SFJ Awards Level 3 Certificate in Commercial Sprinkler Design for Ordinary Hazard Systems

Qualification Handbook

Qualification Number: 610/6444/0

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 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 Commercial Sprinkler Design for Ordinary Hazard Systems

This qualification develops the knowledge and practical skills needed to design safe and compliant **commercial sprinkler systems**. Learners will be able to interpret legislation and standards, engage with customers and stakeholders, prepare design specifications, complete hydraulic calculations, determine water supplies, and select appropriate system components. It is aimed at designers, specifiers, installers, commissioners, maintenance engineers, and those in regulatory or advisory roles.

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

Mandatory Units					
Unit Number	**Odyssey Reference**	**Unit Title**	**Level**	**GLH**	**TQT**
1	6787	Identify requirements for commercial sprinkler systems	3	15	25
2	6788	Identify requirements for designing commercial sprinkler systems	3	20	35
3	6789	Design commercial sprinkler systems	3	55	70

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

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

- 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 Commercial Sprinkler Design for Ordinary Hazard Systems	130	90

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

Learners who achieve this qualification may progress to higher-level sprinkler design qualifications, including specialist commercial or residential design pathways, or broader fire protection and building services qualifications offered by SFJ Awards. It can also support progression into roles with greater responsibility in sprinkler design, project management, and fire safety consultancy.

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	Identify requirements for commercial sprinkler systems
Level	3
Unit Number	1
GLH	15

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*	**Assessment Criteria** *The learner can:*		**Guidance and/or Indicative Content**
1. Understand sprinkler system standards	1.1	Summarise sprinkler system standards and how they are applied to commercial buildings	Standards: BS EN 12845, BS EN 12259, FM Global, NFPA 13, UL, insurers' requirements
	1.2	Describe hazard classifications and their application in design	OH, HHP, storage categories; fire loading and occupancy classification
	1.3	Describe other standards relevant to sprinkler system components	Sprinkler heads, valves, pumps, pipework – BS EN 12259 series
2. Understand legislative and regulatory requirements relevant to sprinkler systems	2.1	Identify legislation relevant to commercial sprinkler systems	Building Regulations, Fire Safety Order, HSE, conservation legislation, statutory instruments

	2.2	Identify water undertaker requirements	Water supply, undertaker consultation, backflow prevention, booster pumps, air gaps, overflow requirements
	2.3	Identify electrical regulation requirements	IET Wiring Regulations (BS 7671), pump wiring, alarms, monitoring equipment
	2.4	Explain the interaction between legislation, regulation, standards and regulators	Regulators: AHJs, building control, fire authority, insurance, HSE, certification bodies
3. Understand how to research industry developments and improvements relevant to sprinkler systems	3.1	Explain how to research developments	Internet, regulators, manufacturers, professional bodies
	3.2	Describe developments relevant to commercial sprinkler systems	Smart monitoring, water mist vs sprinklers, BIM integration
	3.3	Evaluate suitability of developments	Assess practicality, compliance, and client requirements

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit is about identifying legislation, regulations, and standards relevant to **commercial sprinkler systems**. It includes consideration of sector developments, innovations, and improvements in system design, installation, and maintenance. The unit is recommended for practitioners such as specifiers, designers, installers, commissioners, service and maintenance engineers, regulators, owners, facilities managers, and building managers. The purpose is to ensure that, within the scope of their responsibility, suitable and sufficient

	commercial sprinkler systems are specified, designed, installed, commissioned, serviced, and maintained in compliance with relevant requirements. The unit has been designed to meet the needs of individuals who work, or intend to work, in a role where they are directly involved in the design, quotation, or implementation of **commercial sprinkler systems**. It is also appropriate for those with regulatory or advisory responsibilities, ensuring compliance with legislation and standards for **commercial sprinkler systems** through cooperation or enforcement. For the knowledge and understanding components of the unit, assessment may be carried out in a learning and development environment. For the practical components, assessment may take place either in the workplace or in a realistic working environment (RWE).
Links	

Title	Identify requirements for designing commercial sprinkler systems
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 identify requirements for commercial sprinkler systems	1.1	Identify customer requirements	Business continuity, fire strategy, occupancy, insurance, risk profile.
	1.2	Identify stakeholder requirements	Fire authority, building control, vulnerable persons, timescales, confidentiality.
	1.3	Identify stakeholders' authority and understanding	AHJ, building control, fire authority, insurers, HSE, certification bodies.
	1.4	Identify legislation relevant to commercial systems	Fire safety orders, building regs, H&S law, environmental requirements.
	1.5	Identify building regulation requirements	Compartmentation, fire stopping, means of escape, structural loading.
	1.6	Identify sprinkler system requirements	Standards, codes of practice, manufacturer's guidance, best practice.

	1.7	Identify water undertaker requirements	Water regs, supply capacity, booster pumps, backflow prevention.
	1.8	Identify electrical regulation requirements	Dedicated circuits, alarms, compliance with standards.
	1.9	Communicate requirements to stakeholders	Clear advice, technical explanation, impartial, reporting methods.
	1.10	Confirm customer and stakeholder understanding	
2. Be able to identify and collate information for design, installation, commissioning, servicing & maintenance	2.1	Explain how building construction impacts design	Structural type, ceiling heights, load capacity, plan drawings.
	2.2	Identify issues impacting system requirements	Accessibility, hazards, integration with services, valve/tank locations.
	2.3	Explain suitable water supply options	Mains, tanks, pumps, boosters, redundancy.
	2.4	Identify other services impacting system	Electrical, gas, HVAC, data, telecoms, drainage.
	2.5	Check technical requirements of other services	Compliance, integration challenges, H&S considerations.
	2.6	Agree suitable options for system components	Sprinkler heads, tanks, valves, alarms, monitoring systems.

	2.7	Agree location options for components	Plant rooms, riser shafts, control sets, pump houses.
	2.8	Agree evacuation & alarm arrangements	Integration with detection, monitored alarms, alarm centres.
	2.9	Confirm customer/stakeholder understanding	
	2.10	Conduct site survey	Inspection, measurement, risk assessment, recording methods.
3. Be able to determine type and category of sprinkler systems	3.1	Identify requirements for system type/category	Hazard class (OH, HHP, storage), design density, duration of supply, special risks.
	3.2	Determine type and category of system	
4. Be able to agree criteria for sprinkler system specifications	4.1	Explain specification options to stakeholders	Legislation, standards, system type, occupancy, heads, pumps, maintenance, integration.
	4.2	Confirm specification with customer and stakeholders	
Additional information about the unit			
Assessment guidance	This unit is about responding to requests for designing **commercial sprinkler systems**, and collecting and recording information for the design, supply, installation, commissioning, servicing, and maintenance of such systems. It includes discussing customer and stakeholder requirements, advising		

	on available options, meeting the requirements of **commercial sprinkler systems**, and conducting site surveys. The unit is recommended for practitioners such as specifiers, designers, installers, commissioners, service and maintenance engineers, regulators, owners, facilities managers, and building managers. The aim is to ensure that, within the scope of their responsibility, suitable and sufficient **commercial sprinkler systems** are specified, designed, installed, commissioned, serviced, and maintained to meet all relevant standards and regulations. The unit has been designed to meet the needs of individuals who work, or intend to work, in a position where they are involved in the design and quotation of **commercial sprinkler systems**. It is also appropriate for those in regulatory or advisory roles, ensuring that the requirements of **commercial sprinkler systems** and associated regulation are being achieved through cooperation or enforcement. For the knowledge and understanding components of the unit, assessment may be carried out in a learning and development environment. For the practical components, assessment may take place either in the workplace or in a realistic working environment (RWE).
Links	

Title	Design commercial sprinkler systems
Level	3
Unit Number	3
GLH	40

Learning Outcomes *The learner will:*		**Assessment Criteria** *The learner can:*	**Guidance and/or Indicative Content**
1. Be able to determine specification for commercial sprinkler systems	1.1	Review specification options for sprinkler systems with customer and stakeholders	Customers may include owners, architects, facilities managers, occupiers. Stakeholders include AHJ, building control, fire authority, water undertakers, insurers, HSE, certification bodies. Specifications cover legislation, standards, fire strategy, occupancy, fire loading, system integration, water supplies, pumps, alarms, and maintenance. Building construction: Larger footprint, high-rise considerations, structural fire resistance, occupancy type, hazards. Accessibility: Site access, logistics for large-scale projects, restricted operational hours.
	1.2	Agree sprinkler system specification with customer, stakeholders, building control and water undertakers	
	1.3	Gather information on building construction relevant to system design	
	1.4	Identify accessibility issues to the building	

2. Understand issues which impact on design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of commercial sprinkler systems	2.1	Identify issues which impact on system design	Commercial issues include: system aesthetics, integration with building management systems, obstructions, fire strategy, component locations, water demand, commissioning phases, servicing requirements, and operational impacts.
	2.2	Identify issues which impact on system installation	
	2.3	Identify issues which impact on system commissioning, servicing and maintenance	
3. Be able to determine type of sprinkler heads, pipework and valve arrangements for commercial sprinkler systems	3.1	Determine type and make of sprinkler heads	National and international standards, manufacturers' data sheets, performance requirements, aesthetic considerations, commercial occupancy demands, new technologies, and large-scale system needs. Components: Pipework, valve set, zone valve, compressor etc. Legislation, standards, best practice, manufacturers' guidance. Consider fire loading, occupancy, performance requirements, cost-effectiveness, and new technologies.
	3.2	Determine type of pipework	
	3.3	Determine valve arrangements	
	3.4	Identify suitable components to fulfil a specification	
4. Be able to determine location of sprinkler heads for commercial systems	4.1	Determine areas of coverage	Commercial coverage requirements, head spacing, obstructions, sloped ceilings, heat sources, flow and pressure demands, and integration with other services.
	4.2	Determine location of sprinkler heads	

5. Be able to determine full hydraulic calculations for commercial sprinkler systems	5.1	Determine type and category of sprinkler system	Commercial hydraulic calculations using industry software, Hazen-Williams formula, K-factors, remote/favourable head calculations, design densities, grid and looped systems, and pump curves.
	5.2	Determine hydraulically most remote and favourable locations and area of operation	
	5.3	Using calculators, determine full hydraulic calculations for sprinkler system	
	5.4	Determine full hydraulic calculations for complex sprinkler systems using recognised sprinkler design software	
6. Be able to determine water supply for commercial sprinkler systems	6.1	Identify options for water supplies	Commercial water supply considerations: mains, tanks, pumps, boosters, storage capacities, regulatory requirements, electrical integration, redundancy, and resilience. Commercial considerations: Higher water demand, mains, tanks, dedicated fire pumps, dynamic pressure, boosters, controller locations, redundancy, hydraulic calculations, estimation.
	6.2	Confirm water supply requirements for sprinkler systems	
	6.3	Determine water supply for sprinkler systems	

	6.4	Identify electrical system requirements for water supplies	
	6.5	Identify and select suitable water supplies to fulfil a specification	
7. Be able to determine alarm requirements for commercial sprinkler systems	7.1	Identify options for alarm arrangements	Commercial alarm systems, monitored and remote monitoring, fire strategy integration, interface with evacuation systems, panels, alarms, battery backup, and compliance with electrical codes.
	7.2	Determine alarm requirements	
8. Be able to determine protection from frost for commercial sprinkler systems	8.1	Identify options for frost protection	Insulation, trace heating, anti-freeze systems (where permitted), control equipment, building envelope considerations, and compliance with water regulations.
	8.2	Determine protection from frost arrangements	
9. Be able to complete commercial sprinkler system proposal documentation	9.1	Compile documentation for a sprinkler system design proposal	
	9.2	Complete a sprinkler system design proposal	

	9.3	Confirm to customer and stakeholders their understanding of sprinkler system design proposal	
10. Be able to amend design specifications of commercial sprinkler systems to reflect installed systems	10.1	Identify areas where variations to a design specification are required	Commercial variations due to building use, design changes, integration issues, component availability, water supply changes, and recalculations of specifications.
	10.2	Identify suitable components and associated services to address variations to a design specification	Commercial variations due to building use, design changes, integration issues, component availability, water supply changes, and recalculations of specifications.
	10.3	Amend a design specification and re-calculate to take account of variations	

Additional information about the unit	
Assessment guidance	This unit is about designing **commercial sprinkler systems** and producing compliant, safe, and practical design specifications. It includes confirming customer and stakeholder requirements, reviewing options, selecting suitable components, determining water supplies, completing full hydraulic calculations, and preparing documentation. The unit also requires learners to gather detailed information on **building construction** and **accessibility issues**, ensuring designs reflect the realities of complex commercial environments. Learners will identify and select system components against specification requirements and consider the integration of sprinkler systems with other building services.

	The unit is recommended for practitioners such as specifiers, designers, installers, commissioners, service and maintenance engineers, regulators, owners, facilities managers, and building managers. The purpose is to ensure that, within the scope of their responsibility, suitable and sufficient **commercial sprinkler systems** are specified, designed, installed, commissioned, serviced, and maintained to industry standards. It has been designed to meet the needs of individuals who work, or intend to work, in roles directly involved in the design of **commercial sprinkler systems**. It is also suitable for those in regulatory or advisory roles, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and standards through cooperation or enforcement. For the knowledge and understanding components of the unit, assessment may be carried out in a learning and development environment. For the practical components, assessment may take place either in the workplace or in a realistic working environment (RWE).
Links	

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.

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

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[3] that can be used for the SFJ Awards Level 3 Certificate in Commercial Sprinkler Design for Ordinary Hazard Systems 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

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

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.

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.

[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

5.3.1. 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
- 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] 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

5.5. 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.

Copyright

SFJ Awards
Consult House
4 Hayland Street
Sheffield S9 1BY
Tel: 0114 284 1970
sfjawards.com