



Saudi Skills Standards

Quality Manual

Guide for Colleges of Excellence

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1 Purpose of Document

This document is designed to support colleges in managing the assessment of SSS Associate Diploma and Diploma qualifications. The document primarily covers the development and assessment of the e-portfolio of evidence, together with general assessment administration. The conduct of the computer-based knowledge test (CBT) and the administration of the Capstone assessment will be dealt with in separate guidance.

For the e-portfolio of evidence, the document provides guidance and support for assessors and internal verifiers in the development of assessment plans for trainees, how to support trainees to develop their e-portfolio of evidence and how to grade evidence submitted by trainees.

This document should be read in conjunction with the SSS “Code of Practice” which is on the SSS website and which will be updated regularly..

2 Definitions

The following definitions are used in this document:

Qualification –

The detailed specification of learning outcomes for both skills and knowledge across a particular subject. The structure is based on units that comprise performance criteria and scope.

Curriculum –

The broad scheme of training and learning for each subject at each level that normally includes learning aims and objectives, academic content, specific learning outcomes or competencies, teaching scheme and teaching/learning resources. The curriculum is developed by Colleges.

Test specification –

The detailed plan showing the structure of a final (summative) test that covers a particular set of learning outcomes within a subject qualification.

Assessments –

The tests or instruments devised and developed by SSS that are used to measure the performance of trainees in demonstrating understanding and competence across the qualifications. SSS assessments include assessment through the use of e-portfolios, knowledge-based synoptic assessment through the use of computer-based tests (CBT), and synoptic skills-based assessment through the use of Capstone assessment.

Assessor-

The assessor is the member(s) of the college team that will assess trainee evidence of performance in their e-portfolio. In most cases this person will also be the subject trainer.

Internal Verifier-

The internal verifier is the person(s) appointed by the college to monitor internal quality assurance of the qualification assessment.

External Verifier-

The external verifier is appointed by SSS to provide external verification of the quality of the qualification.

Learning Assistant (LA)-

The e-portfolio system being used by SSS for the trainee portfolio and Capstone assessment evidence.

3 Preparing assessment plans

The first stage in the planning process is to be clear about what it is that has to be assessed. What is the trainee being asked to do, show, know, and produce – to what standard and under what conditions? This information will come from the qualification specification which details what a trainee must be able to do and what a trainee must know.

For practical skills this information is in the form of Skills Learning Outcomes. The unit states what has to be seen, produced, observed, explained – and the scope of the skills required. This information is presented in the form of Skills Learning Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Skills Scope. In turn this information will be used to develop lesson plans. A good lesson plan will have objectives – ‘what is it that I want the trainees to be able to know or do as the outcome of this lesson or series of lessons’. If this cannot be identified, then probably the lesson planning needs more attention.

In addition to being able to identify the required outcomes to be assessed, it is also important to make sure that the meaning of the outcome is understood and agreed as part of the planning process – so that everyone is looking for the same thing. Some outcomes, whilst clear, are intentionally written to allow for local interpretation according to particular circumstances.

An example taken from the *Associate Diploma and Diploma in Guest Relations Management, Unit 03 - Respond to and meet guest requirements* – could be any customer service oriented qualification:

1.1 Deal with the guest politely and in a helpful and understanding manner at all times

Obviously there is no one correct answer to what is meant by ‘helpful and understanding manner’ although some common features could probably be agreed – smiling, positive tone of voice, welcoming body posture, However, different reception staff and hotels will have their own definitions of what they consider to be appropriate. This is often what distinguishes one business from another. The teaching program will provide opportunities to discuss all the possible interpretations and to consider why different businesses have different policies. It will also focus on what is most appropriate for the particular situation in which the trainees might be working.

This discussion is important because it raises trainees’ awareness; trainees should be part of the planning process and be encouraged to help develop the plans for their own e-portfolio and how they might provide the evidence. Therefore, for the assessment of this objective it is important to agree the criteria that will be used so that the trainee understands what is being looked for, and the assessor knows what to look for. This information has to be shared with everyone. So, if there are several groups all working to the same standard, all the assessors and all the trainees need to have a shared understanding of the required outcomes. This is an important part of the planning process. When new assessors join the team, they should also share this knowledge.

Having decided what needs to be assessed, the focus of planning should be on the methods to be used. The first task is to work through the list of assessment outcomes required in the qualification unit and decide the basis on which trainees will produce the necessary evidence. It may be, of course, that several criteria can be met through one assessment activity. The second task is to

decide where the evidence can be produced. Lastly, there should be some planning around the suggested format the trainee will use to present the evidence. This process will then be followed for each subsequent unit.

How to produce:

- As a part of the learning program – evidence that is produced formatively during the teaching program for the unit
- During a specific evidence producing activity – the learning activity may lead to a the production of evidence as the final activity
- By undertaking an assignment or project activity specifically designed to enable the trainees to produce e-portfolio evidence

Where the evidence is produced will obviously depend, to some extent, on the qualification but could include:

- In a workshop
- In the classroom
- In an IT facility
- In the workplace – the assessor may decide that the only effective place to enable the trainee to provide evidence is in the workplace whilst on work placement
- In a realistic work environment (RWE)

Evidence formats could include: (see Section 5)

- Written material
- Documents
- Recorded observation by assessor
- Video showing performance
- Audio recording
- Images
- Artefacts – eg examples of materials produced by the trainee showing skills competence required

Look at this example from the *Associate Diploma in Guest Relations Management* and decide how this could be assessed for a group of 15 trainees:

<i>The trainee will be able to:</i>	<i>Performance criteria:</i>
1. Communicate with guests	1.1. Greet guests in a manner that promotes a positive impression of the organization 1.2. Use guests' names correctly and at appropriate times

- | | |
|--|--|
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.3. Identify guests' requirements and confirm with them that the request is understood correctly1.4. Confirm with the guest the timeline for meeting their request1.5. Complete appropriate records of guest requests |
|--|--|

Of course, there are several options – and what is actually planned will depend on the resources available, but there are some fairly obvious considerations. To provide valid and reliable assessment of Performance Criteria 1.2 – 1.5, at least, the choice of assessment method is probably going to be observation of performance. So there is a wide choice. It could be that some of the assessment can take place in an RWE but it may be decided that these customer related outcomes can only be undertaken in a work placement in a hotel. This may raise a number of issues – will these outcomes be evidenced at a different time to the remainder of the unit and who is going to assess the trainees? Will it be their college assessor or will it be a member of the hotel staff? If it's going to be hotel staff, are they part of the planning and do they understand what is required?

Each unit will need to be planned in this way. Both the internal verifier and the external verifier will provide support and both will expect to see a plan as part of their quality monitoring. Remember to keep the plan flexible; other opportunities may present themselves for assessment to take place.

4 Assessment of Practical Skills

Practical skills can be assessed not only using a variety of assessment instruments – for example, naturally occurring evidence, evidence produced during the learning program, via projects or assignments, the evidence might also be produced whilst working in a number of different environments – the classroom, a workshop, an IT suite or a realistic work environment (RWE). Whilst some of the evidence will come from the trainees’ work placement, most will come from within the college environment. Nevertheless, trainers and assessors should make every effort to ensure that, as far as practicable, the evidence is produced in a way that would reflect practices in the industry and in employment at this level.

a. Using a Realistic Work Environment (RWE)

This approach is likely to be used where specialist facilities are available – for example a Hotel and Catering department or a Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Repair department. Here, in addition to classrooms, the college will have specially developed facilities that can be used to enable assessment of practical skills in an environment that is as close to work as possible, but which is not taking place on an employer’s premises. Specialist equipment and facilities will be available (paid for by the college or provided/sponsored by an external source such as local employers). The facilities will be used to provide the trainees with practice doing real work tasks and, ideally, will involve producing products for customers. An example would be a Hotel and Catering department that has kitchens that are similar to hotel kitchens, and that has a restaurant that is open to the public – maybe at certain times of the day or year. The type of equipment provided is important. For example, if a Motor Vehicle department is only provided with old equipment that has been donated by local employers because it has become outdated and is no longer used, then the trainee may have the opportunity to demonstrate competence in particular tasks, but does not have the opportunity to become familiar with modern equipment that may be more efficient or reflect modern vehicles eg computer based engine management systems. Employers will expect trainees to have used up-to-date equipment and techniques during their training. This, of course, may encourage them to support the college.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Can be set up within the college	Will be expensive to set up and equip
Easy to integrate into training program, if on site	Equipment needs to reflect current work practices and may be expensive to continually keep up-to-date
Available throughout training program	Often difficult to reflect real work pressures – time, customers etc.
Good face validity – assessment should be a close to real employment as possible	Staff need to reflect recent work practices
Can avoid the need for some skills to be assessed in the workplace	

b. Workshop Activities

Workshop activities are particularly useful in the early stages of assessing practical skills and can be used in combination with RWE or later work placement. Many of the practical based Diplomas will include significant learning time based in workshops where practical skills are taught and practiced by the trainee. In many cases, the skills outcome can be evidenced from the best examples of this work.

Following good practice, the trainees will continue to practice their skills on work placements having real work outcomes. To reduce the risk of trainees making mistakes with an employer's work that might have a real value, workshop activities can be used to practice highly technical skills until both the trainer and the trainee are confident that the task can be performed safely and competently. Workshop practice, combined with work experience, is also useful where there is a high element of risk – car braking systems or where the relationship with customers and customer satisfaction is very important.

Although it can contribute to the demonstration of practical skills and has its advantages in certain situations, to rely on workshop activities alone for the assessment of practical skills has several disadvantages. It does not give the trainee the opportunity to experience a work environment and therefore it is only possible to infer that if the trainee were in a workplace, then probably they would perform the task competently based on successful performance under observed conditions in the workshop, or while carrying out practical tasks. This approach may be suitable for some Performance Criteria. Used on its own, it is less suitable for tasks that involve producing products (repaired cars, meals for people etc.) or working with people (teamwork and supervisory skills, customer care etc.).

Advantages	Disadvantages
Assessment can take place when the trainee is ready	Low face validity – evidence not produced in a work based environment
Best examples of formative assessment can be used for the e-portfolio of evidence	Difficult to confirm that trainee will produce the same outcome in a work environment
Assessment takes place in a controlled, safe environment	Ensuring that equipment used matches current workplace practice
Trainee can have a number of opportunities to produce appropriate, valid evidence	
Very suitable for some basic core performance assessment	

c. Practical Assignments and College Designed Tasks

Here the college uses the skills outcomes and performance criteria to plan an activity or series of activities in the form of an assignment or set of tasks that will allow the trainee to demonstrate competence and provide the required evidence.

Where possible, the assignment should be designed around a real-world work based scenario that the trainee can work through in a set period of time. The assignment should set appropriate deadlines, identify criteria that would support grading and enable trainees working at all levels to achieve. Assignments need to be carefully designed, ensuring that scenarios reflect current real work situations. Ideally, they should be designed in conjunction with local employers who can provide, for example, copies of forms used or company policies.

The assignment should set out which skills outcomes and performance criteria are being assessed. A good assignment may also reinforce learning in the course of it being undertaken.

Where working as a group is a performance criteria, a well-designed assignment allows group dynamics to develop whilst allowing the assessor to monitor and assess contributions from individual members of the group.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Trainers have more control over the criteria being assessed and can therefore plan to ensure coverage	Good assignments are difficult and time consuming to design
Trainers have control over the timing of the assessment activity	Poorly designed assignments have poor face validity
Assessment is not dependent on opportunities occurring naturally.	Difficult to confirm that trainee will produce the same outcome in a work environment
Assignment can be designed to ensure the inclusion of grading opportunities	

d. Use of Work Placements

The delivery of the SSS Associate Diploma and Diploma qualifications both allow for a substantial period of work placement designed partly to consolidate the trainees learning and partly to provide opportunities to demonstrate their acquired skills and knowledge. With this goes the opportunity for further skills assessment and, in particular, the assessment of the employability units.

This is where a trainee's ability to carry out tasks to the prescribed standard can be assessed as part of the normal work routine. This approach is most likely to be used when there has not been the opportunity in the college environment to assess certain skills because, for

example, they need to be undertaken on specialist equipment or they can only be validly assessed in a workplace situation. Observation of performance under realistic conditions such as these is highly recommended because it has high face validity – meaning it is as close as possible to a real task. In particular, it is possible to observe whether or not the trainee can perform tasks both to the standard required and in the time required. Most work environments (servicing a car, applying makeup, preparing a meal) require the job to be done within a certain time to ensure efficient work and customer satisfaction. This level of real pressure is almost impossible to create in the college.

The college will need to consider who undertakes the assessment – it may be that those involved in the assessment of practical skills (usually the immediate work supervisors) will need to have some training to carry out the role of assessor.

Advantages	Disadvantages
High face validity	Good relationships need to be built with employers
Trainee does real job in real environment	Not all employers will be able to offer the same assessment opportunities and there may be gaps in assessment coverage
Trainee see the real value of some skills in a real workplace	Care needed with real customers
The only environment for some skills to be assessed	Places burden on employers which they need to understand
Enables college to undertake assessment using equipment/facilities not readily available in the college	

5 Types of Evidence

The Learning Assistant e-portfolio being used by SSS will handle most types of file so that evidence can be produced in the most suitable format although there are some limits on file size. These limits will be found in the relevant Learning Assistant guidance.

Assessors should always discuss with trainees the most effective way of demonstrating their skills competence against the criteria and be encouraged to use formats other than text. Whichever method is being used, the assessor should also ensure that the trainee understand how and when they will receive feedback. (See section on feedback)

Observation

Many of the assessment outcomes can only be effectively assessed by observation. An example from the *Associate Diploma in Guest Relations Management* demonstrates this:

<i>The trainee will be able to:</i>	<i>Performance criteria:</i>
2. Communicate with guests	1.2 Greet guests in a manner that promotes a positive impression of the organization

In order to assess this effectively, the assessor needs to witness the trainee greeting a guest. This may be part of a wider set of activities that include the trainee greeting the guest, checking the guest in for a booking and providing them with information.

The assessor should create a checklist to support the assessment process and to ensure all the relevant performance criteria and scope are covered as planned.

An example might look like this:

<i>The trainee must be able to do the following:</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1.2 Greet guests in a manner that promotes a positive impression of the organization	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3 Use guests' names correctly and at appropriate times	<input type="checkbox"/>

At the completion of the observation, the checklist should be agreed and signed by the assessor and trainee and it then becomes part of the e-portfolio and should be scanned and uploaded into LA. The checklist does not need to be in a paper format - the assessor might also capture the information using a tablet so that the checklist can be uploaded directly into LA.

Before the assessment takes place, it is essential that the assessor briefs the trainees. The assessor can do this as a group, or individually. Observing a trainees performance is not intended to be an examination, or one that causes trainees undue stress because of nerves and it should never be a surprise, unannounced activity. The assessor will already have planned for the observation of performance to take place in a situation that is as natural as possible. The purpose of briefing the trainee is to share the planning with the trainee and to reduce anxiety and concern. The explanation should begin with a description of what is planned to do and which aspects of the trainee performance are being assessed. The assessor should also discuss how this activity will contribute to the e-portfolio. The assessor should ensure the trainee fully understands the process and that during the observation, the trainee is encouraged.

Written evidence

Written evidence, whether in the form of a word processed document, a scanned document or, for example, a spreadsheet can be uploaded directly into LA to be assessed.

Trainees should only need to provide written evidence for performance criteria that requires written evidence as an outcome: a report, a letter, a marketing flyer, a spreadsheet, a menu and so on. Good examples would stem from the following:

Business Accounting – Associate Diploma

2. Create presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Design slides, notes and handout masters to incorporate organizational and task requirements in relation to image and preferred style, avoiding distractions 2.2 Use software functions for consistency of design and layout to meet identified presentation requirements 2.3 Balance presentation features for visual impact and emphasis 2.4 Use advanced software features to streamline and customize the presentation for different audiences 2.5 Prepare presentations within designated timelines
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Automotive Customer Service – Associate Diploma

1 Maintain documentation relevant to work role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Document activities promptly in accordance with established routine/procedures 2.2 Ensure that documentation is accurate and clarity and correct any anomalies 2.3 Obtain a signature, where applicable, from an appropriate person
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2.4 Forward a copy of any required documentation to the appropriate person(s) in accordance with established routine/procedures

Assessors should avoid trainees providing “exam answer” type evidence. The advantage of using an e-portfolio system is that evidence need not be in a written format and using the next three formats may provide opportunities for trainees to meet the criteria without just using text.

Digital Images

Trainees have access to a variety of equipment that will enable them to capture images of their work as they undertake it. Digital images can be uploaded to LA as a sequence – for example a design storyboard in Fashion Design or the process for changing a brake pad in Automotive Service Technology or a single images of an completed artefact – a decorated cake, for example.

Trainees can add a description to the image to describe the steps shown and, if appropriate, add an overall description. Whilst in most cases, the quality of the image is not critical, assessors should make sure that if the need to see detail, the image needs to be of a certain quality.

One of the key advantages for assessors to the use of digital images is that they can be assessed at a point in time convenient to them. However, they do need to be confident that the images are authentic and were of work completed by the trainee. One way of ensuring this is for the assessor to be present when the image is captured and confirm this in the e-portfolio, even if their final assessment is made at a later point. Alternatively, the assessor can question the trainee about the process or artefact to confirm authenticity.

Video

Video has two significant advantages when compared to digital images; the trainee can also be asked to ensure they describe the process or the artifact they are capturing thus making it clear that that it is the trainees work, secondly, a video can capture interactions between people when, for example communication evidence is required. For example, the “*Communicate with Guests*” outcome described earlier might be more effectively captured on video and uploaded to the e-portfolio. The assessor and trainee will also need to take account of the LA file size limits.

The principal disadvantages are that trainees need to be confident in capturing video evidence in such a way that all the expected performance criteria are covered and that assessing extended video can be time consuming and unproductive.

If assessors wish to use this methodology, then trainees need to be provided with guidelines and practice capturing effective video for assessment.

Audio

There may be circumstances where it’s unnecessary to capture performance using video, but an audio of the activity may be sufficient. For example, a small group may want to capture a group discussion.

The trainees need to be well-known to the assessor so that they can identify and assess the contributions of individual trainees.

Products and Artefacts

Whilst many assessment activities and their practical outcomes can be captured using these methodologies, there are some where it is necessary for the assessor to assess the product at the time it's completed in addition to capturing the process.

The most obvious is catering, where the quality of the outcome may need to be tasted for quality. In others, the completed artifact may need to be examined in detail, for example in fashion design where the assessor may want to establish the quality of cutting and stitching.

In these situations, some aspects of the actual artefact cannot be captured electronically and the assessor will need to physically examine the product and perhaps even sample it in the case of catering products. Nevertheless, as well as the assessment record prepared by the assessor, a digital image(s) of the final product would also support the assessment outcome.

6 Grading e-Portfolio Evidence

e-Portfolio evidence is graded by unit (see next section) based on a generic set of grade descriptors provided for each qualification. An example of the grade descriptor for the Associate Diploma in Sales is on the next page.

To achieve a unit, trainees must provide appropriate evidence against each Performance Criteria in the Skills Learning Outcomes. This is the pass level – Grade D. However, when planning assessment activities, assessors must plan overall for assessment opportunities that allow trainees to demonstrate the higher level grades as well as the basic (Grade D) skills. Assessors should develop criteria based on the grade descriptor to differentiate trainees' performance so that the trainees are clear as to the criteria they will need to meet to achieve higher grades. Not all activities or assessment opportunities will provide a context in which all grading can be achieved.

The assessor will need to take a holistic view of the evidence presented in order to determine a grade for the unit. Trainees (and the assessor) may well wish to receive grades for individual assessment activities which together will make up the unit evidence. Whilst the overall grade will be formally recorded in LA, the individual assessment activity grades are internal to the college. They may, however, help the assessor in determining the overall unit grade that they intend to award.

Exemplars of unit assessment and grading for a number of qualifications are part of the assessor training program and are also available on the SSS website.

Qualification Grade Profile – Saudi Skills Standards –Associate Diploma in Business and Finance

<p>Purpose</p> <p>Qualification Rationale: More broad based than the Diploma, covering working practical application of business administration.</p>			
D	C	B	A
<p>Time management</p> <p>Trainees have awareness of time requirements to meet tasks and require support to meet deadlines. Often tasks are left to the last minute, which may cause problems</p>	<p>Time management</p> <p>Trainees are able to identify some realistic timescales required to complete tasks and require reminders to meet deadlines. Tasks are carried out but not some may be left to the last minute.</p>	<p>Time management</p> <p>Trainees are able to identify realistic timescales required to complete tasks. Most deadlines are met without support or reminders. Time is used efficiently with minimal distractions.</p>	<p>Time management</p> <p>Trainees are able to identify realistic timescales required to complete tasks. Where deadlines might be missed, appropriate people are informed and alternatives agreed. Trainees are focused and not distracted.</p>
<p>Planning</p> <p>Trainees specify tasks in broad terms. Support is required to break down complex tasks. They sequence tasks with some realistic timescales. Planning tends to be 'in their heads' rather than documented. There is limited formal monitoring of progress. Trainees give limited consideration to unexpected events.</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Trainees identify and sequence tasks with some realistic timescales. Some support may be needed to break down complex tasks. Planning is documented with some tasks detailed. Documentation shows some consideration of unexpected events. Progress is monitored but not always documented. Some project</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Trainees specify tasks in broad terms. Support is required to break down complex tasks. They sequence tasks with some realistic timescales. Planning tends to be 'in their heads' rather than documented. There is limited formal monitoring of progress. Trainees give limited consideration to unexpected events.</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Trainees specify tasks in broad terms. Support is required to break down complex tasks. They sequence tasks with some realistic timescales. Planning tends to be 'in their heads' rather than documented. There is limited formal monitoring of progress. Trainees give limited consideration to unexpected events.</p>

	management tools are used to support planning.		
<p>Use of business admin software (spreadsheets, databases, word processing, presentations)</p> <p>Trainees use basic software tools and features to complete tasks. They require frequent support and instruction of how to use and features. They use some formatting and design techniques. They are aware of organizational requirements for house style.</p>	<p>Use of business admin software (spreadsheets, databases, word processing, presentations) Trainees use some advance software tools and features to complete tasks with some support and instruction. They use a range of formatting and design techniques in line with organizational requirements for house style following instruction.</p>	<p>Use of business admin software (spreadsheets, databases, word processing, presentations)</p> <p>Trainees can select appropriate software and use some advanced tools and features to complete tasks. Trainees work mainly with autonomy. They use a range of appropriate formatting and design techniques that are fully in line with organizational requirements for house style.</p>	<p>Use of business admin software (spreadsheets, databases, word processing, presentations)</p> <p>Trainees can select appropriate software and use advance features to complete tasks and to make documents work efficiently and create impact with external stakeholders. Trainees work with autonomy, speed and accuracy. They use a range of advanced formatting and design techniques that are fully in line with organizational requirements for house style.</p>

<p>Communication skills</p> <p>Trainees can use a clear voice with appropriate tone although communication is generally hesitant. Trainees ask unplanned questions and frequently ask for information that has been provided to be repeated. Notes are taken of conversations but may have omissions. Trainees provide information with some hesitation or interruption. Their tone is polite. Written communication has minor spelling and/or grammatical errors that do not detract from meaning.</p>	<p>Communication skills</p> <p>Trainees use a clear voice with appropriate tone although communication at times is hesitant. Trainees tend to use one style of questioning. Questions are planned but style of questioning means that additional questions are required to elicit all information. Trainees ask for information that has already been provided to be repeated. Notes are taken of conversations that are accurate but may have omissions. They provide information to customers without hesitation. The tone and language used is polite. Written communication has minor spelling and/or grammatical errors that do not detract from meaning.</p>	<p>Communication skills</p> <p>Trainees use a clear voice with appropriate tone and communication generally flows. They use a range of questioning techniques to ask planned questions. Additional unplanned questions may be required to obtain relevant information. There is evidence of active listening. Notes are taken of conversations that are accurate and legible. Trainees provide structured information promptly to customers. The tone and language used is polite and appropriate to the customer situation. Written communication is error free.</p>	<p>Communication skills</p> <p>Trainees use a clear voice with appropriate tone and communication flows. Trainees use a range of appropriate questioning techniques to ask planned questions to obtain required information.</p> <p>They consistently use active listening skills. Notes are taken of conversations that are accurate and legible. Trainees provide clear and well-structured information promptly. The tone and language used is consistently polite and appropriate to the situation. Written communication is error free.</p>
<p>Calculations</p> <p>Trainees are aware of calculations required to complete tasks. They are able to carry out straightforward calculations accurately. Approaches used, are not always the most efficient. There is evidence of checking accuracy. Trainees are able to update documents which may have some minor errors in transposition.</p>	<p>Calculations</p> <p>Trainees are aware if calculations required completing tasks and the level of accuracy that is appropriate. They are able to carry out straightforward calculations accurately. There is some evidence of an efficient use of techniques in either manual calculations or the use of spreadsheet formulae. There is evidence of the use of estimation and checking accuracy of results. Trainees are able to update relevant</p>	<p>Calculations</p> <p>Trainees are able to carry out straightforward and some complex calculations accurately. There is some use of an efficient use of techniques in both manual calculations and the use of spreadsheet formulae. The trainees use techniques to estimate and check the accuracy of calculations. Relevant documents are updated error free.</p>	<p>Calculations</p> <p>Trainees are able to carry out complex calculations accurately. There use of manual calculations and spreadsheet formulae efficiently. The trainees use appropriate techniques to estimate and check the accuracy of calculations. Relevant documents are updated error free.</p>

	documents with minor errors and no omissions.		
<p>Customer complaint handling</p> <p>Trainees can deal with routine and straightforward customer situations autonomy but refer complex needs or tough situations to others. There is consideration of the customer and they show empathy. They will follow procedures to reach conclusions. Trainees show professionalism and some confidence. They address people with respect. Trainees meet customers' straightforward needs. They are able to identify when there is a problem but may need support of others to deal with complex situations.</p>	<p>Customer complaint handling</p> <p>Trainees can deal with routine and straightforward customer situations autonomy but refer complex needs or tough situations to others. There is consideration of the customer and they show empathy. They will follow procedures to reach conclusions. Trainees show professionalism and some confidence. They address people with respect. Trainees meet customers' straightforward needs. They are able to identify when there is a problem but may need support of others to deal with complex situations.</p>	<p>Customer complaint handling</p> <p>Trainees can deal with routine and straightforward situations with autonomy. There is consideration of and empathy with the customer evident. Trainees follow organizational procedures and are able to reach conclusions which consider the organization's needs and those of the complainant. The trainee is professional and shows confidence. They are prepared and address people with respect. Trainees are able to identify when there is a problem and they are able to propose solutions to some complex and tough situations.</p>	<p>Customer complaint handling</p> <p>Trainees can deal with tough customers and non-routine situations with autonomy. They reach conclusions which fully consider the organization's needs and those of the customer. The trainee is professional and confident throughout. They are well prepared and address people with respect. Trainees are able to recognize when there is a problem and they are able to propose viable solutions to complex problems.</p>

<p>Initiative</p> <p>Shows initiative, will try, may be misguided, may need someone to step in or supervise</p>	<p>Initiative</p> <p>Depth of knowledge allows them to take initiative to perform effectively.</p>
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<p>Teamwork</p> <p>Some understanding of what teamwork is, able to work effectively on tasks with other people, need direction from within the team</p>	<p>Teamwork</p> <p>Is able to build relationships within a team that they are part of or have to work with</p>
<p>Organizational awareness</p> <p>Follows procedures, will be able to refer to information sources or ask if they need to speak to somebody, understand business objectives, but may not always focus activities on these objectives, may not understand contribution that activities make to business objectives</p>	<p>Organizational awareness</p> <p>Knows who to go to in the organization, understand how tasks contribute to business objectives, and ensure that their activities contribute to objectives</p>
<p>Finance</p> <p>Superficial knowledge of resource use, awareness of budgets and need to work within them.</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Understands that use of resources has impact on a business, can work within budgets and escalate if they are likely to be exceeded.</p>
<p>Project management</p> <p>Is basic, some awareness, but not sophisticated use of tools such as MS Project, project monitoring not fully documented, will stick to plan even if changes are required.</p>	<p>Project management</p> <p>Includes risk management of simple projects, has a systematic approach; can deal with deviations as required.</p>

Project management

Is basic, some awareness, but not sophisticated use of tools such as MS Project, project monitoring not fully documented, will stick to plan even if changes are required.

Marketing

Some level of innovation/creativity towards achieving marketing objectives.

7 Providing Effective Feedback

An essential part of any assessment activity is to give feedback to the trainee on performance. For all assessment activity the basic feedback is in the form of a confirmation that the assessment met the criteria or that one or more parts of the assessment did not meet the criteria.

If the criteria were fully met, the trainee may be given an indicative grade which can be used by the assessor as a basis for forming an overall grade for the unit. In due course, when all the assessment for that unit has been completed successfully, the final grade will be recorded in LA. Any indicative grade should be accompanied by an explanation in writing using the feedback functionality of LA.

It is recommended that for the assessment of practical skills, trainee feedback is always in the form of a one to one conversation between the trainee and the assessor. The assessor may also agree with the trainee to give verbal feedback for written work.

A constructive approach to giving feedback is encouraged. As the person responsible for the assessment of the practical skills this can be achieved by remembering that the purpose of assessment is to find out what a person can do and treating the assessment positively. This process begins at the planning stage, when the trainee understands what the assessment will involve and what the intended outcomes are. A contrasting, negative approach, is not to be encouraged, neither is to treat the assessment activity as a means to find fault or to catch the trainee out by using unexpected tasks, or asking deliberately difficult questions.

A positive approach must be maintained throughout the process. This always means starting with the activities or tasks or products that the trainee completed well, and explaining to the trainee what was done well. If appropriate to the particular feedback, go through each stage of the assessment. At this stage it is useful to explain not only what was successfully achieved but also why it was achieved. By maintaining a positive approach throughout, a good relationship will be developed with the trainee, and the trainee is prepared to accept any feedback on performance as fair and valid.

Giving feedback on unsuccessful performance is always more difficult. However, it is equally important. At no time should the assessor feel under pressure to say that something has been successfully achieved when it has not. As with all assessment activities, success at this stage will mean careful preparation at the planning stage. Before the assessment the trainees should have discussed the criteria to be met before successful performance can be recorded; this will also have been part of the day to day teaching and learning program and in some practical areas the trainees will have been building towards a piece of evidence for the e-portfolio through formative activities. The trainees should also have been given the opportunity to ask questions about what is required for the assessment, and to clarify any points which are unclear. Finally, the assessment criteria will have been shared with the trainee before the assessment. Therefore what is required should come as no surprise to the trainee.

Assuming the trainee understands what was required; the assessor role is to explain to the trainee the reasons why successful performance cannot be recorded. The approach should be positive and

objective. It should be explained what parts of an activity were done well, even if overall performance did not meet the required outcome. The assessor should also be able to explain objectively which specific outcomes were not achieved, and why, and to be able to give examples to the trainee about what could be done to achieve a successful outcome. To be able to give this kind of feedback positively, it will be seen that careful and accurate monitoring of trainee performance through the assessment activity is essential. The trainee will feel justifiably aggrieved if the assessor cannot explain why the outcomes were not achieved, and what could have been done to achieve them.

In addition to explaining why the trainee has not met the criteria, the assessor should also be prepared to explain to the trainee what they need to do to fill the gaps in assessment evidence. It may be that further learning and practice is required or it may be that the assessor feels the trainee simply needs to provide further evidence. Either way, the assessor needs to agree an action plan with the trainee, including a suitable deadline, bearing in mind that the learning and assessment program is probably moving on the next topic. The assessor may also need to reinforce to trainees generally that evidence which has met the criteria cannot be resubmitted simply to achieve a higher grade.

8 SSS Qualification Grading Structure¹

Assessment for the SSS Associate Diploma and Diploma has three elements:

- an ongoing e-portfolio of evidence of achievement during the learning program for each unit
- an on-screen knowledge test for each qualification
- a Capstone assessment taken at the end of each 1 year program.

To successfully complete the program and achieve the qualification, trainees must pass each component. In addition, the individual components are graded A – D and the overall qualification is awarded at grades A – D.

This document is designed to explain the process for achieving the individual component grades and how these are combined to form the final, overall grade for the qualification.

e-Portfolio

Evidence of skills competence will be collected in an e-portfolio over a period of time. The evidence may be in a variety of formats; written, video, audio or digital image. The college assessor is responsible for working with the trainees to agree the most appropriate form for the evidence and this will vary between units and qualifications. The assessor is responsible for grading the evidence A – D and for determining the grade for each unit. The grade will be determined by a range of criteria based on the requirements of the unit. In the process, the assessor may also grade individual pieces of work undertaken by the trainee and submitted to the e-portfolio. Once all the work for a unit has been completed, the assessor will make an overall judgment of the grade to be awarded for that unit. This grade is recorded in the e-portfolio. As part of the formative assessment process, if a particular piece of work/evidence does not meet the evidence requirements, the assessor will provide feedback to the trainee outlining the work necessary for them to complete the evidence. Once finally and formally submitted, evidence cannot be re-submitted to gain a higher grade. Evidence for the Employability Units, which are common to all qualifications, will also be collected in the e-portfolio and graded A – D. This evidence will normally be collected whilst trainees are on their work placement. The e-portfolio will be internally verified in the college and externally verified by SSS external verifiers.

On Screen Tests (CBT)

Each test consists of 60 knowledge items drawn from the units that make up the Associate Diploma or the Diploma. Each item is worth 1 mark. The tests will be made available to colleges on designated days. At the end of the overall test window, SSS will undertake an awarding process and determine the cut scores for each of the grades A – D for each test. This process will also identify poorly performing items and provide SSS with a range of information regarding both the performance of each test and the performance of colleges and trainees. Once the cut scores have been determined, trainees will be awarded a grade A – D for the test.

¹ Text taken from the Triple S “Grading Methodology” v6.0

Capstone Assessment

The Capstone assessment for each qualification will be provided by SSS and will be the same for all trainees undertaking the same qualification in a particular trimester. The assessment will provide an opportunity for trainees to demonstrate their skills and understanding across the whole qualification and is therefore synoptic in style. The Capstone will be assessed by the college assessors using detailed criteria provided by SSS. Each assessment will consist of a number of tasks, each of which will be graded A – D. These grades will then be combined to provide an overall grade A – D for the overall Capstone assessment.

Final Grade

Each of the three assessment elements will be combined to determine a final grade (A-D) for the qualification. The elements will be weighted at the present time on the basis: e-Portfolio – 15% CBT – 35% Capstone – 50% A trainee must have achieved a grade of at least “D” in each of the elements to qualify for graduation assessment.

Standardization

e-Portfolio

Each college is expected to undertake internal standardization to ensure consistency and comparability of outcomes. These will be undertaken by the internal verifier and monitored by the external verifier.

Capstone Assessment

The initial assessment will be undertaken by the college assessor. The outcomes will be verified internally by the internal verifier and externally by the SSS external verifier. For qualifications being undertaken at more than one college, SSS will undertake a standardization process across colleges to ensure comparability between outcomes from different colleges and ensure the standards of grades are maintained year on year. No grade will be confirmed or qualification awarded until all standardization processes have been carried out and awards confirmed.

9 Internal Verification

Internal verifiers are responsible for:

- ensuring that assessors follow the qualification assessment guidance provided
- establishing procedures, advising and supporting assessors to assist them in interpreting and applying the qualification requirements correctly and consistently
- sampling, including by direct observation, assessment activities, methods and records to monitor consistency of assessment decisions
- sampling an increased ratio of assessment decisions by new assessors and being responsible, and accountable, for arranging the checking process
- providing assessors with prompt, accurate and constructive feedback on their assessment decisions
- using LA, maintaining up to date records of internal verification and sampling activities and ensuring that these are available for the external verifier
- undertaking an active role in raising issues of good practice in the assessment process
- liaising with other staff members and the external verifier to implement the requirements of the assessment system
- organizing regular meetings between all those involved in assessment within the college, including any satellite sites (records or minutes of such activities should be kept for the external verifier)
- facilitating appropriate ongoing staff development and training for assessors
- ensuring that all trainees' achievement records and college documentation are completed in accordance with requirements countersigning as appropriate assessment documentation.

Internal verifiers must possess current sector experience for the qualifications they are internally verifying and be experienced assessors themselves. Internal verifiers cannot verify their own assessments if they are also acting as an assessor.

Undertaking the role - Monitoring assessment practice

Why? The purpose of monitoring assessment practice is:

- to check that the required standards of assessment are met consistently by all assessors, thereby providing all trainees with fair and reliable assessment
- to identify any areas where assessors need help or further development.

How? The first thing an internal verifier must decide is how they are going to check the reliability of the assessment process for the qualification for which they are responsible within the college. In a very small college it may be possible to check every single assessment decision, but it certainly would not be practical in most colleges. An internal verifier, therefore, must find a way of reviewing the quality of assessment practice to get a clear view of the work of all the assessors. This is done through a process of 'sampling' assessments.

What? An internal verifier will need to sample sufficient evidence, through direct observation of assessor practice and review of the trainee product, paper or computer based evidence and records, to form a view about the assessment practice within the college. They will need to check assessment decisions of every assessor over a period of time, but what and how many? In deciding, consideration must be given to a number of factors including those listed in section *Sampling strategy*. For example, all assessors must be included in the sample during the year, but if they are experienced it may be necessary to sample only one or two individual assessment decisions per trainee and only two or three trainees for each assessor. However, if there is a new or inexperienced assessor, the internal verifier will need to sample many more of their assessment decisions for the first 6-12 months to ensure that their assessments are reliable and consistent over a period of time.

When? It is important that sampling is carried out at different stages in the assessment process so that any problems can be identified and rectified at an early stage. The sampling process will also include sampling the assessment decisions made for the Capstone at the end of the program. It must include direct observation of assessors with a trainee, they are:

- action planning
- assessment planning
- trainee briefing
- observing trainee performance
- inspecting product or documentary evidence
- questioning and giving feedback to trainees

These may need to be undertaken both in the college and when trainees are on work placement.

Sampling Strategy

Sampling of assessments cannot simply be 'random sampling of assessment decisions'. It must be planned carefully in order to be representative of college assessment practice across the whole qualification or group of qualifications. The internal verifier must therefore develop a sampling strategy which clearly identifies the overall approach to the development of an effective sampling process. This will vary from college to college but in every case there are particular factors which must be taken into consideration.

- Size and geographical spread of college. What is the number and geographical spread of the assessment locations? There could be – a single assessment site at the college – several assessment sites at satellite colleges – workplace assessment sites.
- Number of assessors. Are there – one or two assessors – several assessors spread across a number of sites – workplace supervisors?
- Level of experience in assessment and verification practice. Are the staff – experienced in delivering and assessing these particular qualifications – new to assessing?
- Range of assessment methods used. These will certainly include: – observation of performance – inspection of products – assignments

- Type of assessment. To pick up problems early on, it can be helpful to check both formative assessment and summative assessment, at least in the early stages.
- Number and type of trainees – small or large number registered for this qualification. Qualification(s) being delivered. Are there any issues with this qualification eg – a new qualification – particular parts of it with which assessors/trainees have difficulty?

When implemented, the sampling strategy must ensure there is sufficient, varied sampling to provide a true picture of the quality of assessment, including grading, in the college, so that the internal verifier (and the external verifier) can be certain that assessments not sampled also meet the standards.

Sampling Plan

A sampling plan is a document that shows how the strategy is to be applied for a specific cohort of trainees. Individual sampling plans drawn up against the strategy will work towards getting a sample of assessment activity that is representative of assessment practice across the whole college.

Outcome of Sampling Activities

As suggested, sampling of assessment practice should be ongoing and not a ‘one-off’ activity. Equally, implementing follow-up action should not be an ‘end of year’ activity. It is essential that an internal verifier immediately provides constructive feedback to each assessor. This should be on an individual basis and not in front of other assessors. Even in the best and most experienced of colleges, it is likely that sampling assessment practice will reveal some inconsistencies.

To decide an appropriate course of action, the internal verifier must consider carefully any weakness/issue identified, for example does it relate to

- just one assessor – are they new to assessing; experienced but new to the college; new to this qualification?
- a number of assessors
- one particular piece or type of evidence
- one particular practical competence/knowledge evidence requirement or the qualification as a whole?
- particular issues such as grading decisions

There clearly will be a training need, but what type? It is the internal verifier’s responsibility to facilitate appropriate on-going development and training for assessors. For example arrangements could be made for

- extra support and guidance for an individual, if just one assessor is experiencing difficulty
- a standardization workshop, if a number of assessors are making inappropriate/inconsistent decisions
- further guidance from the External Verifier or SSS, if the problem arises from uncertainty about interpretation of requirements for a new qualification.

Remember, there is little point in developing a highly efficient sampling strategy unless there is an equal commitment to addressing the issues it reveals.

The internal verifier must keep appropriate records of their verification activity. The external verifier will want to see these and discuss issues that they might raise. Most of the records and reports can be maintained within LA.

10 External Verification

External verifiers are appointed by SSS for specific qualifications to ensure that all assessments undertaken within SSS colleges are fair, valid, consistent, and meet the requirements of the qualification. They will have an appropriate level of knowledge and expertise for the qualifications for which they undertake this role. External verifiers are responsible for:

- helping colleges to develop internal assessment and evidence evaluation systems that are fair, reliable, accessible and non-discriminatory
- ensuring that internal verifiers are undertaking their duties satisfactorily
- monitoring internal quality assurance systems and sampling, including by direct observation, assessment activities, methods and records
- checking claims for certification to ensure they are authentic, valid and supported by auditable records
- acting as a source of advice and support, including help with the interpretation of standards
- promoting best practice
- providing prompt, accurate and constructive feedback to all relevant parties on the operation of colleges' assessment systems
- confirming that colleges have implemented any corrective actions required
- reporting back to SSS on the conduct of their qualifications
- maintaining records of college visits and making these available for auditing purposes
- providing feedback and an action plan to the college to support improvement

There are four key strands to the work of external verifiers:

- they will undertake external verification visits to the college
- they will sample trainee evidence, assessor decisions, feedback and internal verification activity remotely through LA
- they will make themselves available through Skype or other mechanisms to support the college team between visits
- they will be members of the Capstone Assessment standardization panel

The purpose of a visit is to monitor the college's quality performance, to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make recommendations as to how the latter may be overcome. The external verifier will prepare a comprehensive report and discuss it with the college assessment manager or appropriate internal verifier. The report will be posted immediately on LA. This instant feedback will provide the college with useful management information about its assessment activities.

Visits

External Verifiers will normally make three visits per year to the college. Visits will normally last one day unless the verifier has a large number of programs or trainees to verify.

These guidance notes have been produced to provide the college team with information on:

- visit procedures
- what external verifiers look for during the course of the visit
- how they report their findings on the visit

The procedures for verification visits are summarized below.

Prior to the visit: Good planning is essential so the external verifier will contact the the internal verifier responsible for a specific qualification in order to:

- plan and agree the visit schedule with the internal verifier where appropriate)
- prepare a visit agenda which will state clearly who and what they will wish to see and send the college a copy. *It should be noted that the external verifier may still require to see people and evidence not specified in advance.

During the visit: The external verifier will:

- check that the previous action plan has been implemented
- inspect a range of evidence to confirm ongoing compliance with the approval criteria
- observe assessments and sample trainees' evidence
- talk to trainees
- examine internal verification and assessment records
- check claims for certification
- meet the assessment manager, internal verifier(s) and assessors to discuss assessment and quality control procedures
- provide support to assessors in planning assessment activity and interpreting qualification standards

Remote Sampling

One of the advantages of using LA is that the external verifier will be able to sample evidence remotely. The external verifier may use the facility to:

- support the assessor(s) by looking at evidence on an “ad-hoc” basis following a request for support
- sample particular units or performance criteria between visits or as part of an action plan
- monitor internal verification activities

All remote access will be agreed with the college and the external verifier will file a report after any substantive activity.

Assessor Support

As well as providing support to assessors during the college visit, assessors have the resource to support colleges remotely by email, skype or other suitable means. This resource is designed to ensure that assessors and internal verifiers have access to a specialist resource throughout the year

without having to wait for a visit. This is particularly important with new qualifications and new assessors.

Sampling Evidence and Decisions

External verifiers will sample assessment and verification decisions made by the college assessors in order to check the accuracy and consistency of the college's internal quality arrangements. There can be no fixed rule about what and how much an external verifier must sample as centres are very different. Therefore, each external verifier is required to develop a sampling strategy which is tailored to the needs of individual centres. This will reflect the

- size and geographical spread
- number of assessors and internal verifiers and their level of experience in assessment
- range of assessment methods used
- the number and type of trainees
- the efficiency of the internal verification system.

Although an external verifier has no fixed formula for deciding how many assessments to check, they, and SSS, must be sure that their sample size will be sufficient to provide a clear view of the quality of the assessment process across the whole of the centre over a period of time.

The Visit Report

At the end of each visit the external verifier will review their findings, which they will have been recording throughout the visit, and complete a report on LA. As outlined above, they will share the content of their planned report prior to the end of the visit.

The report will give the college and SSS, a clear view of how well the college is doing in four key areas of activity:

- management and administrative systems
- physical and staff resources
- assessment
- quality assurance.

Ideally every visit should end with the external verifier being satisfied that the college is meeting all SSS requirements. However, even in the best colleges, there is usually room for improvement so the verifier will complete an action plan at the end of the report which will tell the internal verifier and the college what needs to be done and by when.

The reporting uses a "traffic light" system to provide the college and SSS with an overall view of the status of the program:

Status	Impact	Action
	Program seen as operating with consistent high quality assessment processes. No concerns regarding the program or the way the college operates.	Potentially, the college could be enabled to process results on a “fast track” basis whereby the EV monitors the program but is not required to “sign off” each individual trainee at completion.
	Program seen as operating effectively but with some concerns regarding processes or quality which do not impact on final outcomes.	EV always “signs off” individual trainee completions and monitors college progress with action plans from EV reports. Chief Verifier monitors reports from other programs to get overall college view.
	Significant quality concerns. Either processes are not being followed and/or are ineffective in maintaining quality.	<p>EV provides continuous monitoring of trainees, assessors and IV processes. Multi-stage action plan. Chief Verifier evaluates the necessity of giving whole college a quality review or whether issues are program based.</p> <p>If no improvement, review possibility of withdrawing program and/or college approval. It is not SSS’s intention to withdraw approval without having explored all possible avenues with the colleges to improve their performance. Withdrawing approval would be seen by SSS as having “failed” and would only be used as a last resort.</p>

Reports also include an action plan and a set of recommendations for the college to address. The system will also ask External Verifiers to automatically update the previous action plan with progress to date.

Confirming Awards

It is the responsibility of the external verifier to confirm that the college may claim an award for a cohort of trainees, based on the satisfactory completion of their skills evidence and of the knowledge test and the Capstone assessment. They will do this after any grade amendments are

made following their final visit and any SSS standardization.

11 Appeals

a. Appeals against knowledge test results

All trainee appeals must be directed via the College at which the assessment took place. If a College is dissatisfied with a test result and has reasons to suspect that it may not be accurate or fair, the first step is to make a "Results Enquiry".

In general, because all on screen tests are marked automatically, an appeal will only be allowed where it is shown that, as a result of factual changes:

- The answer to a question is no longer valid
- There is now more than one valid answer
- There are no valid answers

or there is a claim of malpractice which potentially invalidates the results from that test session.

Where it is shown that the results are inaccurate as a result of questions/answers no longer being valid, SSS will re-run the automated marking to discount the question(s) involved and re-issue to results.

If concerns about the accuracy of the results still persist, the College should submit an appeal.

Appeals are processed in two stages:

Stage 1 involves an investigation by a senior officer of SSS who has had no previous involvement with the results in question. The appellant will receive a report following this investigation. If the College remains dissatisfied, they may take the appeal to Stage 2.

Stage 2 involves a hearing before a SSS committee which includes external and independent members.

If an appeal is accepted, an investigation into the trainee's and/or the College's results and the SSS's procedures will follow.

Appeals will only be accepted from the appropriate senior person in the College. Other than in exceptional circumstances, appeals should be made within 10 working days of the receipt of the original result or the result for Stage 1, if proceeding to Stage 2.

The decision of the Stage 2 Appeal hearing is final.

b. Appeals against Internal e-Portfolio and Capstone Decisions

Where a trainee disagrees with an assessment decision made by the College assessor the matter should initially be reviewed by the College's internal verifier. This applies to both e-portfolio evidence and Capstone Assessments. If the trainee remains dissatisfied, the matter should be

passed to the next stage of the College's internal appeals procedure. This usually involves an investigation by a member of the senior management team.

If this does not resolve the situation and the trainee is still dissatisfied, the College may refer the matter to the SSS external verifier for reconsideration. If the matter remains unresolved following consideration by the external verifier, an appeal should be made, by the College to the SSS Chief Verifier for further consideration. This reconsideration of an assessment decision by the Chief Verifier will be taken to meet the requirements of Stage 1 of the SSS appeals process.

Where the re-consideration of an assessment decision by the Chief Verifier does not resolve the matter, the College may then write to SSS and request an escalation to Stage 2. Stage 2 involves a hearing before a SSS committee which includes external and independent members.

12 Malpractice and Maladministration

SSS takes the issue of malpractice and maladministration very seriously. Any allegations of malpractice, whether from College staff, senior management, trainees or as a result of external verifier monitoring, will be investigated independently by SSS. If necessary, SSS will instigate an appeals process so that any party affected by the allegation of malpractice or maladministration has access to an appropriately structured process whereby they can appeal against any issue raised by an allegation.

SSS reserves the right to withdraw recognition from any College that is found to have operated in an inappropriate manner and to disqualify any trainee.

Examples of possible malpractice and maladministration include:

- Contravention of SSS College and qualification approval conditions
- Failure to enable SSS to carry out its work or by failing to give access to SSS staff, external verifiers or other staff who have reasonably requested access to the College, its records and trainee evidence
- Actions required by SSS's external verifiers not being undertaken within agreed timescales
- Failure to carry out delivery, internal assessment, internal moderation or internal verification in accordance with SSS's requirements
- Failure to maintain auditable records, e.g. certification claims
- Fraudulent claims of qualification achievement
- Intentional withholding of information from SSS which is critical to maintaining robust quality assurance mechanisms
- Forgery
- Plagiarism of any nature by trainees
- Impersonation