



Introducing the Training Quality Standard for Employers

developed by
CFE for the Learning and Skills Council

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Web Version



The Training Quality Standard is an assessment framework designed to recognise and celebrate the best organisations delivering training and development solutions.

The Standard allows organisations to explain their plan or strategy, the approaches they deploy, and the results they achieve, and to submit this for robust assessment with the potential of certification for those meeting the high standards set for capability and performance.

The Standard has been created by the Learning and Skills Council to develop a new higher standard for the certification of training provision. This provision can also include that which is delivered internally by an organisation.

Starting out

Designed to recognise and celebrate the best

The Training Quality Standard is an assessment framework and an assessment and certification process which has been designed to recognise and celebrate the best organisations delivering training and development solutions to employers.

The outcome of a year-long process of research, development and testing, the Training Quality Standard has been designed to reflect employers' priorities and expectations in sourcing training and development solutions, and the practices of the organisations proven to be the best at delivering them.

The Training Quality Standard has been developed to help employers by:

- creating a quality mark which will highlight the best public and private organisations from which to access training and development solutions; and
- setting a high bar for certification to trigger a cultural shift among training and development providers, encouraging them to aspire to greater flexibility, relevance and commitment to continuous improvement.

The Training Quality Standard has been developed to help organisations delivering training and development solutions by:

- offering a comprehensive framework through which to evaluate current strategies, approaches and results in delivery of training and development;
- delivering a rigorous, independent assessment against that framework, with feedback given, to inform innovation, learning and improvement; and
- creating an opportunity for certification, allowing the best organisations to stand out in the market, winning new business on the basis of their proven capability.

Certification against the Standard is tough to achieve, so we can be confident in endorsing organisations to employers. Consequently, it is something which organisations can aspire to, and be proud of when they achieve it. For all organisations though, the experience of assessment should be positive and give some powerful insights for developing and improving the way employers are served.

The Standard

Built on an evidence base of employer needs and provider practice

The Training Quality Standard's framework is built on an evidence base of business needs and provider practice, deployed through established industry methods for the assessment of quality, capability and improvement. Whilst the Training Quality Standard for Employers applies these same principles, and the same rigour, its emphasis rests on the ability of an organisation's internal training function to meet customer needs and corporate aims and objectives.

The Standard was developed with the intention of driving through a cultural change in the delivery of training and development. Accordingly, the assessment framework for training providers focuses on two linked but ultimately very different delivery competencies:

- responding to the needs of employers as individual customers; and
- developing and deploying products to address particular sector needs.

Where the focus of assessment for employers is an organisation's internal training delivery and its ability to meet the needs of the business, the assessment framework focuses on two linked delivery competencies:

Responding to the needs of other parts of the organisation as individual customers

- This is covered in **Part A** of the Standard, assessing an organisation's internal training provision for their responsiveness to individual customers within the organisation.

Developing and deploying products and services to meet wider corporate objectives

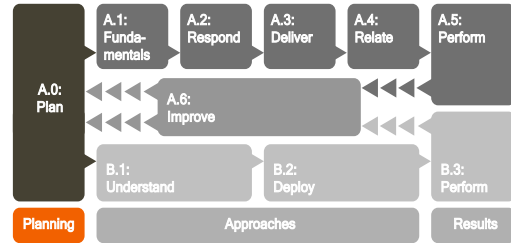
- This is covered in **Part B** of the Standard, assessing an organisation's internal training function for their expertise and ability to deliver against, and meet, defined business needs based on the organisation's wider corporate objectives.

These two emphases reflect the origins of the framework in a set of key concepts defining the essentials of delivering high quality, high impact training and development solutions. These key concepts set out three linked, critical process loops: flexibility, relevance and improvement.

What the Standard's assessment framework does is create a common language through which organisations can tell their stories of how they achieve against the tasks defined by the key concepts. The framework isn't prescriptive; it defines what a provider should be doing rather than how, and asks organisations applying for assessment to tell their story from strategy, through approaches, to achievements.

The assessment framework

A.0: Strategy



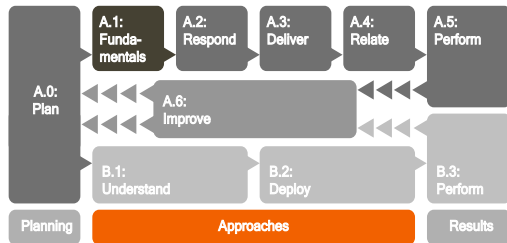
Responsive internal training functions (hereby referred to as providers) **have a plan for working with other parts of the organisation, or, the organisational area(s) for which they are responsible.** This will include clearly defined objectives based on the market **(the needs of the organisation and specific areas that they serve)** and they will also take actions to ensure their aims and approaches are communicated to **appropriate** stakeholders.

A.0.1 The plan for working with other parts of the organisation defines aims and approaches which are communicated to appropriate stakeholders.

A.0.2 The plan for working with other parts of the organisation includes an analysis of the organisational needs.

A.0.3 The plan for working with other parts of the organisation defines specific, measurable and time-bound objectives, which are communicated to appropriate stakeholders.

A.1: Fundamentals



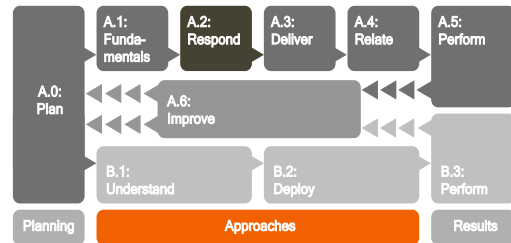
Responsive providers **manage their people and resources** to ensure they have the scale and quality they need to meet the needs of the organisation. They also take action to ensure that other parts of the organisation know what products and services they can offer.

A.1.1 The people arranging and delivering training solutions are reviewed regularly for performance and capability.

A.1.2 The resources used to deliver training solutions are reviewed regularly for availability and quality to meet the organisation's needs.

A.1.3 Other parts of the organisation are made aware, through appropriate information channels, of the range of training solutions available.

A.2: Respond



Responsive providers **manage enquiries** to understand needs and identify the right solutions.

A.2.1 Training and development requests and enquiries are handled promptly and flexibly, and are reviewed regularly against standards of customer service.

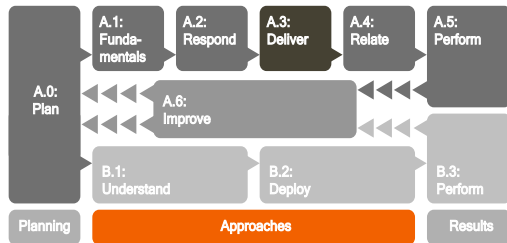
A.2.2 Customer wants are established and underlying business needs identified to shape solutions tailored to its requirements.

A.2.3 A customer is referred to appropriate alternatives when an appropriate training solution cannot be provided.

A.2.4 Proposals for the delivery of a solution are based on specific and realistic outcome targets reflecting the customer's business needs.

A.2.5 Proposals are presented in ways which recognise the employer's preferences and circumstances.

A.3: Deliver



Responsive providers **deliver training solutions** through clear communication and adaptive management of progress and emerging issues.

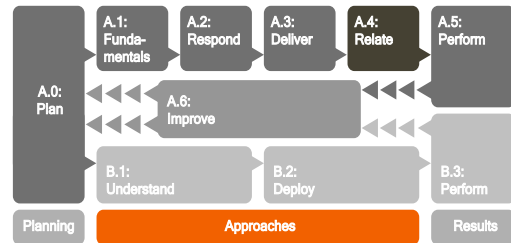
A.3.1 The people delivering training solutions are briefed fully on the requirements and background of the employer before they begin working with them.

A.3.2 Customers are given appropriate briefing before delivery of a training solution begins.

A.3.3 Training solution delivery is reviewed regularly for quality and customer service, and the customer is informed of progress made.

A.3.4 The customer's feedback on training solution delivery is sought and acted upon promptly where appropriate.

A.4: Relate

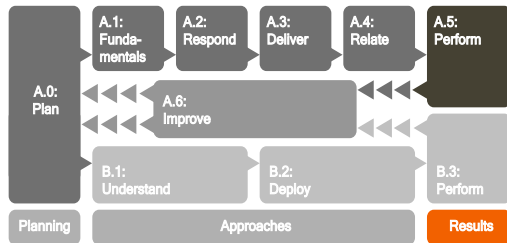


Responsive providers **relate to customers**, by following up after delivery and building lasting relationships.

A.4.1 The outcome targets agreed at the proposal stage are reviewed upon delivery to identify and address the customer's unmet business needs.

A.4.2 The relationship with a customer is managed and developed, with contact maintained at appropriate intervals.

A.5: Perform



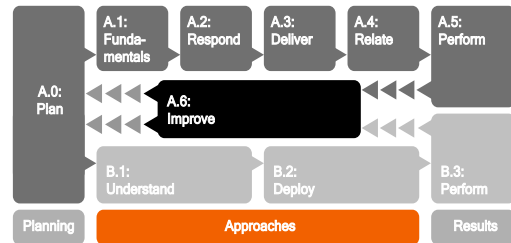
Responsive providers **comprehensively measure and achieve** satisfaction and impact for the customers they work with.

A.5.0 Indicators and outcomes of performance against the objectives outlined in your plan show an improving trend or a sustained high level of performance.

A.5.1 Customers' satisfaction with services shows an improving trend or a sustained high level of performance.

A.5.2 Customers' assessment of impact on business needs shows an improving trend or a sustained high level of performance.

A.6: Improve

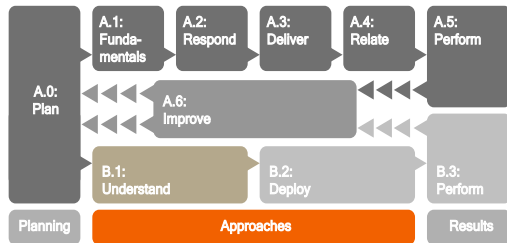


Responsive providers **review their performance** in serving all customers and anticipating the future needs of the business to identify and pursue opportunities for improvement, innovation and learning.

A.6.1 Performance against the plan and in satisfying and impacting customers is reviewed at an appropriate level, and as a result improvements are implemented.

A.6.2 The range and content of training solutions offered continues to evolve and improve to support the overall business plan.

B.1: Understand

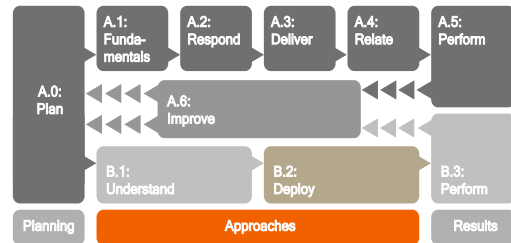


Providers **engage in dialogue** with customers across the business to understand its future training needs.

B.1.1 Input is sought from customers across the business on the training required to support the achievement of corporate aims.

B.1.2 Input from, or requirements of, appropriate stakeholders are used to understand the role of training in supporting the achievement of corporate aims.

B.2: Deploy



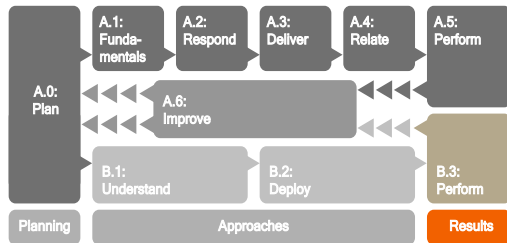
Providers **develop products and services** to meet the future training needs of the business, supported by the people and resources able to meet corporate expectations.

B.2.1 Products and services are developed and deployed to supply the training required to support the achievement of corporate aims

B.2.2 The people arranging and delivering products and services have the knowledge and skills to meet corporate expectations.

B.2.3 The resources used to arrange and deliver products and services meet corporate expectations.

B.3: Perform



Providers impact on the performance of the wider business.

B.3.1 Impact across the business shows an improving trend or sustained high level of performance.

The Process

A robust assessment process with the power to certificate the best

The Training Quality Standard was developed from the start as a vehicle to assess and compare organisations delivering training and development solutions to employers. For that reason, to go along with the assessment framework we have created robust assessment process with the power to certificate the best organisations.

The assessment process has been designed to achieve two main purposes:

- First, to provide your organisation with a valuable experience; and
- Second, to provide a sound basis for decisions by a Certification Panel.

Because we want employers to invest their trust in certification, the process is tough. Its focus is an application you will put together to describe, against the assessment framework, how the internal training function delivers for its organisation and develops expertise.

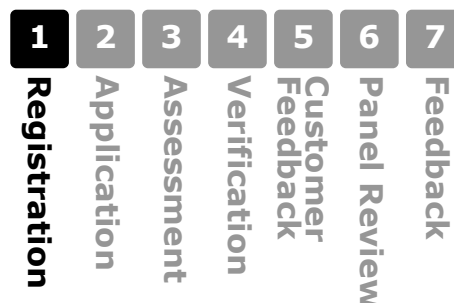
Once submitted, your application will be subject to assessment, verification and customer feedback, with the Certification Panel using the outcomes of these processes to make a decision on whether to certificate.

Most of your contact through the process will be with our Assessor team. They have been selected for their expertise in conducting assessments and have been given in-depth training in reviewing applications for the Standard.

In terms of timescale, we recommend that you spend at least a month, and often more, to pull together your applications. After this point, assessment will typically take around three months to conclude, finishing with a notification of the Panel's decision and a visit to talk you through what assessment found, with a report detailing the strengths and areas for improvement identified against each of the Standard's Indicators.

The assessment process

Step 1: Registration



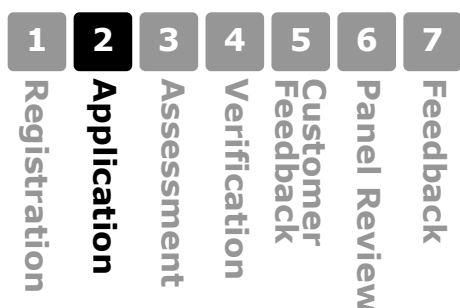
The first step in your journey will be to scope your application by deciding where the standard will sit within your training function as a whole and the boundaries of your application. The outcome should clearly define what you intend to cover as part of the assessment.

Once scoping is finalised you will then be ready to register your intention to apply for assessment and potential certification with a Certification Body. You can get a copy of the registration form from your chosen Certification Body who will also be able to help clarify any questions you might have. Once you register, an Assessment Agreement will be formed, specifying the timescale for its conclusion.

Particular actions here will include:

- Confirming your eligibility for certification if successful
- Close working with your Certification Body to identify the most appropriate scope for your application
- Deciding who will attend the TQSE Applicant Training Course, and when
- Sign-up and commitment from a 'Corporate Sponsor', who is able to comment on the training function's ability to meet corporate objectives in relation to training needs
- Proposing your planned timescales for submitting your application – how long do you think you will need to put it together?

Step 2: Application



After making an Assessment Agreement, the next step is for you and your colleagues to pull together your application.

The Applicant Training Course will give you more information on how to construct a good application – but the critical point is to make sure that the claims you make are backed with hard evidence.

Particular actions here will include:

- Being participative in pulling together your application – it should reflect how your organisation runs, as your claims will be rigorously tested.
- Making sure that you submit the application with full details of your customer contacts to allow for Customer Feedback.

Step 3: Assessment



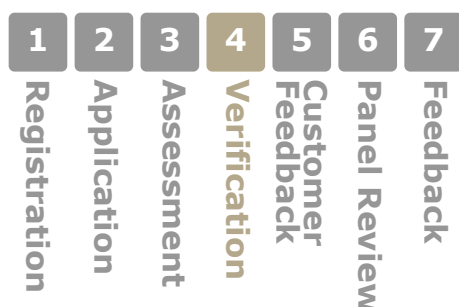
Once your application has been submitted, your Certification Body will assign it to an Assessment Team, who will get in contact with you early on to plan and confirm the proceeding assessment stages.

Your Certification Body will first check that the application is fit for purpose, and then the Lead Assessor will subject it to a review, in anticipation of the verification process.

Particular actions here will include:

- A Desktop Review - The assigned Assessor working through your submission on each Indicator, identifying Strengths and Areas for Improvement; and
- Assigning an initial score to the submission, following the Standard's Scoring Framework.
- The scoring mechanism is derived in part from the RADAR Scoring Matrix used in the EFQM Excellence Model copyright © 1999 - 2003 EFQM.

Step 4: Verification



Once your Assessment Team has reviewed your application, the team will arrange to come to your premises to make a verification visit.

The visit will typically last a day, and will involve a team of at least two Assessors. Their task will be to verify issues identified from your application.

Particular actions here include:

- Talking to you about the application, and talking to senior management to understand the organisation;
- Sampling documentary evidence to see how it supports the claims made in your application;
- Talking to operational staff to check that their experience chimes with the account given in the application; and
- The Assessors revising the assessment score on the basis of their findings, and formulating a recommendation to the Certification Panel.

Step 5: Customer Feedback



As part of the Training Quality Standard, you are being assessed on how responsive you are to your internal customers in Part A and how the training function meets the wider corporate objectives in Part B. Accordingly your Assessment Team will want to speak to a selection of your customers and your corporate customer to validate your application, quantitatively and qualitatively.

Customer feedback is carried out by your Assessment Team as part of the verification visit. Therefore you will need to make sure the appropriate people are available on the day to speak with your Assessor.

Particular actions here will include:

- Checking customers' experiences of working with you and validating how the internal training function meets corporate objectives;
- Using this data for an analysis of your customers' backing for possible certification; and
- On the basis of the verification and customer feedback stages, the Assessors will revise the assessment score based on their findings, and formulate a recommendation.

Step 6: Panel Review



Once the Assessors have concluded their work, they will write up their findings and forward them to the Certification Panel for review.

Another Assessor will take on the role of Moderator for the panel, to first ensure that the assessment process has been followed, and then facilitate the Panel review process.

Particular actions here will include:

- Reviewing the Assessor's draft Feedback Report, including the scores given and issues raised;
- Reviewing the Assessor's Recommendation, and customer feedback evidence; and
- Arriving at a decision on whether to offer certification.

Step 7: Feedback



After the Certification Panel have made their decisions, two things will happen. First, you'll receive notice of their decision, including any offer of certification.

Second, your Lead Assessor will get in touch to set up a visit to deliver full feedback on their assessment.

Particular actions here will include:

- Presenting you with a detailed Feedback Report, with Strengths and Areas for Improvement highlighted for each Indicator;
- Within the Feedback Report, giving you headline scores for your application, to allow you to review your performance; and
- At the visit, talking you through the Report, and responding to your questions.

The Outcome

A rigorous and independent review of an organisation's approaches and results.

Not every organisation will achieve certification on their first attempt – although congratulations will be due to those that do so. Every organisation will, though, benefit from the experience of a rigorous and independent review of their approaches and results.

About three months after your application has been submitted, you will receive notice if you have been offered certification and, just as important, a visit from your Lead Assessor to deliver detailed feedback on the findings of assessment. Certification decisions will take one of three forms:

■ **Successful**

An offer of certification, subject to signing a Certification Agreement within three months.

■ **Deferred**

No offer of certification, but the opportunity to resubmit on a limited number of Indicators within the next three months.

■ **Not successful**

No offer of certification, but the invitation to apply again after six months, and feedback to help improve.

In any case, the outcome of the process will give your organisation:

- A rigorous assessment of the way you deliver and the results you achieve;
- An independent, expert view of quality and capability;
- An in-depth feedback report, which will summarise, and then detail against each Indicator the Assessors' view of your organisation's Strengths and Areas for Improvement; and
- If successful, the opportunity to be recognised by a range of organisations, including other employers, government agencies and other stakeholders, as a leading provider of training and development solutions.

The Benefits

Is the Training Quality Standard for Employers right for your organisation?

We hope this quick tour has given you an idea of what the Training Quality Standard for Employers is trying to achieve, what it looks at, and how you can participate. At this point, we would like to reflect on what you've found out and consider how your organisation could gain from developing and submitting an application for assessment.

Application for the Training Quality Standard for Employers is designed to be of benefit to all organisations, public or private, where there is a commitment to:

- achieving the highest standards in delivery of training and development solutions for customers;
- demonstrating expertise in meeting the needs of corporate aims and objectives through the development and delivery of products; and
- continuously improve, learn, and innovate.

Application for the Training Quality Standard will help your organisation by:

- giving a structure and an opportunity to think about your strategy, approaches, and results in delivering training and development solutions to customers;
- offering a robust, independent view of your achievements in terms of quality, capability and performance.

Where successful, Certification for the Training Quality Standard will help your organisation by:

- demonstrating to your customers, and wider organisation, your competence and added value in delivering training and development solutions;
- demonstrating your responsiveness and expertise within the training sector; and
- demonstrating your progression, achievement, and commitment to continuous improvement to your staff and other stakeholders.

What's next?

If the Training Quality Standard for Employers is right for you and your organisation, then we're ready to help you to make the most of the experience.

We've developed comprehensive guidance and can provide in-depth training for your staff on the focus of the Standard, and how to develop an application.

We are conscious that the Training Quality Standard for Employers is a complex subject and one that many people will want to be sure that they understand as fully as possible before progressing to registration and application. To help with this, we have invested in a range of routes to inform you as to the Standard's approach, content and assessment methodology:

- A number of documents are available through our website to give you more background, and support, should you wish to make an application-for-assessment.
- The Assessment Guide and Evidence Framework is available through the Certification Bodies. The Guide is the core technical document for the Training Quality Standard.
- Applicant Training Courses last over one or two days and explore in detail the Standard's different criteria and how to develop an application for assessment.

We should say here that while many organisations have approached us with a view to some sort of coaching support, we are unable to provide this as it might compromise the independence of the assessment process.

If you would like to know more, we would be happy to answer your questions. To explore further, you can talk to us to find out more detail or register to begin the application process. In either case you can:

- **speak to our enquiries team on 0845 225 1310**
- **visit our website www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk or**
- **contact a Certification Body**