

About NVQs

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work-based qualifications that assess someone's competence in a work situation and certify that the individual can perform the work role to the standards expected in employment.

NVQs are based on national occupational standards of competence drawn up by standards-setting bodies known as Industry Lead Bodies. The standards describe the level and breadth of performance that is expected of persons working in the industry or sector which the NVQ covers.

Assessment methods

The assessment methods describe the methods which should be used to assess performance and underpinning knowledge.

Assessors

The Assessor's role is to assess the work carried out by candidates and use this evidence to judge whether the candidate has met the standard laid down in the NVQ element. The Assessor needs to be competent to assess to national standards in the area under assessment.

Approved Centre

Organisation/centre approved by the TVET Council to offer full National Vocational Qualifications.

Case Studies

In situations where it is difficult for workplace assessment to take place, case studies can offer the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate potential competence.

A case study is a description of an actual or imaginary situation presented in some detail. The way the case study is presented will vary depending upon the candidate, but the most usual methods are written, taped or filmed.

The main advantage of a case study is the amount of evidence of underpinning knowledge they can generate and the specific nature of the evidence produced.

Competence

In the context of vocational qualifications, competence means: the ability to carry out prescribed activities to nationally pre-determined standards in an occupation. The definition embraces cognitive, practical and behavioural skills, underpinning knowledge and understanding, and the ability to react appropriately in contingency situations.

Element

An element is a description of an activity which a person should be able to do. It is a description of an action, behaviour or outcome which a person should be able to demonstrate.

Explanation of NVQ Levels

NVQs cover five (5) levels of competence, from entry level staff at Level 1 through to senior management at Level 5.

Level 1 – Entry Level

Recognises competence in a range of varied work activities performed in a variety of contexts. Most work activities are simple and routine. Collaboration with others through work groups or teams may often be a requirement. Substantial supervision is required especially during the early months evolving into more autonomy with time.

Level 2 – Skilled Occupations:

Recognises competence in a broad range of varied work activities performed in a variety of contexts, some of which are complex and non-routine. Some responsibility and autonomy. Collaboration with others through work groups or teams and guidance of others may be required.

Level 3 – Technician and Supervisory Occupations:

Recognises competence in a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources are often a requirement. The individual is capable of self-directed application, exhibits problem solving, planning, designing and supervisory capabilities.

Level 4 – Technical Specialist and Middle Management Occupations:

Recognises competence involving the application of a range of fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of resources, as well as personal accountabilities for analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution, and evaluation.

Level 5 – Chartered, Professional and Senior Management Occupations:

Recognises the ability to exercise personal professional responsibility for the design, development or improvement of a product, process, system or service. Recognises technical and management competencies at the highest level and includes those who have occupied positions of the highest responsibility and made outstanding contribution to the promotion and practice of their occupation.

External Verifier

Person trained and appointed by the TVET Council and competent to approve and ensure an approved centre's quality of provision.

Extracted workplace examples

This could be something produced during the normal course of work, which can be used for evidence purposes such as reports, menus, promotional literature, training plans, etc.

Internal Verifier

The Internal Verifiers act in a supporting role for Assessors and ensure consistent quality of assessment and competence. Needs to be competent to assess to national standards in the area under assessment.

Key role

Key roles are the broadest descriptions of the activities required in employment. They describe the principle components of work and help shape the standards into a comprehensive structure. This structure is then broken down into further units of competence.

NVQ

National Vocational Qualification.

NVQ Coordinator

Within each approved centre offering NVQs, there will be a centre contact who takes overall responsibility for the operation and administration of the NVQ system.

Observation

Observation of the candidate carrying out his/her job in the workplace is the assessment method recommended in the vast majority of units and elements. Observation of staff carrying out their duties is something that most supervisors and managers do every day.

Performance criteria

Performance criteria indicate what is required for the successful achievement of an element. They are descriptions of what you would expect to see in competent performance.

Questioning

Questioning can sometimes be used to assess a candidate in those areas of work listed in the range which cannot be assessed by observation. Guidance on when this assessment method can be used is given in the assessment guidance of each individual element.

Questioning is also one of the most appropriate ways you will be able to collect evidence to assess a candidate's underpinning knowledge and understanding.

As an assessment method, questioning ensures you have all of the evidence about a candidate's performance. It also allows you to clarify situations.

Range statements

A range puts the element of competence into context. A range statement is a description of the range of situations to which an element and its performance criteria are intended to apply.

Range statements are prescriptive therefore each category must be assessed.

Role-plays

Role-plays are simulations where the candidate is asked to act out a situation in the way he/she considers "real" people would behave. By using role-play situations to assess a candidate you are able to collect evidence and make a judgment about how the candidate is most likely to perform. This may be necessary if the range specified includes a situation in which the candidate is unlikely to find himself/herself, or where the candidate needs to develop competence, for example, in a disciplinary situation, before being judged competently.

Simulations

Where possible, assessment should always be carried out by observing **natural performance** in the workplace. **Simulated performance**, however, can be used where specified to collect evidence about an aspect of the candidate's work which occurs infrequently or is potentially hazardous; for example, dealing with fires.

By designing the simulated situation, briefing the candidate and observing his/her performance, you will be able to elicit evidence which will help you judge how a candidate is **most likely** to perform in real life.

ETTLB

Entertainment and Events Technology Lead Body.

Underpinning knowledge

Underpinning knowledge indicates what knowledge is essential for a person to possess in order to successfully achieve an element and prove total competence.

Units

A unit of competence describes one or more activities which form a significant part of a person's work. Units are accredited separately but in combination can make up a vocational qualification. There are three categories of units:

Mandatory units – are core to a qualification and have to be completed.

Elective units – within some qualifications which allow the candidate to choose a number of individual units from a specific group.

Additional units – are units which do not have to be completed to achieve a qualification.

Work-based projects

Work-based projects are a useful way for you to collect evidence to support any decision you make about a candidate's performance. They are particularly appropriate in determining the level of a candidate's underpinning knowledge and understanding where it may be insufficient to rely only on questioning and observation.

A project often involves the identification of a solution to a specific problem identified by you and/or the candidate (such as looking at ways to redress a recent drop in sales), or may be a

Work-based projects (Cont'd)

structured programme of work built around a central situation or idea (such as the introduction of a new job rostering process).