Level 3 Award in Fire Control Command

Qualification Handbook

Qualification Number: 610/6321/6

Operational Start Date: 1st October 2025

Contents

Document Control

Revisions and Amendment Register

Date of Issue	Page No	Revision	Version

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 qualification's 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:

Level 3 Award in Fire Control Command

The Level 3 Award in Fire Control Command is designed to support the development and recognition of individuals responsible for managing the fire control function within a fire and rescue service. Aimed at Watch and Crew Managers, the qualification reflects the application of command principles within a control room environment, aligning with operational, tactical, and strategic levels of command.

It supports the implementation of the National Operational Guidance requirement for formal training and assessment of Fire Control Commanders. Learners will explore the responsibilities involved in leading the fire control function and coordinating effective responses across a range of scenarios, including:

- Single and multiple incidents

- High-call volume situations

- Spate conditions, such as wildfires or extreme weather events

- Major incidents

- Planned or pre-arranged events

This qualification helps standardise approaches to fire control command across services, ensuring clarity of roles and consistent decision-making under pressure.

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 **two** mandatory units as shown in the table below.

Unit Number	Odyssey Reference	Unit Title	Level	GLH
1	6782	Understand Fire Control Command	3	15
2	6783	Manage the fire control room during operational incidents	3	20

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

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

- 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 Fire Control Command	50	35

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 can support progression to more senior roles within fire control, such as roles with wider command responsibilities. It may also help with moving into training, assurance, or resilience planning roles. Learners might go on to further qualifications in command, leadership, or emergency management.

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 Fire Control Command
Level	3
Unit Number	1
GLH	15

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	Assessment Criteria *The learner can:*		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Understand fire control command roles and responsibilities	1.1	Explain the role and responsibilities of the Fire Control Commander within the incident command system	For example: • management of the fire control function • supervision of fire control personnel • may align with tactical or strategic incident command • tactical advisor skills • legal responsibilities • national guidance / regulations • Health And Safety At Work Act 1974 (HASAWA 74)

			• applying lines of command and reporting in fire control • intraoperability with other FRS • increasing the level of command in fire control • transferring command in fire control • escalating to a more senior person for support and advice
	1.2	Summarise the principles of joint working in facilitating interoperability at multi-agency incidents	For example: • JESIP Joint Doctrine Principles for joint working - JESIP Website • UK Civil Protection Lexicon • JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles
	1.3	Evaluate the relationship between leadership and teamwork, including the importance of trust, in the fire control room context	Examples may include: • instilling confidence • managing safety • valuing and supporting others • open and two-way communication • appropriate use of authority • how skills are used within the team • co-operation • co-ordination of activities

2. Understand communication and interpersonal skills for the fire control room during operational incidents	2.1	Explain the role and use of communication in the management of fire control activities and operational incidents	Examples could include: • components of communication • obtaining and sharing accurate information promptly via use of appropriate communication channels • co-ordinating activities, completing tasks and handing over command • building relationships between people • good leadership • flow of information in fire control • types of information communicated • issuing instructions and briefing personnel • emergency call supervision • visual / audio monitoring

	2.2	Summarise principles that should be considered in establishing and maintaining a communication strategy for a developing incident	May include communications:
			• within own fire and rescue service
			• with other agencies
			• with the media
			• following handover of command
			  ○ type of information that should be communicated
			  ○ benefits of a recognised briefing structure e.g. IIMARCH (NOG)

		2.3	Detail the interpersonal skills that can be used during communication to: • ensure information is understood • support the transfer of information	Examples of interpersonal skills include but are not limited to: • empathy • emotional intelligence • conflict resolution • negotiation • listening • positive attitude • teamwork • collaboration • motivation
		2.4	Explain how communication and interpersonal skills can impact the effectiveness of fire control command	
3. Understand situational awareness and decision making in fire control command		3.1	Describe the stages of situational awareness	Learners may refer to the Common Operating Picture (COP): • information gathering • understanding information • anticipation
		3.2	Explain factors which affect the maintenance of situational awareness when organising fire service resources	Factors may include: • how effective situational awareness is obtained and maintained

				• those which adversely affect situational awareness
				• remoteness from the scene
				• interoperability - METHANE
				• intraoperability
	3.3	Analyse factors which impact on decision making		For example:
				• time
				• use of decision controls
				• legislation / regulations
				• attitudes to risk
				• decision traps
				• decisions made by others
				• information received
				• situational awareness
	3.4	Summarise decision-making strategies		
	3.5	Summarise the key elements of the Joint Decision Model		The Joint Decision Model (JDM) - JESIP Website
	3.6	Explain the use and recording of professional judgement in the fire control room		For example:
				• when can own professional judgement be used?
				• importance of recording decisions and rationale

	3.7	Explain how to identify and prioritise risk critical activities in fire control	For example, resourcing of the fire control function:
			• level of the commander
			• number of personnel
			• equipment
			• arrangements for increasing capacity or level of command
			• contingency planning
			• situational awareness of fire control activity
			• welfare of fire control personnel when planning the activities of fire control
			• use of operational risk principles (Control Room NOG Training Specification: Positive Safety Culture)
	3.8	Explain why it is necessary to continuously assess fire control activity	For example:
			• experience and skill levels of fire control personnel
			• additional support or supervision
			• own abilities and limitations
	3.9	Explain the role of specialists during operational incidents	For example, Subject Matter Advisors (SMAs) or Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
	4.1	Explain the different team roles in fire control	For example:

4. Understand teamworking and team welfare in the fire control room			• definition of a team in the Fire Control NOG (see Control Measure Knowledge – Teamwork) • team leader • team leaders during multi-agency incidents and events • fire control personnel as team members during different types of incidents Learners may consider functions / roles in their own control room and how they might differ in others – smaller / larger control rooms etc
	4.2	Analyse how teamwork impacts on the delivery of the fire control function	For example: • team performance • intraoperability between fire and rescue services • interoperability between emergency services and responders during complex or major incidents • consistent application of JESIP policies and procedures
	4.3	Explain the factors that can impact on own personal resilience and that of team members	What is personal resilience? Factors could include: • mental health and well-being • social support networks including own team • physical fitness

				• problem-solving and coping skills
				• experience and training
				• work environment – culture, leadership and organisational support
	4.4	Explain how to recognise and reduce stress and fatigue in self and team members	For example:	
			• chronic and acute stress	
			• post-incident support for self	
			• signposting others to support	
5. Understand debriefing and post-incident reviews	5.1	Summarise types of debriefing	For example:	
			• formal debriefs	
			• informal debriefs	
			• hot debriefs	
			• multi-agency debriefs	
	5.2	Explain the benefits of debriefing and post-incident reviews	May include:	
			• gaining operational intelligence and safety-related information	
			• reviewing and improving performance	
			• sharing findings with relevant parties (colleagues, incident commanders, other agencies)	
			• identifying trends / issues affecting interoperability to support future learning	

			• using Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) Online
			• identifying good practice
			• supporting National Operational Learning
			• public inquiries

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit must be assessed using methods appropriate to the assessment of knowledge and understanding.
Links / further information	NFCC Fire Control Command Training Specification and Guidance
	Public Emergency Call Service (PECS) Code of Practice
	Control rooms - JESIP Website
	JESIP Website

Title	Manage the Fire Control Room during Operational Incidents
Level	3
Unit Number	2
GLH	20

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	Assessment Criteria *The learner can:*		Guidance and/or Indicative Content
1. Be able to review and determine the status of Fire Control Command during operational incidents	1.1	Gather information from available sources to gain accurate situational awareness and understanding	May include: • at change of shift • during an incident
	1.2	Confirm actions comply with relevant legislation and protocols	For example, organisational policies, procedures and guidance
	1.3	Review application of safe systems of work	For example: • stress / fatigue • is an additional level of command required?
2. Be able to assume responsibility for Fire Control Command to support those resolving incidents	2.1	Take command of the incident in a timely manner	Timing dependent on / appropriate to circumstances of incident
	2.2	Review the capabilities and limitations of personnel, appliances and equipment	For example: • appliance crewing

			• supervisory officers on appliances
			• availability of appliances
			• switch crewing
			• equipment within the control room
			• expedience and skills of team within control
			• limitations of mobilising system
	2.3	Monitor the fire control activities and situation, giving support to the team	Learners should refer to own fire control room policies, procedures and NOG for the incident
	2.4	Establish liaison with other agencies	For example: • Who, when and why • Dedicated ES channel • NTG20
3. Be able to demonstrate leadership command skills in the fire control room	3.1	Use own leadership style, knowledge and skills to: • instil confidence • build trust • manage safety when managing the control room during incidents	For example: • valuing and supporting others • having open and two-way communication • collaborating and co-operating effectively with others • valuing the contribution of others • looking after the welfare of others, including the fire control working environment
	3.2	Form a command structure in accordance with the priorities and demands of an incident	For example: • allocation of roles

			• delegation of roles and responsibilities
	3.3	Utilise technical and interpersonal communication skills to: • gather and evaluate information • develop and maintain situational awareness	
	3.4	Demonstrate appropriate use of authority when managing the fire control room during an incident	For example: • setting standards of performance and behaviour • being responsible and accountable for decisions taken and plans implemented
4. Be able to demonstrate teamworking skills in the fire control room	4.1	Support members of the: • fire control team • incident command teams • multi-agency teams/LRF in accordance with individual and organisational needs	
	4.2	Co-ordinate the actions of the fire control team in support of the planned operational activity	
	4.3	Co-ordinate fire control actions and tasks with those of other emergency services and agencies to support a multi-agency approach	

	4.4	Manage the working environment and workload to mitigate the effects of stress and fatigue and to optimise personal resilience	
5. Be able to use appropriate communication and interpersonal skills while managing the fire control room function	5.1	Use communication and interpersonal skills to demonstrate own competence, instil confidence and build trust with others	Others may include: • members of own team • incident command teams • multi-agency team members
	5.2	Adapt own communication style to suit the audience and situation	For example, communicating the objectives, priorities and tactics to be adopted to resolve an incident or situation
	5.3	Demonstrate use of communication skills in different situations using appropriate lines of reporting within the fire control room	For example: • briefing or debriefing colleagues • transferring command
	5.4	Ensure information and updates are shared with the incident ground and agencies via the appropriate method	For example, information / updates may be shared with incident grounds or emergency responders Use of: • M/ETHANE • national reporting tool • radio talk groups

			• methods and communication techniques for delivering briefings to personnel • channels to support intra- and interoperability • information/updates to be shared with the public
	5.5	Maintain a communications strategy for the duration of the incident	
6. Be able to make decisions in the fire control room during operational incidents	6.1	Manage fire control resources during an operational incident	For example: • identification of resources available to take immediate action • request resources likely to be needed to fulfil the activities of fire control
	6.2	Implement plans to support those involved in undertaking organisational and operational activities to resolve incidents	May include: • Tactical plans • Emergency plans • Major incident plan • Pre plans • Action plans
	6.3	Review plans based on changes to situational awareness and new information gathered	For example, impact of call volumes and potential for prolonged sustained fire control activity on personnel arrangements

	6.4	Communicate changes to plans with relevant personnel	
	6.5	Record actions, decisions and their rationale within using relevant documentation for the decisions made to support ongoing activity	Documentation could include incident and decision logs
7. Be able to demonstrate situational awareness when managing fire control incidents	7.1	Analyse information to anticipate how a situation may develop	
	7.2	Maintain situational awareness to evaluate the potential consequences of a range of actions	
	7.3	Ensure that appropriate methods are used to share situational awareness with other control rooms	Models may include JESIP or M/ETHANE Other control rooms may include Category 1 and 2 responders
	7.4	Conduct regular briefings to support situational awareness	Briefings may be internal/external during the incident
	7.5	Maintain situational awareness when transferring command	
8. Be able to risk assess fire control activities	8.1	Conduct appropriate risk assessments	Risk assessments may be: • dynamic • analytical • personal

	8.2	Monitor risk assessments on an ongoing basis using situational awareness throughout fire control activity	
	8.3	Take into account call volumes and potential for sustained fire control activity when planning personnel arrangements	
	8.4	Monitor the welfare of fire control personnel	
9. Be able to conclude fire control activities relating to incidents	9.1	Ensure all actions, tasks and activities relating to the incident are completed	Examples may include: Passing details onto the Fire Investigation team Specialist teams in line with organisational policies and procedures
	9.2	Conduct a debrief or post-incident review at a level appropriate to the incident or event	
	9.3	Ensure an effective fire control command handover	This may be through use of a recognised briefing structure Learners may consider: • Information that should be communicated when handing over command • Methods of briefing fire control personnel following a handover of command • Communication techniques to confirm shared situational awareness is understood when transferring command of fire control

	9.4	Record findings from incident debriefs and post-incident reviews	For example, hot debrief

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	Assessment of this unit can be carried out in the workplace through direct observation and use of witness testimony, supplemented by professional discussion if necessary. Simulation through the use of scenarios may also be used where evidence does not naturally occur in the workplace.
Links / further information	NFCC Fire Control Command Training Specification and Guidance Public Emergency Call Service (PECS) Code of Practice Control rooms - JESIP Website JESIP Website

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.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.

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[2] that can be used for the SFJ Awards Level 3 Award in Fire Control Command are as follows:

- Aural Examination
- 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.[3] Further information on qualification levels is included in the SFJ Awards Assessment Guidance.

Evidence must be:

- Valid
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Current

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[2] Selected from assessment methods listed on Ofqual's regulatory system (Portal)
[3] 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

- Reliable

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

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.[4] 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.

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[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

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.

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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