



**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ARBORICULTURE AND FORESTRY ADVISORY GROUP**

Training and Certification

Certificate of Competence in Chainsaw and Related Operations

1. Introduction

This paper is presented by NPTC. It reflects NPTC's views on a range of fundamental issues concerned with training and certification on which AFAG members are invited to consider, comment and make recommendations. It covers a range of issues related to current and future developments in NPTC training and certification including:

- Independent Assessment
- Consolidation periods between training and assessment
- Unit CS32 – maximum diameter
- CS Unit Revision

2. Issues

2.1 Independent Assessment

In year 2000, training and assessment became separated by NPTC as a means for improving the QA for the CS certificate of competence (CoC), (previously there was integrated training and assessment). The following year, Lantra Awards introduced integrated training and assessment (ITA) courses for chainsaws and created certificates in direct competition with NPTC.

In 2002, there was extensive industry consultation organised throughout the UK by the Sector Skills Council and there was an overwhelming industry demand for the following:

- The CS qualifications/units to be independently assessed (not ITA)
- Only one awarding body to issue certificates to avoid potential confusion over the status of any certificate presented by an operator to an employer or HSE inspector, (NPTC was the certificate required).

As Members will be aware, the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) requires units be entered onto a shared databank and Awarding Bodies can access these to build them into a qualification. The QCF framework recognises both qualifications that are independently assessed and those gained through integrated training and assessment.

In light of this, AFAG Members are asked to recommend one of the following options:

- (i) Option 1: That all NPTC CS units should independently assessed.
- (ii) Option 2: That all NPTC CS units are not required to be independently assessed, but could also be delivered through ITA procedures, provided the quality assurance arrangements are approved and regulated by Ofqual.
- (iii) Option 3: The basic NPTC units CS30*, 31*, 38* & 39* could be independently assessed with an ITA system for all the other “progression” units.

*CS30 and 31 are the basic ground-based units; CS38 and 39 are the basic aerial Tree work units. CS30 is chainsaw maintenance and crosscutting; CS31 is felling small trees; CS38 is climb trees and perform aerial rescue; CS39 is use a chainsaw from a rope and harness. 80.5% of all CS certificates are for these four basic units.]

2.2 Consolidation period between training and assessment

There has previously been support from across the industry, including from some AFAG Members, for the introduction of a period of consolidation and further practice of skills following chainsaw training and before assessments. Although some larger companies have not supported this, it has been suggested that this might improve (a) safety of new certificate holders starting work and (b) the proficiency of new certificate holders giving them at least “some” experience before they are awarded a certificate of competence.

Previously, FASTCo used to issue a “Record of Training and Assessment” (RTA) if trainees passed an end of training evaluation. This RTA was valid for up to 6 months as evidence that the operator had been trained and was competent to operate a chainsaw, but was inexperienced so that he/she required monitoring or supervising whilst using a chainsaw.

Members are asked to recommend whether City & Guilds, NPTC should introduce a system of “provisional” certification following training. This could be valid for up to 6 months and, if required could have a minimum imposed (e.g. 1 month) before the full independent assessment is carried out. [If option 3 in section 2.1 above is supported this proposal could be amended to only apply to the basic units (CS30, 31, 38, 39) if required.]

2.3 CS 32 maximum diameter

The upper limit for CS32 was removed during the industry consultation of the latest NPTC chainsaw qualification review. Therefore, CS 32 is now medium AND large trees. CS33 no longer exists (over 760mm), and has been replaced by CS49 "Specialist felling" (CS49).

An advanced (specialist) felling unit replaced CS33 and progression in size of tree felling beyond 380mm was left to the new CS32 and felling CPD/experience.

Members are asked to consider whether they recommend that an upper limit on CS32 be re-instated or the unit left in its current form.

2.4 CS units revision

Since NPTC took over awarding the CS certificates of competence from the Forestry Training Council (FTC) in 1990 there has been a number of empirical changes to the qualification units. Some new units have been added and all have had bits added on here and there. Over the same period, the training courses which passed from FTC to FASTCo and then eventually to Lantra Awards have been added to and updated.

Analogy: What has happened can be likened to someone who is living in a place that is getting progressively colder, who keeps putting another jumper on. We are now at the position that this person is wearing 30 jumpers, cannot move very easily, looks rather strange, and is still not as warm as they need to be. In other words although their clothing serves a need it is not really fit for purpose. What needs to happen is they need to take off all these jumpers and put on a specially designed thermal suit.

I believe that this analogy can be applied to our chainsaw qualifications. We need to strip it all back to basics, redesign the qualification syllabus, develop the revised training packages and create a fit for purpose assessment process.

This process will need to address all the concerns surrounding the current system. In order to do this NPTC needs to work closely with employers and key industry stakeholders (such as those represented on AFAG) to help specify the requirements for a revised syllabus so that our qualification design experts can develop a proposal for a renewed system, which I would like to be introduced in September 2011. HSE would also be required to contribute to this process but an appropriate stage i.e. at the final draft stage following the technical content of the course had been developed by NPTC in partnership with the industry.

Members are asked to recommend whether a full review of chainsaw and related certification and training is needed and, if so, whether ad-hoc sub-

groups of the AFAG Training and Certification Project Group should be set up provide AFAG's technical input into any future NPTC review of forestry and arboriculture training units.

3 Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the following recommendations:

3.1 Independent Assessment

Members are asked to consider recommending one of the following options:

- (i) Option 1: That all NPTC CS units should independently assessed.
- (ii) Option 2: That all NPTC CS units are not required to be independently assessed, but could also be delivered through ITA procedures, provided the quality assurance arrangements are approved and regulated by Ofqual.
- (iii) Option 3: The basic NPTC units CS30*, 31*, 38* & 39* could be independently assessed with an ITA system for all the other "progression" units.

3.2 Consolidation period between training and assessment

Members are asked to consider recommending that City & Guilds, NPTC introduce a consolidation period between training and assessment as outlined in section 2.2 above.

3.3 CS 32 maximum diameter

Members are asked to consider whether they recommend that an upper limit on CS32 be re-instated or the unit left in its current form.

3.4 CS units revision

Members are asked to recommend whether a full review of the current suite of NPTC forestry and arboriculture training units is needed and, if so, whether ad-hoc sub-groups of the AFAG Training and Certification Project Group should be set up provide AFAG's input into this process.