

## **FOR QIG TO APPROVE**

### **Final version: Definition, Description and Explanation of National Occupational Standards (NOS)**

#### **What are National Occupational Standards (NOS)?**

NOS set out measurable performance standards to which an individual is expected to work in a given occupation. The standards comprise competencies in performance, skills, knowledge and understanding for specific activities required by employers.

NOS are expressed in outcomes related to the main roles and responsibilities within occupations. These outcomes will specify the skills, knowledge and understanding required to perform competently to the standards required in employment.

NOS define competence. This is a wide concept which embodies an individual's ability to transfer their skills and knowledge to new situations within the occupational area. It encompasses organisation and planning of work, innovation and coping with non-routine activities. It includes those qualities of personal effectiveness that are required in the workplace to deal with co-workers, managers and customers.

The terminology for the singular is a NOS or a standard. The terminology for a collection of NOS covering a particular occupation, or set of closely related occupations, is a suite of NOS or a suite of standards.

#### **Who is responsible for developing National Occupational Standards (NOS)?**

NOS are developed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and other Standards Setting Bodies (SSBs) (where no SSC exists) in collaboration with employers. SSC/Bs are custodians or stewards of the NOS they produce and are responsible for the maintenance and updating of NOS for their sectors. SSC/Bs can copyright the NOS they develop but need to make them freely available through the NOS Directory to the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), regulatory authorities, awarding bodies, and to higher and further education institutes for use in qualifications.

The majority of funding for NOS development and revision is provided through the UK NOS Board.

#### **Who is responsible for approving National Occupational Standards (NOS)?**

The UK Co-ordinating Group (UKCG) is responsible for approving NOS on behalf of the UK NOS Board. UKCG is chaired by the SSDA and has representatives from the SSDA and the four UK nations' respective regulatory authorities. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, all NOS have been approved against the NOS Quality Criteria.

## MANDATORY COMPONENT SECTIONS OF NOS

### NOS title

This should reflect the content:

### NOS overview

This introductory section provides a brief summary of the NOS to help the user judge whether it is relevant to them. This section allows the NOS writer to include extra information such as:

- Job roles to which the NOS may relate
- Pre-requisites for using the NOS
- Explanation of NOS
- The origin of the NOS, for example, if it is imported from another SSC/B standard

While this section can be written more freely, it should not contradict or weaken other sections.

### Performance criteria (PCs)

The performance criteria define in detail what is expected of the individual.

PCs must:

- be achievable by an **individual**.
- state the **outcomes** of competent performance

for example, paperwork completed legibly; safety equipment used in line with the manufacturer's instructions; clear instructions given

- indicate the **quality** of the outcome to ensure performance criteria are not just a list of activities which could be carried out without actually achieving their purpose

for example, if completed paperwork is illegible it will not convey information effectively

PCs are:

- **critical** to achieving the overall function as stated in the NOS title, i.e. not just 'nice to have' options
- **generic**, i.e. accepted as best practice across an area within a relevant sector

They can also cover contingency and emergency situations.

### Knowledge and understanding

This section states what the individual needs to know and/or understand to enable them to meet the performance criteria.

for example, to comply with legislation the individual needs to know what the current relevant legislation is, why they must follow it, and how it applies to their work.

The knowledge and understanding section should include all that is both **essential** and **generic** i.e. applicable across the relevant sector(s).

## **OPTIONAL COMPONENT SECTIONS OF NOS**

### **Scope**

Scope specifies the range of circumstances or situations that might have a critical impact on the activity. These can help individuals prepare for the different contexts or contingencies that they could face.

### **Element**

A NOS can be divided into two or more discrete elements which describe the activities the person has to carry out, but the NOS writer should ensure there is no duplication.

### **Values and behaviours**

These describe the personal attributes an individual is expected to demonstrate within the NOS.

---

## **HEADINGS FOR THE COMPONENT SECTIONS OF NOS**

The use of these terms is preferred. However, as long as the content of the component sections meet the characteristics described in this paper, there is flexibility for SSC/Bs if these are inappropriate for sectors.

### **Mandatory Sections:**

NOS title

NOS overview

Performance criteria

Knowledge and understanding

### **Optional Sections:**

Scope

Element

Values and behaviours