

Guidance for Trainer and Assessor Learning and Development Qualifications (March 2014)

Background

When NSARE published its Baseline Inspection Report in September 2012 one of the key recommendations for training and assessment providers surrounded the level of teaching qualifications held by the trainers and assessors in the sector. The recommendation was that all individuals involved with work based learning should be qualified to at least a Level 4 standard (based on the English qualifications structure).

NSARE accredits a number of different types of organisations and individuals:

- FE Colleges
- Private providers delivering apprenticeships, work based learning and other programmes in the rail industry
- Private providers delivering Network Rail RTAS training (under NSARE's RTAS Concession).

For those trainers/assessors who are accredited under the Network Rail RTAS regime the current Network Rail 'Quality Assurance in Training and Assessment' Standard (NR/L2/CTM/202) sets a minimum of a Level 3 qualification for trainers/assessors delivering RTAS related training. NSARE incorporates such specific Network Rail requirements into its accreditation process where applicable.

The RTAS Rules will be subject to a fundamental review in 2014, this will include the requirements of the current NR/L2/CTM/202 Standard. Whilst we cannot predict the outcome of the review it is clear from our discussions with Network Rail that they want to see a continuing 'raising of the bar' in terms of the approach to the Quality Assurance of training provision and the quality of training/assessment delivery.

Learning and Development Qualification Level Required to be an Accredited Trainer/Assessor

The minimum requirement for ALL trainers/assessors is to hold a relevant Level 3 qualification in learning and development and/or assessment.

As we look to the future and the challenges that the industry faces to deliver improved safety, greater efficiencies, maximum benefit for investment and to deploy new technologies it is clear that over time the workforce will need to be better trained to deliver this 'railway of tomorrow'. In addition, NSARE believes

that teachers/trainers and assessors have a critical role in supporting the industry to develop a highly skilled and competent workforce. We want to encourage well qualified, inspirational and highly motivated learning professionals to be working in the industry.

We therefore believe that all trainers and assessors should be developing themselves by completing a qualification at Level 4 with a minimum of 40 credits and are strongly encouraging individuals to do so.

For those trainers who are delivering or aspire to deliver work based learning programmes such as apprenticeships and higher level technical courses (currently outside the RTAS regime) NSARE's minimum requirement is for the trainer to hold (or be working towards) a Level 4, 40 credit qualification in Learning and Development.

Ultimately it will be for providers to demonstrate the quality of the teaching and training taking place in their organisation during their inspection.

Options for Obtaining a Level 4 Qualification

There are a number of options for individuals looking for a suitable Level 4 programme, these include

- the University of Derby programme developed at the request of NSARE for the industry
- Diploma in Learning and Development (offered by several awarding organisations including the Open University)
- NVQ Level 4 in Learning and Development

A key issue to consider is whether you and your learners would prefer a predominantly 'taught' programme requiring attendance at college or a training provider versus a blended or distance learning approach. For those individuals who have not undertaken any structured learning for a number of years a distance learning option could be particularly challenging and a 'taught' programme or NVQ style qualification may be better suited to these individuals. This is a decision for the individual and their employer – NSARE would be happy to discuss and talk through the various options to help you make your decision. We may also be able to put you in touch with providers of relevant qualifications local to your organisation.

Providers should be aware that a Level 4 programme is not designed to be easy, it requires a high academic standard (it is post 'A' level) and individuals will need support and guidance from their employing organisations. The amount of time required to achieve 40 credits is, on average, around 400 hours in total. This

includes all activity, be it in a classroom, researching, completing assignments and reflecting on what has been learnt etc. For those people embarking on a distance learning approach this will require a number of hours per week over a period of several months and providers should consider factoring at least some time for study into the individual's working time.

Those trainers/assessors delivering work based learning programmes that attract government funding e.g. apprenticeships and recognised qualifications are encouraged to consider progressing to at least a Level 4 with 120 credits over a longer period of time. This is the minimum standard currently expected within the further education system.

Assessors

There are a number of individuals who are 'assessors only'. NSARE is also encouraging these individuals to complete a Level 4 qualification.

Many learning and development qualifications offer a number of mandatory and optional units whereby the individual is able to select the units most appropriate for them in their work role, including units focussed on assessment and verification. There are also specialist Level 4 Quality Assurance qualifications that may be appropriate for assessors depending on their broader role in their organisations.

Assessors have a very important role to play in the whole learning and development cycle, questioning individual's understanding of what they are doing and advising candidates on gaps in their knowledge and skills. It is important that assessors regard themselves as part of the overall learning process and as such it is vital they have a good understanding of it.

Individuals Who Already Have a Level 4 Qualification

There is some confusion surrounding people who already hold Level 4 qualifications that were awarded prior to the introduction of the QCF and associated credit ratings.

NSARE does not expect people who already hold a qualification equivalent to 40 credits to 'redo' this. Some individuals may have completed 'small' qualifications previously and that under the new credit system would attract only around 12 credits – we would encourage these individuals to consider top up units or a fuller qualification of 40 credits or more.

New Trainers/Assessors

All new trainers/assessors being accredited by NSARE for the first time will also be encouraged to achieve a level 4, 40 credit qualification. A pre-requisite for being considered for accreditation is a Level 3 qualification. Individuals who are delivering work based learning programmes (outside the RTAS regime) and/or other specific technical or higher level courses will be expected to have achieved the Level 4, 40 credits requirement within 12 months of their initial accreditation date.