



Assessing the Qualification in Archaeological Practice NVQ Levels 3 and 4

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do you assess an NVQ?

NVQ Candidates are assessed 'on the job' by NVQ Assessors. NVQ Candidates must be based in the archaeological workplace (as an employee or volunteer) and have a qualified archaeologist (line manager or supervisor) supporting them in their role and helping them develop their archaeological skills. An NVQ has core requirements (for all archaeologists at a certain level) and optional requirements (so you can specialise in finds work, information management or fieldwork for example). The NVQ Assessor's role is to take the candidate through the requirements of their chosen NVQ (using the National Occupational Standards for Archaeological Practice), and the Candidate then gathers evidence for the assessor of how they meet those requirements, based on what they do in their workplace. The Candidate's supervisor may be called upon to confirm this evidence by providing witness testimony, or a 'witness statement'. Once the Candidate has gathered enough evidence to meet the requirements of the particular NVQ they are undertaking, the Assessor ticks off the evidence against the standards, and, if complete, recommends the candidate to the Awarding body (Education Development International, EDI) for the qualification. The process can take between 6 and 12 months, or sometimes longer.

2. If NVQs are assessed 'on the job', will it be possible to assess candidates if you do not work with them?

It would be rare for you to work with your candidates- most of your candidates will work for archaeological organisations other than your own, but we try to match candidates to assessors in the same parts of the country as far as possible. You have to meet your candidate face to face at least once. Assessment is through examination of documentary evidence (reports, records etc), witness statements of those who do work with the candidate, observation of them by you on occasion, or through 'professional discussion' between you and the candidate when you meet or on the phone.

3. How much is it to train to be an assessor, and what does it involve?

The fee for training to be an assessor is £500, and the training is 'on the job' – as you would expect with NVQ related activities – there are no formal classes or seminars, but you have to assess 2 candidates (with IfA support and advice), and you have to attend 2 meetings of the Assessment Centre (3 a year), where all IfA Assessors meet to discuss aspects of assessment and the logistics of assessing candidates, with the Centre Manager and Awarding body EDI.

4. Is the £500 the full and final fee for training as an assessor? Are there any other ongoing costs?

You will have to pay expenses for travel to at least 4 meetings while you are training. These will be wherever your candidates are based, and also to Assessment Centre meetings in Reading/Swindon/London. If you need to post information to your candidate/us, this will also be at your expense, as would other communications – phone, fax, printing etc.

5. How much time does initial training take?

Assessing will involve about 4 days of your time per candidate (if they are doing Level 3 qualifications, 5/6 days at Level 4), plus the time to liaise with us (about a day in all?), and time to attend Assessment Centre meetings (a day in all). You also need time to put together your own portfolio of evidence that you have assessed 2 candidates, in order to qualify for your 'A1' Assessor's Qualification from EDI. You should expect to qualify within 6 months to a year of applying to be an assessor.

6. Do you get paid for the first two candidates you assess (while you are a trainee)?

I'm afraid you don't get paid for your first 2 candidates, as the fees for those go to the Assessment Centre to support and advise you, and to verify ('second-mark') your candidates.

7. Is there an assessor's exam?

No. After assessing 2 candidates, with our guidance, you would need to submit 'evidence' to the awarding body (EDI) of your assessments, to qualify as an assessor.

8. How much will I get paid for assessing, and how many candidates will I get?

We pay assessors £630 to assess a Level 3 NVQ (c. 4 days work, 3 once experienced at assessing) and £1050 to assess a level 4 (c. 6 days work, 4 once experienced at assessing). We can't guarantee you candidates, but the take up is steadily increasing, so you might expect at least a couple a year. We would allocate them to you based on your location and expertise. You will receive a contract for this work setting out your terms and conditions as an assessor, once you have fully qualified.

9. What do I need to be an assessor?

The only requirement for being an assessor is that you have current or recent experience of those areas you are assessing in (your CV and CPD log will tell us if that's the case). If you don't have experience in some areas, you may have to share the assessment of a candidate, or you may be able to rely on witness statements from experts working with the candidate in those areas.

10. I'm still not sure. Who can I talk to?

We are holding a Workshop to explain the process and let you have a go at assessing, to see what it's all about. The next workshop is on February 4 2010 at the University of Reading. To register, email andrea.bradley@archaeologists.net. Or contact Andrea in the meantime to discuss the process.