

Frequently Asked Questions – SummitSkills National Assessment Programme

Guidance for Colleges and Training Providers

Q1 – What is SNAP?

A – SNAP stands for SummitSkills National Assessment Programme. The project is a joint partnership with the HVCA, SummitSkills and Engineering Services SKILLcard. SNAPs' main objective is to provide opportunities for Experienced Workers (who do not possess any formal qualifications) to obtain an Engineering Services SKILLcard by working towards an S/NVQ (where the majority of the evidence can be provided via Accreditation of Prior Learning).

Q2 – How can a training provider/college be added to the SummitSkills SNAP database?

A – Training providers and colleges planning to become assessment centres (and, thus, wishing to be added to the SNAP database of approved assessment centres) will have to be approved by an appropriate awarding body to deliver the H&V and/or RAC S/NVQs. The centre will also need to demonstrate that they have facilities/resources to offer assessment services for experienced workers. For further information about joining the database contact enquiries@summitskills.org.uk

Q3 – What S/NVQs does the SNAP initiative include?

A – At present the SNAP initiative covers all of the following qualifications;

- Heating & Ventilating Domestic Installation – S/NVQ L2 & L3
- Heating & Ventilating Industrial/Commercial Installation – S/NVQ L2 & L3
- Heating & Ventilating Ductwork Installation – S/NVQ L2 & L3
- Heating & Ventilating Service & Maintenance – S/NVQ L2 & L3
- Refrigeration & Air Conditioning – S/NVQ L2 & L3

Q4 – Are there any specific supporting documents available to help assessment centres in dealing with experienced workers?

A – SummitSkills has developed candidate and assessor packs for each of the H&V and RAC S/NVQs. They have been developed to aid the centres in carrying out the initial profiling of the candidate, preparing action plans and tracking candidates' progress as they build up their portfolio of work-based evidence. For more information regarding these documents contact enquiries@summitskills.org.uk

Q5 – Does an Experienced Worker have to carry out any additional training?

A – Candidates may require additional training if they have not gained the full range of knowledge and skills to meet the variety of systems and components contained within the S/NVQs. This will be identified by the assessment centre during the initial profiling stage.

Q6 – What is the definition of an ‘Experienced Worker’?

A – In the context of the SNAP initiative, an ‘Experienced Worker’ it is someone employed in the HVACR industry who has considerable industrial experience and recognised skills, but no formal industry recognised qualifications (i.e., someone who has learnt their skills purely on-the-job).

Q7 – Can an Experienced Worker fast-track an S/NVQ?

A – An Experienced Worker can progress as quickly as they can prove their competency to their assessor. They still have to complete all units of competence and cover all the range of systems and components contained within the S/NVQs relevant to their occupation.

Q8 – Do Experienced Worker candidates have to complete the appropriate technical certificate?

A – *RAC Experienced Worker candidates will have to complete the technical certificate, but it is not a requirement for Experienced Workers undertaking the H&V NVQs.

*Not applicable to candidates undertaking SVQs.

Q9 – Is there funding available to subsidise the assessment of Experienced Workers?

A – There are a number of government initiatives (i.e., the ‘Train to Gain’ programme in England, ‘Experience Counts’ in Scotland) that may lead to some form of grant or reduced fees for Experienced Workers undertaking S/NVQs. Under the SNAP initiative, it will be part of the assessment centres’ role to provide individual candidates with more details on these local/regional initiatives.

Q10 – Can Experienced Worker candidates apply for a SKILLcard while they are working towards their S/NVQs?

A - Candidates can obtain a blue Experienced Worker SKILLcard when they have fulfilled the following three requirements:

- Passed appropriate SKILLcard/CITB Construction Skills H&S test (within the last 2 years);
- Carried out initial profiling (i.e. completed a candidate pack) with an approved S/NVQ centre; and
- Received S/NVQ enrolment details from an awarding body (normally via their centre).

Experienced Worker SKILLCards are valid for three years only and cannot be renewed. Candidates therefore have three years in which to complete the relevant S/NVQ. It is the responsibility of the assessment centre to ensure that have mechanisms in place to maintain contact with their Experienced Workers candidates, to ensure they complete the qualification concerned.

More information on how to apply for an Experienced Worker SKILLCard can be gained by contacting Engineering Services SKILLcard at <http://www.skillcard.org.uk/cardinfo>

Q11 – What kind of evidence can an assessment centre use when assessing Experienced Workers candidates?

A – The evidence would be no different to any other candidate completing an S/NVQ and may include the following documents

- Witness testimonials (from supervisors, customers or clients)
- Site based records (test certificates, permits to work, day-work sheets etc.)
- Assessor and expert witness status list and sample signatures
- Variation orders
- Extracts from drawings and specifications
- Photographic evidence that has appropriate commentary and signatures
- Assessor reports
- Professional discussion documentation with assessor
- Knowledge evidence documents (written/oral question and answers)

Q12 – Can an Experienced Worker go straight onto an S/NVQ level 3 or do they have to achieve an S/NVQ level 2 qualification first?

A – Candidates should complete the level of S/NVQ that is most appropriate to their current experience, knowledge and skills. If this is already at S/NVQ level 3 then there is no need to complete an S/NVQ level 2. This will be determined and agreed by the assessor and the candidate at the initial profiling stage.

Q13 – I have an Experienced Worker who needs an Engineering Services SKILLcard to get a job, but can't get a SKILLcard without a job! How should we proceed?

A – If the candidate meets the three criteria as described in Q10, then he/she can apply for a blue Experienced Worker SKILLcard, which lead to employment, thereby allowing the candidate to be assessed on-site, collect relevant work experience and ultimately complete his/her S/NVQ.

Q14 – Why do Experienced Workers need a SKILLcard and who is checking?

A – Increasingly, building services engineering contractors are under pressure to demonstrate to their clients that the workforce they use is fully competent to undertake the work they are employed to do. Many clients (such as main

contractors) will not allow workers on site without proof of their skills, competence and qualifications. For those workers in the industry without formal industry qualifications, the entire construction industry has decided that steps need to be taken to ensure that such workers are indeed properly qualified. The SKILLcard initiative is a deliberate means of ensuring such workers are forced into a position where they need to get qualified, formally.

SNAP therefore aims to provide opportunities for Experienced Workers who do not possess any formal qualifications to obtain an Engineering Services SKILLcard by working towards an S/NVQ through Accreditation of Prior Learning process.

By insisting that everybody who gets a SKILLcard also has to satisfy the health and safety requirements of SKILLcard before being issued with a card, SKILLcard has made an important contribution to reducing workplace risks and to raising the standards of workplace health and safety awareness throughout the industry.

Members of the main client groupings – such as the big builders who form the Major Contractors Group (MCG) and the principal M&E contractors who form the Joint Major Contractors' Group (JMCG) – carry out periodic audits of the people working on their sites to ensure they have SKILLcards or other CSCS-affiliated cards issued in related sectors.