

**Assessment Strategy**

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| **Qualification Title(s)** | SVQ in Processing Operations: Hydrocarbons (Control Room) at SCQF Level 7 |
| **Developed by** | OPITO |
| **Approved by ACG** | 12/06/2024 |
| **Version** | 1 |

#### **Introduction:**

This Assessment and Verification Strategy sets out OPITO’s requirements and recommendations for the assessment, verification and external quality control of SVQs for the Upstream Energy Industry.

The Strategy should be read in conjunction with any specific assessment guidance published within each Standard and the requirements of any other Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations, if relevant.

## Definitions

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| **Assessment** | Assessment is the process of ensuring that individuals are competent to undertake their job roles in accordance with an agreed Standard. |
| **Assessor** | An Assessor judges Candidate performance and evidence against a relevant Standard(s) |
| **Auditor** | See External Verifier |
| **Awarding Body/**  **Audit Organisation** | Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations quality assure the delivery and assessment of qualifications and/or Standards. |
| **Candidate** | Candidates are individuals who seek to be assessed as competent against a Standard(s). |
| **Competence** | Competence is the ability to perform activities within an occupation to the standards expected within employment. Individuals must provide evidence that they have the required experience, technical skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour to perform a job role/function and that they apply them consistently, safely and in accordance with procedures and Standards. |
| **Expert Witness** | An experienced person (in the same discipline as the Candidate) that may be required to support the assessment process by carrying out on the job observations on behalf of an Assessor. |
| **External Verifier** | An External Verifier is employed by an Awarding Body/ Audit Organisation or by a Standards Setting Bodies/Organisations to ensure that Standards are being implemented consistently across all organisations. This will generally be achieved through an external verification visit or an audit. This role may also be carried out by Qualification Verifiers. |

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| **Internal Verifier** | An Internal Verifier assures the quality and consistency of assessments carried out against the relevant Standard(s). Internal Verifiers may also be referred to as Internal Quality Assurers or Quality Monitors. |
| **National Occupational Standard (NOS)** | A National Occupational Standard defines the expected level of performance, knowledge and understanding an individual must achieve when carrying out job roles/functions in the workplace. National occupational Standards therefore act as benchmarks for assessing on-the-job competence and can be used to monitor the performance of the workforce on an on-going basis to maintain a safe and productive workforce. National Occupational Standards must be assessed in the workplace in accordance with operational requirements and procedures. |
| **Standards Setting Bodies/Organisations** | Standards Setting Bodies/Organisations work with employers to develop National Occupational Standards (NOS) for the industries, sectors and occupations they represent. OPITO is the Standards Setting Body for the upstream energy industry. |
| **Verification** | Verification is the process of ensuring that all assessments have been fair, safe, valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and consistent across all assessment decisions. |
| **Vocational Qualification** | Vocational Qualifications provide recognition of an individual’s ability to work in real working environments. Such qualifications include Global Vocational Qualification, Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). |

## Typical Sections of a Standard

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| **Outcomes/Elements** | describe the skills that need to be demonstrated to achieve the Standard. **All** the Outcomes/Elements must be met to achieve the Standard. |
| **Performance Criteria** | define the evidence that candidates must provide to show that they have the required skills. **All** the Performance Criteria must be met to achieve the Standard. |
| **Scope** | defines the range of activities that must be assessed to achieve the Outcomes and Performance Criteria. Typically all the Scope must be met to achieve the Standard (unless specifically stated otherwise). |
| **Knowledge** | defines what the Candidate must know and understand in order to complete the skills being assessed. The knowledge is considered essential and not what is nice to have. |
| **Assessment Guidance** | provides details of how assessment must be carried out and what types of assessment methods must be used. |
| **Evidence Requirements** | define thetype and quantity of evidence that must be provided. **All** these requirements must be met. |

**Assessment requirements**

**The Purpose of Assessment and Verification**

To be **competent**, individuals must provide evidence that they have the required experience, technical skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour to perform a job role/function and that they apply them consistently, safely and in accordance with relevant procedures and Standards.

The purpose of the **assessment process** is to ensure that individuals are competent to undertake their job role or function within the oil and gas industry.

The purpose of the **verification process** is to ensure that all assessments have been fair, safe, valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and consistent.

**Guidance for the Assessment and Verification of Competence**

1. Assessing competence must include observation of Candidates performing tasks in the workplace to a specified Standard(s). Observations are ideally expected to be carried out by a trained Assessor wherever possible. Where it can be shown that is not possible or practical to have a qualified Assessor in the same location as Candidates, Expert Witnesses can be used to support the assessment process by carrying out on-the-job observations on behalf of a trained Assessor.
2. Observation of Candidates must be supported by questioning to ensure that Candidates have, and can apply, relevant knowledge and understanding for the specified Standard(s).
3. Relevant workplace documents and job records can be used to support the assessment process. Additional supporting evidence could include witness testimony from individuals who are in a position to provide informed feedback on the performance of Candidates.
4. Simulation must only be used when it is not practical and/or safe to obtain direct evidence of Candidates’ performance and when expressly indicated by individual Standards.
5. All assessments must be subject to a valid verification process conducted by competent Internal Verifiers. Internal Verifiers must sample evidence across all Assessors, Candidates and assessment sites.
6. All Candidates must have access to fair and equitable assessment opportunities and have a right to appeal against any decision made by their Assessor.
7. Robust internal quality assurance systems must be implemented to ensure that the quality of the assessment and verification processes is maintained. Where formal qualifications are to be achieved this must be in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations.)

**Assessment Process**

**Preparation for Assessment**

Assessors must familiarise themselves with the relevant Standards. This will identify the skills that will need to be demonstrated, and the types of evidence that a Candidate will need to generate.

**Planning Assessment**

Effective assessment planning will ensure that:

* Candidates understand what is to be assessed and how it is to be assessed
* relevant sources of evidence can be discussed with Candidates
* assessment processes can be linked to Candidates’ work patterns and naturally occurring opportunities to generate evidence
* sufficient time is available to collect documentary evidence, including product evidence and witness testimonies
* observations can be planned around work plans, shift patterns, etc
* the use of Expert Witnesses to carry out observations, if required, can be planned and appropriate approvals sought (see page 18 for more guidance)

alternative arrangements for evidence for infrequently occurring activities or activities that cannot be readily generated in the workplace can be planned and appropriate approvals sought if required, for example, for the use of simulation

Assessment planning can be carried out in a number of ways, (for example - verbally, via email or in an Assessment Plan form). The outcome should be that both the parties agree on what will be assessed, the assessments methods used and when the assessment will be carried out.

**Carrying Out Assessment**

The key aspect of assessment is to determine whether suitable and sufficient performance and knowledge evidence is available to meet the prescribed requirements, in order to demonstrate competence against the Standards. The Assessor shall review and assess the Candidate using a range of Assessment Methods.

**Integration of Assessment**

Wherever possible opportunities for integrating assessments should be identified. For example:

* it may be possible to assess more than one Standard during an Assessment
* it is often appropriate to assess knowledge during observations
* knowledge can often appear in more than one Standard within the same discipline area – this needs only to be assessed on one occasion.

**Judging Evidence**

Evidence should cover the performance criteria, scope and knowledge required for the Standards as defined on the evidence requirements.

Considerations when judging Candidates’ evidence include:

* is there sufficient evidence or are there any gaps in the evidence
* is the evidence relevant, valid and reliable
* is the evidence current – the general guidance is that evidence should be less than 2 years old but there can be exceptions
* can the evidence be attributed to the Candidate and or is further authentication required – for example, this may require additional questioning of the Candidate and/or counter-signatures from witnesses.

**Assessment Decisions**

Assessment decisions must be fair and based upon the evidence available and against the Standard(s). If sufficient evidence is not available then a decision of competent cannot be made irrespective of what the Assessor may believe about the competence level of the Candidate.

The final assessment decision will be:

**Competent**

Where the Candidate has fully demonstrated competence against the relevant Standard(s). Competent decisions are made when the Candidates evidence meets all requirements of VARCS (valid, authentic, reliable, current & sufficient).

**Not Yet Competent**

A not yet competent decision will be made where there is insufficient evidence available to demonstrate competence against the Standard(s).

**Re-assessment**

Re-assessment may be required when Candidates have failed to demonstrate competence.

When considering Candidates for re-assessment the Assessor needs to decide whether to re-take the whole assessment or only part.

This will depend on:

* + The assessment method that has been used
  + The purpose of the assessment

For example, the Candidate may have completed knowledge questions, but only need to be re-assessed against a couple of the questions and not the full set.

In all cases of re-assessment, the assessment must be of equal demand to the original assessment.

Candidates who take longer to work through an Outcome or who need to be re-assessed should be assessed only against the Standards and must not be compared with quicker Candidates.

**Recording Assessment Decisions**

All assessment decisions should be recorded and retained. Records are required because:

* It allows Candidates’ progress to be tracked.
* Internal and external verifiers will use the records to help them select sample assessment decisions for review.
* Awarding bodies can use records when monitoring quality assurance activities in the approved centre.

**Feedback on Assessment**

The basis of an assessment is close co-operation between the Assessor and the Candidate with discussion and agreement at each stage. Final feedback should be given at the end of the assessment process, in a neutral location, and as a minimum recorded formally at the end. Feedback must be constructive and should be used to:

* Support Candidates.
* Motivate and encourage.
* Point out strengths.
* Identify development needs.

**Exceptional Circumstances**

To ensure fairness for Candidates in the external assessment process, processes are in place to ensure that Candidates who have suffered genuinely exceptional circumstances, (such as a bereavement or illness,) before or around submission of unit or award evidence, are not disadvantaged, and to provide a safety net check of final results. Candidates should be made aware of this during their induction and followed up during the assessment planning stage.

On return to work Candidates will review their assessment plan with their Assessor. All existing evidence will be reviewed and assessed using the VARCS principles by an Assessor. Evidence that is not within Currency should be revalidated and re-assessed by the Assessor to ensure the Candidate still has the required skills & knowledge to meet the requirements of the Standards.

**Assessment Methods**

*Awarding Bodies should specify the appropriate assessment methods in order to ensure that the requirements specified within each Standard are achieved. Typically used and appropriate assessment methods which may be deployed are described in this section. The primary methods of assessment are observation and questioning and the secondary methods are product evidence, personal statement, witness testimony, professional discussion and RPL.*

Standard(s) generally specify criteria as either Performance or Knowledge.

**Performance Evidence**

Demonstrates a Candidates skills and ability as well as some level of knowledge. Typically carried out through observation, although other methods can also be used.

**Knowledge Evidence**

Demonstrates the Candidates understanding and how it is applied to the task. Typically carried out through questioning, although other methods can also be used.

**Observation**

Observations are used to assess Candidates’ performance as they carry out normal work activities in accordance with the Standard(s). Observation can allow an Assessor to assess a range of criteria, for example:

* That the Candidates are following the correct procedures and job specifications.
* That Candidates are following safe systems of work.
* That communication with colleagues and clients is effective.

It is not normally acceptable for Candidates to record Assessor observations: if this is done, then it has the status of a Personal Statement.

It is expected that observations will be carried out by a qualified, occupationally competent Assessor or by an Expert Witness (EW) acting on behalf of the appointed Assessor.

Records must be retained of what has been observed and how this relates to the Standard(s) being assessed.

**Questioning**

Assessment of knowledge and understanding will typically cover knowledge of facts and procedures, understanding of principles and concepts, application of principles and procedures.

Questions can be used to:

* Confirm that the evidence collected by Candidates is valid and authentic.
* Fill gaps in evidence where Candidates have not been able to demonstrate specific skills as they did not occur when they were being observed.
* Confirm that Candidates know ***why*** they are doing something.
* Assess if the Candidates have the relevant knowledge/experience to deal with non–standard or contingency situations.

Questions can be written and/or oral. Assessors must retain a record of all the questions asked, together with the Candidates’ responses.

**Product Evidence**

In some areas, as Candidates work towards achieving their qualifications they will generate evidence in the form of Products of Work (such as Permits, Isolations, Procedures, Daily Log Reports, Handovers). This is particularly the case for vocational and work-based qualifications. Any work product that shows how a Candidate meets the Performance/Knowledge Criteria can be used as evidence. Products of Work should be authenticated by the Candidate, witness on the job or Assessor.

Review of product evidence can allow Assessors to assess if Candidates have:

* Carried out the required work activities in accordance with job requirements and procedures;
* Made a relevant contribution to the overall job.
* Completed the paperwork correctly (e.g. Recorded relevant information and completed all required sections).

**Personal Statement**

Personal Statements are written reports produced by the Candidate, providing details of an activity they have carried out. Personal Statements should record what was done, how it was done and why it was decided to do the work in this particular way. They must be written in such a way that they reference the performance criteria within the standard or unit being covered.

The Personal Statement does not have to cover the entire activity being carried out, but should have enough information to detail the Standard(s) it is intended to cover.

Records must be retained of the Personal Statement and how this relates to the Standard(s).

**Witness Testimony**

Witness Testimonies are written reports produced by a technically competent person(s) who have observed the Candidate undertake an activity. A Witness Testimony should not be used by itself to make a competency decision, and should be supplement by the Assessor reviewing the products of work or discussing the knowledge and understanding with the Candidate.

Witness Testimonies must be capable of being authenticated. To authenticate a Witness Testimony, a Signature List should be kept by the Candidate with details of all witnesses involved in the process.

**Professional Discussion**

Professional discussion provides a holistic approach to assessing knowledge and understanding and is useful in determining not only what and how a Candidate is performing, but also their analytical and decision-making abilities. As an assessment method, it can be a beneficial way of testing the validity and reliability of a Candidate’s evidence. It is important to bear in mind that professional discussion it is not a question and answer session and does not replace observation and other stated methods of assessing Candidate performance.

There are three key stages in organising professional discussion, namely planning, facilitating/assessing and recording:

* Planning the discussion.
* Facilitating and assessing the discussion.
* Recording evidence from the discussion.

Records must be retained of what has been discussed and how this relates to the Standards .

**Recognition of Prior Learning**

Evidence from prior leaning must be relevant to the Qualification/Standard concerned, and be authenticated, reliable and valid. Typically evidence more than two years old should not be considered unless in exceptional circumstances. **See Assessment Principles (Currency) for further details.** Where there have been significant changes within the sector within the previous two years, prior experience and learning should be used with caution and additional evidence sought.

**Simulation**

#### This outlines the extent to which simulation is permitted.

Standards define the expected level of performance individuals must achieve when carrying out job roles/functions in the workplace.

The majority of the Candidates’ evidence must be drawn from their normal working activity and simulation can only be used where it is difficult or hazardous to obtain direct evidence of Candidates’ performance and when expressly indicated by individual Standards.

Examples of when simulation may be required:

* Health and safety considerations would prevent assessments being carried out under normal working operations.
* It would not be feasible to replicate a situation such as emergency/critical conditions, hazardous operations, adverse weather conditions or contingency scenarios.
* Naturally occurring evidence is so infrequent that gathering evidence from normal working operations would be impractical.

Simulation must take place in a realistic working environment. The environment and conditions for the assessment must reflect normal working situations; equipment must be the same or similar to that currently used in industry; and normal working procedures must be observed.

**This use of simulation should be by exception and must be approved in advance by an External Verifier.**

The following information should be provided:

* Reasons for carrying out the simulation in place of collecting direct evidence.
* How the simulation will be conducted – including details of the equipment, facilities and physical environment used.

**The assessment environment**

**Digital and Remote Assessment**

Digital and remote assessment could include the use of video or audio recording submitted by a Candidate or used with both the Assessor and Candidate. When using digital and remote assessment, a number of considerations should be looked at prior to use. For example:

• Can the assessment meet the requirement of the Standard(s) if delivered digitally.

• Can personnel (Candidate/witness etc) be authenticated.

• Can the security and integrity of the assessment material be maintained.

Typically when delivering digital assessment, it’s good practice to produce a checklist or standardised approach, defining the outcomes to be covered and the Standard(s) to be achieved; this will help to ensure that the assessment is valid and reliable. This should be issued in advance and used consistently with all Candidates.

The use of digital assessment should meet the requirements of Organisation security, safety and data protection policies prior to use.

**Requirements for roles in assessment and quality assurance**

# Roles & Responsibilities

*The following guidelines should be read in conjunction with the requirements of Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations, if relevant.*

**Candidates**

Candidates are individuals who will be assessed as competent against a Standard(s).

### Responsibilities

Candidates’ responsibilities are to:

* work with their Assessor(s) to identify opportunities where they can demonstrate their competence in accordance with the relevant Standard(s);
* perform agreed tasks in the workplace in accordance with all health, safety and environmental requirements;
* gather evidence (where required) to support their claim of competence in accordance with the relevant Standard(s).

## Expert Witness

An experienced person (in the same occupational discipline as the Candidate) that may be required to support the assessment process by carrying out on the job observations on behalf of an Assessor.

### Responsibilities

It is expected that observations will be carried out by a qualified and occupationally competent Assessor. If an organisation identifies that it is not possible or practical to have a qualified Assessor in the same location as a Candidate for all required observations, it may be possible to use an Expert Witness to support the assessment process by carrying out required on-the-job observations.

An Expert Witness’s main responsibilities are to:

* Agree a time with the Candidate for the observation to take place and advise the Assessor, where possible.
* Observe the Candidate carrying out normal work tasks/activities.
* Record details of each task/activity observed and confirm its completion according to the required Standard(s).
* Authenticate any supporting documentation/job paperwork.
* Record any questions asked during the observation to support or authenticate the Candidate’s work.
* Comment on the Candidate’s technical ability, knowledge of equipment, team work, safe working practices, etc.
* Make a recommendation to the Assessor on the Candidate’s ability to carry out the task/activity.

Where on-the-job observations are carried out by an Expert Witness, a qualified Assessor must continue to be responsible for all other assessment activities, including assessment planning, providing feedback, review of product evidence and questioning to confirm that all performance and knowledge requirements have been met.

The Assessor must review all the evidence provided by the Candidate, including the observation by the Expert Witness, and make a judgement on the competence of the Candidate. It is the responsibility of the Assessor to make sure that any testimony from an Expert Witness is reliable and technically valid.

### Minimum Requirements

The following minimum requirements must be met for Expert Witnesses:

* An Expert Witness must have demonstrable relevant experience in the discipline area in which the Candidate is being assessed.
* An Expert Witness must be registered by the Centre and details of relevant experience must be available for review by External Verifiers at External Verification Visits/Audits.
* An Expert Witness must participate in a briefing session to ensure that they are familiar with the Standard(s) being assessed and the role of an Expert Witness – evidence of the briefing processes must be available for review by External Verifiers at External Verification Visits – guidance on what should be included in a briefing session is detailed in Additional section.

Please see Additional section for further guidance on utilising an Expert Witness.

**Details of Expert Witness competence and experience must be recorded for review by Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations, as relevant.**

## Assessors

An Assessor assesses Candidate performance and evidence against a relevant Standard(s).

### Responsibilities

Assessors’ responsibilities are to:

* Register and carry out an Induction before practicing for the organisation.
* Fully understand and comply with the requirements defined in the Standard(s) for which they are carrying out the assessment.
* Fully understand and comply with the required assessment and internal verification processes and quality procedures for the Standard(s).
* Plan and manage the assessment process.
* Carry out assessments of Candidates performance and/or knowledge against the relevant Standard(s)
* Ensure that Candidates’ evidence is aligned to the VARCS principles (valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient).
* Make a determination as to the competence of the Candidate.
* Record and maintain assessment decisions & Candidate feedback as defined by the organisation.
* Support the Candidate through the qualification.
* Ensure all assessment instruments and methods are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.
* Identify gaps in a Candidates competency and work with the Candidate to provide a plan in closing such gaps (where necessary).
* Identify and support Candidates who require particular assessment arrangements.
* Be aware of the risk of malpractice and act according to organisations procedure (as applicable).
* Participate & liaise with other Assessors and internal verifiers (including standardisation activities) to ensure a consistent approach to assessment.
* Inform the organisation immediately if there is a Personal Interest (Conflict of interest) with the Candidate under assessment utilising the Declaration of Interest Form.

The Assessor may also be required to carry out the following additional activities, in accordance with their organisation’s and, where relevant, the Awarding Body/Audit Organisation’s quality systems.

* + Participate in any assessment appeal as indicated in the organisations procedure.
  + Participate in any complaint as indicated in the organisations procedure.
  + Attend and participate in any visits by Awarding Bodies/Organisations, as required.
  + Contribute to the organisations review of policies, procedures, learning and assessment material and resources.

### Minimum Requirements

Assessors must be occupationally competent and qualified to carry out the assessment process – they must meet the following minimum requirements:

* Be technically competent in the discipline area of the Standard(s) they are assessing against. – this could be demonstrated in a number of ways:
* they are an experienced practitioner or supervisor in the same discipline.
* they have been assessed as competent for the relevant Standard(s) and/or have achieved an equivalent qualification.
* they have previously performed or supervised the activities defined in the Standard(s) and/or and can demonstrate that they have maintained their technical expertise and knowledge of current processes and practices.
* Hold (or be working towards it) a recognised Assessor qualification (e.g.L&D9DI, L&D9D, A1, A2, D32, D33) and be operating to the requirements of the current Standard(s) for trained Assessors.

**Details of Assessor competence, certification and experience must be recorded for review by Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations, as relevant.**

### Skills Currency

Assessors must maintain the currency of their skills:

* Assessors must participate in regular updates / training / Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities relating to their technical discipline, Standard(s) being assessed and assessment practices – typically, on an annual basis.
* Assessors who have not carried out any assessments for a period of 2 years or more for the Standard(s) against which they will be assessing, must undertake refresher training, which could be undertaken internally before carrying out any assessment activities. This refresher training must ensure that they are fully conversant with the criteria defined in the Standard(s) that they will be assessing against and, if relevant, the current version of the Assessor qualification.

### Additional Assessor Requirements

Additional notes on the requirements for Assessors:

* Assessors will be required to demonstrate technical competence for the individual disciplines depending on the standard(s) being assessed.
* Should an Assessor also act as an Internal Verifier, the Assessor cannot take any part in the verification of the Candidates that they have assessed – this must be done by a different Internal Verifier.
* Assessors who are in training can undertake assessments but all assessments against Standard(s) must be reviewed by a qualified Assessor and/or an Internal Verifier. Assessors in training would be expected to complete their own Assessor qualification within a year of their involvement in the assessment process.

## Internal Verifiers

An Internal Verifier assures the quality and consistency of assessments carried out against the relevant Standard(s). Internal Verifiers may also be referred to as Internal Quality Assurers or Quality Monitors.

### Responsibilities

Internal Verifiers’ main responsibilities are to:

* Fully understand the content of, and the assessment requirements for, the Standard(s) for which they have responsibility for verifying.
* Ensure the quality and consistency of assessment decisions made by the Assessors.
* Ensure that the assessment processes comply with required quality assurance systems.
* Provide feedback to Assessors on the judgements they have made about Candidates’ competence.
* Internally verify assessments across all sites, Assessors and Candidates – including interim verification;
* Provide feedback, advice and support to Assessors.
* Comply with the internal verification processes and quality procedures for Standard(s).
* Maintain records of internal verification activities for the Standard(s).
* Conduct and/or participate in standardisation activities to ensure a consistent approach to assessment is maintained
* Participate in, and support, their organisation’s internal quality systems and ensure that any corrective actions and recommendations required following internal audits are carried out in a timely manner.
* Inform the organisation immediately if there is a Personal Interest (Conflict of interest) with the Assessor/Candidate under assessment utilising the Declaration of Interest Form.

The Internal Verifier may also carry out the following additional activities, in accordance with their organisation’s and, where relevant, the Awarding Body/Audit Organisation’s quality systems:

* + Implement an appeals procedure to settle any disputes between Candidates and Assessors.
  + Facilitate, or contribute to, the induction, training and development of Assessors.
  + Participate in, and support, external quality audits and ensure that any corrective actions and recommendations required following the audits are carried out in a timely manner.

### Minimum Requirements

Internal Verifiers must be competent and qualified to carry out the verification process – they must meet the following minimum requirements:

* Have sufficient occupational expertise in the broad discipline area covered by the relevant Standard(s) to permit valid judgements about assessments and appeal decisions – typically this would be demonstrated by the Internal Verifier having worked at either operational or supervisory level in the broad discipline area.
* Hold (or be working towards it) a recognised Internal Verifier’s qualification (e.g. L&D11, V1, D34) and be operating to the requirements of the current Standard(s) for trained Internal Verifiers.

**Details of Internal Verifier competence and experience must be available for review by Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations, as relevant.**

### Skills Currency

Internal Verifiers must maintain the currency of their skills:

* Internal Verifiers must participate in regular updates / training / Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities – typically on an annual basis.
* Internal Verifiers who have not carried out any verification for a period of 2 years or more must undertake refresher training before carrying out any internal verification activities. This refresher training must ensure that they are fully conversant with the Standard(s) they will be internally verifying and, if relevant, the current version of the Internal Verifier qualification. This could be undertaken by internal training.

### Additional Verifier Requirements

Additional notes on the deployment of Internal Verifiers:

* Internal Verifiers would normally be expected to complete an Assessor qualification and have been carrying out assessments for a minimum of 6 months before going on to become an Internal Verifier.
* Should an Internal Verifier also act as an Assessor, the Internal Verifier cannot take any part in the verification of the Candidate that they have assessed – this must be done by a different Internal Verifier.
* Should Internal Verifiers undertake Candidate assessments, they must meet all the requirements outlined above for an Assessor.
* Should an Internal Verifier with sufficient occupational expertise in the broad discipline area not be available, internal verification could be carried out by an experienced Internal Verifier from a related discipline (e.g. another maintenance or process related discipline). Alternatively, specific approval could be sought from an Awarding Body/Organisation and/or External Verifier for the use of an experienced Internal Verifier from a related discipline.

## Internal Verification and Sampling

It is important to have confidence in the assessment process and ensure all Assessors have carried out assessments in a fair and consistent manner, and that their assessment decisions are correct and consistent.

The Internal Verifier is responsible for ensuring the validity of internal assessments and the reliability of Assessors’ decisions. This responsibility has several parts:

* Supporting Assessors.
* Checking assessment instruments to ensure validity.
* Arranging standardisation exercises.
* Sampling assessment decisions.
* Maintaining assessment and verification records.

Interim verification must be ongoing through the assessment process. This allows the Internal Verifier to review assessment decisions before final conclusions are made. This identifies any areas for improvement at an early stage and will allow support or training to be provided to Assessors if required. The outcomes of internal verification should be given as feedback to the Assessors and used to improve the assessment process.

The Internal Verifier should select a sample of Candidate evidence to check that each Assessor is making consistent decisions in line with national Standard(s).

Internal Verification sampling must cover all Assessors, all Standard(s) and all Candidates.

There are several key features that should be considered in selecting a sample. These include:

* First time delivery of a Standard.
* New Assessor.
* Previous issues or areas for improvement identified by internal or external verification/audit.

**For example:**

The rate of internal verification sampling should be increased when delivering a new Standard . In most cases this should start at 100% for all Assessors.

Internal verification of safety Standard(s) should always be 100% for all Assessors.

100% of assessments carried out by new or inexperienced Assessors should be verified for the first 3 assessments carried out for each Standard being assessed. Assuming that verifications are acceptable, a sampling rate of 50% could be introduced for a further 3 assessments, reducing to 25% for all further assessments. Should any issues be identified during sampling, verification should return to 100%. This verification sampling plan should be applied to each new Standards being assessed by new or inexperienced Assessors.

**External quality assurance**

External quality control of assessment will be carried out by Awarding Bodies/Audit Organisations.

### Responsibilities

Awarding Bodies/Organisations will be responsible for:

* **Approval** of new Centres to ensure that they are suitably equipped and prepared to assess against the Standard(s) and have sufficient Assessors and Internal Verifiers in place;
* **External Verification** to monitor Approved Centres’ performance to ensure that the requirements of the Standards and the Assessment Strategy are being met

Awarding Bodies/Organisations must ensure that:

* Approved Centres have implemented robust quality assurance systems to ensure that the quality of the assessment and verification processes is maintained and meets the requirements of the Standard(s).
* Assessments are subject to a valid verification process - Approved Centres must be able to demonstrate that they have implemented a valid sampling plan which samples evidence across all Assessors and Candidates.
* Candidates have access to safe, fair and equitable assessment opportunities and have a right to appeal against any decision made by their Assessor.
* Approved Centres maintain a list of Assessors, Internal Verifiers and Expert Witnesses who are involved in assessment and internal verification activities for each Standard supported by CVs.

The primary method of external quality control of assessment will be through Approval and External Verification activity to Approved Centres. Alternative methods, such as paper approvals, postal verification or online verification (where online portfolios have been generated), may be used following a valid risk assessment of each Approved Centre.

External Verification must be carried out on a minimum of an annual basis for active Approved Centres. Standardisation activities for External Verifiers must take place on a regular basis to ensure consistency within Approved Centres. This would be separate to any ongoing monitoring undertaken by OPITO.

Awarding Bodies/Organisations will be responsible for taking relevant sanctions against Approved Centres who have not met the requirements of the Standard(s) and the Assessment Strategy and for ensuring that corrective actions are implemented.

### Minimum Requirements

External Verifiers must meet the following minimum requirements when involved in the assessment process for SVQs:

* Hold (or be working towards it) a recognised External Verifier qualification within 2 years of starting (e.g. L&D12, D35 or V2)
* Be competent in internal verification.
* Have relevant occupational competence.
* Have experience of working within the upstream energy industry.

In addition to the above requirements, External Verifiers will also be required to:

* Participate in the approval of Approved Centres.
* Monitor Approved Centres’ performance and review Candidate evidence across a representative sample of Assessors and Internal Verifiers.
* Provide feedback, advice and support to Approved Centres.
* Review Approved Centres’ lists of Assessors, Internal Verifiers and External Witnesses who are involved in assessment and internal verification activities for each Standard on an annual basis.

External Verifier should maintain the currency of their skills and should participate in updates / training / Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities – on a minimum of an annual basis.

**Additional**

**Standardisation**

All assessments must undergo a standardisation process to ensure that they are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair and that they can be delivered in a consistent way by all Assessors.

Regular standardisation activities should take place with all Assessors and Internal Verifiers to discuss the assessment process to ensure a consistent approach is being applied and to discuss any issues arising.

Typical Standardisation methods might include (but are not limited to):

* **Agreement trials:** Assessors work together to consider examples of Candidates’ evidence. By discussing discrepancies and coming to a shared understanding based on the evidence requirements, the Assessors reach a common understanding. Involving Internal Verifiers is very helpful in achieving consensus.
* **Dual assessment:** Two Assessors assess the same Candidates. Teaming an experienced Assessor with a new Assessor is not uncommon, but there are benefits for any Assessor in checking their decisions, particularly for new Standard(s). It also encourages cooperative working.
* **Cross assessment:** Assessors exchange Candidate evidence to check each other’s interpretation of the Standard.
* **Evidence review:** Internal Verifier collates assessed Candidate evidence and asks a group of Assessors to discuss any discrepancies between their individual decisions This allows professional development as well as ensuring a shared understanding.

## Conflict of Interest

All personnel involved in the assessment and verification process have a responsibility to make a declaration if they are related to, or have a personal relationship with, a Candidate, and are currently deployed to:

* Set assessments which this Candidate will undertake.
* Make assessment decisions on this Candidate’s evidence.
* Internally verify assessment decisions on this Candidate’s work.
* Invigilate an assessment which this Candidate is sitting.

**Briefing Guidelines for Expert Witnesses**

All Expert Witnesses must participate in a face to face briefing/coaching session to ensure that they are familiar with the Standard(s) being assessed and that they understand their role to observe the Candidate and record observations and comments.

Briefings for Expert Witnesses should be conducted by an experienced Assessor or Internal Verifier.

As a minimum, the following key points must be covered in briefing/coaching sessions with Expert Witnesses.

**Assessing competence against occupational Standard(s) within the Qualification**

* What does competence mean?
* What is a Standard?
* What is a Qualification?
* An overview of the specific Standards against which the Expert Witness will conduct observations.
* How does assessment relate to the Standards?
* What are the specific requirements for observing on-the-job competences for the Standard(s) that the Candidate is being assessed against?

**Carrying out observations**

* What can be assessed by observation?
* How to prepare for observation.
* Good practice during observations.

**Recording observations and providing supporting evidence**

* Recording observations and comments.
* Confirming that job paperwork is available and confirms the activities and that the paperwork can be attributed to the Candidate.
* Providing a clear recommendation to the Assessor on the Candidate’s performance and ability to carry out the task/activity.