

## Assessment Methodology and Tests

**Q:** *Why is the level of English targeted at A2/B1 for trainees?*

**A:** The qualifications developed for the Colleges of Excellence (CoE) are based on National Occupational Standards that have been designed and drafted with extensive and systematic involvement of employers in the Kingdom. One of the key concerns expressed throughout the process was the need for employees to have a minimum level of competence in English. The Foundation Year tests at KET and PET level should be well within the grasp of trainees who attend the required number of learning hours during their 3 trimesters.

**Q:** *Is the Foundation Year test for IT Skills more a test of English than IT competence?*

**A:** No, the IT Skills test is a practical, skills-based test and set at A2 level. If the training is delivered by experienced assessors for the recommended number of learning hours then the qualification should be well within the grasp of all trainees.

Following the experience of the Wave 1 providers in the first year of implementation, and following presentations to all CoEs in October 2014, we have introduced the 3 Microsoft Specialist modules as the exit test from June 2015.

**Q:** *What if the trainee fails English and/or IT Skills? What are the funding implications?*

**A:** The rules for progression (including funding implications) are set out by the COE organization in your contract, and included in your Management Guidelines and associated updates.

SSS provides funding for one attempt and one re-sit per Foundation Year test.

Other costs associated with running the MOS Specialist program should be included in your College budget or discussed with the COE organization.

**Q:** *Why do we need 3 assessment types for the technical training programs?*

**A:** The remit that Saudi Skills Standards was given as part of the TVET improvement process was for a rigorous, world-class approach to the assessment of trainees, with some external assessment included to ensure quality and standards. Given the need for improvement in the level of practical skills, the assessment methodology has been developed to measure accurately skills and knowledge acquisition through the use of:

- a synoptic Capstone assessment of 6-10 hours duration
- an e-portfolio system that will track and monitor trainees' skills' progress throughout the program
- a final Computer-Based-Test (CBT) of 2 hours duration that will cover theory and knowledge outcomes in the relevant qualification

The weighting of the components favours the skills-based nature of SSS qualifications.

**Q:** *Does the Capstone assessment duplicate some of the assessment in the e-portfolio system?*

**A:** The aim of the e-portfolio approach is to enable trainees to demonstrate and evidence specific skills and competences as they acquire them throughout the program. The Capstone assessment is an extensive and practical exercise that requires trainees to integrate a number of skills and competences across a series of linked tasks.

**Q:** *How does the e-portfolio system actually work?*

**A:** The system ('Learning Assistant') has now been installed at each CoE by SSS and City & Guilds (initial training was included in the roll-out). CoEs are asked now to review the e-portfolio evidence submitted by each trainee, and enter just one grade per unit for the 2014-15 cohort.

The qualifications and learning outcomes are pre-loaded, so assessors can now use the system to allow trainees to upload evidence as and when the assessment opportunities are identified. The system is relatively 'light-touch' so that it does not impose too heavy a burden on assessors and trainees (including the requirement that assessors only need to grade a trainee at unit level, not learning outcome or performance criteria level).

**Q:** *What should CoEs do in the period before the e-portfolio system is ready?*

**A:** CoEs have been advised by SSS to continue recording trainees' evidence against the skills' learning outcomes using any appropriate method; this has been discussed with CoE trainers and managers during the assessor training in 2014, and also during the internal verifier training in January 2015. The first external verifier visits in December 2014 also included guidance on this issue.

**Q:** *The CBT is scored automatically, but how will assessors be guided to allocate grades for the practical assessments?*

**A:** Grading criteria for the first Associate Diplomas being run by CoEs are included on the SSS website. For the Capstone assessments, the document itself contains detailed grading criteria produced for assessors for each task.

CoE assessors are also receiving guidance on grading criteria during the training programs being run with City & Guilds during 2014/15.

**Q:** *How are the Employability units assessed?*

**A:** These will appear as part of the e-portfolio system and therefore need to be graded as for all the other units. Assessors will need to liaise with employers if the trainee has undertaken actual work experience, although it is acknowledged that some CoEs will be assessing trainees for these units through a realistic (simulated) work environment. Separate grading criteria for these units are contained on the SSS website.

**Q:** *Does SSS produce samples of the assessments that will be used for the Associate Diploma trainees?*

**A:** The qualification specifications have been available to COEs since February 2014. SSS is now working with its international assessment partner (City & Guilds UK) to produce:

- test specifications for the CBTs
- CBT questions (some 45,000 need to be generated)
- Capstone assessments

The SSS website includes the CBT test specifications for technical qualifications being offered by Wave 1 providers for first assessment in June 2015, and (as at 31 January 2015) includes sample CBTs and Capstones for the same qualifications (and others are being added weekly).

**Q:** *How will the results for trainees be reported?*

**A:** The Foundation Year results and certificates will be produced according to the rules of the external awarding body.

For the Associate and full Diplomas, the trainee will receive a Certificate that includes a grade for each of the 3 components, and a final overall grade (A-D as pass grades, and F for not achieved). An attached report will detail the qualification specification for reference by potential employers.

**Q:** *To what extent should assessors be conducting internal tests and assessments?*

**A:** This is a matter for each individual CoE and assessment team. SSS would expect that appropriate and relevant coursework is being carried out throughout the program in order to give trainees opportunities to demonstrate skills and knowledge acquired throughout the program.

**Q:** *Will SSS help with curriculum design and delivery?*

**A:** No. The role of SSS is that of awarding body, so curriculum issues need to be addressed within each CoE. There are initiatives with the COE organization to help

support curriculum networks across CoEs, but the expectation is that world-class providers will bring their own expertise and experience to bear.

**Q:** *Do CoE assessors need to be formally qualified and accredited?*

**A:** There are some requirements in the management guidelines for minimum qualifications of CoE assessors. SSS would expect that world-class providers will employ experienced and qualified assessors as far as possible, and will provide professional development support for those assessors who may not immediately have appropriate qualifications.

The assessor and internal verifier training being carried out during 2014/15 can be extended by CoEs to incorporate the option of trainers working to a formal certification; this can be done through separate arrangement between CoEs and City & Guilds.

**Q:** *How does a CoE register trainees for the programs and assessments?*

**A:** SSS has developed an Awarding Body Management System (ABMS) that enables CoEs to upload trainees' details, after which the CBTs and Capstone assessments will be made available automatically.

It is critical that CoEs provide SSS with updated trainee registration details (and details of the qualifications they offer, or intend to offer) on request.