Standardisation Policy (EPA)

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1.   Policy Statement

Smart Awards is committed to developing and delivering end-point assessments so that quality and standards are maintained across its assessment tools, the implementation of these, and approved independent assessors for end-point assessments.

2.   Scope

This policy applies to independent assessors for end-point assessments and Smart Awards staff whose role involves the end-point assessment.

3.   Responsibility

Smart Awards Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented.

4.   Policy and implementation

Smart Awards will develop the relevant assessment tools to meet the requirements of the Assessment Plan for each Standard assessed. Smart Awards Development Policy describes how this will take place.

Assessor recruitment and training

Smart Awards identifies appropriately qualified and occupationally competent independent assessors to carry out end-point assessments in accordance with the published Trailblazer Standard(s) and Assessment Plan(s). Assessors must meet the specification below:

Role: Independent Assessor
Objective: To establish competence of apprentice's through the end-point assessment process
Key responsibilities:

- Assess apprentices for the end-point assessment of this Standard using the assessment tools and mark schemes developed by Smart Awards
- Apply the grading structure
- Act in accordance with Smart Awards Code of Conduct for Assessors
- Liaise with Smart Awards staff, Lead Assessor, employers and training providers as necessary
- Ensure accurate and timely reporting to Smart Awards
- Take part in regular standard setting activities as specified by Smart Awards
- Maintain continual professional development including occupational competence

Knowledge, Skills and Experience:

- Hold or be working towards the qualifications and experience needed to carry out assessment – D32, D33, A1 or A2 or Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment, Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement, Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement, TAQA Assessor Award
- Have a sound, in-depth knowledge of the Standard and associated Assessment Plan relating to the Standard
- Have significant industrial/ occupational expertise
- Have industry credibility including current membership of the relevant professional bodies
- Be technically knowledgeable in Smart Metering with an appropriate technical qualification, relevant vocational qualification or industry accepted equivalent discipline qualification or equivalent technical experience
- Hold a current First Aid certificate
- Hold a Health and Safety certificate

- Committed to equality of opportunity
- Good interpersonal and effective communication skills, both written and verbal
- Attention to detail

Potential assessors must provide Smart Awards with the following:
- Details of occupational competence / qualifications held
- Details of assessor qualifications/awards
- Any other knowledge, skills or experience

The process is as follows:
- Independent Assessor applications are reviewed against the specification and references followed up
- Those that meet the criteria in the specification are invited to attend a training day
- Following successful completion of this day, and review of references, independent assessor status will be confirmed (or not)
- New assessors will be accompanied by the Lead Assessor for their first assessment at least
- Their first assessment without the Lead Assessor will be moderated

Independent assessors will be responsible for:
- Assessing evidence of apprentice knowledge and skills competence against the assessment tools mapped to the Standard
- Maintaining accurate and verifiable assessment records
- Taking part in standardisation activities and events
- Following Smart Awards quality processes around moderation/ verification
- Completing all administration as per Smart Awards requirements

Independent end-point assessors must agree to and follow Smart Awards Code of Conduct. For Assessors

Assessor training and standardisation
New independent assessors must attend an initial training day that will include the following:
- Smart Awards systems and processes around the end-point assessment
- Assessment methods for the Standard that they have applied to assess – how to apply these
- Grading and how to differentiate grade boundaries
- Standardisation involving a review of samples of assessment evidence. Where there are initial gaps in sample material then evidence will be simulated. Borderline cases are preferred from which Assessors will required to agree what constitutes a pass and how to differentiate grades appropriately
- The role of the Lead Assessor
- Training and role play around interview skills and conducting interviews.

Training will be delivered by Smart Awards Lead Assessor. Attendance at training and taking part in on-going standardisation activities is mandatory and constitutes continuous professional development for assessors. This is in addition to evidence of on-going occupational competence that assessors must demonstrate (30 hours annually).

Assessment and standardisation
(a) Monitoring assessor practice and decisions
All assessment decisions are recorded monitored by Smart Awards. This involves logging all fails, passes, and grades awarded by each individual assessor. The purpose of this is to identify any patterns or trends, for

example, to identify whether any particular assessor is more likely to award a specific grade, or fail a candidate, compared to other assessors. This in itself does not mean that the assessor is out of synch with other independent assessors, however the assessor concerned will be subject to closer levels of scrutiny.

Smart Awards may also use this information to report to other organisations for the purposes of monitoring quality assurance.

A Lead Assessor will be appointed that will assist Smart Awards in training, standard setting and monitoring assessment decisions.

(b) Ensuring comparability and consistency of assessment decisions

Monitoring assessment decisions helps Smart Awards to ensure that these are comparable across assessors and also consistent within assessors (i.e. each assessor's assessment decisions are monitored over time). In addition to these assessors are required to take part in standardisation activities and events as detailed below. These allow assessment decisions to be compared across assessors and assessment methods.

(c) Standardisation and moderation activities

Assessors are required to take part in standardisation activities and events, the purpose of which is to:

- Provide an opportunity to ensure the consistency of standards between independent assessors
- Compare the different assessment strategies and benchmark assessments
- Ensure that evidence is sufficient to demonstrate achievement against parts of the Standard assessed by each method
- Ensure that the assessment does not prevent any unintended barriers to achievement for a particular learner and pay due respect to any issues of equality and diversity
- Ensure that the assessment tasks are written in language that is appropriate to the level and is free from bias
- Ensure consistency in the assessment judgements that are being made based on the available evidence

Standardisation activities allow assessment decisions to be compared across assessors and assessment methods and include the following:

- Peer review – where assessors accompany one another and report on this Cross-marking pieces of evidence (this will take place 'blind' meaning that the assessor is unaware of the mark/ grade given by other assessors).
- Standardisation meetings – where pieces of assessment evidence are discussed. This will tend to focus on borderline cases that will be collected from the Lead Assessor for this purpose, and/or from appeals

A standard agenda will be used at the events which will allow the group to discuss and compare information to:

- Confirm decisions they may have made regarding assessment during the year
- Consider standards across a range of different types of evidence e.g. portfolios, short answer questions, observation to confirm the validity of evidence
- Confirm the volume/appropriateness of evidence
- Ensure consistent approaches to assessment decisions identify and share good practice
- Confirm grading decisions
- Confirm standards across time by examining materials and outcomes from previous standardisation events
- Consider feedback gained

Smart Awards will appoint a Lead Assessor for each Standard who will be responsible for:

- Regular sampling evidence of assessment decisions including direct observation of assessment practice. This will include accompanying the independent assessor for their first assessment at least, which may be increased if the Lead Assessor feels that the assessor requires further support
- Moderating the assessors first assessment (without the Lead Assessor present) and provided this is acceptable sampling each assessor's decisions/ grades allocated thereafter, normally a 10% sample that will increase where there are any concerns with regards to the assessor's decisions (100% verification may be used if deemed necessary)
- Maintaining up-to-date records of sampling activity
- Monitoring and supporting the work of assessors
- Facilitating appropriate staff development and training for independent assessors
- Providing feedback to Smart Awards on the effectiveness of assessment
- Reviewing all fails
- Reviewing borderline cases referred by independent assessors

Smart Awards retains records of sampling activity. A report will be completed by the Lead Assessor following sampling activities that will indicate whether the independent assessor sampled required further standard setting activities or development.

Improving the quality of assessment practice
Smart Awards seeks to continually improve the quality of its assessment tools and practice, and its assessors and personnel involved in the delivery of end-point assessments.
The following actions contribute to this process:

Monitoring assessment decisions across assessors (fails/passes/grades)
- Standardisation activities across assessors
- Sampling assessment decisions
- Obtaining feedback (opportunities to improve are logged and monitored)
- Utilising the outcomes of complaints and appeals (opportunities to improve are logged and monitored)
- Standardisation with other EPA assessment organisations

Note that this list is not exhaustive.

Grading
Grade boundaries will be applied in accordance with the bands shown in the Assessment Plan and further articulated as necessary by Smart Awards. These boundaries developed will clearly articulate the level of competence required for a pass, merit (where included) and distinction (where included).

5. Monitoring

Assessment decisions will be monitored as described in this policy, and corrective action(s) applied where necessary. Smart Awards will monitor the effectiveness and review the implementation of this policy, regularly considering its suitability, adequacy and effectiveness. Any improvements identified will be made as soon as possible. Internal control systems and procedures will be subject to regular audits to provide assurance that they are effective in ensuring the quality and standards of all independent end-point assessors and their practices.