

Qualifications and units available

A list of qualifications and units available is shown in Appendix A.

Notification to approved centres of changes to VQs

As a general statement, approved centres will receive notification announcing the arrival or demise of a VQ.

In future, for a new VQ, the notification will clearly state the date that the new qualification is available from, to whom it is relevant, whether it replaces an existing VQ, the intended 'life' of the VQ, and will cover any special points about the VQ. The aim is to distribute the news of a new VQ at least six weeks before candidates are able to register on the VQ. This will enable interested approved centres to digest, apply to assess, and cater for the VQ. ECITB external verifiers visiting the interested approved centre and advising them accordingly will support this. ECITB VQ publications will be updated to include the new VQ as soon as is practicably possible.

The notification will also announce the impending demise of a VQ and the intended run out period. The VQ database will be interrogated six months before the end date of a VQ to remind approved centres that they have candidates registered on the VQ or on units of the VQ. ECITB external verifiers will advise the individual approved centre of impending changes during routine visits or audits.

Reliable and accurate assessment of competence is critical if the qualifications are to be credible and have value in employment. Assessment involves collecting evidence of competence and judging it against the national standards expressed in the units of competence. The evidence gathered must be reliable, valid, current (up to and including the two year period prior to the assessment date for any individual VQ unit or qualification) and sufficient to ensure that competence has been fully demonstrated. Assessment is therefore essential to the success of the qualification system.

Any evidence submitted for an N/SVQ must be.

Valid ~ it must relate to the requirements of the standard for the unit being assessed

Authentic ~ it must be genuine evidence of the candidate's competence (and not someone else's)

Current ~ it must show that the candidate is competent at the time of the assessment

N.B. ECITB Awarding Body permits performance evidence from any work activity completed by a candidate to be included within a portfolio (up to and including the two year period from the assessment date) for any individual N/SVQ unit or qualification.

Reliable ~ it must be able to guarantee validation from other stakeholders

Sufficient ~ there must be enough evidence in respect of each requirement to show the candidate's competence

Assessment teams must ensure rigorous and effective control of centres and the assessment processes so that the judgement of what is valid, authentic, current, reliable and sufficient evidence is maintained across all assessment methods. Those assessment team activities are audited by the Awarding Body.

Other than as indicated in the qualification on simulations, all evidence of competence must reflect activity undertaken by the candidate in the workplace.

Candidates should be encouraged to make effective use of all available opportunities for evidence collection in line with the following principles:

1. Evidence must be valid, in that it's meet the requirements of the standard and is capable of being authenticated as the candidates own work, or work for which the candidate has responsibility and it meeting the standard.

2. Where the scale, diversity, complexity and duration of projects from which candidates can derive evidence are limited, evidence supplied from a single project, using a combination of significant components within it, may be sufficient. However, evidence from a range of projects is preferable.

3. Assessors should pay due regard to the cost-effectiveness of using varied sources of evidence when planning assessments with candidates.

There are two main types of evidence, both of which are necessary to successfully complete an N/SVQ:

- Performance evidence
- Knowledge evidence

Awards outside England, Wales and Northern Ireland

The regulatory authorities can only accredit and assure the quality of qualification for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, awarding bodies may still offer the accredited qualifications in Scotland, UK dependent territories and other countries, and may issue certificates carrying the relevant regulatory authorities' logo(s).

The regulatory authorities reserve the right to take appropriate action against awarding bodies in cases where practices in their centres outside England, Wales and Northern Ireland could bring the education and training system into disrepute.