



The Ultimate Guide to Becoming an NVQ Assessor

Steve Kirk

By the end of the book, you should have a clear understanding of the subject and be ready to start your training for a new exciting career.

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Introduction

Becoming an NVQ Assessor is probably one of the most rewarding things you will ever do. However, changing career is always going to be a daunting prospect. Especially so when it is hard to find any definitive answers to the many questions you will have. I have over 20 years experience in the field and hope you will find the book easy to read and very informative.

The book is written in plain English with all the educational jargon removed to make it as easy to understand as possible.

By the end of the book, you should have a clear understanding of the subject and be ready to start your training.

Key Subjects

In order to offer some clarity, I have broken the book down into three short sections:

- About training to be an NVQ assessor
- Current and past assessor qualifications.
- What could you train in?

At the end of the book, I have included my contact details. If by the time you have finished reading it you still are unsure about anything please contact me. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

Happy reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Kirk', written in a cursive style.

Steve Kirk

About the author



Steve Kirk

Steve has been designing and delivering Assessor training and Internal Quality assurance training for many years. Some might say too many. During that time he has seen the qualifications change many times. From D units to the A1 and now the CAVA. Each time it changes, in his opinion, it gets a little better and a little more in depth.

Because of his love for assessor training, a few years ago Steve started his own company, [Brooks and Kirk Assessor Training](#). As you can imagine all the company does is assessor training. They decided rather than be a jack of all trades they would focus on trying to be a master of one. An approach that has paid off as now Brooks and Kirk Assessor Training deliver assessor training to some of the biggest companies in the UK. In addition to delivering assessor training, Steve has also been called upon to share his knowledge as a guest speaker at both national and regional events.

A personal note

When not working Steve has been known to have a fondness for beer and heavy metal music. Yes, he did use to have long hair..... but he says you're not seeing those photos.

Chapter One

In this first chapter, I will give you an overview of the Assessor role. We will then look at who becomes an Assessor and how you go about becoming one.

What does an Assessor do?

The short answer is, the role of an assessor is to observe learners in their workplace, provide support and guidance by collecting evidence, assessing their abilities and enabling them to gain their desired qualifications or apprenticeship.

That does not really give you the full picture. As an NVQ assessor you would be expected to perform some or all of the following tasks:

- plan and deliver NVQ training programmes and workshops
- observe and assess candidates in their workplace
- examine candidates' portfolios of evidence
- question candidates about how they would deal with non-standard situations
- provide feedback and offer advice if the standards are not met
- sign off the NVQ when all the requirements have been met
- keep records of candidates' progress, according to the requirements of the NVQ awarding bodies
- attend meetings with other assessors
- work closely with the training staff and candidates' line managers.

All assessors should be occupationally competent and have expertise in the fields in which they want to assess.

Being an Assessor you are the main point of contact for your learner and you will develop a strong working relationship, for many people this is one of the best parts of the job.

Who becomes an NVQ assessor?

I have been training assessors for quite a few years, over 20 to be little more precise. In that time I have trained many people to be assessors. Recently I have been asked who becomes an NVQ Assessor? That may seem like an obvious question until you actually think about it. I had a good idea but wanted to back this with evidence so we went out and got some. I have done a survey of a cross-section of previous learners of [Brooks and Kirk Assessor Training](#) and here are the results.

My research has shown me that there are five different reasons people gave for training to be an NVQ Assessor. However, most people fell into at least two of the types.

So here goes my definitive answer as to the question 'who becomes an NVQ assessor?'

Who becomes an NVQ assessor – the battle weary.

This group of people said that they trained to be an NVQ assessor because health problems meant that they found it difficult to continue in their current role. An example of this is a Health and Social Care Assessor who left working in care because she developed a bad back. We also had this reason given by many in the construction trades. From Electrical Installation Assessors with bad knees to Plastering and Tiling Assessors with dodgy shoulders.

Of all the learners we surveyed who fell into this type the most peculiar was a Hair and Beauty Assessor. After 20 years in the profession and for no apparent reason, suddenly developed an allergy to the chemicals they were using. Not being able to do her job left her a little red-faced, both physically and metaphorically.

Who becomes an NVQ assessor – the work-life balancers.

Many of our past learners gave the reason of work-life balance for their training to be an NVQ assessor. Childcare obligations or care of close family members were the most common causes mentioned for looking to make a change to their work-life balance. The cost of childcare or cost of caring for an elderly relative meant their income was all but vanishing. The flexibility they enjoyed being a freelance NVQ assessor enabled them to continue earning and still carry on being the care provider. Other members of this group were those who had decided to move from full-time to

part-time working. We have to say sadly but not surprisingly nearly all of this group were female. It looks like somethings will never change.

Who becomes an NVQ assessor – the knowledge givers.

You might think this is a very strange group. Surely every NVQ assessor wanted to be a knowledge giver. Well yes, they did. The difference between this group and the other groups is that this was either their primary reason or indeed, their only reason for training to be an NVQ assessor. They liked doing their job, were able to carry on doing their job and simply wanted to share their knowledge and skills with the next generation coming through. Many of them simply became in-house assessors for the company they already worked for. For them, it was all about the joy of sharing knowledge often without any material gain.

Who becomes an NVQ assessor – the career changers.

This groups reason was the most straightforward. They either simply fancied a [change of career](#) or circumstances forced them to have a change of career. Many were getting a little bored with their current role and just liked the idea of a new challenge. For them, training to be an NVQ assessor was a quick and relatively easy way of effecting a career change without wasting all the knowledge and skills they had built up over the years. We also saw a lot of career changers between 2008 and 2010 when people from the finance sector trained with us. The strange twist of fate is that now Accountancy Assessors and Financial Service Assessors are in huge demand and attracting the best salaries. Just shows you can always make money from money.

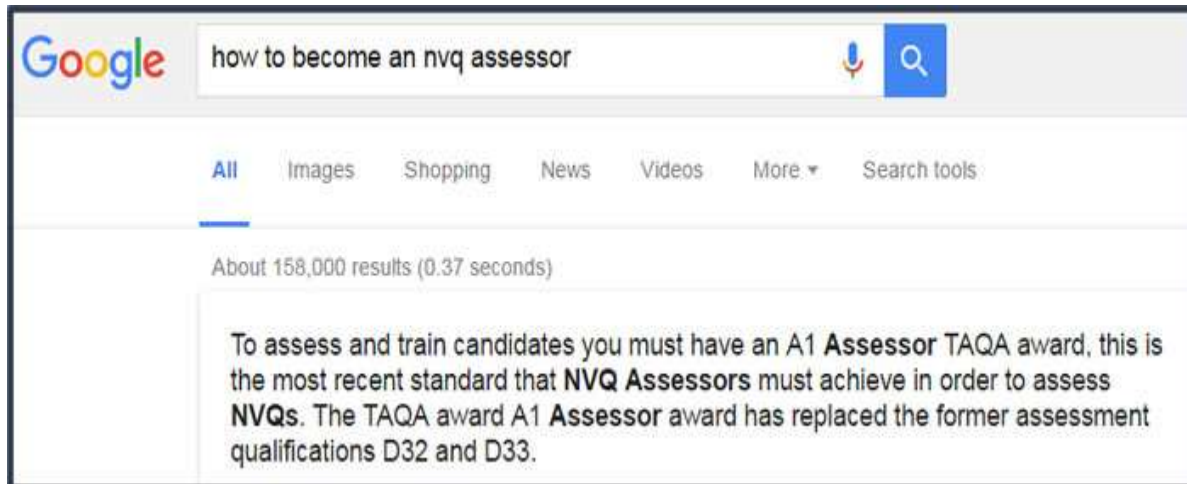
Who becomes an NVQ assessor – the second incomers.

Our last group was also pretty straightforward. They wanted more cash. The reasons they wanted or needed more money were of course varied. Pay bills, little luxuries or supplement their early retirement. Working freelance as an NVQ assessor allowed them to take on extra work without having to give up either their other job or in fact too much of their free time.

So there you have it, my industry leading research has shown the people train to be NVQ Assessors for one of, or a combination of, five different reasons. What will yours be?

How to become an NVQ assessor

Hundreds and hundreds of people Google the phrase 'how to become an NVQ assessor' or words to that effect on a monthly basis. This is one of the most common searches for people that are looking to gain their assessor qualification. Here is what you would currently be shown if you were to Google that phrase...



There is no wonder why so many people struggle to establish which qualification is right for them when even good old Google is providing them with an answer that is a whopping 7 years out of date.

But not to worry! I clear up the confused minds of trainee assessors to-be on a daily basis.

So, how do you become an NVQ assessor?

In order to become an NVQ assessor, you need two things.

Firstly, you need to be **occupationally competent** in the occupation in which you intend to assess. Occupational competence can be evidenced by prior qualifications and experience of working in a relevant job role.

Secondly, you will need to obtain the **relevant assessor qualification** from the most recent suite of assessor qualifications. The most highly regarded assessor qualification, and the one I would recommend is the [Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement \(CAVA\)](#). Upon completion of this course and providing you have sufficient occupational competence, you would be qualified to assess learners completing NVQs and Apprenticeships.

It really is that simple!

However, if you are still unsure about all of those terms that you may have stumbled across during your time researching assessor training, then you will definitely find the next page 'Assessor qualifications explained' worth a read.

Chapter Two

In this chapter, I will go through a little bit of assessor training history. I will explain the different Assessor qualifications and try to clear up the confusion that exists.

Assessor qualifications explained.

With so many different people talking about assessor training it can often get very confusing as to which course is the right one for you. One of the main reasons for this is that many people still refer to old qualifications that no longer exist. Fear not though, I am here to clear your mind of any confusion. I'm going to take you through a quick history of all the assessor qualifications that have existed to date.

It all began with the...

D units

The D32/D33 Units were the first assessor qualifications.

Suffice to say they ceased to exist many years ago and were replaced with the...

A1 Award

The A1 Award was a single unit divided into four parts and was for anybody who was involved with assessing learners taking National Vocational Qualifications, a programme of training in skills, techniques and principles of assessing competency using a variety of assessment methods.

In December 2010, the A1 Award was replaced with a suite of new qualifications. These are the current qualifications and are made up of a combination of three units.

Unit 1 Understanding the principles and practices of assessment

Unit 2 Assess occupational competence in the work environment

Unit 3 Assess vocational skills, knowledge and understanding

The qualification that most employers are looking for, and the only one I would recommend to somebody looking to train as an assessor is the

Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement (CAVA)

This is the only qualification that will make you a fully qualified assessor able to assess both stand-alone qualifications and apprenticeships. On completion of this course, not only would you be able to assess learners in their workplace (in your own area of occupational competence), but you would also be qualified to assess learners' vocational knowledge and skills in any of the following learning environments: classrooms, workshops and virtual learning environments.

The other less common qualifications in the current suite are

Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment (ACWE) - Units 1 & 2

This qualification is aimed at anyone who needs to be able to assess learners in a workplace. On completion of this course, you would **only** be qualified to assess learners' occupational competence within a work environment.

Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement (AVRA) - Units 1 & 3

This course is for anyone who needs to be qualified to assess learners in any of the following learning environments: classrooms, workshops and virtual learning environments. On completion of this course, you would **only** be qualified to assess learners' vocational knowledge, skills and understanding outside of the work environment.

Level 3 Award in Understanding the Principles and Practices of Assessment (UPPA) - Unit 1

This qualification is ideal for anyone who has previously trained as an assessor and only needs to do a refresher course to bring their knowledge up to speed. This qualification alone **would not** qualify you to assess learners in any learning environment or within the workplace.

So that's it a brief history of Assessor Training qualifications and a list of the current ones.

TAQA

“Wait a minute!” I hear you say, “you’ve missed off **TAQA**.” The reason for that is simple. **TAQA is not an assessor qualification!**

TAQA is an umbrella term used by various awarding bodies, including City and Guilds, to cover all of the assessing and quality assurance qualifications. It stands for Training, Assessment and Quality Assurance. So, CAVA forms part of the TAQA qualification suite.

So next time when you see training companies or job vacancies talking about 'The TAQA Course', just remember, the likelihood is that they are in fact referring to the Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement (CAVA).

Chapter Three

In the final chapter, I intend to explain about assessing at different levels and try to remove any confusion of what the phrase Occupational Competent actually means.

What level can I assess after I am qualified?

The million dollar question, after you have got your assessor qualification, what level would you be qualified to assess up to? If I had a pound for every time someone asked me that question I would be retired and sipping gin and tonics on a beach in Barbados...

Occupational competence

The easy answer to that question is; you can assess at any level that you are deemed to be occupationally competent.

Does that answer your question? Probably not...

So, let's take it right from the top. Firstly, you will need to meet the requirements that are set out in the awarding organisation's qualification specification. Just in case you aren't overly familiar with awarding bodies and what they do; every learning provider that is offering accredited qualifications must be a registered centre with an awarding organisation. That awarding body is who the training provider/college would register and certificate learners through. For every accredited qualification they offer, there will be an accompanying specification. This will detail everything that the learning provider needs to know about that qualification; including the 'Requirements for Assessors' involved with the delivery and assessment of that course.

You could, if you wanted to, have a read of the requirements for assessors for a few different qualifications. A quick word of warning, it certainly won't be the most entertaining thing you have read this year. Below I have cropped out the relevant sections from the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Construction specifications below to save you a lot of scrolling.

4 Occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers

4.1 Awarding organisations must ensure that **assessors**:

4.1.1 have sufficient, verifiable, relevant current industry experience, knowledge and understanding of the occupational working area at, or above, the level being assessed. This must be of sufficient depth to be effective and reliable when judging candidates' competence. Assessors' experience, knowledge and understanding could be verified by a combination of:

- curriculum vitae and employer endorsement
- references
- possession of a relevant NVQ/SVQ, or vocationally related qualification
- corporate membership of a relevant professional institution
- interview

(The verification process must be recorded and available for audit)

4.1.2 have sufficient occupational expertise so they have up to date experience, knowledge and understanding of the particular aspects of work they are assessing. This could be verified by records of continuing professional development achievements

4.1.3 only assess in their acknowledged area of occupational competence

4.1.4 have a sound, in-depth knowledge of, and uphold the integrity of, the sector's NOS and this Assessment Strategy (this document)

4.1.5 are prepared to participate in training activities for their continued professional development

4.1.6 hold, or are working towards, a qualification as listed within 'Assessing and Assuring Quality of Assessment', either in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF):

- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
- Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement
- SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
- SVQ (SCQF level) Assessing Vocational Achievement

or hold one of the following

- A1 Assess candidates using a range of methods
- D32/33 Assess candidate performance, using differing sources of evidence

Holders of A1 and D32/33 must assess to the reviewed National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Learning and Development.

In Scotland, approval for exemptions must be obtained from the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Do you need to be qualified to be occupational competent?

If you actually took the time to have a read through the above page then you should have noticed something quite surprising. Nowhere in the above specification does it say that you **must** hold the respective qualification to be able to assess it. So, you can assess a Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Construction Contracting Operations without even having that qualification yourself. This isn't just the case with this qualification, you will find that this is the case for the majority of vocational qualifications. I could have chosen the Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Health & Social Care, or the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Hairdressing both would have said the same thing, it is all about being occupationally competent.

As you can see from the page above, it is all about how that term 'occupational competence' is defined. There is nothing saying that you need to have *x, y and z* in order to be deemed occupationally competent. Which is why it is the learning provider who determines whether or not you have sufficient occupational competence. This means that whilst you can technically be eligible to assess a qualification according to its specification, any provider or college could deem you to be ineligible to assess that same qualification for them. That is exactly why the question "what level can I assess up to?" can be such a tricky question to answer. Because at the end of the day, it all boils down to what the learning provider's policies are for their own assessors. Every training provider and college will call the shots when deciding what their requirements are for their own assessors.

Lots of experience but no qualifications.

What you need to remember is that this only becomes a bit of a grey area for those who have been working in their sector for donkey's years, but don't have any qualifications to show for it. Obviously, if you have been working in your area of expertise for the last 10 years and you are qualified to level 3 in your occupation, then you will definitely be qualified to assess vocational qualifications in your occupation up to and most of the time including level 3. It all depends on how each individual training organisation views your level of **occupational competence**.

Conclusion

I hope you have found my ebook interesting and informative. I could talk, or write, about assessor training for hours. It would never be possible to cover every question I have ever been asked so I have tried to cover the subject in just enough detail without going overboard.

If you would like to know more or have a burning question I have not answered please feel free to contact me and I will try to help you.

Contact the Author

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