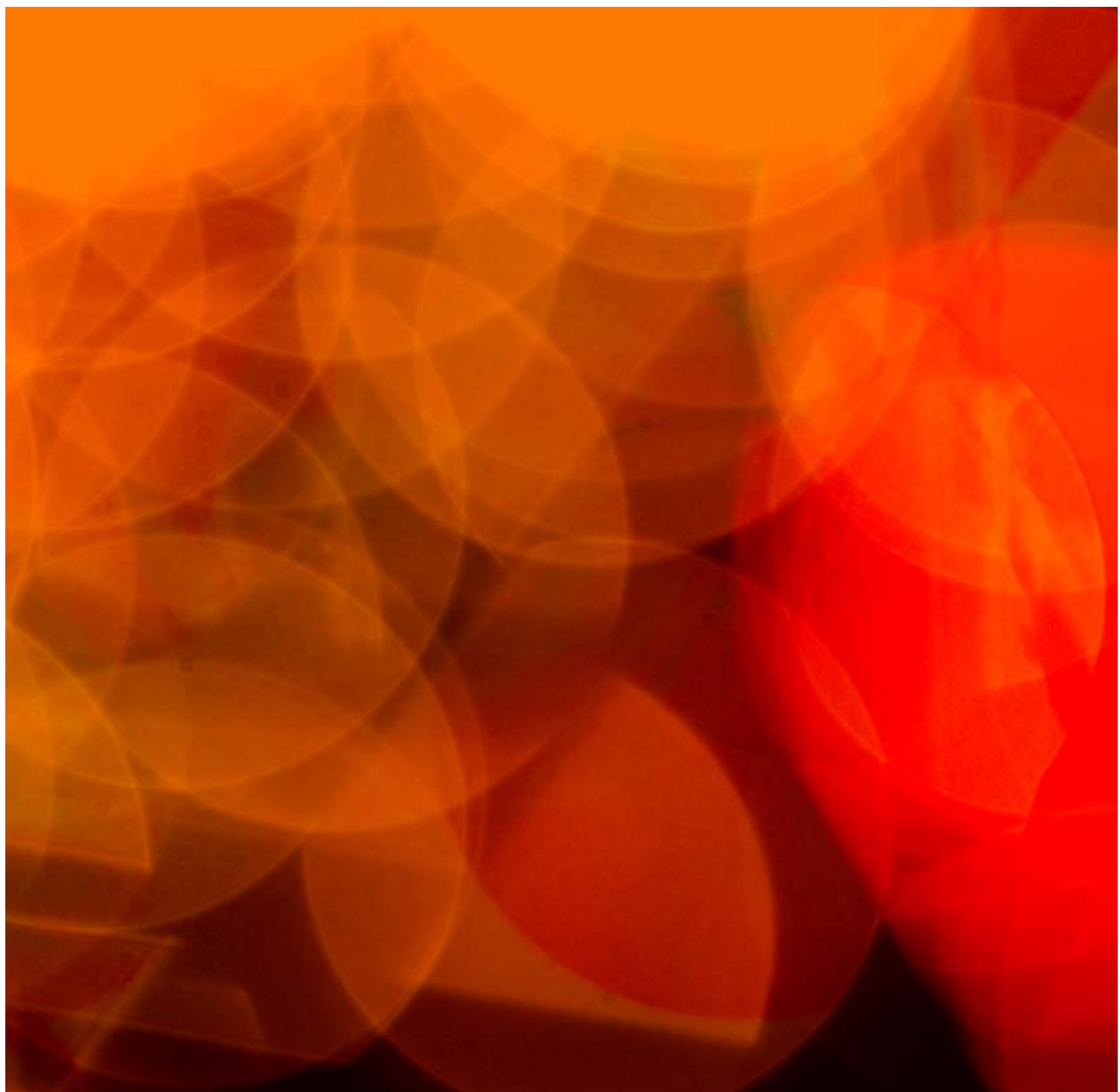


# Training Quality Standard Part B

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Retail sector

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# Pre-submission guidance for providers working with employers in the retail sector

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# 1. Introduction

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This guide is the output of work undertaken for KPMG by LSN Education as part of the World Class Skills Programme, funded by the Learning and Skills Information Service (LSIS) in the period November 2008 to March 2009.

It is designed to assist providers with a specialism in Retail who are preparing for Part B certification of the Training Quality Standard (TQS). It has been produced with advice and guidance from Retail providers, the Retail Sector Skills Council – Skillsmart Retail ([www.skillsmartretail.com](http://www.skillsmartretail.com)), and with input from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

At the time of writing (March 2009), there are two providers who hold Part B certification for Retail.

This document is intended to support Retail providers in reviewing and improving their readiness for Part B of the Training Quality Standard and not writing the actual application for any external assessment.

Providers who wish to know more about how to register for the Training Quality Standard and submit an application, should consult the dedicated official TQS website, helpline or e-mail enquiry service. (See Appendix B for useful contact details.)

## 1.1. Overview of the Training Quality Standard

The Training Quality Standard has a particular, and clearly defined, focus. It deals with how learning provider organisations develop and manage successful customer relationships with employers and how they ensure that the content of the training solutions they deliver, achieves the necessary quality to back up those relationships.

The Training Quality Standard aims to assess and where appropriate, to certificate learning providers with reference to two broad issues:

- their responsiveness to employers' needs
- their expertise in particular industry sectors.

These concepts are set out in a practical framework of criteria and indicators that focus on two linked but ultimately very different delivery competencies:

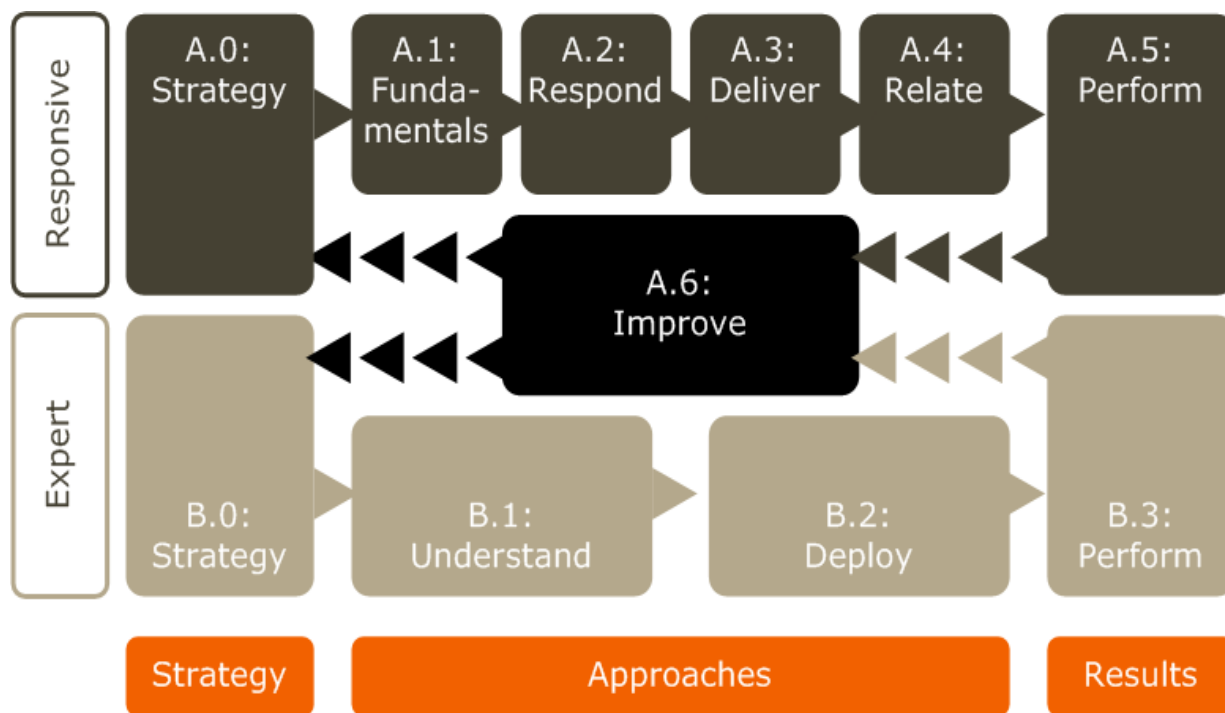
- responding to the needs of employers as individual customers, which is covered in Part A of the Training Quality Standard
- developing and deploying products to address particular sector needs, which is covered in Part B of the Training Quality Standard

**Part A** is for all organisations delivering training and development solutions.

**Part B** focuses on areas where organisations have expertise, having already demonstrated their ability to serve employers through Part A.

The individual Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) have produced guidance on Part B customised for their sector. For Skillsmart Retail’s guidance, see Appendix A.

An overview of the Training Quality Standard is reproduced below. This diagram can be found in *Introducing the Training Quality Standard (2008)*. This document can be downloaded from: [www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk](http://www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk)



The Training Quality Standard is explicitly non-prescriptive. That is, a provider organisation is not obliged to do things in a predetermined way, to become certified. However, much of the assessment is ‘scored’ on the basis of the approaches that a provider uses. These approaches have to be ‘sound’ and effectively ‘deployed’.

One way for a provider to present a coherent story, is to base it on the way their processes are linked. This allows them to demonstrate that they have a complete range of appropriate processes, in line with the evidence requirements and the links between the processes allow the story to ‘flow’ naturally.

## 1.2. Case Study – Solihull College

In December 2008, Solihull College was awarded TQS certification with excellence in Retail. Linzi Johnston is the Head of School for Retail and Construction and was heavily involved with the College’s TQS journey, in particular with the Part B submission. Linzi has provided the following account of her involvement with Solihull College’s TQS journey.

**N.B:** At the time of writing, Retail providers were not using the Readiness Check. It is also important to bear in mind that providers will submit a unique narrative that describes their processes and procedures. This case study serves the purpose of describing the approach used by Solihull College.

Planning for the Part B submission started in the summer of 2008. It was agreed that I would co-write the narrative with our Partnerships Manager. We spent time together reading through each indicator and discussing how our operations could be described to best effect. We made notes as we went along and these notes were typed into a working document that formed the basis for our submission.

Using these notes, the Partnerships Manager drafted an indicator at a time, constantly referring to the Assessment Guide & Evidence Framework, to ensure our narrative matched the requirements of the Standard. As she completed an indicator, it was emailed to me to read through and comment upon. Fortunately, for the latter half of the process we shared an office, so were able to communicate as often as necessary on the progression of our submission.

The Partnerships Manager and I were also part of a Steering Group that was chaired by the Deputy Principal and attended by members of the College's Senior and Middle Management teams. During the course of these meetings, we updated each other with progress (our Part A submission was being produced at the same time as the Part B), and agreed milestones and deadlines. These meetings helped to maintain the momentum of the submission – as in any large organisation, other projects crop up and you can become distracted from a task. Knowing that a certain action was required by the next meeting ensured that everyone involved in the College's TQS application kept to the agreed schedule.

A draft of the Part B submission was given to the Deputy Principal and Director for Workforce Development for review. Amendments were made and our submission sent to CFE.

At this point, the Partnership Manager produced an Evidence Matrix. This listed every piece of evidence we had included in our submission and enabled me to collate a file containing all the relevant documents. Prior to the Validation Visit, the assessors did tell us which pieces of evidence they would want to see, but I still made sure I knew where everything else was, just in case!

I also carried out briefings with the Retail team. A copy of the TQS submission was given to each of the team, as part of a discussion covering any issues they felt they needed clarification on. In the main, the team felt confident about the visit, as the majority of the work they deliver with Retailers is employer facing and therefore responding to questions on this, posed no problems.

On 16 – 18 November 2008, two assessors conducted the Validation Visit. The visit was based at the Regional Retail Academy in the centre of Solihull, the home of our Retail and Customer Service CoVE. The assessors requested the opportunity to speak to the delivery team, the sales advisors and the management team for this area. The interviews were used to clarify aspects of the submission and to gain a deeper insight into what we actually do. Questioning was thorough, although none of those involved in the process felt under pressure and feedback suggested that some actually enjoyed the visit.

### **Following my TQS experience, I would advise providers in the Retail sector to:**

- Plan – well ahead of when you think you ought to
- Stay focussed – don't let TQS slip down your agenda. Once you are engaged with the process, ensure you stay engaged
- If you are not the best person to write the submission end to end (and if you manage the provision you may be too close to tell a clear story) identify someone within your organisation, with whom you can work closely and maintain communication

- Ensure you tell a clear story about the Retail sector, the issues affecting it and how you seek to address these with employers. Your assessors might not (probably won't) have a Retail background so you need to be explicit
- Similarly, you need to be able to describe (and illustrate) the impact you have made on employers. This needs not only to be in the form of case studies, but also in the form of quantitative data that shows the impact
- Explain your links to Skillsmart Retail and to other key stakeholders – there is a lot of useful information on the Skillsmart website that we used
- Where you can, use figures and graphs to back up the assertions you have made in your text
- Talk to the employers you work with. Let them know what you are doing, and why – they may be willing to help you

Good luck!

### 1.3. Why the Training Quality Standard?

The process of achieving TQS accreditation is challenging. However, in an increasingly employer-led market place, it is important for providers to engage with the employer engagement agenda and to benchmark their abilities. You may find you need to use internal marketing to ensure buy-in across your organisation.

The following information has been provided by the Learning & Skills Council and describes how the Training Quality Standard links to providers' employer engagement strategies.

#### **Informing employer choice in a demand-led system**

In a truly demand led system employers will be free to choose where they purchase their training and development solutions. It is, therefore, important to ensure that employers recognise what TQS represents and what they can expect from a provider with TQS. The LSC is working with a range of stakeholders to ensure that providers with TQS are highlighted to employers as their preferred provider. The LSC is working on The Employer Guide to Training Providers, to ensure that employers with TQS are 'flagged' as being highly responsive.

#### **Train to Gain**

As the Train to Gain service is enhanced for 2008/09, it is vital that the service continues to be high performing, helping employers identify and meet their skills needs. Providers with TQS will play a major role in further raising the credibility and equality of the Train to Gain service.

Train to Gain Brokers have been made aware of providers with TQS and what this represents. These providers should be prioritised over those without the standard, when referring new TTG business. The Employer Guide to Training Providers will link in with this, when TQS providers will be flagged as preferred.

## National Apprenticeship Service

As the apprenticeship programme expands, TQS will play a major role in the delivery of responsive provision that meets the needs of the employer and the learner. Providers, who have invested in a responsive infrastructure and excellence in vocational areas, will drive the apprenticeship programme forward.

## Framework for Excellence

The Framework for Excellence is an annual quantitative assessment of performance across all LSC funded providers. The Framework will provide an accurate, independent picture of the performance of the further education sector, validated and supported by published data.

The evidence used to assess the employer views measure in the Framework will be based on a subset of the assessment criteria from TQS. Providers that achieve TQS for their whole organisation will automatically be rated outstanding across the whole Responsiveness to Employers KPA for the period for which TQS is awarded (three years).

In a reciprocal arrangement, from summer 2010, any provider that is in scope for the Responsiveness to Employers KPA may need to achieve a rating of 'good' or 'outstanding' in this particular area, before it can apply for TQS. This alignment means providers do not need to do both.

Framework for Excellence evidence will be highly relevant to support an application for TQS, not least because the Framework's Employer Views survey is based on elements of TQS.

The operational relationship between TQS and Framework for Excellence was agreed by Ministers in March 2007 and published in the Framework for Excellence provider guides in July 2007 and July 2008.

## Capital skills prospectus: implementing the key priorities of building colleges for the future

The LSC Capital Strategy published in March 2008 had confirmed the intention to help drive increased specialisation among FE providers and ensure that capital investment supports provision, to address identified skills needs. Providers with TQS will have priority access to specialist capital funding. The capital prospectus states that 'colleges applying for capital funding will need to demonstrate their commitment to employer engagement'. In most cases, colleges will need to show that, at the point of application, they have at least applied for TQS, and they must have achieved the TQS before funding is released. This requirement will apply to other providers of employer responsive provision as well.

## National Skills Academies

The LSC is working with the new and emerging National Skills Academies, so that they adopt TQS as their key quality criterion in selecting and working with provider partners. This will ensure that only the highest standard providers are part of the National Skills Academies networks.

**N.B:** Skillsmart Retail's application to become a National Skills Academy has now been approved. As part of their drive to promote excellence in Retail provision, Skillsmart Retail will be actively encouraging providers to achieve TQS certification.

## 1.4. Who should use this guide?

This guide has been developed for use by a range of people:

- senior management: as it is **imperative** that there is senior management buy-in to a TQS application
- middle managers: who may be involved in curriculum design, managing provision, engaging directly with employers or monitoring quality, should also engage with the contents of this guide.
- delivery staff: who are likely to contribute at all levels to a TQS submission

You may also decide to work on a cross-organisational basis with specific input from staff with responsibility for the key aspects of the topic area, such as senior managers for strategic planning, the marketing officer, business development manager and management information system (MIS) managers, as well as vocational tutors, learner support providers and work-based assessors.

## 1.5. Internal communication

As it is likely that staff from various departments will play a role, whether large or small, in your TQS journey it is important that the key messages are communicated clearly and regularly. You may consider an initial briefing to ensure a shared understanding, with regular follow-up meetings for discussion, review of findings and action plans. They would help to maintain commitment and momentum.



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## 2. Sector-specific issues

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When applying for the Training Quality Standard Part B, it is important to demonstrate through the narrative that your organisation has an excellent understanding of the market in which it operates. One way you can do this, is to demonstrate how your strategy – which underpins everything you do – has been informed by issues that specifically affect your sector.

Skillsmart Retail has regional information available on their website ([http://www.skillsmartretail.com/categories.php?pages\\_id=69](http://www.skillsmartretail.com/categories.php?pages_id=69)). The points below have been taken from there, from the official graduate careers website [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) and from a report produced for the Department of Work and Pensions by the Centre for Research into the Older Workforce (see [www.niace.org.uk/crow](http://www.niace.org.uk/crow)). They are not exhaustive, but can act as a starting point, when considering the issues you have encountered and how the development and deployment of your strategy has helped to tackle these.

- The sector has very high numbers of young workers aged 16–24, but this is a decreasing pool.
- Nearly half (45%) of employers have hard-to-fill vacancies, in particular specific technical and management roles.
- There is a deficiency of skills in store managers, irrespective of the size of store.
- Skills development of older and part-time workers is often neglected.
- Employees can be a transient work force, with people viewing Retail as a stop gap rather than a career choice.
- Nearly three-quarters (70%) of parents reject Retail as career choice for their children.
- In terms of skills needs, the National Employer Skills Survey (2005) showed that customer handling, team working and verbal communication are the three most difficult skills to obtain from Retail job applicants.
- The preference of larger Retailers is to train in-house. Retailers who employ fewer than 50 people (where they do take up training), rely on public provision.
- The Retail industry is susceptible to economic and consumer trends. A change in interest rates, for example, will affect people's disposable income and how much they are likely to spend.
- Customer confidence is a key issue – if customers feel optimistic about their situation, they will spend more. Even in minor economic downturns Retailers suffer, as profit margins are cut to sustain levels of sales. The investment in training inevitably suffers.
- Over half (57%) of companies provide training, with annual training expenditure being half of the national average.

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## 3. Understanding the TQS requirements

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This section of the guide has been designed to enable you to:

- develop your understanding of the requirements of the Training Quality Standard
- map your organisation's current processes against the requirements
- action plan to meet any development needs

To facilitate this, it includes the following:

1. An extended version of the Skillsmart Retail Part B guidance
2. A review template
3. An action-planning template
4. An evidence matrix

### Skillsmart Retail Part B guidance

This section should be read and considered by everyone who operates in the sector, with support from the senior management team.

### Review template

After reading and considering the Skillsmart guidance, move onto the review template. Use it to map your current level of performance against the TQS requirements and to identify areas for development. Rate your organisation as 1 (outstanding), 2 (good) or 3 (satisfactory).

**N.B:** Remember that the Training Quality Standard recognises 'good' provision, so if you grade yourself consistently as a 3 (satisfactory), you may wish to delay your application while you work on development.

Allocate an appropriate amount of time to completing your review, because it will help to identify processes and evidence to support your application and enable you to demonstrate your performance, in relation to each of the key evidence criteria. This will enable you to write a submission that has clarity, and therefore credibility, about your current level of performance.

When you are mapping your current level of performance, your key considerations should include:

- honesty about your organisation's current position, capabilities and its capacity to move forward
- realistic use of staff expertise, drawing on strengths and acknowledging areas for development
- assigning responsibilities for ensuring that action takes place
- assessing the resources required
- setting realistic timescales

## Action planning

Finally, use the action plan template to identify a way forward on your areas of development – if there are any!

When planning to move forward in areas where a process requires development (and therefore where your ability to describe the process may be limited) important questions to ask yourself are:

- Have you identified all the practical steps needed to address the issue?
- Will the steps lead to some identifiable, measurable outcomes?
- Are the actions clear and specific?
- Will the actions help meet agreed objectives? How?
- Will the actions help improve your organisation's ability to achieve Part B?

### 3.1. An extended version of the Skillsmart Retail TQS Part B Guidance

N.B. Read through the information for each TQS Part B indicator contained in the tables below, one section at a time. You may choose to read through the document as part of a team, or individually, comparing notes with others afterwards. Do not skim read, but take time while you are reading, to think about your organisation and the way your processes support your work with employers. Consider what your key documents are and how they are shaped and reviewed. There may be other documents or processes that you use effectively, which are not noted here and which could be described in your narrative.

<b>B.0: Strategy</b>		
Providers with sector expertise have a strategy for working with the sector based on the market including clearly defined objectives. They take actions to ensure that their aims and approaches are communicated to appropriate stakeholders.		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Processes/key documents and evidence</b>
B.0.1: Define aims	The strategy for working with the sector defines aims and approaches that are communicated to appropriate stakeholders.	<p><b>Retail strategy document</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure inclusion of market segmentation and explanation/understanding of how appropriate markets were identified. For example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ use of internal marketing department</li> <li>○ use of SSC website</li> <li>○ liaison with local borough council</li> <li>○ use of external marketing consultants</li> <li>○ focus groups with employers</li> <li>○ employer surveys</li> <li>○ partnership work with other providers</li> <li>○ demonstrating how strategy meets local need (consultation with employers/focus groups/employer surveys/visit reports/minutes from meetings)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Evidence of how strategy links with Sector Qualification Strategy</li> <li>• Evidence of sustainability of strategy and projected growth based on LMI, employer feedback</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	Processes/key documents and evidence
B.0.1: Define aims	The strategy for working with the sector defines aims and approaches that are communicated to appropriate stakeholders.	<p><b>Process by which strategy is reviewed and frequency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of review meetings – attendees, actions, minutes</li> <li>• Management information systems (MIS) reports – demonstrate how these influence the strategy/feed into the monitor, evaluate, review (MER) framework</li> <li>• Annual self-assessment documents, showing honest and rigorous assessment of the strategy and action planning, including measurable outcomes, ownership and time bound success criteria</li> <li>• Success rates – demonstrate how the review of success rates informs the aims of the strategy and shapes future planning</li> <li>• Regular reviews/monthly quality reviews – attendees, actions, minutes</li> <li>• Business and forward-planning documents</li> </ul> <p><b>Process for keeping abreast of Retail skills demands and understanding sector behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at bi-annual training provider road shows</li> <li>• Attendance at specialist provider group meetings</li> <li>• Attendance at bi-annual continuing professional development (CPD) events</li> <li>• Evidence and examples of how attendance at the above, informs strategy and communication with stakeholders</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	Processes/key documents and evidence
B.0.1: Define aims	The strategy for working with the sector defines aims and approaches that are communicated to appropriate stakeholders.	<p><b>Evidence of engagement with SSC and use of labour market information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of SSC website (all LMI held centrally on the website) – demonstrate familiarity with content and confidence in navigating around site. Discuss who uses the site, frequency and the purposes for which LMI information is gathered/used/disseminated</li> <li>• In the longer term, evidence links with the National Skills Academy</li> </ul> <p><b>Robust processes for consulting with employers and SSC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of identification of appropriate stakeholders (networking/referrals/long-term relationships/attendance at local or regional events and meetings)</li> <li>• Minutes of meetings, visit reports, details of events demonstrating how relationships are maintained</li> <li>• Communication methods with stakeholders (newsletters, e-bulletins, meetings, events, focus groups)</li> <li>• Attendance at SSC events</li> <li>• Evidence of consulting with employers at local and national level (visit reports, minutes of meetings, details of events, emails, letters)</li> <li>• Details of customer relationship management (CRM) or other databases, used to keep employer information updated and relevant, details of who accesses this information and for what purpose</li> <li>• Documents detailing work with skills brokers and outcomes.</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	Processes/key documents and evidence
B.0.2: Define market	The strategy for working with the sector is based on an analysis of the market and key customer groups	<p><b>Market assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing strategy</li> <li>• Market assessment information, including evidence of local consultation (events, focus groups, employer meetings, broker feedback, SSC information, interaction with local LSC and borough council) to identify key customer groups. Evidence of time-bound planning, resource implications and an awareness of macro factors and emerging trends</li> <li>• Use of SSC website (refer to B.0.1 above)</li> <li>• Use of information from local LSC and borough councils – evidence of key relationships, attendance at events and meetings. Demonstrate what sort of information is gathered, how it is used and its impact on market decisions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Market analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feasibility studies detailing market analysis</li> <li>• Process documentation</li> <li>• Evidence of maintaining market information (use of internal marketing department/external consultants, use of SSC website/local LSC and borough council intelligence). Demonstrate an awareness of relevant research findings that are used to develop the marketing strategy.</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	Processes/key documents and evidence
B.0.3: Define results	The strategy for working with the sector defines specific and measurable performance objectives	<p><b>Targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that targets are linked to market size, organisational capacity and planned penetration of market (from market analysis) – commentary on targets, taking into account these factors</li> <li>• Demonstrate how results are aligned with strategy, including details of meetings/discussions with SSC and local LSC, to evidence how targets were reached and agreed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategy document</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate how SMART objectives were identified (meetings documentation, including details of key staff involved in making decisions, correspondence with SSC and local LSC, links to market analysis, employer feedback)</li> <li>• Confidence with and use of LMI to address skills shortages, increased employer buy-in/engagement</li> <li>• Details of potential market, historical performance data from the MIS department and market penetration to date, with projected growth/barriers understood and clear action plans in place</li> <li>• Clear links to wider sector objectives (i.e. Sector Skills Agreement) and an understanding of available national and local sector benchmarks</li> <li>• Clear rationale for each performance target, including ownership, resource, cost and time implications</li> </ul>



Indicator	Statement	Processes/key documents and evidence
B.0.3: Define results	The strategy for working with the sector defines specific and measurable performance objectives	<p><b>Process documentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of self-assessment, objectives (developed &amp; agreed) – meeting minutes</li> <li>• MER (monitor, evaluate and review) documents</li> <li>• Quality improvement plans</li> <li>• School (for those working in a college)/team reviews</li> <li>• Data from MIS department including performance management reports</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer surveys</li> <li>• Feedback provided by SSC (evidence from one-to-one meetings and emails)</li> <li>• Evidence of attendance at strategic forums</li> <li>• Action plans from regional meetings</li> </ul> <p>Evidence should clearly show steps taken to monitor progress against identified milestones.</p>

## B.1: Understand

Providers with sector expertise engage in dialogue with employers and stakeholders in their sectors and look to lead in the adoption and sharing of good practice.

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.1.1: Understand employers	Input is sought from sector employers on their expectations for training solutions and common business needs	<b>Record of consultation events</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Event details</li><li>• Notes/information taken from events</li><li>• Details of internal use of information/intelligence from events – to whom it was disseminated and how it was used including sector-specific research information, available on local employers</li><li>• Evidence of how provision takes account of employers' needs</li><li>• Evidence demonstrating a two-way dialogue, documents evidencing partnership-working, including visit reports, minutes of meetings, newsletters, press releases (issued by provider and/or employer) and testimonials</li><li>• Details of a structured approach to consultation; for example, employer advisory groups, focus groups, attendance or hosting of other employer-focused events</li><li>• Evidence of employer input into programmes – involvement in programme or delivery, assessment or as a work-based recorder, mentor or assessor</li></ul>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.1.1: Understand employers	Input is sought from sector employers on their expectations for training solutions and common business needs	<p><b>Staff development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents evidencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CPD schedule of development (for example annual appraisal cycle, lesson observations) and work placement</li> <li>○ records of industry placements</li> <li>○ evidence of evaluation of CPD activity and feedback to SSC on future needs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Staff development strategy document</li> <li>• Process documentation to support sharing of best practice</li> <li>• Evidence of processes in place, or evidence of participation in boards, forums or groups that discuss and address training for the sector</li> <li>• Innovation and/or proactive approach to developing training solutions, prior to mandatory legislation</li> <li>• Employer participation in the development and design of the curriculum</li> </ul> <p><b>Reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant and disseminated documents including minutes of meetings, briefings, etc, summarising outcomes of consultations/events/networking</li> <li>• Action-planning to take this work forward, with clear ownership, anticipated outcomes and review dates shown</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.1.2: Understand stakeholders	Input is sought from appropriate stakeholders to share good practice and understand the sector's common business needs	<p><b>Collaborative working</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence to demonstrate working with SSC to develop understanding of sector's common business needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ invitations to events</li> <li>○ agendas, minutes of meetings</li> <li>○ attendance at training provider road shows</li> <li>○ partnership meetings</li> <li>○ European Social Fund (ESF) meetings</li> <li>○ Diploma events</li> <li>○ apprentice events</li> <li>○ skills shop events</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Regular dialogue with relevant sectoral and regional partners evidenced, along with details of the process of initiating, developing, utilising and maintaining relationships</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.1.2: Understand stakeholders	Input is sought from appropriate stakeholders to share good practice and understand the sector's common business needs	<p><b>Train To Gain working</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss confidently the Train to Gain model and future plans for further development</li> <li>• Attendance at Lifelong Learning Network meetings</li> <li>• Evidence of developing relationships with skills brokers (referral documentation/meetings/emails/visit reports)</li> <li>• Evidence of investment into skills brokers, enabling them to understand the</li> <li>• Provision and promote successfully</li> <li>• Details of monitor, evaluate, review (MER) framework and how effective this is at ensuring skills brokers maintain effective communication, where there are areas for development</li> <li>• Explanation of the involvement of internal members of staff in promoting Train to Gain (for example business sales advisers or similar)</li> <li>• Visit reports, following meetings with employers</li> <li>• Assessor feedback on learner progression</li> <li>• MIS reports showing starts, completion, retention and success rates</li> </ul> <p><b>Reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of sharing good practice via employer and partner networks – details of reports/briefings, summarising key findings/minutes of meetings</li> <li>• Examples of innovative approaches, leading to an awareness of and participation in Retail best-practice activity</li> <li>• Documents illustrating internal processes, concerning service development</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.1.2: Understand stakeholders	Input is sought from appropriate stakeholders to share good practice and understand the sector's common business needs	<p><b>Quality improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of and participation in industry-specific best practice activity, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ feedback on suitability of development programmes and qualifications</li> <li>○ development plans</li> <li>○ self-assessment documents</li> <li>○ quality improvement plan</li> <li>○ team and school (for those working in a college) reviews</li> <li>○ action plans</li> <li>○ documents supporting the range of strategic relationships and how the effectiveness of networking is evaluated</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Broker and employer feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of liaison with LSC and skills broker</li> <li>• Documents showing take up of leads and ultimate outcomes</li> <li>• Employer surveys</li> <li>• Testimonials</li> <li>• Press releases</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting documents from skills broker, endorsing partnership working/training delivery</li> <li>• Supporting documents from industry trade bodies – as above</li> </ul>

## B.2: Deploy

Providers with sector expertise deploy products and services to meet employer needs, supported by the content, people and resources able to meet industry expectations.

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.2.1: Deploy products and services	Products and services are developed and delivered to industry expectations and employers' business needs	<p><b>Process documentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Details of consultation meetings/feedback from employers and other stakeholders/LMI that evidences where gaps in provision have been met with the development of bespoke provision</li><li>• Documents outlining the design process of the new provision</li></ul> <p><b>Reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rationale for selecting programmes and evidence of take up (for example MIS data, registers, employer and learner feedback)</li><li>• Documents showing how employers and stakeholders receive information about provision and effective communication is maintained (emails, visit reports, minutes of meetings)</li></ul> <p><b>Employer feedback</b></p> <p>Evidence that employers' feedback is sought and acted on – for example, minutes of meetings, summaries of consultation events or focus groups, copies of employer surveys</p>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.2.1: Deploy products and services	Products and services are developed and delivered to industry expectations and employers' business needs	<p><b>Evidence that programmes are 'fit for purpose'</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link LMI to the new provision and show how it meets need and aligns to the Sector Qualification Strategy, or if this is not appropriate, demonstrate awarding body accreditation.</li> <li>• Evidence, where appropriate, that industry quality marks have been awarded</li> </ul> <p><b>Analysing feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a clear process for assessing customer and learner satisfaction and evidence of how this is taken forward</li> <li>• Evidence of informing SSC of common themes or issues, enabling continuous improvement (for example emails, meetings of meetings, summary documents)</li> <li>• Demonstrate the process for assessing the industry relevance of products and services – how changes are taken into account</li> <li>• Evidence links to market assessment and sector needs (use of LMI from SSC website, link to strategy documents, employer feedback and local LSC intelligence)</li> <li>• Support 'no wrong door' policy</li> </ul>



Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.2.2: Deploy people	People arranging and delivering products and services have the knowledge and skills to meet sector expectations	<p><b>Staff development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to section B.1.1 – evidence of industry competence among delivery staff and assessment teams</li> <li>• Include details of qualifications, experience and training – how these are reviewed and maintained</li> <li>• Documents detailing membership of appropriate bodies and evidence that staff have direct links with industry to ensure best practice – what the links are and how they work</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents showing how staff feedback is gathered and used to support continuous improvement - for example, specific training activities and developmental work. Include programmes from events, minutes of meetings, briefing notes or reports, following specific activity and emails</li> </ul> <p><b>Schedule of staff development and evidence of evaluation and review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal documentation showing planned activities and their links with emerging trends, needs of employers, feedback from the SSC</li> <li>• Evaluation documents and action-planning records</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.2.2: Deploy people	People arranging and delivering products and services have the knowledge and skills to meet sector expectations	<p><b>Staff development records and evaluation of work placement activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal documents showing the relevance and validity of staff development</li> <li>• Feedback from employers on any work placements</li> <li>• Comments from staff</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff development strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detail of who owns responsibility for the strategy and how it is reviewed and monitored – may form two strands: overarching organisational strategy and one tailored for the Retail team</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff development programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above and including details of how the impact of development is measured</li> </ul> <p><b>Staff development records</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May form two strands – overarching organisational records and local/departmental documents</li> </ul>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.2.3: Deploy resources	Resources used to arrange and deliver products and services to meet sector expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting</li> <li>• Minutes of meetings where delivery/assessment team discuss resources, their impact, relevance and usability</li> <li>• Self-assessment report</li> <li>• Action-planning documentation</li> <li>• Employer feedback and reports/emails/testimonials on the quality of resources, their links to sector expectations and their usefulness in the workplace</li> <li>• Comments from employer surveys</li> <li>• Details of resource focus groups</li> <li>• Learner feedback and Learner surveys</li> <li>• Details of resource focus groups attended by learners</li> <li>• Comments from evaluation sheets/feedback forms</li> <li>• Resources plan</li> <li>• Evaluation of implementation of new resources (including feedback from employers on facilities and equipment)</li> <li>• Internal planning documents on the maintenance of equipment and resources</li> <li>• Evidence of consulting employers on capital investments (reports, minutes, emails)</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer and customer satisfaction surveys, focusing on the effectiveness of equipment and resources</li> </ul>

### B.3: Perform

Providers with sector expertise cause improving results or sustained good performance in the areas defined in their strategic objectives.

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.3.0: Achieve results	Indicators of performance against strategic objectives show an improving trend or a sustained level of high performance	<p><b>Reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monthly, termly, annual performance reports on trends, performance to target and to objectives outlined in B.0.3</li><li>• Documents (whether reports, minutes from meetings, summary/briefing documents) clearly illustrating in quantifiable terms market penetration, number of employers engaged with, details of repeat business, details of employer contributions and how these have risen</li><li>• Details of progression to Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) targets</li></ul> <p><b>Data capture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reports (possibly from MIS department) showing progression information, evidence that employers are using the programmes. Clear link to how these map to strategy and targets</li><li>• Demonstration on how this information informs evaluation and future planning</li></ul> <p><b>Quantitative results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employer surveys</li><li>• Self-assessment report</li><li>• Quality improvement plan</li></ul> <p><b>Monitoring performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examples of how information is collected against employer and sector objectives, targets and strategy</li><li>• Clearly demonstrate that information illustrates performance, trends and identifies action planning</li></ul>

Indicator	Statement	What could count as evidence
B.3.1: Achieve impact	Impact on the sector shows an improving trend or sustained high level of performance	<p><b>Reporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MIS information showing year-on-year reporting and comparisons – evidence that employers’ take-up of courses is increasing</li> <li>• Clear links to SSC objectives</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence that SSC LMI has been used</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes of meetings with SSC, agreed actions and evidence of achieving or working towards actions</li> <li>• Participation in regional action planning, documents that can support this activity</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that the influence of activity, driven by the strategy and implementation plan, has been reviewed – for example, self-assessment report, details of monitoring, evaluation and review (MER) activities, internal focus groups and minutes of meetings</li> <li>• Documents detailing feedback from SSC objectives – the impact on these</li> <li>• Employer surveys</li> </ul> <p><b>Internal planning documents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MIS reports showing retention, completion, achievement and success rates</li> <li>• Annual business plans, detailing growth and sustainability strategies and evidence of meeting sector expectations through provision</li> <li>• 3–5 year development plan</li> <li>• Cross-organisational work (reports, minutes of meetings, emails)</li> <li>• Feedback from SSC and LSC showing how delivery has contributed to the development of the sector’s skills base</li> </ul>

### 3.2. Review template

The review template that follows has been designed to enable you to map the way you operate against the TQS requirements. You will probably need to refer back to the tables of information in Tool 1 to help you decide how far your organisation already meets TQS requirements. As stated previously, it is imperative that you consider your organisation's operations honestly. Grade your current operations as 1 (outstanding), 2 (good) or 3 (satisfactory). Use the blank rows to note any other procedure or document not already mentioned that could help your case.

Process, key documents and evidence	Do we have this?	How well do we do this? Rate your current level of performance as follows: 1 = outstanding 2 = good 3 = satisfactory	Notes
<b>B.0: Strategy</b>			
Strategy document, including Retail strategy			
Process for reviewing and assessing strategy including frequency			
Evidence of use of labour market information			
Robust process for consulting employers and SSC			

<b>Process, key documents and evidence</b>	<b>Do we have this?</b>	<b>How well do we do this?</b> <b>Rate your current level of performance as follows:</b> <b>1 = outstanding</b> <b>2 = good</b> <b>3 = satisfactory</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>B.0: Strategy</b> continued			
Market assessment			
Market analysis			
Process documentation			

Process, key documents and evidence	Do we have this?	How well do we do this? Rate your current level of performance as follows: 1 = outstanding 2 = good 3 = satisfactory	Notes
<b>B.0.3: Define results</b>			
Targets are linked to market size/organisational capacity			
How are results aligned with the strategy?			



Process, key documents and evidence	Do we have this?	How well do we do this? Rate your current level of performance as follows: 1 = outstanding 2 = good 3 = satisfactory	Notes
<b>B.1.1: Understand employers</b>			
Records of consultation events			
Details of staff development evidencing CPD/records of industry placements			
Reporting, including minutes of meetings/briefings/consultations/events/networking			

Process, key documents and evidence	Do we have this?	How well do we do this? Rate your current level of performance as follows:  1 = outstanding 2 = good 3 = satisfactory	Notes
<b>B.1.2 Understand stakeholders</b>			
Details of collaborative working			
Process for maintaining dialogue with relevant sectoral and regional partners			
Train to Gain working			
Quality improvement systems			
Feedback from brokers and employers			

<b>Process, key documents and evidence</b>	<b>Do we have this?</b>	<b>How well do we do this?</b> <b>Rate your current level of performance as follows:</b> <b>1 = outstanding</b> <b>2 = good</b> <b>3 = satisfactory</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>B.2 Deploy</b>			
Process documentation – details of consultation meetings/feedback			
Documents outlining the design process of new provision			
Employer feedback /evidence that provision is ‘fit for purpose’			
Analysis of feedback and how this is linked to strategy			
Staff feedback on their continuing professional development			
Details of staff development programme/strategy			
Resources plan showing an evaluation of resources			
Feedback from employers on resources			

<b>Process, key documents and evidence</b>	<b>Do we have this?</b>	<b>How well do we do this?</b> <b>Rate your current level of performance as follows:</b> <b>1 = outstanding</b> <b>2 = good</b> <b>3 = satisfactory</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>B.3 Perform</b>			
Monthly, termly, annual performance reports on trends and performance			
Data capture processes			
Quantitative results – employer surveys, self-assessment report or quality improvement strategy			
Evidence of using SSC LMI			
Impact assessment			
Internal future planning processes			
Feedback from SSC showing how delivery has contributed to development of sector skills base			

### 3.3. Action plan template

The Training Quality Standard has been designed not only to benchmark a provider's ability to meet the training needs of employers, but also as a tool for business improvement. This template enables you to pick up on any key issues you may have highlighted, as a result of either reading the requirements, or conducting the review analysis. Remember that the Training Quality Standard is looking to recognise the work of 'good' providers. If you score your levels of operation consistently as a 3 (satisfactory), you may wish to consider extra development work, before you submit an application.

Key issue:					
Objective(s):					
Current position	Actions proposed/ evidence to be collected	Staff responsible	Timescale	Resources (to include costs)	Training requirements (including costing)

### 3.4. Evidence Matrix

#### Explanatory Notes

**This Evidence Matrix has been designed so you can note the evidence you have described in your submission and collate it, prior to the validation visit.**

For each indicator, examples of evidence you may have cited are given along with space to add others. **Every provider will have its own unique list of evidence and this matrix is not intended to be prescriptive.**

It is unlikely that you will need to provide the assessors with hard copies of every piece of evidence included in your submission. Prior to their visit, they will send you a list of evidence that they would like to see – use the tick box column to show you have this printed and ready for viewing.

It would be prudent to ensure that you are able to quickly locate any other evidence and you can use the location/person box to note where this evidence is situated.

Use the cross reference box to note where evidence has been mentioned more than once in your submission. This will shorten your overall list, giving you a more compact and useable document. This also serves the purpose of highlighting how your processes link and how you close the loop between deciding your strategy and measuring the impact of this on employers.

## TQS Part B – Retail Evidence Matrix

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.0.1: Define Aims</b>	CoVE Development Plan/Retail Strategy document			
	Marketing to employers, mail shots, emails, records of telephone calls, etc			
	Publicity materials			
	LMI			
	Analysis of trends in take-up of courses			
	Minutes of meetings with Skillsmart Retail			
	Research documents taken from Skillsmart Retail web-site			
	Minutes of LSC meetings			
	Reports on monitoring objectives			
	Self Assessment and Quality Improvement documents			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.0.2: Define Market</b>	Sector info gathered by delivery team or other members of staff			
	Analysis of data that gives sector specific info			
	Use of T2G, ESF and Apprenticeship funding			
	Marketing literature promoting special offers on courses			
	Analysis of macro factors and the communication of these			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.0.3: Define Results</b>	Communicating objectives to appropriate staff – Delivery and Sales Team (inc monitoring targets on monthly basis)			
	Internal documents, showing how objectives are developed, agreed and monitored			



Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.1.1: Understand employers</b>	Minutes/notes of delivery staff meetings with employers			
	Summaries of the outcome of consultation and networking			
	Records of industry placements			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.1.2: Understand stakeholders</b>	Minutes of meetings (e.g. CoVE Network)			
	Minutes of SPN meetings at LSC			
	Visit reports			
	Notes from meetings with employers			
	Proposals			
	Broker feedback			
	Evidence of improvement activity			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.2.1: Deploy products and services</b>	Pro-forma of delivery team contract			
	Mystery Shopper Reports			
	Employer Feedback surveys			
	Business Review notes			
	Research on industry expectations and how this shapes provision			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.2.2: Deploy people</b>	Examples of using specialist media to advertise jobs			
	Copies of adverts, job descriptions and person specs			
	Pro-forma lesson observation			
	Pro-forma appraisal			
	Evidence of team attending training events			
	Records of staff training held by HR			
	Employer feedback on staff			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.2.3: Deploy resources</b>	Course Reviews/evaluations of resources			
	Feedback from employees at end of delivery			
	Employer feedback on resources			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.3.0: Achieve results</b>	MIS data showing improvements year on year			
	CRM data – tracking actions such as repeat business			
	Reports detailing trends and performance to target			

Indicator	Evidence	Tick box	Cross reference	Location/person
<b>B.3.1: Achieve impact</b>	Reports on trends			
	Analysis of performance against target and achievement of objectives			

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## 4. What Next?

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Providers considering making a TQS application should ensure the following steps are taken.

### 1. Visit the TQS website.

[www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk](http://www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk)

This website contains a wealth of information on the Training Quality Standard, including details of applicant training courses and the Certification Bodies, which are approved to assess your application.

There is also a link to the World Class Skills Website (<http://wcs.excellence.qia.org.uk/>) which provides information on accessing support and guidance throughout the application process.

You are encouraged to engage in detail with the information provided on these websites. Information is available on how to register an application on the CFE website.

### 2. Complete a readiness check

The Readiness Check is a resource that has been produced in order to help providers ascertain their readiness, or otherwise, for submitting a TQS Part B application. This resource is available as a downloadable document from the Skillsmart Retail website ([www.skillsmartretail.com](http://www.skillsmartretail.com)).

It is recommended that the Readiness Check be completed by more than one person, and that responses are compared, to ensure a thorough appraisal of an organisation's ability to meet the requirements of the Training Quality Standard.

### 3. Allocate key roles and plan internal communication

As detailed in section 1.4, it is imperative that all staff are made aware of an organisation's TQS journey. A member of the Senior Management team should be identified to drive forward the application process. He or she may chair a Steering Group, organise cross-organisational briefings and nominate members of the middle management team to attend Applicant Training sessions and liaise with the World Class Skills team.

It is also important to consider the following:

#### The author of the application

This may not be the Curriculum Manager for the area. If this is the case, then the author and Manager will need to work very closely to ensure the area is represented accurately.

#### Timescales and key milestones

There should be adequate time and resources given over to the production of a TQS Part B application. However, this should not be an indefinite period of time and key milestones should be agreed and adhered to. Progress may be checked by the Senior Manager chairing the Steering Group.

#### Preparing employer information

As part of the assessment process, providers are required to submit details of the employers they are actively engaged with. Time should be allocated to the preparation of this data, as there are implications for submitting inadequate or out of date information. Further details will be provided during the course of the Applicant Training Course.

## Reviewing the submission

A TQS Part B submission will contain unique information that relates solely to the operations undertaken within a specific sector by that provider. It is highly recommended that the Manager of the area is either the author of the submission, or is closely involved in the writing process. However, such closeness to the subject area can sometimes lead to assumptions being made in the text and processes and procedures not being described as clearly as they might be.

The Senior Manager responsible for leading the application process should therefore review the narrative before its submission, as someone who is a step removed from the day to day operations of the area. It is also recommended that the submission is also reviewed by a second member of staff, who has no connection to the area. This process may result in clarification being sought and further detail added to the submission. It also acts as a valuable proof-reading opportunity.

Advice and guidance on writing a submission are provided during the Applicant Training Course.

## 4. Prepare for the validation visit

The size of your organisation, the number of sites that serve employers and the number of employers you are engaged with, will determine the number of assessors, who conduct the validation visit and the number of days they spend with you.

Prior to the visit, assessors will advise which pieces of evidence that are detailed in your submission, they would like to see. In addition to these, you may wish to allocate time to compiling an Evidence Matrix that lists every piece of evidence cited in your submission, its location and whether it cross references to any other part of your narrative. In the event that the assessors require access to additional evidence during the course of their visit, this will then be easy to track.

Further internal briefings should be carried out prior to the validation visit and every member of staff should be familiar and comfortable with the content of the submission. A timetable will be agreed with your assessors for the people and locations they wish to see.

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## Appendix A: Application form narrative

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### Guidance notes

When writing the narrative for your application form, bear in mind the guidance from the Training Quality Standard (TQS) team – they are looking for demonstration of the RADAR methodology:

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<b>Results:</b>	What do you want to achieve? What are appropriate targets? How are these met or exceeded? What evidence do you have of benchmarking? Can you show sustained results?
<b>Approach:</b>	What do you plan to do and why? Can you evidence a clear approach that is well defined and developed? Who is involved in shaping your approach? Is it linked to policy/legislation? Can you demonstrate a sound means of achieving results through your approach?
<b>Deployment:</b>	Can you demonstrate systematic roll-out of your approach throughout the organisation? Are staff supported through on-going and appropriate continuing professional development?
<b>Assessment and Review:</b>	Can you evidence assessment and review of your approach and deployment methods? Do you regularly seek to improve?

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Ensure that your narrative signposts the assessor to appropriate evidence; you do not need to include it all with your application. Your narrative needs to describe why you do things, as well as how and how your strategy meets the needs of employers in your sector. Highlight the relevance of your work and the impact you have had on employers.

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## Appendix B: Useful contacts

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### **Skillsmart Retail**

Jane Rexworthy  
Project Director  
National Skills Academy

Email: [Jane.rexworthy@skillsmartretail.com](mailto:Jane.rexworthy@skillsmartretail.com)

Telephone: 0779 5962450

### **Training Quality Standard Team**

Enquiry line: 0845 225 1310

Email: <mailto:info@trainingqualitystandard.co.uk>

website: [www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk](http://www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk)

**Information about support for the Training Quality Standard is also available from World Class Skills – developing employer responsiveness**

Email: <mailto:wcsenquiries@kpmg.co.uk>

Telephone: 0800 3286075

Booking information at: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/programmesandservices/wcs/booking>