	
		5.7	Close down a decontamination area with own team	
		5.8	Check out through the BA entry control	
		5.9	Clean/replenish equipment as appropriate to ensure it is available for use	

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed through a range of assessment methods, but must include observation/expert witness testimony of learner performance

Links / relevant national occupational standards / sector information	Skills for Justice Fire and Rescue NOS
	FF3: Save and preserve endangered life
	FF4: Resolve Fire and Rescue operational incidents
	Fire Service Guides to Risk Assessments
	Generic Risk Assessments
	Specific Risk Assessments
	Standard Operating Procedures
	Technical Bulletins and Fire Service Circulars
	Fire service training programmes in BA Instruction
	National Operational Guidance: Breathing Apparatus operational procedures – all incidents
	UKFRS National Operational Guidance Programme Training Specification Breathing Apparatus
	UKFRS Foundation for Breathing Apparatus

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 Guidance and the SFJ Awards Quality Assurance (Internal and External) Guidance, available in the centres' area of the SFJ Awards website http://sfjawards.com/approved-centres.

5 Assessment

5.1 Qualification assessment methods

Assessment methods[2] that can be used for the SFJ Awards Level 3 Award in Using Breathing Apparatus in Fire and Rescue
Responses are as follows:

- Portfolio of Evidence (including for example records of professional discussions and question and answer sessions, work products and expert witness testimony)
- Practical Demonstration / Assignment

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 achievement[3] 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.

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

To demonstrate their competence, IQAs must be:

- 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 assessment[4] 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.[5] Further information on qualification levels is included in the SFJ Awards Assessment Guidance.

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[4] National Occupational Standards for Learning and Development, LLUK 2010
https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/
[5] Qualification and Component Levels, Ofqual
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications

Evidence must be:

- 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 Guidance.

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.[6] Further information on qualification levels is included in the SFJ Awards Assessment Guidance.

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 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) Evidenced question and answer sessions with assessors
c) Evidenced professional discussions
d) Written assignments (including scenario-based written assignments).

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[6] Qualification and Component Level, Ofqual
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications

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) Guidance 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.

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