

NVQ Assessor

What is the work like?

NVQ assessors work with candidates to help them meet the occupational standards (competences) needed to gain National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

An assessor will first identify what a new NVQ candidate knows and is able to do. This enables any further underpinning knowledge and skills that the candidate needs to gain to be agreed. An individual action plan is produced and the assessor monitors the candidate's progress against this, whilst advising and supporting him or her throughout the period of learning and assessment.

Occupational competences are assessed in a number of ways. These include:

- observing candidates in their workplace
- questioning candidates on a one-to-one basis to assess their knowledge and to gauge how they would deal with non-standard situations
- monitoring and recording candidates' progress, which might involve examining portfolios containing evidence of a candidate's knowledge, understanding and vocational competence. Depending on the nature of the candidate's work, the evidence might be paper based, in the form of electronic or audio-visual records or as a product that a candidate has made.

NVQ assessors:

- examine and evaluate candidates' portfolios of evidence
- observe, evaluate and record candidates' performance and sign off units as they are completed
- give candidates detailed feedback after an assessment and provide any necessary support and advice
- keep detailed records of candidates' progress and pass on relevant information to the NVQ awarding bodies.

Assessors usually work with a number of candidates at the same time. They often work as one of a team alongside an internal verifier (IV). Assessors also liaise regularly with line managers and training staff within workplaces to keep them informed of the progress of their candidates.

Some assessors are self-employed, working as freelancers. Some are employed as teachers or trainers and plan and deliver NVQ training, too. A large number are employed in commerce or industry in roles such as care workers, pharmacy technicians or retail supervisors, and undertake assessment of employees as part of a wider role.

Hours and environment

Full-time NVQ assessors may work up to 40 hours a week. Part-time work and job sharing are possible. Freelance assessors work on the basis of an hourly rate.

Assessors must be prepared to carry out assessments in a candidate's workplace that fit in with that candidate's normal working hours. This can include evening and weekend work.

Salary and other benefits

These figures are only a guide, as actual rates of pay may vary, depending on the employer and where people live.

- Starting salaries for full-time assessors range from £16,000 to £22,000 a year.
- With experience, they might earn £26,000 a year or more.
- At senior levels, full-time assessors with additional activities, such as training or verifying, might earn up to £35,000 a year.
- Teachers and trainers who carry out NVQ assessment within a broader role start on about £20,000 to £25,000 a year and could progress to about £33,000 a year.

Skills and personal qualities

NVQ assessors must:

- have recent experience in the occupational area they are to assess, ie have held a post for a minimum of one year, in the last two years, in which they performed the activities defined in the occupational standards as an experienced practitioner
- be able to demonstrate recent professional development
- be well organised
- have the confidence to visit different workplaces and to work with candidates.

NVQ assessors should:

- have strong speaking, listening and writing skills
- be able to encourage and motivate candidates
- be able to work both independently and in a team
- have good judgement in assessing performance against agreed standards
- be patient and supportive.

Interests

It is important to:

- enjoy working with people
- have an interest in promoting education and training
- have a commitment to maintaining professional practice.

Getting in

NVQ assessors are employed throughout England by:

- colleges
- training providers
- companies of all sizes.

Assessors are employed across the whole NVQ framework, which is classified into the following areas:

- tending animals, plants and land
- extracting and providing natural resources
- constructing
- engineering
- manufacturing
- transport
- providing goods and services
- providing health, social and protective services
- providing business services
- communicating
- developing and extending knowledge and skill.

Jobs are advertised in local and national newspapers, by recruitment agencies and in training publications, eg People Management. Vacancies can be found on the websites of The Institute of Assessors and Verifiers: www.iavlttd.co.uk and The Times Education Supplement: www.tesjobs.co.uk.

Entry routes

Assessors should have recent experience in the occupational area they wish to assess and recruiting employers often specify that they should also hold a vocational qualification relevant to this occupational area. Teachers or trainers who act as assessors as part of their role might be required to gain a recognised teaching qualification or Learning and Development Award.

As assessors may work with children or vulnerable adults, applicants to this type of work may need to undergo checks through the Criminal Records Bureau.

Training

Depending on the context in which they work, Assessors must gain one or both of the following Level 3 in-service qualifications:

- Certificate in Assessing Candidates using a Range of Methods (A1)
- Certificate in Assessing Candidates' Performance through Observation (A2).

Candidates for either of these qualifications must be able to oversee the work of NVQ candidates, either in their own workplace or through an assessment centre, but are not allowed to do formal assessments until fully qualified. Courses for A1 and A2 Certificates typically take 6 to 12 months to complete and are offered by many colleges of further education and private training organisations. To gain these certificates, candidates must build

up a portfolio of evidence and have their own practical skills assessed in the workplace.

Some course providers accept only experienced professionals who have been put forward by their employers and who are qualified to between Level 2 and Level 4, or equivalent, in their selected occupational area. Others require that candidates are members of an accredited NVQ centre's assessment team.

Once they have gained the A1 or A2 award, Assessors may join The Institute of Assessors and Internal Verifiers (IAV) as Associate members. When they have worked as an assessor for at least 12 months, they can apply for Licentiate membership and be added to the IAV's National Register. Licentiates who have been qualified for five years can apply for Fellowship.

Assessors must undertake continuing professional development (CPD) to keep up to date with developments in their particular occupational sector and in assessment practice. They can do this in a variety of ways, such as attending workshops and courses.

Getting on

An assessors can broaden his or her role by becoming an internal verifier (IV) or an external verifier (EV).

Internal verifiers work with a team of assessors in an approved assessment centre. The internal verifier is responsible for ensuring the quality of the team's assessments and of the assessment process within the centre. Internal verifiers must gain the Level 4 Unit VI Conduct Internal Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process, which takes 12 to 18 months to complete.

External verifiers work for awarding bodies and monitor the work of approved assessment centres. External verifiers must gain the Level 4 Unit V2 Conduct External Quality Assurance of the Assessment Process.

Further information

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), 151 The Broadway, London SW19 1JQ. Telephone 020 8612 6208. Website: www.cipd.co.uk

City & Guilds, 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD. Telephone 020 7294 2800. Website: www.city-and-guilds.co.uk

ENTO, 4th Floor, Kimberley House, 47 Vaughan Way, Leicester LE1 4SG. Telephone 0116 251 7979. Website: www.ento.co.uk

The Institute of Assessors and Internal Verifiers, PO Box 148, Wirral CH62 7WB. Telephone 01925 485786. Website: www.iavltd.co.uk

Lifelong Learning UK, 5th Floor, St Andrew's House, 18-20 St Andrew Street, London EC4A 3AY. 020 7936 5798. Website: www.lluk.org

Further reading

Excellence in Assessment and Verification - ENTO

Excellence in Initial Assessment - ENTO

How to Become an NVQ Assessor - MBV Training Ltd (includes CD-ROM)

The NVQ Assessor and Verifier Handbook - Kogan Page

Magazines/journals

People Management

(Some may be priced)

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