

Why are TICA no longer offering the NVQ route to competency?

In August 2021, following consultation with our Governing Council and wider stakeholders, TICA announced their decision to cease delivery of the NVQ as of 1 January 2023.

The following explains our reasoning.

Firstly, some background:

- NVQs were introduced into construction more than 30 years ago to provide nationally recognised qualifications to many highly skilled trades people who for a variety of reasons had never been to college or had the opportunity to complete an apprenticeship.
- Completion of the NVQ (at that time) was a secure way to assess existing skills that had been generated by years of on-site work experience, working alongside highly skilled trades people.
- NVQs were never intended to replace the apprenticeship model and were never intended to train new entrants – it was to assess existing skills.
- When the NVQ was first introduced, the vast majority of the industry would have been fully employed via PAYE and not subcontract CIS – therefore training a fellow employee was possible on site.
- The NVQ is an assessment of your existing skills – it is not a taught qualification.

So what's changed?

- NVQs have been flooded with money from the European Social Fund, meaning private training providers have multiplied to provide the qualification and exploit lucrative funding opportunities – leading to very poor quality of delivery.
- The majority of the workforce has moved to CIS and are paid on a day rate. This means that the likelihood of one worker wanting to develop the skills of another co-worker is extremely unlikely.
- Following recent construction tragedies, the need for competency has understandably been placed under the spotlight and all skilled worker card schemes are looking to strengthen their proof of competency.
- It is clear that the market cannot train itself to the same standard that a college based apprenticeship can deliver.

During this time, the Apprenticeship Standards for Thermal Insulation at Level 2 and 3 have been developed and implemented (2017). The standards are well funded by the ESFA and the route has provided a secure learning journey for insulators to develop high quality skills.

All insulators who obtain the blue Skilled Worker Card must demonstrate exactly the same level of competency as apprentices.

As a result, whilst TICA will no longer deliver the NVQ, private training providers continue to do so.

Operatives who undertake an NVQ through this route will continue to have their qualification recognised within the TICA Skill Card application process, however in addition to their NVQ, they must complete the same practical examination that an apprentice would do at their End Point Assessment.

For NVQ candidates, this will be called their Practical Skills Assessment (PSA).

The PSA is only ever required to be completed once – just like the NVQ.

The Practical Skills Assessment mirrors the standards and scale of the practical examination in an Apprenticeship End Point Assessment and is completed over one and a half days starting at 9am on day one and concluding at 1pm on day two.

The cost of £1200 for individuals and £900 for TICA members will cover the cost of the workshop, the assessor, materials and certification and is costed in the same way as an End Point Assessment.

TICA members remain on a discounted rate for all training as they are contributing to the maintenance and development of our training offering through annual membership fees to the association.

There remain several ways to develop skills to a given competency and TICA are committed to maintaining all routes however, the end competencies and final qualification that all training leads to must be the same if we are to maintain consistency within the Skill Card scheme.