Certificate in Fire Risk Assessment

SFJ Awards Level 3

Qualification Handbook

Qualification Number: 610/5745/9

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Contents

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Revisions and Amendment Register

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1. Introduction

1.1. About SFJ Awards

SFJ Awards is part of the Workforce Development Trust group, together with Skills for Justice, Skills for Health and People 1st International. The Workforce Development Trust is a not-for-profit organisation helping employers to continually improve their workforce through increasing productivity, improving learning solutions and helping to boost the skills for staff across a wide range of industries throughout the UK and internationally.

SFJ Awards is an independent Awarding Organisation, regulated by the UK qualifications regulators, including Ofqual, CCEA and Qualifications Wales, to assess, quality assure and certificate learners and employees, helping training providers and employers to continue developing a highly skilled workforce for the future. Our values are 'For Skills, For Flexibility and For Jobs' and our work embodies the core charitable aims of the wider Workforce Development Trust group that ultimately supports better jobs. We add value to employers and training providers by delivering a wide range of sector-specific regulated qualifications, bespoke learner certification and quality assurance; SFJ Awards is also an End-Point Assessment Organisation for Apprenticeships in England.

Whilst predominantly delivering qualifications and assessments to meet the needs of Policing, Fire and Rescue, Community Justice, Custodial Care, Armed Forces, Security and Emergency Services, we continue to grow into markets that require a robust, and quality assured certification solution.

1.2. Customer Service Statement

Our Customer Service Statement is published on the 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

Email: 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 Certificate in Fire Risk Assessment

This qualification has been developed as part of the **Fire Safety Suite**, in response to the publication of **BS 8674:2025 – Built Environment: Framework for Competence of Individual Fire Risk Assessors**.

The qualification represents the **Foundation level of competence** for fire risk assessors. Its objective is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to **support the completion of fire risk assessments in low-risk premises**, under appropriate supervision and organisational control.

Learners will develop an understanding of the role and responsibilities of fire risk assessors, principles of fire development and spread, fire prevention, human behaviour in fire situations, and the purpose of passive and active fire protection measures. They will be able to identify fire hazards, review existing fire safety measures, recognise indicators of increased risk, and record findings clearly and accurately.

The qualification emphasises professional conduct, ethical behaviour and awareness of personal limitations, in line with current fire safety legislation, guidance and BS 8674 expectations. It does not evidence independent or unsupervised fire risk assessment practice.

2.2. Pre-entry Requirements

There are no pre-entry requirements for 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

To be awarded this qualification the learner must achieve **all 4** mandatory units as shown in the table below.

Mandatory Units				
Unit Number	Odyssey Reference	Unit Title	Level	GLH
1	6738	Understand the role and responsibilities of fire risk assessors	3	5
2	6736	Understand fire development and spread, prevention principles and human behaviour in fire	3	15
3	6737	Understand fire protection, means of escape and associated management systems within low-risk premises	3	20
4	6738	Carry out fire risk assessments in low-risk premises	3	30

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 Certificate in Fire Risk Assessment	200	70

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

2.5. Grading

This qualification is graded pass / fail.

2.6. Age Range and Geographical Coverage

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

2.7. Opportunities for Progression

This qualification creates a number of opportunities for progression, for example, into employment as a fire risk assessor or enhances roles within fire safety management. It also provides a strong foundation for further study in fire safety or health and safety at higher levels, such as qualifications in fire engineering, fire protection systems or advanced fire risk assessment for complex premises. Learners may also choose to work towards professional registration with relevant fire safety bodies or pursue specialist areas within the fire safety industry.

2.8. 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 sfjawards.com or on request from SFJ Awards.

3. Qualification Units

3.1. Mandatory Units

Title	Understand the role and responsibilities of fire risk assessors.
Level	3
Unit Number	1
GLH	5

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Understand the moral and professional standards required from fire risk assessors and associated fire industry specialists	1.1	Explain the concepts of professional behaviour in complying with professional codes of practice, specifically: • Honesty • Integrity • Respect for life • Respect for the law • Obligation to communities and the fire safety profession • Safeguarding	• The risk assessor must be fully aware of their role and professional conduct in ensuring they have appropriate ethos core values and standards when they represent the fire safety industry. • They must be able to notify their own organisation, responsible persons and where necessary the enforcing authority when risks are noticed and need immediate resolution. • Safeguarding others by maintaining confidentiality, reporting concerns, and

			prioritising the safety of all occupants, especially vulnerable individuals.
	1.2	Summarise the competency requirements and limitations of fire risk assessors	Fire risk assessor should have an understanding of their role and limitations of the level of competence when visiting premises.
	1.3	Explain process and methodologies for maintaining personal performance, development and external validation	• UKAS accreditation • CPD
	1.4	Summarise the employment liability and professional indemnity requirements relating to carrying out work in the fire industry	EL & PI insurance requirements
	1.5	Explain the role of other fire industry specialists, their competence and the contributions they make to reduce fire risks in premises	• Fire engineers and consultants, fire strategies • Fire alarm and electrical engineers • Gas engineers • Passive fire protection engineers • Fire doors remediation specialists
	1.6	Explain how to gain support from colleagues or specialists when your own abilities are limited	• Fire engineers • Alarm specialists • Enforcing authorities • More experienced persons etc.

2. Understand how to work in a safe and ethical manner	2.1	Identify the key health, safety, security legislation and regulations relevant to the role of a fire risk assessor	• Data protection • Cyber security essentials
	2.2	Explain health, safety and security risks that may exist in different workplace locations	
	2.3	Explain the actions that should be taken to ensure the safety of yourself and others when visiting premises for a fire risk assessment	Risk Assessments and method statements
	2.4	Explain how to promote equality, diversity and inclusion within working practices and activities	
3. Understand the legislative framework fire risk assessors operate within	3.1	Describe the different responsibilities and definitions within fire safety legislation	• Responsible persons. (Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 - Article 3 & 5) • Relevant persons • Nominated and accountable persons • Competent persons • Enforcing authorities • Duty holder
	3.2	Outline the legislation requirements imposed upon those responsible within low-risk premises	• Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 • Fire safety Act 2021 • Fire Safety England regulations (informative only) • Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022 (for info only) • Relevant regulation / legislation in NI, Wales Scotland

4. Understand the relationship with enforcing and regulatory authorities	4.1	Explain the role and of enforcing authorities ensuring fire safety compliance	
	4.2	Summarise the different role of regulatory bodies in ensuring fire safety compliance	• Fire Authorities • Licensing authorities • Heritage England • Environmental protection officers • Local Authority housing officers • Building control bodies • HSE • BSR • MOD
	4.3	Summarise primary authority partnership arrangements	
	4.4	Explain the types and levels of enforcement available to authorities to ensure fire safety compliance	• Non-formal / formal enforcement • Types of premises scoring matrixes
	4.5	Summarise how fire risk assessors can contribute to reducing the level of enforcement and aid in the withdrawal of notices and restrictions on premises	• Time bound actions • Justification through risk assessment

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed through methods appropriate for assessing knowledge. A combination of methods should be used to allow holistic assessment, which could include coursework, e-assessment, professional discussion, question and answer sessions, written examination.
Links	Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Fire Safety Act 2021

	Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Building Regulations 2010 – Approved Document B Equality Act 2010 HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Offices and Shops HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessments: Factories and Warehouses Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Means of Escape for Disabled People *(Supplementary Guide)* PAS 79-1:2020 – *Fire risk assessment – Premises other than housing* BS 9997:2019 – *Fire risk management systems – Requirements with guidance* UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) Data Protection Act 2018 Cyber Essentials *(optional – basic UK government scheme for IT security awareness)*

Title	Understand fire development and spread, prevention principles and human behaviour in fire
Level	3
Unit Number	2
GLH	15

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Understand fire prevention principles and best practices	1.1	Explain the key principles of fire prevention, including the fire triangle and methods for reducing fire risks	• Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Schedule 1, Part 3 • Or other relevant legislation
	1.2	Explain the importance of effective housekeeping in fire prevention, including the management of waste and maintaining clear escape routes	Government fire safety guides
	1.3	Identify sources of oxygen and oxidising materials in low-risk premises	
	1.4	Describe the risks associated with combustible materials	
	1.5	Outline best practices for storage and separation to minimise fire hazards	
	1.6	Identify common causes of arson and recommend measures to reduce the risk of deliberate fire-setting	
	1.7	Summarise fire prevention strategies in different workplace settings, considering relevant legislation, guidance, and industry best practices	

2. Understand principles of combustion and fire development & spread.	2.1	Describe mechanism of combustion and methods of fire spread	• Triangle of fire • Convection • Radiation • Conduction
	2.2	Summarise the common causes of fire in different types of premises	National fire statistics
	2.3	Identify the range of direct and indirect sources of ignition	
	2.4	Explain how fire can spread internally and externally	
	2.5	Explain the different types of fires and how they are extinguished	• Triangle & classes of fire • Different firefighting media
	2.6	Identify hazardous processes with a potential to result in a fire and / or explosion	• Cooking • Hot working • Working with dangerous substances • HSG guidance notes
	2.7	Summarise elements of design and structure and their limitations in fire situations	• Construction product regulations • Construction methods and building design types • Structural steel, masonry, concrete, cement particle boards • building boards, dry wall linings, rockwool • Timber (impregnated / non impregnated)

			• MDF, expanded polystyrene, polyisocyanurate foams • Glazing systems
	2.8	Summarise furniture and furnishings and the prevention requirements related to products within premises	• Manufactures responsibilities under the fixture and fittings regulations • Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 • Hazard classifications depending upon building type
	2.9	Summarise how building services, ducting and associated appliances can contribute to fire development and growth	• Fixed electricals • fixed gas • cooking appliances • ventilation ducting • HVAC systems
3. Understand fire risk assessment methodologies and control mechanisms to reduce risk.	3.1	Define the following meaning in a fire safety context: • Hazard • Risk • Control measure	
	3.2	Explain the different fire risk assessment approaches, methodologies and templates	For example: • PAS 79 • 5 step • 7 step • 9 step
	3.3	Evaluate the use of fire risk assessment in justifying departures from codes of practice	Gov Fire safety guides

4. Understand human behaviour in a fire situation	4.1	Describe human behaviour in the context of fire safety	
	4.2	Identify types of people and their limitations for access/egress and escape in different types of premises	
	4.3	Explain the mechanisms and assistance that can be provided to people with sensory and / or cognitive impairments	

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed through methods appropriate for assessing knowledge. A combination of methods should be used to allow holistic assessment, which could include coursework, e-assessment, professional discussion, question and answer sessions, written examination.
Links	Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Fire Safety Act 2021 Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Building Regulations 2010 – Approved Document B (Part B1) Equality Act 2010 HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Offices and Shops HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessments: Factories and Warehouses Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Means of Escape for Disabled People *(Supplementary Guide)*

Title	Understand fire protection, means of escape and associated management systems within low-risk premises
Level	3
Unit Number	3
GLH	20

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Understand passive fire safety systems to protect life in low-risk premises	1.1	Explain the requirements for passive protection and the guidance to be used depending upon the buildings, age, use, height and size	• Separate sections • Buildings over 280m² • Separation of ancillary accommodation and storage
	1.2	Evaluate the classification of linings and fire resistance within protected and non-protected areas of the premises	• Classification of linings and products • Single staircases • Means of escape • Risk room sizes
	1.3	Explain the requirements and locations for fire doors in buildings depending upon the age, size, use and people in the building	Certificated, nominal and notional fire doors
	1.4	Describe the types and limitations of fire dampers, ducting and ventilations systems and their application within fire compartmented premises	
	1.5	Identify the methods and types of fire stopping in buildings where services and systems penetrate fire compartments	Learner should provide at least 3 examples

2. Understand active fire safety systems to protect life in low-risk premises	2.1	Explain the specification and requirement for detection and warning systems depending on the buildings size, configuration and use	BS 5839-1
	2.2	Explain the specification and requirement for emergency lighting systems depending on the buildings size, configuration and use	BS 5266
	2.3	Explain the specification and requirement for portable firefighting systems depending on the buildings size, configuration and use	BS 5306
	2.4	Identify where ventilation may be a requirement for low-risk premises	• Refuse areas in shops and retail units • Where the premises is part of a wider complex
	2.5	Identify where suppression AWFSS protection may be located in low-risk premises	• Low risk premises within wider premises e.g. separate sections of buildings • AWFSS (Automatic Water Fire Suppression System)
3. Understand the requirements to secure safe means of escape in low-risk premises	3.1	Summarise the factors contributing to safe means of escape	MOCTET (Method of Construction, Type of Escape, and Time)
	3.2	Explain how floorspace layout and the diverse needs of occupant's impact fire safety planning	
	3.3	Summarise travel distance requirements and associated fire safety measures in different types and areas of low-risk premises	

	3.4	Explain the requirements for exit routes and final exits to be of sufficient size and number for safe escape	DCLG guides
	3.5	Summarise the additional factors to be considered to ensure people with sensory and / or cognitive impairments can escape safely	• Inclusive designs • Access and egress requirements
	3.6	Explain the requirements for adequate signage for means of escape	BS 5499
4. Understand external fire spread and development in low-risk premises	4.1	Outline the classification requirements for flammability of external walls depending upon building size, height and use	• ADB vol 1 table 10.1 • ADB vol 2 table 12.1
	4.2	Explain the importance of co-ordination of fire risk appraisals of external walls and internal fire risk assessments	Reference to the fire strategy if available
5. Understand fire safety management in low-risk premises	5.1	Describe the fire safety arrangements required in different low risk premises to reduce the potential fire ignition and spread	• Housekeeping • Arson prevention • Control and use of naked flames etc.
	5.2	Summarise the fire evacuation and training requirements within different low risk premises	
	5.3	Describe the maintenance regimes for fire protection systems and how this contributes to a reduction of risk	• Fire alarms • Emergency lighting • Fire stopping • Fire doors • Dampers • Ventilation and kitchen ducting

	5.4	Summarise the maintenance regimes of building services, appliances and associated fixtures and fittings and how this contributes to a reduction in risk	• Fixed electricals • Fixed gas • Lightening protection • Maintaining furniture and fabrics • Portable appliance testing
	5.5	Outline the facilities and access arrangements needing to be maintained for fire and rescue services in low-risk premises	• Access for fire vehicles • Water supplies
	5.6	Summarise the relevant records and information that are required to be retained by responsible persons and made available for the purpose of fire risk assessment	• User and periodic maintenance records • Test inspection records • Article 11 Fire safety arrangements

Additional information about the unit

Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed through methods appropriate for assessing knowledge. A combination of methods should be used to allow holistic assessment, which could include coursework, e-assessment, professional discussion, question and answer sessions, written examination.
Links	Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Fire Safety Act 2021 Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 Building Regulations 2010 – Approved Document B (Parts B1 & B5) Equality Act 2010 Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Offices and Shops HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessments: Factories and Warehouses Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Means of Escape for Disabled People *(Supplementary Guide)*

	PAS 79-1:2020 – Fire Risk Assessment – Premises Other Than Housing BS 9999:2017 – Fire Safety in the Design, Management and Use of Buildings BS 5839-1:2017 – Fire Detection and Alarm Systems for Buildings *(basic awareness)* BS 5306-8:2012 – Selection and Positioning of Portable Fire Extinguishers

Title	Carry out fire risk assessments in low-risk premises
Level	3
Unit Number	4
GLH	30

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Be able to plan visits to premises for the purpose of fire risk assessment	1.1	Plan a series of visits taking account the following factors: • Competence of self • Time required for the visit • Benchmark guidance and availability of publications to assist in the undertaking of fire risk assessment	
	1.2	Inform the responsible person about the visit, confirm their responsibilities, and ensure relevant parties understand the expectations	Send notifications
	1.3	Compile health and safety risk assessment / method statement for intended work	• PPE • Asbestos register
	1.4	Examine existing fire safety risk assessment and review its application and effectiveness	• Fire risk assessments • Fire risk assessment action plans
	1.5	Examine existing associated fire safety arrangements and records related to the premises	• Fire strategies • Fire safety arrangements • Testing and maintenance records

			• Training records
2. Be able to carry out Fire Risk Assessment observations in premises	2.1	Confirm welfare and safety provisions are in place to proceed with assessment	
	2.2	Use existing information and records to assist with effective assessment of hazards and risk	• Fire safety procedural & management arrangements • Any previous fire risk assessment • Licence agreements • Fire safety maintenance records • Servicing logbooks for services and fire installations • Fire drills and staff (fire) training • Notes of any shortcomings or unresolved issues that may affect the fire risk assessment • View and interpret existing plans to determine the overall layout, circulation, structure, fabric and services
	2.3	Conduct a physical examination of the premises to identify fire hazards and potential risks	• Evaluating the risk of a fire occurring • Evaluating the risk to people from fire • Removing or reducing fire hazards • Removing or reducing the risks to people

				• This must be carried out on site
	2.4	Evaluate the adequacy of the general fire precautions including the passive and active fire protection systems installed within the building	
	2.5	Evaluate the adequacy of key fire safety management & evacuation arrangements	
	2.6	Seek guidance and confirmation from colleagues, specialists and/or other parties where the limitations of your own knowledge or skills may be insufficient	
	2.7	Confirm if existing fire safety provisions are adequate or further measures are needed to control risks	
	2.8	Record findings from the fire risk assessment and communicate immediate serious safety issues with relevant parties including clients and regulators where required	
3. Be able to carry out post fire risk assessment observation administration work	3.1	Interpret and apply technical knowledge to enable compliance with appropriate documentation and recognised good practice	Reports should have reference points against fire strategies and or regulatory guidance and codes of practice (e.g. British Standards, building control regulations and national guidance)

	3.2	Provide reports that make clear and achievable recommendations on the measures required to reduce risk from fire to a level as low as reasonably practicable	
	3.3	Produce fire risk assessment in accordance with any stated business policies and procedures and in agreed formats	
	3.4	Quality assure and validate fire risk assessment reports and send in secure formats to those responsible	
	3.5	Archive completed information and reports in secure formats	Data Protection Act 2018
	3.6	Follow up and review assessment recommendations and other fire safety related matters, when required and where necessary in an appropriate way	

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit can be assessed in a simulated environment or through direct observation in the workplace. To enable the fire risk assessor to achieve the qualification they must submit at least 3 fire risk assessments within different environments as part of the evidence collation. The following list represents the type of premises these fire risk assessments should be completed on: *3 different risk assessments from at least 2 separate categories* **Offices – 5 storeys max**

	Low fire load, no sleeping accommodation, familiar occupants, clear layout and escape routes, good fire safety management.
	Shop – 4 storeys Retail premises selling low-risk goods (e.g. clothing, books), minimal storage of combustible materials, staff trained in evacuation.
	Small factory Light industrial unit with limited fire hazards, minimal machinery, no flammable or hazardous substances, clear fire safety controls.
	Other workplaces less than 4 storeys Includes workshops, studios, admin spaces – simple layouts, known occupants, low fire risk activities, and straightforward evacuation.
	Small single storey licensed premises less than 300 people Examples include pubs or village halls with limited combustible furnishings, no sleeping, manageable occupancy, and clearly marked exits.
	Small school / nursery Single or two-storey buildings with good adult supervision, clear evacuation plans, low fire load, and regular fire drills in place.
	Small public building Such as a local library, health centre, or community hall – limited occupancy, simple layout, non-complex fire safety systems, and well-maintained escape routes.
	AC 3.6 can be evidenced through professional discussion or written questioning where required.
Links	Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Fire Safety Act 2021 Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

	Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
	Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
	Building Regulations 2010 – Approved Document B (Part B1)
	Equality Act 2010
	HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Offices and Shops
	HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessments: Factories and Warehouses
	Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Means of Escape for Disabled People *(Supplementary Guide)*
	PAS 79-1:2020 – Fire Risk Assessment – Premises Other Than Housing
	BS 9999:2017 – Fire Safety in the Design, Management and Use of Buildings *(awareness level)*

4. Centre Requirements

4.1. Centre Responsibilities

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 processes and procedures.

When a centre applies to offer a qualification, they will need to provide evidence that they have sufficient resources and infrastructure in place for delivery of that qualification:

- evidence of assessor and IQA competence
- sample assessment materials and mark schemes
- scheme of work
- details of available resources.

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
- have access to appropriate training and support
- are independent and any conflicts of interests are managed and monitored appropriately by SFJ Awards.

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 handbook should be used in conjunction with the following SFJ Awards documents:

- Assessment Guidance
- Centre Handbook
- Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policies
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Appeals Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Sanctions Policy
- Examinations and Invigilation Policy
- Risk and Centre Monitoring Policy

- Fair Access and Equality of Opportunity Policy
- Reasonable Adjustment and Special Considerations Policy
- Standardisation Policy
- Direct Claims Policy
- Centre Approval Process

All documents referenced in the strategy are available to centres on Odyssey, SFJ Awards learner management system, or on request from SFJ Awards.

4.2. Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy

Awarding Organisations are required by Ofqual to have a CASS Strategy in place to improve the controls where an assessment is devised and marked by a centre.[2] In line with our CASS Strategy, SFJ Awards will determine the most appropriate CASS approach for each qualification / qualification suite using a risk based approach.

Any Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) used by centres to develop and/or mark assessments must declare any conflict of interest and centres must ensure that any such conflicts are mitigated. All details of such conflicts of interest must be recorded by the centre.

SFJ Awards will require sample assessments from centres to maintain confidence with our centres' approach to maintaining the integrity of our quality assurance strategy defined within the CASS strategy. Centre marking will be subject to external quality assurance.

Centres are permitted to develop and mark assessments for the qualification(s) in this handbook, in line with our CASS Strategy.

4.3. Facilities

Training and assessment for approved qualifications must take place in a suitable environment that has been approved by SFJ Awards. The environment must be adequately equipped for training, conducive to effective learning, and must comply with current Health and Safety requirements. Equipment for practical activities must be readily available and fit for purpose. All examination venues must comply with the policy, standards, and regulations specified by SFJ Awards to gain approval for knowledge-based assessment.

Training and assessment facilities must comply with the ongoing approval arrangements of SFJ Awards.

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[2] Condition H2 - Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny where an assessment is marked by a Centre

4.4. Trainers

Some sectors specify trainer requirements for qualification delivery, for example first aid and security. Details of any specific trainer requirements are included in this qualification handbook. Centres should therefore check the handbook, or with SFJ Awards, for any trainer requirements that apply to the qualification(s) they wish to deliver. Centres applying for approval with SFJ Awards will be required to provide SFJ Awards with current evidence of how each trainer meets the requirements, for example certificates of achievement, CV or CPD records.

5. Assessment

5.1. Qualification Assessment Methods

Assessment methods[3] that can be used for the **SFJ Awards Level 3 Certificate in Fire Risk Assessment** are as follows:

- E-assessment
- Multiple Choice Examination
- Portfolio of Evidence (including for example records of professional discussions, question and answer sessions, work products)
- Practical Demonstration / Assignment
- Practical Examination
- Task-based Controlled Assessment
- Written Examination
- Observation
- Professional Discussion
- Interview
- Presentation and Questioning
- Project

5.2. 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 Guidance.

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.

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[3] Selected from assessment methods listed on Ofqual's regulatory system (Portal)
[4] Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition, Section E - Design and development of qualifications www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications

5.3. Methods for Assessing Competence

Qualifications may be assessed using any method, or combination of methods, as stipulated either by SFJ Awards or within specific qualifications, and which clearly demonstrate that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met. Some sectors may have specific assessment requirements that apply to their qualifications and where these apply, details will be included in the qualification-specific handbook.

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 expect assessors to use a combination of different assessment methods to make a decision about an individual's occupational competence. Assessment methods which are most likely to be used are outlined below. However, these are included for guidance only and there may be other methods which are suitable. Further information on assessment methods is included in the SFJ Awards Assessment Guidance.

5.3.1. Observation

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

5.3.2. 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). Assessors will not need to spend as long assessing expert witness testimony as they would a witness testimony from a non-expert. Therefore, if expert witnesses are involved in the assessment strategy for a qualification a greater number of learners can be managed by a smaller number of assessors.

The assessor is however responsible for making the final judgement in terms of the

learner meeting the evidence requirements for the qualification unit(s).

5.3.3. 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.

5.3.4. Professional Discussion

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 records of discussions must be maintained.

5.3.5. 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 records of all questioning must be maintained.

5.3.6. Simulations

Simulations may take place in a non-operational environment which is not the learner's workplace, for example a training centre. The assessment guidance attached to each unit in section 3 of the handbook will specify where simulations are authorised. Please note that 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.

5.4. 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 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

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[5] Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition, Section E - Design and development of qualifications www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications

- Invigilation.

Where assessment in controlled environments is considered appropriate for qualifications, or the use of specific assessment materials (for example, exemplars or scenarios) is required, information will be included in the qualification handbook.

5.5. Methods for Assessing Knowledge and Understanding

SFJ Awards expect assessors to use a variety of different assessment methods to make a decision about an individual's knowledge and understanding, which are likely to include a combination of the following:

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

Where written assessments are centre-devised and centre-assessed, centres must:

- maintain a sufficient bank of assignments which are changed regularly
- record how risks in tests/exams conducted in controlled environments are mitigated
- conduct assessments in line with SFJ Awards Examination and Invigilation Policy.

Centres must take into account the qualification when selecting knowledge assessment methods to ensure they are appropriate and allow the learner to evidence the assessment criteria. For example, MCQs are unlikely to be appropriate for higher levels qualifications or assessment criteria which require learners to 'explain', 'describe', 'evaluate' or 'analyse'.

5.6. Assessment Planning

Planning assessment allows a holistic approach to be taken, which focuses 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
- 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; 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. The

assessment is therefore a more efficient, cost effective process which minimises the burden on learners, assessors and employers.

6. Assessor Requirements

6.1. Occupational Knowledge and Competence

Due to the risk-critical nature of the work, particularly when assessing in the public and security sectors, and the legal implications of the assessment process, assessors must understand the nature and context of the learners' work. This means that assessors must be occupationally competent. Each assessor must therefore be, according to current sector practice, competent in the functions covered by the unit(s) they are assessing. They will have gained their occupational competence by working within the sector relating to the unit(s) or qualification(s) they are assessing.

Assessors 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(s) they are assessing as a practitioner, trainer or manager.

Where assessors are assessing knowledge-based qualifications, they must be occupationally knowledgeable in the sector they are assessing in.

6.2. Qualification Knowledge

Assessors must be familiar with the qualification unit(s) they are assessing. They must be able to interpret and make judgements on current working practices and technologies within the area of work.

6.3. Assessor Competence

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

- qualified with a recognised assessor qualification, or
- working towards a recognised assessor qualification.

However, there may be circumstances when assessors have the equivalent competence through training to appropriate national standards, and SFJ Awards will agree this on a case-by-case basis.

Assessors' experience, knowledge and understanding could be verified by a combination of:

- curriculum vitae and employer endorsement or references
- possession of a relevant NVQ/SVQ, or vocationally related qualification
- corporate membership of a relevant professional institution
- interview (the verification process must be recorded and available for audit).

Recognised assessor qualifications include, but are not limited to:

- RQF/QCF Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
- RQF/QCF Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement
- RQF/QCF Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement
- An appropriate Assessor qualification in the SCQF as identified by SQA Accreditation
- A1 Assess candidates using a range of methods
- D32/33 Assess candidate performance, using differing sources of evidence.

Where assessors hold an older qualification e.g. D32/33 or A1, they must provide evidence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to demonstrate current competence.

Assessors must hold an assessor qualification, or equivalent competence if agreed by SFJ Awards, relevant to the type of qualification(s) they are assessing e.g.

- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment:
  - For assessors who assess **competence in a work environment**, which requires the use of the following assessment methods: observation, examining work products or outputs, oral questioning, discussion, use of witness testimony, learner statements and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement:
  - For assessors who assess **knowledge and/or skills in vocationally related areas** using the following assessment methods: tests of skills, oral questioning, written questions, case studies, assignments, projects and RPL.

To be able to assess both knowledge and competence-based qualifications, new assessors should be working towards the **Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement.**

Centres must have in place a procedure to ensure that their trainee assessors have a representative sample of their assessment decisions counter signed by a qualified and competent assessor. SFJ Awards will provide centres with guidance on the ratio of qualified/trainee assessors.

Trainee assessors working towards a qualification must be registered for the qualification with a regulated AO and achieve it within 18 months. Assessor competence will be checked through annual External Quality Assurance checks.

Centres must check the qualification handbook for assessor requirements for the qualification(s) they are approved to deliver as some sectors have different requirements e.g. security, education and training, assessor and quality assurance, and learning and development.

Centres applying for approval with SFJ Awards will be required to provide SFJ Awards with current evidence of how each assessor meets these requirements, for example certificates of achievement. Centres who apply for approval to offer

additional qualifications will be required to provide evidence of assessor competence for the qualifications they wish to offer.

6.4. Continuing Professional Development

Assessors must actively 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 as an assessor.

It is the centre's responsibility to retain the CPD information of assessors. Assessor competence and CPD will be checked by External Quality Assurers at the centre's annual compliance visit.

7. Internal Quality Assurer Requirements

7.1.   Occupational Knowledge

Internal quality assurers (IQAs) must be occupationally knowledgeable across the range of units for which they are responsible prior to commencing the role. Due to the risk-critical nature of the work, particularly in the justice, community safety and security sectors, and the legal implications of the assessment process, they must 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.

7.2.   Qualification Knowledge

IQAs must 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.

7.3.   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:

- qualified with a recognised internal quality assurance qualification, or
- working towards a recognised internal quality assurance qualification.

However, there may be circumstances when IQAs have the equivalent competence through training to appropriate national standards, and SFJ Awards will agree this on a case-by-case basis. Recognised IQA qualifications include, but are not limited to:

- RQF/QCF Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
- RQF/QCF Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
- An appropriate IQA qualification in the SCQF as identified by SQA Accreditation
- V1 Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process
- D34 Internally verify the assessment process.

Where IQAs hold an older qualification e.g. D34 or V1, they must provide evidence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to demonstrate current competence. Approved centres will be required to provide SFJ Awards with current evidence of how each IQA meets these requirements, for example certificates of achievement.

Centres must have in place a procedure to ensure that their trainee IQAs have a representative sample of their IQA decisions counter signed by a qualified IQA who holds a minimum of the **Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice**. SFJ Awards will provide centres with guidance on the ratio of qualified/trainee assessors.

Trainee IQAs working towards one of the above qualifications must be registered for the qualification with a regulated AO and achieve it within 18 months. IQA competence will be checked through annual External Quality Assurance checks.

7.4. Continuing Professional Development

IQAs must actively engage in continuous professional development activities to maintain:

- occupational 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 as an IQA.

Centres must check the qualification handbook for IQA requirements for the qualification(s) they are approved to deliver as some sectors have different requirements e.g. security, education and training, assessor and quality assurance, and learning and development.

8. 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.

8.1. Occupational Competence

Expert witnesses must, according to current sector practice, be competent in the functions covered by the unit(s) 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.

8.2. 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.

9. External Quality Assurers

External quality assurance is carried out by SFJ Awards to ensure that there is compliance, validity, reliability and good practice in centres. External quality assurers (EQAs) are appointed by SFJ Awards to approve centres and to monitor the assessment and internal quality assurance carried out by centres.

SFJ Awards are responsible for ensuring that their external quality assurance team have:

- sufficient and appropriate occupational knowledge
- current experience of external quality assurance
- access to appropriate training and support.

9.1. External Quality Assurer Competence

To demonstrate their competence, EQAs must be:

- qualified with a recognised external quality assurance qualification, or
- working towards a recognised external quality assurance qualification

Relevant qualifications include:

- Level 4 Award in the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
- Level 4 Certificate in Leading the External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice

Trainee EQAs working towards one of the above qualifications must be registered for the qualification with a regulated AO and aim to achieve it within 18 months. Whilst working towards a qualification, trainee EQAs will be supported by qualified EQA and receive training, for example by shadowing the EQA on compliance visits. EQA competence will be checked and monitored by SFJ Awards.

9.2. Continuing Professional Development

EQAs must maintain their occupational and external quality assurance knowledge. They will attend training and development designed to keep them up-to-date, facilitate standardisation between staff and share good practice.

10. Standardisation

Internal and external standardisation is required to ensure the consistency of evidence, assessment decisions and qualifications awarded over time.

10.1. Internal Standardisation

IQAs should facilitate internal standardisation events for assessors to attend and participate, in order to review evidence used, make judgments, compare quality and come to a common understanding of what is sufficient.

10.2. External Standardisation

SFJ Awards will enable access to external standardisation opportunities for centres and EQAs over time.

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

11. 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 support 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.

12. 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 are disabled or who have additional 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.

All cases where reasonable adjustment has been used must be fully documented, made available for external quality assurance and retained for a minimum of 3 years.

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

SFJ Awards will conduct Equality Impact Assessments in the design and development of qualifications to minimise as far as possible any impact on learners with a protected characteristic, disability or additional learning needs.

13. Health and Safety

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

SFJ Awards foster 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 some sectors 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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The Workforce Development Trust

Skills for Health

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