Guidance on the Principles of Assessment Practice for Vocational Police Knowledge and Competence Based Qualifications in England and Wales
May 2014
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Foreword

This document has been jointly developed by Skills for Justice and the College of Policing, to set out the expectations of employers in policing in relation to the principles of assessment practice for knowledge-based and competence-based qualifications in England and Wales. It is intended to be a guidance document to support Awarding Organisations in the quality assurance of centres offering these qualifications. Guidance to centres is the responsibility of Awarding Organisations; however there is no embargo on this document being circulated to centres.

Employers in policing require a consistency of approach to assessment for qualification purposes to ensure transferability between forces, without the need for re-assessment. They require a robust system which ensures the validity, reliability and authenticity of the evidence produced and the assessment decisions made.

For qualifications in policing to be successful, employers must be confident about the quality of assessment and quality assurance, and that there are no perceived easy routes which compromise that quality. To this end, this document seeks to set out the principles of assessment which employers consider necessary to maintain the value, quality and consistency of the qualifications.
1. Background

Skills for Justice

Skills for Justice is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) covering all employers, employees and volunteers in the Justice sector throughout the United Kingdom. This includes:

- Police Forces
- Law Enforcement Agencies including National Crime Agency, HMRC, Border Force, Immigration Enforcement Agency
- Custodial Care including the public and private sector establishments
- Community Justice
- Forensic Science
- Courts and Tribunals Services
- Prosecution Services
- Fire and Rescue Sector
- Local and Central Government
- Legal Services
- Youth Justice
- Armed Forces

The College of Policing

The College of Policing is the Professional Body for policing in England and Wales, and was created in December 2012. Representatives from the Police Federation, the Superintendents' Association, ACPO and UNISON worked with the Home Office to create the College, ensuring that it represents the police service's desires and aspirations.

The College's aim is to use knowledge of what works well to raise standards across policing, supporting police forces to cut crime, protect the public and support the development of an evidence-based profession.

The College has a remit to set standards for the police service on training, development, skills and qualifications. The College also provides support to help the service implement these standards.
2. Introduction

This document sets out the principles for the summative assessment and quality assurance systems required for current and future vocational knowledge and competence based qualifications in England and Wales from May 2014.

These principles apply to all Awarding Organisations and centres offering qualifications in the policing and law enforcement strand of the justice sector.

The following sections outline the specific principles in regard to:

- external quality assurance
- workplace assessment including the use and characteristics of simulation
- knowledge based assessment
- the required expertise of assessors and those involved in quality assurance/verification of assessment

These principles are in addition to the criteria that Awarding Organisations must meet for the delivery of qualifications on the QCF, as required by Ofqual’s ‘Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework’ and the ‘General Conditions of Recognition for Awarding Organisations.’

This guidance document does not describe the detail of systems to deliver these principles. It only provides the overarching principles. The systems may vary from one organisation to another and Skills for Justice and the College of Policing accept this, providing the overarching principles of this document are consistently put into practice. Where the police service determines that it is appropriate for specific assessment processes to be designed and delivered in a standardised way across England & Wales, additional guidance on the specific detail of the assessment requirements and methodology will be provided and agreed with the Awarding Organisations or relevant bodies.

Skills for Justice aims to work in partnership with Awarding Organisations to ensure that the assessment principles are consistently applied to qualifications in policing and law enforcement, which have been developed by the Sector Skills Council on behalf of employers. Awarding Organisations are encouraged to contact Skills for Justice if they require any additional guidance and support in implementing the requirements.

3. External Quality Assurance

External quality assurance is the responsibility of Awarding Organisations, and the mechanisms required to achieve this are outlined in Ofqual’s ‘Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework’.

External quality assurance, monitoring, support, development and control will be put in place as appropriate to each Centre’s level of risk and in line with the Awarding Organisations General Conditions of Recognition.
4. Workplace Assessment

Direct observation in the workplace by a competent assessor (as outlined in Section 6.1) is the preferred methodology in work-based assessment. It should be noted that an officer may demonstrate competence as part of a team but it will be the performance of the individual assessed within the team context.

Alternative assessment methods may be used where direct observation is not possible or practical. Examples of these include:

- work products
- records
- reflective accounts
- professional discussion
- simulations

In all forms of assessment the assessor is responsible for making the final judgement in terms of the candidate meeting the evidence requirements for the unit, confirmed via the process of internal and external quality assurance.

Scenarios/simulations based assessment can be used when:

- There are limited opportunities to demonstrate competence in the workplace against all of the learning outcomes or the length of time for opportunities to arise is considered too long by the employer or Assessor.
- Scenarios/simulations would provide a more consistent demonstration of competence.
- It would enable candidates to be assessed in more difficult circumstances than is likely to happen day to day.
- Scenarios may be appropriate where there is a health and safety consideration for example, firearms, or there are legal implications for example, driving.

The use of scenarios/simulations cannot be used to cover all of the workplace assessment requirements. They should be used to supplement when necessary for the reasons listed above. Where simulations are used, the methodology should have previously been agreed as part of the ongoing quality assurance by the Awarding Organisations.

The Awarding Organisations should issue adequate guidance and strategies to their centres as to how these simulations should be planned and organised. In general this guidance must ensure that the demands on the candidate during simulation are neither more, nor less than they would be in a real work situation. Simulations must be agreed between the representative from the Awarding Organisation who is responsible for external quality assurance and with the person who is responsible for internal quality assurance in the assessment centre, prior to use.

All simulations should follow these basic principles:

- A centre’s overall strategy for simulation must be examined and approved by the person from the Awarding Organisation who is responsible for external quality assurance
- The nature of the contingency and the physical environment for the simulation must be realistic and candidates should be given no indication as to exactly what contingencies they may come across
- Where simulations are used they must reflect the requirements of the qualification criteria
• The location and environment of simulation must be agreed with the person responsible for internal quality assurance, prior to taking place and be in accordance with agreements made with the Awarding Organisation’s representative.

• All 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.

• There should be a range of simulations to cover the same aspect of a unit so that the risk of candidates successfully colluding is reduced.

All arrangements for assessment should be agreed with the Awarding Organisation and be monitored through the external quality assurance process. Centres need to comply with the malpractice policy of the Awarding Organisation and be alert to the risks that all such arrangement could present. All Awarding Organisations must adhere to the unit specification and assessment strategy; if an Awarding Organisation wants to use an assessment method which falls outside the unit specification or assessment strategy the SSC and the College of Policing must be consulted.

5. Knowledge Based Assessment

The General Conditions of Recognition for Awarding Organisations detail the requirements expected of Awarding Organisations in delivering tests and in setting assessment. It explains that all assessments must be fair, robust, rigorous, appropriate, authentic, sufficient and transparent.

Methodologies to be considered for knowledge-based assessments might include:

• Written tests / essays in a controlled environment.
• Multiple choice questions.
• Evidenced questions and answers sessions with assessors.
• Evidenced professional discussions; for example on legislation, principles and practices.
• Scenario based demonstrations (in a classroom or other environment.)
• Individual scenario based written assignments – time-bound.

For the employer the key to knowledge based assessment is that the learner is able to apply the knowledge they have attained in a relevant context. This means that whilst the term knowledge based assessment is used to describe these assessments, the requirement is not just knowledge (or recall) but rather, it extends to understanding (including theoretical application).

Good practice around policing knowledge based assessments, should include:

• Answering specific questions with short answers which draw on a student’s knowledge (recall of facts)
And
• Longer answers where candidates would need to demonstrate a broader understanding of a policing context e.g. theoretical application (this might be an answering questions around specific points of law and how this relates to given policing incidents)
Written assignments cannot be used under any circumstances as the only source of evidence for assessment. Centres must maintain a sufficient bank of assignments, which are regularly updated, to minimise the likelihood of a candidate being given an assignment which has been recently used.

All other assessment should be carried out under closed book conditions.

Other forms of assessment may only be used by agreement with Skills for Justice, the College of Policing and the relevant Awarding Organisation.

An appropriate blend of the above methodologies should be used to attain greater accuracy when measuring a candidates understanding, i.e. some candidates may perform better orally than in writing. Therefore assessment of the knowledge and understanding within each unit of assessment should ideally be shown through more than one method of assessment.

Applying the principle of reasonable adjustment for those candidates who may be disadvantaged through use of certain assessment methodologies and deliveries will also better ensure that assessments remain fair.

Validity and Controlled Assessment

Key to the success of policing knowledge qualifications is that they are a valid measure of a candidate’s knowledge and understanding; as such the following key requirements are recommended:

- Candidates must demonstrate that they have satisfied all assessment criteria of any qualification

- A proportion of the summative assessment must be conducted in a controlled environment (i.e. under supervision) and must be closed book (i.e. without the availability of reference material) to establish that it is actually the candidate completing the assessment. Such assessment should be time-bound and the conditions the same for all candidates. The proportion of summative assessment undertaken in controlled conditions should, as a minimum, be that which the Awarding Organisations would deem sufficient to ensure the validity of the assessment

- All assessments whether created by Awarding Organisations or providers must be limited to the content of the unit and its learning outcomes so as not to create a demand on the candidate which is beyond the requirements of the qualification.

- All assessments whether created by Awarding Organisations or providers must be current, legally up to date and align to current authorised professional practice at the time the assessments are undertaken. Awarding Organisations and/or providers should ensure that they have appropriate measures in place for maintaining the validity, currency and integrity of assessments.

6. The required occupational knowledge or competence of Assessors and Internal & External Quality Assurers

Skills for Justice and the College of Policing believe that the occupational knowledge or competence of those undertaking the roles of assessment, internal and external quality assurance is one of the key factors underpinning valid, fair and reliable assessment. Assessors and assurers need to have the right skills and knowledge to perform the role as agreed by...
the employer and the Awarding Organisation. The integrity of assessments and quality assurance is of paramount importance.

**Assessors**

All assessors must:

- Be qualified as an assessor by having the relevant qualifications or have been trained to assess through a programme that meets the standards laid out in the Police Learning Descriptor for Assessor Training. Those carrying out assessment whilst working towards a qualification must have a lead assessor’s sign-off for their work until they achieve the qualification. The Assessor must be trained to the level of assessment that they will be required to perform. Assessor training approved and monitored by an Awarding Organisation would also be acceptable.

- Have the role of assessor identified within their role profile, where assessment forms part of an individuals’ role.

- Be occupationally competent in the unit (subject areas) they are assessing. For knowledge based qualifications they must be occupationally knowledgeable. This means that each assessor must, according to current sector practice, be competent in the functions covered by the units they are assessing. They will have gained their occupational competence or knowledge working within the policing sector or within an appropriate occupational sector e.g. law/crime based learning environment. They are not required to occupy a position in the organisation more senior than that of the candidate they are assessing.

- Be familiar with the units that relate to the qualification and must be familiar with the correct application of current working practices and technologies within the area of work.

- Maintain their occupational competence and/or knowledge by either actively engaging in continuous professional development activities such as attendance at role specific seminars, any other training and also attendance at exercises and refresher events or by performing the operational role as part of their regular responsibilities in order to keep up-to-date with developments relating to the changes taking place in the policing sector.

- Maintain their professional competence or knowledge as an assessor by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities such as by attending regular assessor standardisation meetings, and effectively performing the assessor role as part of their regular responsibilities in order to keep up-to-date with developments relating to the assessment of competence/knowledge based qualifications.

- Have knowledge and/or competence in the assessment methodology they are utilising.

- Have an appropriate induction to qualifications and the standards that they are assessing provided to them by the centre, including how to identify and deal with plagiarism. Assessors must have access to ongoing training and updating on current issues relevant to these qualifications. Information on the induction and continuing professional development of assessors must be made available to the assessor.
Expert Witnesses

The use of expert witnesses is encouraged as a contribution to the provision of performance evidence presented for assessment.

All expert witnesses must:

- Be occupationally competent in the area being assessed. This means that each expert witness must, according to current sector practice, be competent in the functions covered by the units to which they are contributing. They will have gained their occupational competence working within the policing sector or within an appropriate occupational sector.

- Maintain their occupational competence by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities in order to keep up to date with developments relating to the changes taking place in the Justice sector. These may include those offered by the Awarding Organisation, Skills for Justice or other relevant providers in the sector.

- Provide current records of their 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.

- Be familiar with the qualification unit; and must be able to interpret current working practices and technologies within the area of work.

- Be inducted by the centre so that they are familiar with the standards for those units for which they are to provide expert witness evidence. They must also understand the centre’s recording requirements and will need guidance on the skills required to provide evidence for the qualification unit(s).

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

All IQAs must:

- Have been trained to perform the function of quality assurance. Those with previous V1 qualifications are acceptable. Where centres use trained IQAs, they must provide evidence of the training undertaken to Awarding Organisations.

- Be occupationally knowledgeable, displaying sufficient operational knowledge and experience Due to the risk critical nature of the work and the legal implications of the assessment process, IQAs must understand the nature and context of the assessors’ work and that of their candidates. 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 standards.
• Sample the assessment process and resolve differences and conflicts on assessment decisions.

• Ensure that assessment has been carried out by persons who are 'occupationally competent' or in the case of knowledge based qualifications 'occupationally knowledgeable' within the area they are assessing.

• Maintain their occupational knowledge by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities in order to keep up-to-date with developments relating to the changes taking place in the policing sector.

• Maintain their professional competence as an internal assurer by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities, for example by attending regular internal assurer standardisation meetings and effectively performing the internal assurer role as part of their regular responsibilities, in order to keep up-to-date with developments relating the IQA of competence based qualifications.

• Have an appropriate induction to qualifications and the standards that they are verifying provided to them by the centre, and have access to ongoing training and updating on current issues relevant to these qualifications. Information on the induction and continuing professional development of internal quality assurer must be made available to the external quality assurer.

External Quality Assurance (EQA)

All External Quality Assurers must:

• Be occupationally knowledgeable and have gained their knowledge working within the sector or associated professional/occupational area.

• Have a thorough understanding of the qualification units that they will be quality assuring.

• Have a detailed knowledge of the Awarding Organisation’s systems and documentation.

• Have a thorough understanding of the qualification system and national policy and guidance documents produced by the regulatory authorities and Awarding Organisations describing assessment and quality assurance practice.

• Maintain their occupational competence by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities in order to keep up-to-date with developments relating to the changes taking place in the Policing sector. These activities may include those offered by the Awarding Organisation, Skills for Justice, The College of Policing or other relevant providers in the sector.

• Maintain their professional competence as an EQA by actively engaging in continuous professional development activities in order to keep up-to-date with developments relating to the changes taking place in the assessment of competence based qualifications. These activities may include those offered by the Awarding Organisation, Skills for Justice, The College of Policing or other relevant providers in the sector.
• Hold or be working towards an external quality assurance qualification.
• Have, where appropriate, undergone relevant security checks due to the nature and confidentiality of the information that they will be exposed to.

The Awarding Organisation may seek clarification from Skills for Justice on the appropriateness of the specific external quality assurance applicant where appropriate.
7. Glossary of terms

Please find a glossary of terms used within this document below:

**Assessors** - an individual assessing the knowledge or competence of candidates to ensure they meet the work related standards to achieve a qualification. This may be a dedicated role or as part of an individuals' wider role e.g. supervisor, manager or tutor.

**Awarding Organisation (AO)** - The Awarding Organisation is a body recognised by the qualifications regulators to award credits and qualifications according to the regulatory arrangements.

**Expert Witness** - The role of the expert witness is to submit evidence to the assessor as to the competence of the candidate in any given unit. This evidence must directly relate to the candidate's performance in the work place which has been seen by the expert witness.

**External Quality Assurance (EQA)** - EQA allows training/testing sites to assess the quality of their performance using an **External Assurer** from the Awarding Organisation. EQA often includes on-site evaluation of the training to review the quality of test performance and operations.

**Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)** - IQA is an activity that can be performed by a dedicated individual or as part of an individual's wider role. The role requires regular checks on the quality of training delivery and assessment to be completed by an **Internal Assurer**.

**Scenario/simulation based assessment** - Scenario/simulation based assessment of knowledge and understanding may take place in a non-operational environment for example in a training and development centre, which is not the immediate workplace.

**Sector Skills Council (SSC)** - An SSC is an employer-led organisation that covers specific economic sectors in the United Kingdom. They have four key goals; to reduce skills gaps and shortages, to improve productivity, to boost the skills of their sector workforces and to improve learning supply.

**Workplace Assessment** - Workplace assessment is the gathering and judging of evidence during normal work activities in order to determine whether a required standard has been achieved. Workplace assessment is any real policing situation where a candidate demonstrates their competence against the qualification unit or units and does this entirely without intervention from a tutor, supervisor or fellow officer.