

INTRODUCTION

The assessments that an IMI approved centre is required to provide will be determined by the qualifications and/or accreditations that they offer. Each qualification and accreditation scheme has an assessment strategy associated with it.

- Individual awarding organisations, such as the IMI, develop the assessment strategy for VRQs. IMI's VRQs include qualifications used in apprenticeships, qualifications for full-time learners, qualifications developed to meet legislative requirements (e.g. refrigerant handling) and qualifications to meet industry needs (e.g. electric vehicles).

Note: Because awarding organisations develop their own assessment strategies for these qualifications, this often results in different assessment requirements for similar qualifications offered by different awarding organisations.

- The assessment strategy for VCQs has been set by the IMI, the Sector Skills Council responsible for developing these qualifications.

Note: VCQs are unique to the motor vehicle sector and have been developed by the IMI SSC in response to industry demand. Other SSCs have retained NVQs for their competence based qualifications.

- The assessment strategy for N/SVQs is set by the Sector Skills Council responsible for developing the qualification.

Note: Centres offering N/SVQs must be aware of the assessment requirements laid down by the Sector Skills Council and/or the regulatory bodies (e.g. Ofqual and SQA Accreditation) specifically for these qualifications.

- The assessment requirements for Functional Skills, Core Skills and Essential Skills Wales are set by the regulatory bodies (i.e. Ofqual, SQA Accreditation and the Welsh Government respectively).
- Assessment strategies for each IMI Accreditation have been set by the IMI based upon guidance from the industry.

Note: Although IMI Accreditations are designed to promote set industry standards they are not regulated qualifications and must not be represented as such.

- Those centres offering IMI Quality Assured Programmes will develop their own assessment specifications for approval by the IMI.

Note: Quality Assured Programmes simply recognise organisations' own training and assessment. They are not regulated qualifications and must not be represented as such.

THE ROLE OF THE ASSESSOR

The role of the assessor is defined in section 2.2 of this manual. This section aims to outline the main requirements for good assessment and to highlight good practice.

As well as having a thorough knowledge and understanding of all the assessment requirements of the qualifications he/she is approved to assess, the assessor must be capable of:

- planning assessments
- using different assessment methods
- making assessment decisions
- recording the outcomes of assessments
- giving feedback to candidates.

Note: This section is not meant to be an instruction manual for assessors. Before they are appointed to the role, they must be competent in assessment activities.

The IMI produces an extensive range of assessment documents for each qualification. Up-to-date versions are contained in the centres' area on the IMI website (www.theimi.org.uk/awarding). Assessors should check the website regularly to ensure that they are using the current version of the documentation.

A list of all the qualifications offered by the IMI, with the qualification number and expiry dates, is also provided on the IMI website (www.theimi.org.uk/awarding).

PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

As with all centre activities, the key to success is good planning. The responsibility for planning assessments rests with the assessor supported by the internal quality assurer. Such planning involves:

- identifying the types of assessments required
- agreeing dates, times and locations for assessments with the candidate and other interested parties (e.g. instructors, mentors, employers etc.)
- being available to brief candidates
- recognising opportunities to make assessment judgements/decisions
- allowing time for feedback to the candidate
- ensuring that assessment documentation is completed
- making arrangements for reviewing the candidate's progress
- liaising with the internal quality assurer.

USING DIFFERENT ASSESSMENT METHODS

There are a number of assessment methods available. The assessor must ensure that he/she chooses the method(s) that meet the assessment strategy of the qualification being assessed.

In most qualifications there are mandatory requirements such as the IMI online assessments or workplace observation for VCQs and N/SVQs. To meet the remaining requirements of the assessment strategy, most assessors choose to use the assessment methodology and documentation produced by the IMI.

However, on some occasions there is scope for assessors to use centre devised assessments, provided that they have been approved (in advance) by the external quality assurer (EQA). Full details are included in section 2.7 of this manual.

Different assessment methods available to the assessor include:

- direct observation of the candidate:
 - at the centre (e.g. practical assessments)
 - in the workplace
- online/computer based assessments:
 - multiple choice tests
 - simulated activities
- written tests:
 - multiple choice
 - short answer
- assignments
- assessor questioning
- professional discussions
- assessing 'evidence' of candidate competence/knowledge:
 - candidates' work records (e.g. job cards)
 - witness testimony
- examining completed work.

Each method has advantages and drawbacks. Inevitably a combination of methods will produce the best outcome. It is up to the assessor to ensure that he/she adheres to the requirements of the qualification and that successful candidates have met the standard required.

LANGUAGE OF ASSESSMENT

If the assessment of the qualification is going to be in a language other than English (when the assessment will take place in England or Northern Ireland), and Welsh and/or English (when it will take place in Wales) the centre must notify IMI prior to registering the candidate.

Note: it is essential that the assessment strategy for the qualification is checked, as not all qualifications allow the use of a language other than English or Welsh e.g. IMI MOT Qualifications.

MAKING ASSESSMENT DECISIONS

The main purpose of the assessor's job is to make judgements and decisions as to whether the candidate has met the standard required. How he/she arrives at that decision will depend largely on the assessment method being used.

For example, an assessor observing a candidate carrying out a specific task will be able to use his/her knowledge and experience to establish whether the candidate completed the task correctly. Other assessments are even more clear cut. A multiple choice test with set answers and pass mark make it easy to determine whether the candidate has reached the standard required.

Harder to judge is candidate 'evidence', a common feature of VCQs and N/SVQ assessment. Here, the assessor must be satisfied that the information provided is current, valid and contains sufficient detail to prove that the candidate has met the standard required by the qualification.

For all IMI qualifications, detailed guidance is provided to help the assessor reach the correct decision. This can be found in the centres' area on the IMI website (www.theimi.org.uk/awarding) under each type of qualification.

For the majority of qualifications and accreditations offered, the IMI has created mandatory online assessments to enable candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. The IMI's online assessments are marked automatically and the results are available instantly.

Note: Online assessments are used primarily to meet the requirements for external assessments as laid down by the regulatory bodies (Ofqual and SQA Accreditation). Generally this is not the sole means of assessing candidates' knowledge and understanding.

Traditionally, the IMI have produced a number of assessments for centres to use to ensure that they cover all the learning outcomes of VRQs. These include practical and written assessments which are available from the 'qualifications' area on the IMI website (www.theimi.org.uk/awarding).

DELIVERY OF ASSESSMENT

IMI approved centres must have systems, procedures and resources in place to ensure that:

- assessors and internal quality assurers are linked to both the centre and the qualifications in advance of them carrying out assessment/internal quality assurance (see section 2.2)
- all assessments are carried out to the standards required
- evidence produced by candidates is authentic
- there is consistency of assessments across units and qualifications and over time
- recognition of prior learning (RPL) and exemptions are used where appropriate
- assessors and internal quality assurers are given sufficient time to carry out their roles
- assessor and internal quality assurers performance is monitored and evaluated
- assessors and internal quality assurers are offered training and receive continuing professional development (CPD).

All assessors and internal quality assurers must identify any conflict or personal interest prior to carrying out assessment and/or internal quality assurance activities. In such instances alternative approved personnel should carry out the assessment or internal quality assurance.

Note: In extreme circumstances when it has not been possible to allocate alternative approved personnel, the assessment/internal quality assurance process must be scrutinised by other approved personnel without a personal interest.

RECORDING THE OUTCOMES OF ASSESSMENTS

The results of all assessments must be recorded promptly and accurately in a format that meets the requirements of the qualification. Most assessors use the documentation provided by the IMI for this purpose which, if completed correctly, will ensure that these requirements are met.

Assessors may use centre devised documentation provided that it has been approved (in advance) by the EQA as meeting the IMI's requirements.

Note: There are some IMI records of assessment (e.g. candidate assessment summary) which must be completed for each candidate and a centre devised alternative or variation will not be accepted. These are used as part of the IMI quality assurance process and if they are not completed correctly it could result in claims for candidate certification being delayed or rejected.

It is important that assessors record the outcome of all assessments, not just those where the candidate has been successful. Records of instances where candidates have not met the standards required play a vital part in informing their development process.

Note: Candidates must be given supportive feedback when they have not met the standards required.

When completing assessment records the following information is critical:

- qualification number and full title
- candidate name and registration number
- assessor name and PIN
- dates of activities recorded
- signatures as appropriate.

Assessors must also ensure that any reference numbers required as part of the centre's reference/tracking system are marked clearly on each document.

This information helps create an audit trail for both centre and IMI use. If any of these details are omitted claims for candidate certification, for example, may be delayed or rejected.

Assessment records should be kept by the centre for a minimum period of five years. They must be:

- stored securely so that only those who have a right to see the information may do so
- easily accessible to the people who need to use them and keep them up to date
- made available to the EQA during monitoring visits and, upon request, to other members of the IMI quality assurance team.

GIVING FEEDBACK TO CANDIDATES

The assessor must provide clear, supportive feedback to candidates about their performance including the outcome. The feedback must be:

- prompt – given as soon as is practical after the assessment has been carried out
- comprehensive – covering all aspects of the assessment
- honest – the real opinion of the assessor
- fair – a true reflection of the candidate's performance, knowledge and understanding.

Although a positive approach should be adopted at all times, the assessor must inform the candidate of any shortfalls and plan for these, and any other issues raised, to be addressed. Supporting the candidate is the hallmark of a good assessor.

ASSESSOR QUALIFICATIONS

It is a mandatory requirement for assessors to hold assessor qualifications or equivalent (e.g. AIEQA) to assess certain types of qualification such as VCQs and N/SVQs.

Traditionally, assessors could only obtain qualifications if they assessed N/SVQs. Now, the following qualifications can be achieved using evidence of assessing other types of qualification such as VRQs:

- Level 3 Award in understanding the principles and practices of assessment
- Level 3 Award in assessing competence in the work environment
- Level 3 Award in assessing vocationally related achievement
- Level 3 Certificate in assessing vocational achievement.

The IMI also runs Assessor and Internal Quality Assurer Update Workshops leading to a Quality Assured Programme certificate for successful candidates. Full details of these and other IMI workshops are on the IMI website (www.theimi.org.uk/awarding).