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

Meeting 18th of April 2012

**RATIONALE FOR LANTRA ASSESSMENT STRATEGY FOR
QUALIFICATIONS AND UNITS IN FORESTRY AND ARBORICULTURE**

1 Background

1.1 The paper attached at Appendix 1 has been provided by Lantra SSC for trees and timber and sets out Lantra's Assessment Strategy for qualifications and units in Forestry and Arboriculture.

2 Issues

2.1 Lantra has developed this Assessment Strategy to provide further information for awarding organisations and training providers to complement the AFAG805 guidance document on training and certification. This Assessment Strategy sets out common guidelines and key principles for assessment and training to meet industry and regulatory requirements.

3 Recommendations

3.1 This paper has been provided to brief Members on Lantra's Assessment Strategy prior to the meeting on 18 April 2012.

Appendix 1

Rationale for Lantra Assessment Strategy for qualifications and units in Forestry and Arboriculture

Tree work can be a high-risk activity with workers operating in remote areas, in all weathers and on difficult terrain. Effective training and certification is an essential requirement to ensure safe working practices for all and to reduce the risk of fatalities of workers.

Lantra, is the employer-led Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the Land-based and Environmental sector. One of its roles is the maintenance and development of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) which includes the tree work industry. Lantra SSC also works closely with awarding organisations to support them in developing qualifications appropriate for entry, progression and professional development in the industry.

Following the review of the NOS for tree work and changes in training and qualifications, Lantra SSC, has developed an Assessment Strategy to provide further information for awarding organisations and training providers to complement the AFAG805 guidance document on training and certification. This Assessment Strategy sets out common guidelines and key principles for assessment and training to meet industry and regulatory requirements.

In reviewing the NOS for tree work Lantra SSC worked closely with industry to ensure that:

- The standards meet current industry practice and align with the guidelines set by AFAG and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- Training and assessment is based on the NOS, providing industry with the assurance that training and assessment meet the AFAG805 guidance on training and certification and HSE regulatory requirements.

Lantra SSC with the relevant awarding organisations develops Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) units based on the NOS which:

- Meet the AFAG805 guidelines on training and certification.
- Have specific assessment requirements set by Lantra SSC
- Provide industry with quality provision and assessment if they use regulated training/qualifications

Lantra SCC on behalf of industry recommends that, because of the high risk nature of tree work, employers and learners should only undertake qualifications that are offered by recognised awarding organisations.

- Recognised awarding organisations are regulated and must meet the regulatory requirements set by their regulators, Ofqual/SQA/Welsh Government/CCEA.
- As part of their regulation awarding organisations must guarantee the quality of assessment and the quality of the providers and their instructors.
- Using the guidelines in this assessment strategy ensures that awarding organisations' assessments meets AFAG805 and HSE requirements.

Lantra SCC on behalf of industry recommends that training and assessment should be delivered by a quality assured provider. Such providers:

- Are monitored by an awarding organisation and must comply with their quality assurance processes
- Use trainers and assessors with the appropriate knowledge and skills.

The Assessment Strategy reflects guidance in AFAG805 that:

- professional chainsaw operators working in forestry and arboriculture need to confirm they have met the minimum level of training through a qualification from a recognised awarding organisation that provides independent assessment of the knowledge and performance .
- occasional users (operations of chainsaw, maintenance, basic cross-cutting and felling material up to 200mm diameter) can be assessed by integrated training and assessment run by a quality assured training provider.

To align with the AFAG805 training and certification guidance the following definitions of assessment have been used:

- Independent assessment of knowledge and performance takes place separately to any training
- Integrated Training and Assessment (ITA) will have assessment on going throughout the period of training with the point of assessment being made clear to the learner

The proposed Assessment Strategy sets out the key principles and guidance for awarding organisations to ensure there is a consistent and robust approach to assessment and provides assurance to industry of high quality assessment. Any organisation wishing to offer qualifications in these areas are required to follow the Assessment Strategy (see annex 1).

Lantra's Assessment Strategy for qualifications and units in Forestry and Arboriculture

Introduction

Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the land-based and environmental sector has produced this assessment strategy to:

- Assist awarding organisations in developing assessment for these qualification areas
- Promote and encourage consistent assessment of units and qualifications between awarding organisations

This strategy provides the principles and guidance to awarding organisations offering qualifications and individual qualification units in forestry and arboriculture to ensure the assessment of these qualifications and units is robust, valid, effective and consistent and have credibility.

Awarding organisations may develop their own quality assurance measures in order to enhance these principles. By providing these overarching principles Lantra is ensuring there is consistency between organisations and the assessment of units and qualifications in these areas.

The information and guidance contained within this strategy also supports, and is in addition to, the AFAG805 training and certificate document. In particular this strategy supports the minimum requirements for professional chainsaw operators, including aerial tree work, pruning and dismantling, is confirmed by independent assessment leading to a recognised qualification.

For those using chainsaws in the sector outside of forestry and arboriculture on trees up to 200mm diameter, classed as an 'occasional user' it is recommended they attend an integrated training and assessment (ITA) course.

Minimum requirements for the development of qualifications

- All qualifications must be developed from the most current NOS
- All qualifications must use the shared QCF units/SCQF credited rated units that have been developed from the NOS by Lantra SSC and members of the awarding organisation forum
- All awarding organisations must contact Lantra SSC for details of the assessment requirements for QCF units
- Awarding organisations must follow Lantra SSC qualification support process to gain approval and have these qualification supported by the Lantra SSC, on behalf of industry, for inclusion on the Register of Regulated Qualifications
- Awarding organisations must be a member of Lantra SSC Awarding Organisation Forum and follow Lantra's "Working Together" agreement.

Regulatory requirements for Awarding Organisations

Any organisation wishing to develop recognised and accredited qualifications must be approved to do so by the Regulators. In England this is Ofqual, Scotland SQA, Northern Ireland CCEA and in Wales this is by Welsh Government.

Awarding Organisation Quality Assurance

Risk rating and risk management protect the integrity of the assessment process by ensuring that all monitoring control and support mechanisms are put into place according to each provider's level of risk. The systems should also focus on the following:

- Assessment bias – any personal, professional or pedagogical relationship between learners, assessors, trainers, verifier should be declared to the awarding organisation
- Conformance to centre/provider approval criteria to ensure that the integrity of the qualifications is maintained

The systems for risk rating and risk management should be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, following any guidance issued to awarding organisations from the regulatory authorities

Where risk is identified, Lantra SSC would expect that one or more of the following actions would be taken by the awarding organisation:

- Conduct a spot visit at short notice
- Meet and/or observe learners or large sample of learner at the centre/with the provider
- Increase the frequency of verification visits
- Conduct learners and employer interviews
- Any other action as appropriate to the risk identified

Assessment Requirements

Assessment is open to any learner who has the potential to reach the assessment requirements set out in the relevant QCF units.

The QCF units have been developed from NOS as combined units of knowledge and performance. Awarding organisations assessment methodology must show evidence of both knowledge and performance to achieve all learning outcomes.

In order to demonstrate consistent competent performance for a unit, awarding organisations must follow the QCF unit assessment criteria and as a minimum the "third column" assessment detail.

Performance must be the main form of evidence gathered in order to demonstrate consistent competent performance of a unit. However, it is unlikely that performance alone will provide enough evidence to assess the key components of knowledge and understanding. It is therefore recommended that knowledge and performance is assessed by an independent method.

The assessment environment must replicate that expected in industry. Where applicable, the machinery, tools, materials, equipment and resources used must be representative of the industry standards and there must be sufficient equipment/resources available for each learner to demonstrate their competence individually.

Lantra SSC is keen to ensure that all learners are given reasonable opportunities to achieve accreditation. Individual awarding organisations must have in place a reasonable adjustment policy on meeting the needs of learners with special assessment requirements.

To align with the AFAG805 training and certification guidance the following definitions of assessment have been used:

- Independent assessment of knowledge and performance will have the assessment taking place separately to any training
- Integrated Training and Assessment (ITA) will have assessment on going throughout the period of training with the point of assessment been made clear to the learner

Awarding organisations offering qualifications and training will jointly agree which units are defined as high risk and will be independently assessed and those of low risk and assessed by integrated training and assessment. The method of assessment is determined on the level of risk and not on the user. This information will be detailed in a separate annex to this document and is available from Lantra SSC.

Occupational expertise for those involved in the assessment and delivery

The Awarding organisation must ensure that all those involved in the delivery and assessment:

- Have sufficient, verifiable, relevant current industry experience, knowledge and understanding of the working area at, or above the level being assessed. This experience and knowledge must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when judging learners. Experience and knowledge could be verified by a combination of:
 - Curriculum vitae and employer endorsement
 - References
 - Possession of relevant occupational qualifications
 - Membership of relevant professional institution
- Have sufficient expertise so they have up to date experience, knowledge and understanding of the particularly aspects of work they are assessing
- Only assess in their acknowledged area of occupational competence
- Have a sound, in-depth knowledge of and uphold the integrity of the relevant and current NOS and be able to interpret these to make judgements on current working practices and technologies within the area of work
- Hold, or be working towards appropriate qualifications as required by the awarding organisation and with relevant codes of practice as set by the regulatory authorities