



Quality Criteria for development of National Occupational Standards

UK Standards & Frameworks Panel
Revised May 2024



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Purpose of Document

Quality Criteria for the development/review of National Occupational Standards (NOS) by Standard Setting Organisations (SSOs).

Effective from: 20th May 2024

Introduction

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are statements of the standards of performance an individual must achieve when carrying out functions in the workplace, together with specifications of the underpinning knowledge and understanding.

They are:

National - because they can be used in every part of the UK where the functions are carried out

Occupational - because they describe the performance required of an individual when carrying out the functions in the workplace in their occupation (plumber, police officer, production engineer etc.).

Standards - because they are statements of effective performance which have been agreed by a representative sample of employers and other key stakeholders and approved by the UK Standards & Frameworks Panel (S & F Panel).

In order to use NOS branding, all NOS must be developed in line with these quality criteria and approved in accordance with the four-nation quality assurance process. These Quality Criteria have been developed by the S & F Panel, which operates on behalf of the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and ensure all NOS meet the quality assurance requirements.

Consultation continues to be on a four-nation basis and must incorporate stakeholder engagement in England as well as Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Together with guidance, publications and capability building activities, the Quality Criteria underpin the NOS Strategy, which highlights the role of Standards Setting Organisations (SSOs) in the development of NOS in consultation with employers and stakeholders. www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/resources

NOS are used by Awarding Organisations/Bodies (AO/Bs), Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutions, Professional bodies and private training organisations as benchmarks from which to develop programmes of learning and qualifications. They are also used by organisations to support human resource management and organisational development processes. In some sectors, demonstration of competence against NOS is required in order to run a business or practice a craft or profession.

The NOS Quality Criteria replace all previous criteria, guidance and quality assurance arrangements. They are designed to ensure the continuing availability of relevant, up-to-date NOS of consistent quality and are accessible to users in a common format. They do not cover the development of vocational qualifications, which is covered by guidance issued by the relevant national qualification regulators.

The NOS Quality Criteria do not just focus on what is required to produce quality NOS. Rather, they take a broader, whole-system approach designed to deliver the NOS to meet the needs of sectors and occupations both to develop the skills people need and to deliver significant business benefits, such as productivity, cost reduction, profitability, quality, risk-reduction, safety and continuity of employment.

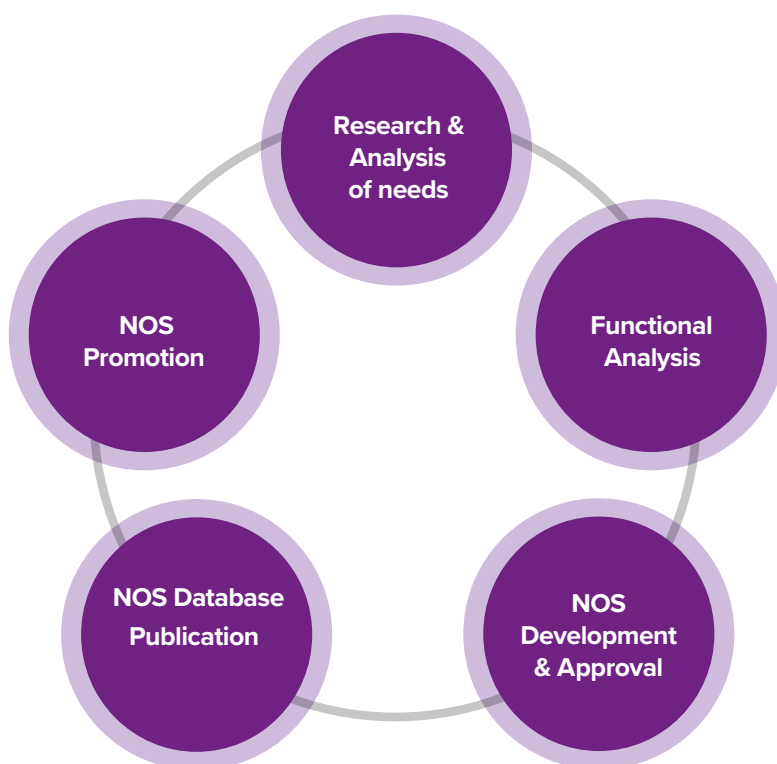


Fig.1 whole system approach to NOS development

A multi-supplier framework agreement is in place to provide the development of NOS for the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The NOS Quality Criteria clearly state what SSOs must do to ensure that quality NOS are available and that their full benefits are realised. The Glossary (Appendix 2) clarifies the meaning of technical terms used throughout the document.

A complementary publication, Guide to Developing NOS, is also available and is designed to provide a sound basis for training and Continuing Professional Development

(CPD) for those involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of NOS.

NOS are available for the Development, Implementation & Review of NOS, specifying the performance required of staff and consultants working on NOS projects for SSOs. These NOS assure individual competence in NOS development and implementation functions and underpin the integrity of the NOS system. They can be found using the Suite name **NOS for the Development, Implementation and Review of NOS** in www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/nos-finder

NOS are uploaded via the NOS Database www.ukstandards.org.uk, which enables NOS to be presented in a common format. This does not prevent SSOs from marketing and presenting

NOS in a format familiar to their industry/occupation through their own websites or systems.

Specific Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes may fall outside of this agreement due to regulatory roles and responsibilities in relation to standards, qualifications, and apprenticeship frameworks. There is no guarantee of public funding for the development/review of standards and frameworks for the specific SOC, which will be confirmed in due course.

Within specific sectors, employers of a certain size are required by law to pay an Industrial Training Levy to a sector representative body. The sector representative body will utilise the Levy to ensure the workforce has the specialist skills required by the industry, including the development and review of specific NOS. In this instance, the sector representative body may “self-fund” NOS activities but will comply with the NOS Quality Criteria. The link to NOS self-funded desk instructions is found here.

1. Responsibility for National Occupational Standards

1.1 Approval to Develop NOS

The development and maintenance of NOS is the responsibility of SSOs that have been approved by the S & F Panel. Some of these may have regulatory responsibilities in relation to standards.

1.2 Meeting the Quality Criteria for NOS

SSOs are required to meet all the quality criteria for NOS to use the NOS brand. The NOS brand may only be used for NOS that have been developed in accordance with the quality assurance process and approved by the S & F Panel.

1.3 Personnel developing NOS

All personnel developing NOS must either:

- ❖ provide evidence that they are competent to cover the functions they are required to undertake for NOS development

or

- ❖ be working towards demonstrating their competence in the functions they are carrying out under supervision.

SSOs are required to ensure that their technical writing skills and knowledge of NOS consultation requirements and the approval process is up to date.

Personnel working on NOS projects are not expected to be competent in sectors or occupation-specific functions as long as relevant sectoral or occupational expertise will be provided by subject matter experts during the review/development process.

1.4 Annual Reporting

SSOs have responsibility to ensure they comply with the NOS Quality Criteria. Where projects are being developed with funding support from the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales they are required to report monthly to the managing agent, Skills Development Scotland on project progress until completion and this will be collated into a report for the S & F Panel demonstrating compliance with the Quality Criteria.

An annual report of progress for funded and self-funded projects may be requested by the S & F Panel at the end of each year ending 31st March. If required this will be requested with sufficient notice and with a specified submission date.

2. Representative Stakeholder Consultation

2.1 Evidence-based Standards

Each NOS must specify current effective practice in the function as evidenced by research and agreed by representatives of the sector/occupation(s) involved.

SSOs developing NOS should provide evidence to show that the NOS specify current effective practice in the function. This evidence may include:

- ❖ findings of research into effective practice in the function
- ❖ outcomes of consultations or deliberations with a representative sample of employers, practitioners and/or subject matter experts to agree definitions of effective practice in the function.

2.2 Employer/Stakeholder Consultation

SSOs must ensure that NOS are informed by a representative sample of relevant employers from each nation and take account of the needs of other key stakeholders.

NOS describe the standards of performance required in the workplace and must therefore be informed by consensus of a representative sample of relevant employers from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England as to what constitutes good practice.

- ❖ Employers should be of varying sizes e.g., large, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and be based across a range of geographical locations within each nation.

NOS should also take account of the views of other key stakeholders, such as:

- ❖ trade bodies
- ❖ trade unions
- ❖ professional bodies and associations
- ❖ statutory bodies, including Qualifications Regulators and other regulatory bodies
- ❖ other SSOs that cover sectors/occupations where the same or similar functions are carried out
- ❖ awarding organisations/bodies
- ❖ third sector organisations
- ❖ education and training providers
- ❖ expert practitioners
- ❖ end users
- ❖ relevant government departments
- ❖ social partners (where applicable)
- ❖ equality groups

SSOs are encouraged to identify new employers to engage with, as well as utilising existing networks and contacts to facilitate wider engagement and be cognisant of work undertaken by employers on English Apprenticeship Standards and incorporate this, if possible, to avoid employer fatigue in standards development.

Direct employer evidence to inform NOS development is always recommended, however, SSOs may consider whether feedback gathered through the development of alternative standards may be suitable for use towards the NOS evidence base. In these circumstances SSOs must contact relevant stakeholders to acknowledge their contribution in the standards development activity and to seek their permission and verification that the information may be admissible for NOS.

2.3 Engagement approach and methodology

SSOs are encouraged to use a wide variety of consultation mechanisms to maximise participation from both large organisations and SMEs, for example:

- ❖ face-to-face and/or virtual working/steering group meetings – which should be composed of four-nation representation, wherever possible
- ❖ one-to-one meetings (where appropriate)
- ❖ telephone interviews
- ❖ on-line surveys.

When submitting evidence of consultation, state whether employers are UK-wide or nation specific. Where employers are nation specific, indicate whether they are based in or operating within the nation. Similarly, where working groups have been convened, indicate dates and locations of meetings and which nation(s) participants were represented.

The NOS Governance Group has made an ongoing commitment to support virtual consultation (where appropriate) to encourage the low/zero carbon agenda.

2.4 Nation-specific requirements

NOS must be developed in accordance with nation-specific requirements, for example legislation.

Specifically, for Wales see section 9.2 & 9.5 for more information on Welsh language consultation and engagement with ColegauCymru/CollegesWales.

SSOs are encouraged to take account of relevant English apprenticeship standards development criteria when developing NOS. This will help to facilitate alignment of NOS with English Apprenticeship Standards and support transferability of occupational competence across the UK.

2.5 Record keeping

SSOs must keep robust records of evidence gathered during stakeholder consultation.

Where feedback has not been obtained from a representative sample of employers in one or more nation SSOs are advised to contact the relevant S & F Panel representative(s).

Robust evidence, for example, employers contacted, the number of attempts made, engagement methods and if feedback was not received, will support discussions to ensure a successful outcome.

Record keeping should comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.

3. Functional Analysis

3.1 Definition

NOS must be derived from functional analysis – an accurate and detailed separation of the functions which have to be carried out in order to achieve the key purpose of the sector, occupation or area of work.

Sometimes, the area to be covered by the functional analysis is a whole sector or occupation. Often, however, the focus is on a smaller area, such as a particular industry (e.g., printing), discipline (e.g., psychotherapy) or cross-sector area of work (e.g., civil contingencies).

3.2 Methodology

Functional analysis starts with a key purpose – a concise, yet comprehensive statement of what is involved in the area of work – the common goal to be achieved.

The development of an agreed key purpose ensures that the area of work being analysed is a coherent reflection of the thinking of all the stakeholders involved.

Functions are the main activities a person is expected to do as part of their job. There are three stages to functional analysis:

1. Identify the key purpose of the sector, occupation or role
2. Identify main functions by asking ‘What needs to happen to achieve the key purpose?’
3. Identify possible NOS by asking ‘What needs to happen to achieve each main function?’ These discrete functions are indicative of the functions which need to be described by NOS.

The functional analysis methodology should identify the technical functions specific to the occupation (Job-Specific Standards – technical and non-transferable) and transferable functions that apply to many occupations and make individuals employable in many sectors (Pan-Sector Standards – relevant to all sectors across the economy, for example ‘administration’ and; Multi-Sector Standards - relevant to a number of roles across multiple sectors).

Job Specific NOS relate to skills that are typically employer specific. Whereas Pan, multi and occupational NOS will ensure competence against core skill requirements aligned to occupations, there is always 'localisation' required from employers to ensure employees are competence in the use and application of their specific tasks, processes and procedures.

Examples of Pan-Sector transferable functions might include: plan and manage own work; work as a member of a team; communicate with stakeholders; contribute to health and safety at work; contribute to improving quality. An example of a Multi-Sector transferable function would be: Plan utility network construction operations, which is a common function applicable across both gas and water network construction operations.

3.3 Outcome

A functional map is a representation of the results of the functional analysis, showing the different relationships between the various functions identified. The number of levels of disaggregation in the functional map will depend on the size and nature of the sector, occupation or area of work being analysed. Also, some parts of the functional map may need to be disaggregated to more levels than others.

Stakeholders must be consulted in the review and development of the draft and final functional maps.

4. Identifying and Importing of existing NOS

4.1 Identifying existing NOS

Prior to the development of NOS, SSOs must identify if suitable NOS already exist, to avoid duplication, or are under development, which may cover the functions identified in the functional map.

In order to prevent proliferation of NOS covering the same or similar functions and to maximise the transferability of competence from one sector to another, it is important that SSOs search the NOS database www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/nos-finder. This will establish if NOS already exist which may cover the functions identified in the functional map or whether another SSO is currently in the process of developing relevant NOS.

In particular, these NOS may cover transferable functions, such as: plan & manage own work; work as a member of a team; communicate with stakeholders; take decisions; contribute to health and safety at work; contribute to improving quality.

Only where there are no existing or draft NOS which adequately describe a function can new NOS be developed to cover this function.

The Pan/multi-sector NOS listed in 4.3 below should be used for functions within the identified sectors.

4.2 Importing existing NOS

Existing NOS which accurately describes the standards of performance required of individuals may be used in other relevant NOS suite(s) providing the Unique Reference Number (URN) and entire content remains the same.

NOS brought in from another NOS suite are known as “imported NOS”. The process for this is that SSOs should email SDS NOS inbox email with importation request, which can be found here. SDS will review with S and F panel

Potential existing NOS should be carefully reviewed by the SSO and its stakeholders to see whether they accurately describe the standard of performance required of individuals when they carry out these functions in the context of the new sector/occupation.

SSOs are requested to also notify the S & F Panel if any proposed imported NOS are deemed to be out of date and in need of updating.

4.3 Pan/multi-sector NOS

Pan/multi-sector NOS are work related standards that reflect skills and tasks used in multiple sectors and occupations which are definable skills that can be identified, taught, validated and have corresponding NOS. Pan/multi-sector NOS may assist individuals in developing or expanding some of their transferable skills, e.g., IT user NOS will support the development of digital skills. To date the following suites have been identified as pan/multi-sector: **leadership and management, business and administration, sales and learning and development**. Further pan/multi-sector NOS will be agreed subject to consultation with relevant partners. See glossary for further clarification.

5. Specification of NOS

5.1 Each NOS must specify the standard of performance an individual must achieve when carrying out a function in the workplace, together with the underpinning knowledge and understanding

NOS should be derived from a functional analysis of the occupational area.

Each NOS should cover a single function which can be performed by an individual.

Whilst NOS may contain other components, it is essential that each NOS specifies the standard of performance an individual must achieve when carrying out the function in the workplace, together with the underpinning knowledge and understanding.

5.2 Each NOS must comprise the following mandatory components:

Unique reference number (URN); NOS title; NOS overview; performance criteria; specification of knowledge and understanding; technical data.

5.3 Each NOS may also contain the following optional components:

Scope/range; values; behaviours; skills; glossary; links to other National Occupational Standards; external links.

Additionally, each NOS may contain one or more other components, at the discretion of the SSO developing the NOS. These optional components may be called by various names in suites of NOS developed by different SSOs for presentation to their sectors/occupations.

5.4 Each NOS must have a Unique Reference Number (URN)

This comprises: an allocated prefix indicating the organisation which has developed the NOS; a suffix indicating the position of the NOS in the functional map or suite.

Each SSO will be issued with a three-letter prefix for all its NOS. The SSO is then responsible for developing a unique suffix for each NOS indicating the position of the NOS in the functional map or suite.

5.5 Each NOS must have a unique, concise title

The title of each NOS should be unique i.e. there should not be another NOS with the same title. The title should be as concise as possible whilst clearly and accurately describing the function it covers.

A NOS title should start with an active verb (e.g., “Encourage” not “Encouraging”) which accurately describes the nature of the function, followed by the object of the verb (e.g., “innovation”). It may be necessary to add further information to the title to more closely define the context(s) in which it may apply (e.g., “in your area of responsibility”).

In the Management & Leadership NOS, for example, *Encourage innovation in your area of responsibility applies in a narrower context than Encourage innovation in your organisation.*

5.6 Each NOS must have an overview

An overview is provided for information purposes only and should not be used for assessment purposes. An overview may therefore be amended without affecting the performance and/or knowledge and understanding demands of the NOS.

The aim of the overview is to rapidly indicate to the reader what the NOS is about and who it is for. It should therefore be as clear and concise as possible and should not seek to provide a summary of the full content of the NOS.

5.7 Each NOS must have performance criteria

Performance criteria answer the question: “what does an individual need to do or ensure happens in order to carry out the function to a satisfactory standard?”.

Taken together, the performance criteria should be capable of distinguishing between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance in the function covered by the NOS. The performance criteria should cover all the aspects which are critical to carrying out the function to a satisfactory standard.

Each performance criterion must be achievable by a competent individual when they are carrying out this function.

Each performance criterion should start with an active verb in the second person singular and be able to follow the introductory phrase: “You must be able to...”.

Each performance criteria should clearly and concisely specify what the individual carrying out the function needs to do or ensure happens and the standard of performance that is satisfactory.

Performance criteria also need to cover likely contingencies which may arise. For example, “when the query is outside your area of responsibility, refer it promptly to the relevant department”. Clearly, an individual will only need to perform to a contingency performance criterion if that contingency arises, but, whether the contingency arises or not, they will need to know what to do in such circumstances.

Contingency performance criteria, like the example above, sometimes have a conditional phrase or clause (“when the query is outside your area of responsibility”) before the main verb (“...refer it promptly to the relevant department”).

NOS are often divided into “sub sections” which describe various sub-functions identified in the functional analysis. For example, the function Plan, organise, monitor, and evaluate activities in your area of responsibility may be divided into four elements, Plan...Organise...Monitor... Evaluate...

5.8 Each NOS must have a specification of the knowledge and understanding

The specification of knowledge and understanding in each NOS answers the question: “what does an individual need to know and understand in order to perform this function consistently to the required standard?”.

The specification should comprise only the knowledge and understanding which is essential for effective performance of the function covered by the NOS.

The level of detail to which knowledge and understanding is specified will depend on the nature of the function being performed and is the responsibility of the SSO developing the NOS to determine with its stakeholders.

Knowledge and understanding items may be grouped together in sections (e.g. consistent with the element titles or divided into different areas of knowledge, such as “legislation and policies” or “knowledge of the work context”).

5.9 National Occupational Standards must contain Metadata

Each approved NOS must have the following technical data:

- ❖ name of the SSO which has developed the NOS
- ❖ version number
- ❖ date the NOS was approved
- ❖ anticipated review date (flexible in line with emerging sector/ occupation needs and priorities)
- ❖ name of the originating organisation and the URN of the original NOS
- ❖ occupations to which the NOS applies
- ❖ suite to which the NOS applies
- ❖ key words to which the NOS applies
- ❖ Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code <https://cascotweb.warwick.ac.uk/#/classification/soc2020>
- ❖ NOS category – Generic or Pan/multi-sector, core to sector or job-specific.

Generic or Pan/multi-sector: NOS that could be transferred or imported across suites in multiple sectors. These NOS could be used across occupations without the need for job-specific requirements.

Core to sector: Skills that are transferable between occupations within the same sector. These are NOS which can realistically only be used in one suite (or similar suites within occupational groups) and require skills and knowledge that can only be relevant to this sector. They will generally have specific terms within them that will not be relevant in other sectors.

Job-specific: NOS which are job-specific and would be considered mandatory components when developing qualifications and training programmes.

5.10 NOS may have statements specifying the scope or the range of variables that have a critical impact on the quality of performance required

Scope or range should only be used where different circumstances or situations have a critical impact on performance. Scope or range should not be used simply to provide illustrative examples or clarify the meaning of a term or phrase (which can be done in a glossary).

Sometimes, in order to show they are fully competent, an individual needs to show that they can cope with all items in the scope/range.

Example 1: a driver of an emergency vehicle would need to show they can handle all types of “Conditions: daylight, night-time, dry, wet, clear, foggy”.

At other times, the individual may not need to show that they can cope with all items in the scope/range.

Example 2: depending where they are based, a driver of an emergency vehicle may not need to show they can handle all parts of the scope/range “Road types: side road, main road and motorway”.

The terms “scope” and “range” are used interchangeably in suites of NOS developed by different SSOs for presentation to their sectors/ occupations, although, technically, “range” specifies all the conditions which must be met (see Example 1 above) and “scope” indicates the different variables an individual might have to deal with (see Example 2 above).

5.11 NOS may contain Values

NOS may have specifications of the values that underpin the function and which an individual is expected to demonstrate when performing the function.

Examples of values include: “respect confidentiality, and inform individuals, families, carers, groups and communities about when information needs to be shared with others”, “promoting equality, diversity, and anti-discriminatory practice” or “good practice requires reflection and a continuing search for improvement”.

How values are expressed in NOS is left to the discretion of the SSO developing the NOS.

5.12 NOS may contain Behaviours

Behaviours, as they are expressed in NOS, tend to be generic and transferable to a wide range of contexts; they often include behaviours linked to employability skills. Behaviours define how an individual undertakes activities and the way in which employees respond to specific circumstances or situations in the workplace.

Examples of behaviours include: “make time available to support others” or “clearly agree what is expected of others and hold them to account”, “take timely decisions that are realistic for the situation”.

How behaviours are expressed in NOS is left to the discretion of SSOs developing the NOS.

5.13 NOS may contain skills

These can specify the professional, technical, managerial and/or interpersonal skills required to perform the function. These may include the technical skills specific to the function described and/or employability skills transferable to a wide range of contexts. Examples of skills include: “analysing”, “listening”, “time management”.

How skills are expressed in NOS is left to the discretion of the SSO developing the NOS.

5.14 NOS may contain a glossary

This explains the key words or phrases used in the NOS.

How the glossary is presented is left to the discretion of the SSO developing the NOS.

5.15 Links to other NOS

How the links to other NOS are presented is left to the discretion of the SSO developing the NOS.

5.16 NOS may contain external links

NOS may indicate how it links to other documents and systems (such as professional standards, codes of practice, pay and grading systems, collective bargaining agreements, licenses to practice, Core Skills and Key Skills). This may include using external links.

How external links are presented is left to the discretion of the SSO developing the NOS but they must consider maintenance requirements for any links.

5.17 Each NOS must be specified in such a way that it may be used in every part of the UK where the function is carried out

NOS are a UK-wide, not just a single nations' resource. It is important that NOS can be used in every part of the UK where the function is carried out.

Care should be taken to ensure that NOS align with legislative, regulatory, policy and institutional requirements in all of the UK nations to which they apply (in a minority of cases, NOS do not apply to all four nations or only apply to one nation). This may require the SSOs developing the NOS to use generic terminology, rather than referring to specific laws, regulations, or institutions.

5.18 Each NOS must meet the requirements of all the sectors/occupations where the function is carried out

Where the same function is carried out in more than one sector/occupation, NOS should be developed in consultation with the SSO covering the other sectors/occupations to ensure that, wherever possible, a single common NOS is developed which meets the requirements of all contexts where the function is carried out (see 4.2).

5.19 Each NOS must be free from direct or indirect discrimination against an individual or group of individuals

SSOs must ensure that both the content and the wording of NOS are free from direct or indirect discrimination against any individual or group of individuals.

The new NOS Strategy 2022 and beyond sets out the NOS Governance Group's commitment to ensuring that activity relating to the development and review of NOS with employers and stakeholders will aim to be inclusive, representative and reflect the diversity of the four UK nations.

www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/resources

5.20 The wording of each NOS must be concise, clear and appropriate for the individuals carrying out the function

Great care should be taken to ensure the wording of each NOS is as concise as possible and is clear and appropriate to the individuals who carry out the function. This may require specialist editing or a professional language review.

Consideration should be given to making the NOS available in Welsh, where there is evidence of demand. (See section 9 for Wales' specific requirements).

6. Approving and Maintaining National Occupational Standards

6.1 Approval for NOS

SSOs are responsible for the quality of the NOS they develop and must have quality assurance systems in place. These will be monitored through the published Quality Assurance arrangements. These will be monitored by the S&F Panel in line with the expectations and requirements stipulated in the NOS Quality Criteria.

When the SSO is satisfied that the new or revised NOS meet all the relevant quality criteria in this document, the final version of the NOS should be uploaded to the NOS Database to enable approval by the S & F Panel.

Once approved, the NOS are freely available for employers, other SSOs and stakeholders to use (see Section 7)

7. Supporting the Implementation of NOS

7.1 Providing Access to NOS and NOS-based Products and Services

All approved NOS will be made available for general use via the NOS Database.

SSOs may also provide access to NOS in their sector/occupation format on their websites and make available a range of other NOS-based products, services, and support to meet the needs of the sector/occupation.

NOS are a public good and must be freely available.

NOS are a public good and subject to Crown Copyright. The Open Government Licence for public sector information grants a worldwide, royalty free, non-exclusive licence to use NOS for any purpose. In line with the conditions of the OGL users must acknowledge the source of information as being based on NOS.

7.2 Promotion of NOS

SSOs are encouraged to reinforce the NOS brand and promote the benefits of NOS as a public good to stakeholders.

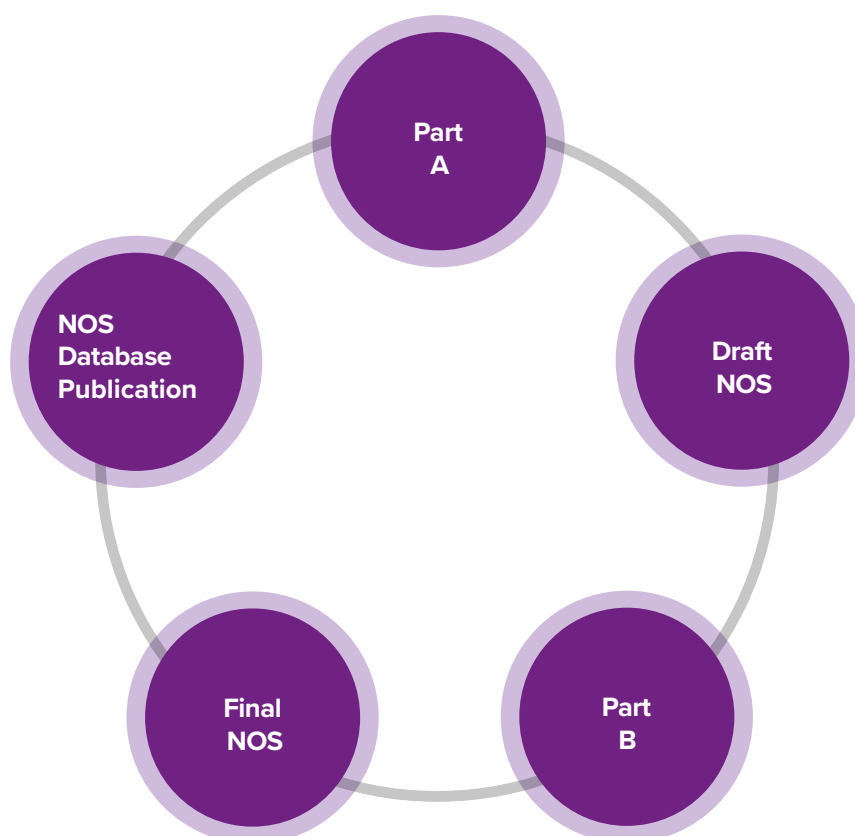
The NOS Governance Group has agreed overarching messages in relation to NOS policy. To ensure messages are consistent and not conflicting SSOs must ensure that their own promotional activities for NOS and/or NOS-based products/services are aligned with these overarching key messages:

- ❖ There is a commitment across all three Devolved Governments to maintain a well-established whole system approach to NOS
- ❖ NOS are the only UK-wide mechanism to ensure consistency and quality in occupational competence
- ❖ Within some sectors NOS are embedded in legislation, regulation, registration, pay and grading
- ❖ NOS are not intended as a curriculum/assessment methodology.

8. Approval Requirements

8.1 NOS Approval Process Guidance

This section provides guidance on each of the stages of the approval process. SSOs are required to consult with employers and stakeholders across all four nations to ensure that NOS remain UK-wide and continue to offer portability/mobility of occupational competence. This is a summary of the requirements for NOS consultation and approval.



You must adhere to the following stages of the NOS approval process:

- ❖ Provide the NOS to the required quality, ready for publication and supply relevant evidence to support the development. Failure to do so will result in delays to approval sign off
- ❖ Submissions made to the NOS database (www.ukstandards.org.uk/en) must allow at least 10 working days for evaluation of each stage. You should bear processing times in mind when planning your submission and allow some contingency time in case the submission is rejected and needs further work before it can be approved
- ❖ A colour coded status is used on the NOS Database for each part of the process, to indicate the current position of each project within the review process:
 - Orange** indicates that the NOS stage is awaiting submission by the SSO
 - Blue** indicates that the NOS stage is awaiting review by the Approving Authority
 - Green** indicates that the NOS stage is approved.

Detailed guidance is available in Appendix 1.

9. Approval Requirements – Wales

9.1 Compliance with Welsh nation specific legislation

The Welsh Language Standards (2015) are a set of legally binding requirements, which apply to the Welsh Government. They set out the Welsh Government's responsibilities in providing bilingual services and ensuring that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language.

SSOs are obliged to comply with the Welsh Language Standards, in so far as is practical, when consulting with Welsh employers/stakeholders to develop NOS funded through the Multi-Supplier Framework Agreement.

Guidance on compliance and bilingual NOS consultation templates are available to support SSOs. www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/news

9.2 Demand for Welsh Language

SSOs are required to measure stakeholder demand to have NOS translated into the Welsh language during the consultation stage.

Where need is identified, funding will be made available for translation.

9.3 Quality assurance of Translated NOS

NOS which have been translated into the Welsh language must be sent to the Welsh Government (via the NOS database) for quality assurance sampling.

Where the Welsh Government proposes changes to content, SSOs should ensure that translators review and amend the full suite of NOS.

Welsh NOS inform/underpin the content of Welsh medium vocational qualifications and acts as an important source of Welsh terminology relating to the occupation and can help to improve the standard of Welsh in specialist technical areas.

9.4 Welsh NOS must be published as soon as possible following translation

SSOs must publish Welsh language versions of NOS as soon as possible after the translation from English is completed.

9.5 Consultation with

ColegauCymru/CollegesWales

SSOs should include ColegauCymru/CollegesWales in consultation undertaken in Wales by emailing hello@collegeswales.ac.uk. Consultation should also include City and Guilds

Appendix 1 Requirements of NOS Development Stages

Part A Evidence of Employer and Stakeholder Engagement

The Part A describes your intended plans and consultation activity. It should be submitted after some initial planning and scoping, but before you actually start the described engagement activities.

As well as completing the Part A return, you must upload any relevant supporting evidence to the NOS database and reference it in Part A.

This requires to be specific to each nation.

Rationale

Outline the type/method of engagement activity and the rationale for its choice – for example, engagement activities may consist of online surveys, focus groups, advisory panels, working groups or other suitable methods.

Please provide details of the methods of governance, engagement and consultation you intend to use, and a rationale for your choice.

Governance relates to industry overview and the mechanism for industry final approval. This is commonly provided through a steering group with membership across all nations. It would be helpful to indicate who you intend to have, or who has already agreed to be part of any steering groups. Alternative methods should be explained here and discussed and agreed.

Engagement and consultation activities may consist of, but not limited to:

- ❖ Steering/Working groups
- ❖ Online surveys
- ❖ Focus groups
- ❖ Advisory panels
- ❖ 1:1 meetings
- ❖ Telephone interviews.

Employers/Organisations

Outline the target audience for this activity. Give appropriate details of the employers/organisations approached with particular regard to their size (small, medium or large) and geographical location.

Please provide details of the scope, size and geographical spread of employers and stakeholders in the sector.

This should be both UK-wide and specific to each nation.

List the organisations you intend to approach, clearly indicating which nation(s) they are representing and ensuring that there is sufficient representation from each nation.

Please ensure that consultees representing UK wide organisations are eligible to comment and provide feedback on behalf of English, Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh employers/ stakeholders, as relevant

Timescale

Give dates, locations and timescales for events connected to each of these activities.

Please provide as much information as possible regarding dates, locations and timescales for events connected to the above activities. This should include steering/working group meetings and consultation events (including those held across all nations).

SSO Involvement

Outline how you will be involved in these activities across the 4-nations.

Please provide details of all those involved in this project and their role in these activities. If your organisation has any nation-specific staff, please explain how they will be involved and how they will engage with the project manager.

Welsh Language (see Section 9)

Outline how you will measure employer demand for Welsh translations of NOS.

For Wales, please indicate how you will assess whether demand exists to have the NOS translated. As an example, via a specific survey question or agenda item at meetings.

Draft NOS

Draft NOS are quality assured by SQA Accreditation only on behalf of the UK. The draft NOS should be developed or reviewed to the point where they are ready for wider industry consultation. This means that you should already have agreed your functional map, reviewed the content of existing NOS, have made recommendations for improvement/update, and developed an initial draft of any new NOS.

Draft NOS should be emailed to the SQA Accreditation Manager rather than uploading them to the NOS Database at this stage.

A Status of NOS Document should be uploaded to the NOS Database and the Sign Off/Approval of Draft NOS will still be recorded on the NOS Database.

The Status of NOS Document must include all NOS within the suite and indicate whether they are new, revised or imported. Please note that imported NOS do not require to be submitted. In addition, all documentation should be sent to your Accreditation Manager by email.

You should provide the following:

- ❖ Functional map
- ❖ Status of NOS document
- ❖ Draft of all NOS that conforms to the current NOS Template and Setting the Standard – Principles for Writing NOS, with evidence of tracked changes where NOS have been revised.

Part B – Evidence of employer and stakeholder engagement

Where the Part A describes your planned engagement activity, the Part B is to record your actual engagement activity. It should be submitted after your consultation has concluded. It would be good practice to ensure the steering group were happy with the consultation and levels of engagement before submitting the Part B. It would also be good practice to produce a project report which covers the development, methods used, participants, findings, outcomes and recommendations.

As well as completing the Part B return, you must upload any relevant supporting evidence to the NOS database and reference it in Part B.

Participation

Give details of those who participated in your engagement activities.

Please provide details of all representatives who actually participated in your engagement/consultation activities. (Please ensure that consultees representing UK wide organisations are eligible to comment and provide feedback on behalf of each nation's employers/stakeholders).

You must include all your engagement activities- e.g., steering/working group meetings, consultation events, consultation responses. **This must provide sufficient coverage across all nations to validate the findings presented.**

Your actual participation must be contrasted against your initial planned engagement in the Part A.

Where there is a marked difference or poor initial participation, you must explain why this happened, how you mitigated the issue and what improvements resulted from your actions. You must ensure you have an appropriate and representative response rate.

You must also explain how your actual governance arrangements contrasted against your planned arrangements in Part A.

Findings

Give a brief summary of your nation-specific findings/outcomes.

Please provide details of the key findings for the project and identify those that specifically relate to each nation from employers or stakeholders.

This must include an analysis of consultation responses ensuring sufficient coverage of the sector in each nation.

Evidence may also take the form of minutes, summary consultation reports, etc.

Similar details are also required for the key findings for the other nations. In addition, you should provide a finalised functional map.

Informed Development

Explain how the findings in each nation informed the development of the NOS.

This section must reflect the information identified in the findings section of the Part B. You must provide evidence that you have considered and, where appropriate, have reflected the feedback in the final NOS, showing whether feedback was accepted, partially accepted or rejected, and indicating changes to the NOS which have been a result of/ taken account of feedback received.

This could be evidenced in the form of a NOS change document i.e., a document which identifies the changes made to NOS, specifying which nation the feedback originated from.

Alternatively, this could be evidenced through extracts/copies of minutes or meeting notes or analysis of consultation feedback.

Please note that where minutes have been provided, please also include outcome/decisions taken.

Specific Issues

Highlight any specific issues raised by those consulted in relation to:

- ❖ Specific qualification requirements
- ❖ Specific policy requirements
- ❖ Content of NOS
- ❖ Format of NOS
- ❖ Please highlight all key issues raised for each nation
- ❖ For Wales, indicate whether demand to have the NOS translated into Welsh was assessed during the consultation stage and what the outcome was.

Final NOS

These should only be uploaded when they are fit for publication and have been:

- ❖ Approved/signed off by your steering group (or other governance arrangement)
- ❖ Quality assured.

You should upload to the NOS Database the following:

- ❖ Status of NOS document
- ❖ Final NOS
- ❖ Final functional map.

This requires sign off by the SQA Accreditation Manager and this is the final stage of development. There is a 10-working day timeline for feedback or approval to be provided.

Supporting Evidence/Documentation

Please provide evidence/documentation in support of both your Part A and Part B. Supporting documentation is essential for SQA Accreditation when reviewing your NOS submission. Reference the title of the supporting document within your Part A and Part B submissions and then upload it to the Project Folder.

In addition, 'the Status of NOS' document & Functional Map should be uploaded at Draft and Final NOS Stages. Failure to upload these at both Draft NOS and Final NOS stages will result in your submission being rejected until provided and will delay progress.

Additional NOS Guidance

You should refer to the following guidance:

- ❖ Setting the Standard – Principles for Writing NOS
- ❖ NOS database which has links to other relevant NOS guidance, including the NOS Database User Guidance.
www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/resources

Appendix 2 Glossary of Terms

Awarding Organisation/Body (AO/AB) - An organisation recognised by the regulators for the purpose of awarding accredited qualifications. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland they are known as Awarding Organisations; in Scotland they are referred to as Awarding Bodies.

Behaviours (Workplace) - These define how an individual undertakes activities and the way in which employees respond to specific circumstances or situations in the workplace.

Competence - See “Occupational Competence”.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) - The systematic maintenance and improvement of knowledge, skills and competence undertaken by an individual throughout their working life.

Employability skills - The professional, technical, managerial and/or interpersonal skills required to perform the function.

Employee - Any individual in employment, whether under a contract of employment, a volunteer agreement, self-employed or through a third-party supplier arrangement.

Employer - An individual or organisation which deploys human resources, whether under a contract of employment, a volunteer agreement or through a third-party supplier arrangement, to achieve its objectives. Employers may include sole-traders, freelancers or professionals working in partnership.

Function - An activity necessary for achieving the key purpose of the sector, occupation or area of work, which can be carried out by an individual worker. Functions are identified through functional analysis and form the basis of NOS.

Functional Analysis - An analysis of the functions which have to be carried out in order to achieve the key purpose of the sector, occupation or area of work.

Functional Map - A representation of the results of the functional analysis, showing the relationship between the different functions identified.

Glossary - Explanations of the key words or phrases used in the NOS.

Imported NOS - A NOS which has been brought in from another NOS suite without any amendments.

Key Purpose - A concise yet comprehensive statement of the common goal that everyone involved in a sector, occupation or area of work is working towards.

Knowledge & Understanding Items - Statements which together specify the knowledge and understanding an individual needs in order to perform to the required standard.

Knowledge & Understanding Specification - The knowledge and understanding an individual needs in order to perform to the required standard.

Legacy NOS - A NOS which has been superseded by new or revised NOS but is still used in qualifications.

Mandatory Component - A component which must appear in a NOS.

National Occupational Standard (NOS) - A statement of the standard of performance an individual must achieve when carrying out a function in the workplace, together with a specification of the underpinning knowledge and understanding.

NOS are National because they can be used in every part of the UK where the function is carried out.

NOS are Occupational because they describe the performance required of an individual when carrying out the functions in the workplace, i.e., in their occupation (as a plumber, police officer, production engineer etc).

NOS are Standards because they are statements of effective performance which have been agreed by a representative sample of employers and other key stakeholders and approved by the UK NOS Standards & Frameworks Panel.

NOS Database - The central database containing all current NOS, developed by all standards setting organisations.

NOS Overview - An overview which describes what the NOS is about and who it is for.

NOS Title - A title of a NOS.

Occupation - A specific type of work carried out by an individual as defined by relevant Standard Occupational Classification.

Occupational Competence - The application of knowledge and skills to perform consistently to the standards required in the work context.

Optional Component - A component which may appear in a NOS, but which is not mandatory.

Original NOS - A NOS developed by a standards setting organisation without direct reference to any existing NOS.

Performance Criteria - Statements which together specify the standard of performance required when carrying out a function.

Qualification - An award made by an awarding organisation/body to demonstrate a learner's achievement or competence.

Qualification Regulators - Statutory organisations that are required to establish national standards for qualifications and ensure consistent compliance with them.

The regulators for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are respectively: Ofqual, Qualification Wales (QW) the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Regulation and the Scottish Qualifications Authority's Accreditation Unit (SQA Accreditation).

Range - Specifies all the conditions which must be met (see Example 1 on page 12).

Scope - Indicates the different variables an individual might have to deal with (see Example 2 on page 12).

Skills - The professional, technical, managerial and/or interpersonal skills required to perform the function.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) - SDS in its function as Skills Agency for the Scottish Government hosts and manages the Standards and Frameworks Programme on behalf of the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Stakeholder - An individual or organisation with a legitimate interest in the NOS.

Standard Occupational Classification - A common classification of occupational information for the UK.

Standards Setting Organisations (SSOs) - Organisations responsible for developing, reviewing and implementing standards which specify the performance required of people in the workplace.

Suite of National Occupational Standards - Set of related NOS which cover all the functions required for a sector, occupation or area or work.

Technical Data (Metadata) - Each NOS must include certain mandatory technical data, such as: the name of the standards setting organisation which has developed the NOS; version number; the date of approval; the indicative date for review; the status of the NOS (original, imported, tailored); and, where the status is imported or tailored, the name of the originating standards setting organisation and the unique reference number of the original NOS. It may also include additional technical data, such as: the place of the NOS in a functional map; the occupations to which the NOS applies.

UK Standards & Frameworks Panel - A three-nation group which operates on behalf of the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and to ensure that NOS meet all quality assurance requirements.

Unique Reference Number (URN) - A unique number given to each NOS which comprises a prefix indicating the standards setting organisation which has developed the NOS and a suffix indicating the position of the NOS in the functional map or suite.

Values - The values that underpin a function and which an individual is expected to demonstrate when performing the function.

Worker - Any individual who is carrying out the function described in the NOS. The worker may be an employee, a formal volunteer, or an informal worker (such as a family member or informal carer).

Workplace - Any location where the function described in the NOS is carried out. This may include formal workplaces (such as factories, offices, hospitals, construction sites, retail units), public areas (such as streets or open countryside) and private property (such as people's homes).