

Jargon Buster

Ability Tests

These are normally written or tick-box tests often used as part of an Assessment Development Centre to see if you have the potential for promotion. They assess general ability, including how you deal with words, numbers and diagrams.

Accreditation

Accreditation happens when the evidence of your performance meets the specified standards and gets formal recognition by a national body.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

APL can be used to exempt you from some of the requirements of your NVQ standards. It's about the assessment and accreditation of your existing learning, knowledge, skills and achievements.

Acquisition

This is the part of your development where you learn (acquire) new skills. This can be achieved by attending training courses. But this isn't the only way to acquire new skills. On-the-job coaching, mentoring or just being given the chance to do something different and challenging are all ways that you can get the skills and knowledge you may need.

Action plan

This is when you and your assessor review your workplace performance and write down precisely what you need to do to develop further. The action plan should detail any gaps in performance, any identified development needs and any further evidence requirements and the candidate and assessor should agree it.

Approved Centre

Before an organisation (for instance a Fire and Rescue Service) can assess people for National Vocational Qualifications, they (the organisation) have to meet rigorous national standards in the way they carry out their assessments. Once they meet those standards, they can become an 'Approved Centre' and they work to an 'Awarding Body'.

Aptitude tests

see Ability Tests.

Application

Application means putting into practice the skills you have learnt. Your workplace performance will be assessed to support your development and confirm your competence.

Assessment (workplace)

The measurement of your workplace performance against the standards contained within your role map.

Assessment Development Centre (ADC)

An Assessment Development Centre is a way of testing your potential. It will help you and your managers identify your strengths and weaknesses in relation to other roles you may want to perform.

If you want to move to a new role, it would be unreasonable to expect you to know everything about that new job in advance. Instead, your personal qualities and attributes (or PQAs) can be measured to see if you have the potential to carry out the new role. These PQAs cover your ability to work with others, to act appropriately in conflict situations, to be part of a team and to communicate effectively. Because they measure your behaviour, they are also known as Behavioural Indicators.

Assessment decision

Once the evidence of your performance has been observed and/or presented, the assessor will make a decision on whether you have demonstrated competence or need further development. They will do this by measuring your performance against the relevant standards in your role map.

Assessor (workplace)

This is the person who assesses your performance in the workplace. Line managers are responsible for the development and assessment of their staff and so in most cases, your line manager will be your assessor.

Authentic

In order to assess your performance, your assessor will need to be sure that your evidence is genuine and the result of your own work. They will check your involvement in the work, whether you did all of it or just contributed to it.

Awarding Body

An organisation approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to provide NVQ programmes and make the award of NVQ certificates.

Behavioural Indicators

See Personal Qualities and Attributes

Benchmarking

Taking samples of various assessments to provide other assessors with guidelines on the standards to adopt. This helps to make sure you get the same level of assessment, regardless of who assesses you.

Best Practice Assessment

The process of assessment should be conducted using a structured approach. This is achieved by following the logical, step by step process of planning, gathering evidence, providing feedback, making a decision, agreeing an action plan, recording the details. This forms the basis of Best Practice Assessment.

Calibration

Taking samples of various assessments, comparing them with the benchmark and making adjustments/improvements to the processes where needed. This

helps to make sure you get the same level of assessment, regardless of who assesses you.

Coaching

Coaching is when a colleague, or your manager, helps you to develop by working on the skills you already have and seeing how they can be improved.

Competence

You are competent when you can perform the activities expected of a person in your role to the National Occupational Standards. This involves demonstrating and being assessed against the performance criteria, knowledge and understanding of each element within your role map.

It's important to note that competence means more than just being able to carry out a task. For example, if you had to give a talk to a community group, the tasks you undertake might include using; a lap top computer, a data projector and a white board. Using them all effectively is the first step towards competence. But you will also have to decide what order to use them in, and how to cope when things go wrong. Finally, you will need to take account of the environment you are working in. Will you be doing a presentation in a church hall or a care home? Is the audience young or old? Do they have English as a first language?

It's only when you've shown that you can cope with all of these, that you will be competent.

For the technically minded, these four areas of competent performance are known as:

Task Skills - Doing the individual tasks well

Task Management Skills - Deciding which tasks to do first

Contingency Skills - Being able to adapt when things go wrong

Environment Skills - Doing all the above in a range of different environments and with a range of different people.

Competencies

See Personal Qualities and Attributes.

Contingency Skills

Being able to adapt when things go wrong - see Competence

Continuous assessment

This doesn't mean following people around with clipboards watching every move they make but taking opportunities to regularly communicate with people about their performance.

Continuous Personal Development (CPD)

You may be competent now but we can all get a bit rusty from time to time. CPD is about maintaining your current skills, learning new ones and, if appropriate, preparing yourself for promotion.

Currency (of evidence)

Because you did something well a few years ago doesn't necessarily mean you can still do it well. Your assessor will decide whether evidence of your workplace performance suggested you could meet the National Occupational Standards in your role map now. If not, they will request to see more recent evidence of similar activities to support their decision.

Development Programme

Once you have shown that you have the potential to undertake a new role, you can be put on a programme to help you develop into that role. This Development Programme helps you acquire any new skills you need and will guide you and your assessor to make sure you apply your skills where it counts - in the workplace.

Development Plan

It's good practice for you and your assessor to agree how, when and why your performance will be assessed. This should take into account activities that can be planned as well as those that cannot. The planning of the performance review should also be considered here: e.g. weekly meetings to discuss your performance and your progress on the programme.

Direct Observation

This is exactly what it says it is, your assessor observing you carrying out an activity within your workplace. This may take place for example; in an office, on a fire station, at a training event, during an inspection or on the fireground.

Dealing With Information

A test often used as part of an Assessment Development Centre to assess your ability to understand and process verbal and numerical information.

Dealing With People

A test often used as part of an Assessment Development Centre to assess how you deal with the people you come into contact with at work.

Dealing With Situations

A test often used as part of an Assessment Development Centre to assess your typical working style.

Element

The National Occupational Standards are divided into units relating to the different aspects of your day-to-day work. **Elements** are the smallest part of a unit. When an element is finished, it has to be collected together with other elements in order to complete the unit.

Environment Skills

Carrying out Tasks in a range of different environments and with a range of different people - see Competence

Evidence

In your day-to-day work there is lots of evidence of how you have performed. This evidence can be a form you have filled out, a training pack you have designed or a conversation you have had. Sometimes your assessor will be present and see what you've done and how well you've done it. At other times, your assessor will not have been present and so they may want to see what you have produced. The important thing about evidence is that it is what you are doing anyway, as part of your normal job. It is not something extra.

External Verifier

Someone who monitors the assessment procedures and ensures that they meet the national standards. The external verifier is appointed by the awarding body and is responsible for checking the work of assessors and internal verifiers.

Feedback

This is where you are told about your performance at work, normally by your assessor. Feedback should always be related to the standards contained within your role-map. Feedback provides you with the opportunity to hear how you performed at work and can help you to maintain your current performance and improve where necessary.

Internal Verifier

Someone who monitors the assessment procedures and ensures that they meet the national standards. The internal verifier works closely with your assessor.

Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills are about how you deal with other people. How you communicate; how good you are at listening; how you deal with conflict; how you negotiate and persuade others.

Knowledge & Understanding

As you do your job, there will be evidence of your performance (see 'evidence' above), but on its own, this may not tell the whole story.

Your assessor will want to check your Knowledge (what you must know in order to carry out the work expected of you) and your Understanding (how to apply that knowledge effectively). Often, you can demonstrate your 'Knowledge and Understanding' by answering questions about the subject.

Maintaining competence

You may be competent now but think how our jobs have changed in the last few years. Computers on fire stations, new IT systems, community fire safety, development programmes, not to mention all the new equipment and procedures and new ways of working. You need to maintain, and develop, your skills in order to show that your workplace performance continues to meet the standards within your role-map. See also Continuous Personal Development (CPD)

Task Management Skills

Deciding which tasks to do first - see Competence

Mentoring

Mentoring is where a colleague, not normally your line manager, helps you to identify your development needs over a long time-scale.

National Occupational Standards

In order for your performance to be assessed fairly and objectively, there must be agreed standards of performance against which the outcomes of your workplace activities can be measured. The standards of performance that your assessor will measure and assess you against are contained within your role-maps.

NVQ's

National Vocational Qualifications. These are work-based qualifications, awarded on the basis of occupational competence by demonstration of workplace performance

Performance criteria

Your role-map tells you what you need to do in your job and also contains performance criteria that tell you how well you need to do the different parts of your role. They are the quality standards, which apply to all aspects of your work.

Performance review

One of the responsibilities of your assessor is to provide development opportunities for you. To do this, they should meet with you regularly on a one to one basis to discuss your progress and any areas for future development. These meetings are called Performance Reviews.

Personal Development Record

This is where you will keep all the information relating to your development. Details of the activities you have completed and the assessment decisions will be recorded in here as will any other matters relating to your development e.g. action plans, monthly reports, verification reports etc.

Personal Qualities and Attributes

If you want to move to a new role, it would be unreasonable to expect you to know everything about that new job in advance. Instead, your personal qualities and attributes (or PQAs) can be measured to see if you have the potential to carry out the new role. These PQAs cover your ability to work with others, to act appropriately in conflict situations, to be part of a team and to communicate effectively. Because they measure your behaviour, they are also known as Behavioural Indicators.

This measurement of your potential is normally carried out at an Assessment Development Centre.

Product evidence

In your day-to-day work there is lots of evidence of how you have performed. This might be a form you have filled out, a training pack you have designed or a report you've written. All of these things are called Product Evidence.

Reliable

An assessor must make sure their decision on the quality of your evidence is reliable. A way of checking this is if another assessor is presented with the same evidence of performance, would they be likely to make the same assessment decision? If the answer is yes then the evidence is reliable.

Role-map

A role-map is a bit like a job description. It tells you, in general terms, everything you need to do in your role. It also tells you how well you need to do it. All roles are slightly different (for example a firefighter doesn't do the same job (role) as a watch manager) but all roles have things in common too. We all have to give other people information so that they can make decisions so this 'element' is in everyone's role-map from a firefighter to the commissioner. To prove competent at your job, you will be judged against your role-map.

Sampling

Collecting information from a cross section of assessments, evidence and systems to ensure consistency throughout the assessment process to identify any trends and gaps in understanding.

Simulation

In order to assess your performance, your assessor needs to see evidence of your performance across a range of activities relating to your role. Sometimes the opportunities to provide this evidence do not arise. In these cases a simulation can be set up so that you get the chance to show you can do the job in a realistic setting. A simulation is a event designed to realistically represent a workplace activity. They may also be used to test knowledge and understanding in preference to asking supplementary questions.

Structured Interview

In a structured interview the questions are always job-related. Everyone is asked the same questions and there is a standard scoring system used to score the answers. Structured interviews are often used as part of Assessment Development Centres

Sufficient

For an assessor to be sure that the evidence you provide is sufficient, they should be sure there is enough evidence to meet all of the performance criteria, knowledge and understanding of the element. This will be achieved through a range of evidence and activities.

Supplementary questions

Your assessor can ask you supplementary questions to clarify how or why you performed in a certain manner and to confirm your knowledge and

understanding of policies and procedures. They may also use the questions to complete evidence requirements where small gaps exist. Questions should be 'open' questions i.e. not requiring yes/no answer in order to gain as much information as possible.

Task Skills

Doing individual tasks well - see Competence

Training

From time to time you will need to learn new skills, or perhaps refresh the skills you already have. One way to do this is through a planned and systematic learning experience, or training course. Just attending a training course is not enough. Its purpose is to enable you to acquire abilities so that you can perform a given task or role for real, back in your workplace.

Unit

The National Occupational Standards are divided into units relating to the different aspects of your day-to-day work.

Valid

For evidence of your workplace performance to be valid, it must be measured against the appropriate element in your role map. So, for example, if you want your assessor to look at your leadership skills and you give them evidence of a training programme you have designed that evidence would not be valid.

Verification

Verification is the process of monitoring and quality assuring assessment, its systems and processes. Its purpose is to ensure that consistency of assessment is being applied.

Witness testimony

In your day-to-day work there is lots of evidence of how you have performed. Sometimes your assessor will be present and see what you've done and how well you've done it. At other times they will not have been present and so they may want to get some information from people you work with. This may be oral or written testimony from someone who observed you carrying out a workplace activity.