

Trading Standards Qualifications Framework Core Skills Portfolio

Part 1 - Introduction

This portfolio is a tool which allows you as a candidate to demonstrate the skills which are fundamental to all those working within a Trading Standards environment, and provides evidence of these skills which can be assessed by another competent professional against an objective framework of assessment criteria.

You are expected to complete the portfolio by undertaking a role in a Trading Standards, or any similar, work context. All work carried out should be of a sufficient standard and must provide evidence which is capable of being assessed and verified against the skills outcomes and assessment criteria.

You may require some specific knowledge to complete the portfolio, as certain skills are impossible to demonstrate without detailed knowledge relating to the matter or procedure in question, however the skills being assessed are those which are fundamental to all those engaged in Trading Standards related work.

This portfolio is divided into types of core skill, followed by a set of relevant skills outcomes and a number of identified tasks, which need to be completed in order to ensure that you complete a wide enough breadth of work in order to meet these skills outcomes.

This portfolio focuses on the central core of generic skills, which are an essential element of all areas of the work of the profession. Separate portfolios which assess the skills which are specific to discrete areas of work, such as metrological testing, compliment this core skills portfolio and provide evidence of specific skills in these specialist areas.

N.B. You should carry out the tasks across as wide a spectrum of the work of your service or organisation as possible to ensure you demonstrate competency in all aspects of the work you are expected to undertake.

Once you have completed the Core Skills Portfolio, we recommend that you continue to gain additional experience of all the areas of service delivery in which you work in order to ensure you are competent in those areas, and you should seek the support of your employer when doing this. This is particularly important for work with which you are unfamiliar or inexperienced, for example when conducting high risk inspections, taking formal samples, seizing or suspending items, risk assessing products, conducting internet investigations or tackling doorstep criminals.

The **central core skills** are divided as follows:

- Interpersonal skills/ communication skills - face to face, on the telephone and in writing
- Organisational skills
- Information skills
- Cognitive skills
- Investigative skills

These skills map directly to the skills outcomes laid down by the Awarding Body for the portfolio.

The **skills outcomes** that this portfolio will have evidenced, once completed are:

1. The ability to find, apply and interpret legal statute, codes of practice and guidance notes.
2. The ability to identify product, gather evidence, sift, appraise, analyse and present information in order to be able to carry out the duties within a trading standards environment.
3. An appreciation of legal process and the ability to interpret and apply legislation appropriately.
4. The ability to advise others on their duties, rights and responsibilities. You must be able to demonstrate that you are able to communicate effectively with people with varied needs in a wide variety of contexts, and put people at ease, using appropriate verbal and body language, asking appropriate questions and giving appropriate responses, structuring and guiding conversations and being suitably assertive, but also listening.
5. The ability to explain to a diverse audience the meaning of, and rationale behind, legal requirements as a means of securing compliance.
6. The ability to develop effective working relationships with other agencies, with a demonstrable practical awareness of where the work of Trading Standards finishes and the work of other agencies begins, and potential overlaps.
7. The ability to work and liaise in partnership with other bodies and agencies.
8. The ability to communicate clearly and appropriately with a varied audience on a variety of technical and non-technical matters through a variety of media suitable to the needs of the user.
9. The ability to work individually, and as part of a team, and develop harmonious and productive working relationships with others.
10. The identification and the effective utilisation of the services of applicable experts and test bodies to support the role of the Trading Standards Service.
11. The personal organisational skills necessary to organise workloads, prioritise tasks and change focus as necessary.
12. The ability to research, gather, record, organise and report information in a context relevant to the service or task being undertaken.
13. The use of common office tools and databases to an appropriate level.
14. The ability to make an analytical appraisal of information with the necessary interpretive skills to reach logical and consistent conclusions.
15. The ability to use theoretical and practical knowledge in order to identify and apply appropriate and reasoned solutions to problems being addressed.
16. The ability to understand and comply with relevant Health and Safety guidelines.
17. The ability to learn from prior experience.

In completing the portfolio the following is the minimum for which you will need to provide evidence. The evidence provided should be, as far as possible, part of the day-to-day work of the Service or Organisation. You should carry out as many activities as deemed necessary by your Service or Organisation and Assessors and Verifiers to ensure that you can demonstrate the required skills competencies in your normal area of work.

Part 2 - Assessment Criteria

Task A Interpersonal skills / communication skills, face to face and over the telephone

The evidence for these outcomes may be drawn from any area of work, however suggested ways of doing this will be:

Communication with consumers, traders, businesses, experts, partners and other groups, such as consumer groups, schools etc. The provision of legal advice, complaint investigation, visiting business premises and the investigation of criminal infringements or civil breaches with a view to the submission of a report.

The minimum number of matters to be looked at across the whole of the portfolio is stated in part 3 required activities.

N.B. Observational evidence will be necessary for these skills to be properly evidenced.

The skills that this section will evidence are:

Interpersonal skills / communication skills - face to face and on the telephone:

Demonstrating the ability to communicate effectively with people with varied needs in a wide variety of contexts, putting people at ease, using appropriate verbal and body language, asking appropriate questions and providing appropriate responses to questions, structuring and guiding conversations, being appropriately assertive and being able to listen. Also, the ability to work individually and as part of a team, and to develop harmonious, productive working relationships.

You must be able to provide evidence of the following:

- A1. That the first contact you had with the person(s) spoken to was in accordance with Service or Organisation standards.
- A2. That you showed acceptable listening skills during each contact.
- A3. That you established all relevant details, for example:
 - Enquirer details;
 - Business details;
 - Relevant dates;
 - Method of payment;
 - The need for copies of relevant documentation;
 - Any other matters which are relevant.

- A4. That, where applicable, you were able to provide appropriate clear verbal advice on the role of your Service or Organisation and its limitations and, if necessary identify and explain alternative sources of advice or assistance?
- A5. When carrying out any visit to a trader's/business premises, you were able to explain the reason for the visit and clarify any issues identified.
- A6. That you were able to introduce yourself and your role professionally.
- A7. That you were able to provide appropriate verbal advice on any legal rights or obligations in relation to the subject matter of the enquiry.
- A8. That you gave clear and appropriate verbal justification for any recommended action.
- A9. That you identified and provided appropriate verbal advice in relation to any other matter which is relevant either to the enquirer or the Service or Organisation.
- A10. That you confirmed understanding of the matter in question with the person with whom you were dealing with.
- A11. That you offered to confirm advice provided, or matters discussed, in writing, or to supply appropriate supporting materials.
- A12. Where no further action was possible, or appropriate that you were able to explain the reasons for this, clearly and succinctly, to all interested parties.
- A13. Where applicable, that you were able to explain and comply with any information disclosure restrictions placed upon you in dealing with the matter.
- A14. Where you faced hostility or negativity, that you took appropriate action in dealing with the situation in a professional manner.
- A15. That you were able to explain clearly the effect of any powers used and the reasons for using them.
- A16. Where corrective action was necessary, that you were able to explain the context and meaning to all those likely to be affected, and correctly distinguish, and explain the difference between, legal requirements and best practice.
- A17. Where action was likely to be taken by the Trading Standards Service, that you were able to explain the nature and effect of this action on the person(s) against whom it may be taken and on any other relevant person(s).
- A18. That you have been able to reflect on your skills as a verbal communicator, and identify your strengths and areas for future development.

Task B Written communication skills

The evidence for these outcomes may be drawn from any area of work, however, the suggested way of doing this will be:

Letters or e-mails giving advice to businesses or consumers, preparation of PowerPoint or other presentations, drafting of advice leaflets, and the preparation of written reports.

The minimum number of matters to be looked at across of the whole of the portfolio is stated in part 3 required activities.

The skills that this section will evidence are:

Written Communication skills:

Demonstrating the ability to communicate in writing with a varied audience on technical and non-technical matters clearly, appropriately and through media suited to the needs of the reader.

You must be able to provide evidence of the following:

- B1. In any written communication, that you used appropriate layout, format, style, vocabulary and grammar.
- B2. That you used appropriate language capable of being understood by the intended recipient clarifying, if necessary, technical and/or legal terminology and what was best practice and what was a legal requirement.
- B3. Where written communication or advice was provided, that you considered the need to signpost to further sources of advice, and included details of these sources in the communication, if applicable.
- B4. That you communicated appropriately and effectively, through the issuing of the correct notice or other document as appropriate, arising out of a visit to the trader's/business premises.
- B5. That you have been able to reflect on your skills as a written communicator, and identify your strengths and areas for future development.

Task C Organisational Skills

The evidence for these outcomes may be drawn from any area of work, however the suggested way of doing this will be:

Arranging meetings, seminars, presentation, talks to groups, provision of legal advice, complaint investigation, visiting business premises or the investigations of criminal infringements / civil breaches with a view to the submission of a report and the carrying out of any initiative based project work.

The minimum number of matters to be looked at across the whole of the portfolio is stated in part 3 required activities.

The skills that this section will evidence are:

Organisational skills:

Demonstrating the ability to organise workloads and prioritise tasks, understanding how your role contributes towards the objectives of the service and/or organisation as a whole.

You must be able to provide evidence of the following:

- C1. That you showed the necessary organisational skills for the work you were undertaking.
- C2. That you were able to prioritise your workload appropriately throughout your operational and other work.
- C3. Where carrying out any form of work, that the appropriate planning and preparation had been carried out.
- C4. When carrying out any kind of inspectional work, that you identified the appropriate goods, services, processes or other matters on which to focus.
- C5. That you were able to determine the options for action arising out of any issues identified, and took the most appropriate course of action within Service or Organisation guidelines.
- C6. That all actions taken were within agreed and/or legal timescales.
- C7. With project based work that you could demonstrate:
 - Sound research;
 - Information / data gathering;
 - Analysis of research;
 - Contingency planning;
 - Identification of objectives;
 - Meeting objectives;
 - Appropriate conclusions and recommendations.
- C8. That you were able to work as a team when required, and develop effective working relationships with colleagues and partnership organisations as required.
- C9. That you have been able to reflect on your organisational skills, and identify your strengths, and areas for future development.

Task D Information Skills

The evidence for these outcomes may be drawn from any area of work, however the suggested way of doing this will be:

Provision of legal advice, complaint investigation, visiting businesses premises, or the investigations of criminal/ civil breaches with a view to the submission on a report, carrying out any project work, and the creation of leaflets and flyers.

The minimum number of matters to be looked at across the whole of the portfolio is stated in part 3 required activities.

The skills that this section will evidence are:

Information skills:

Demonstrating the ability to use common office tools including databases and other information sources at an appropriate level in order to research, gather, record, organise and report information in a context relevant to the task being undertaken.

You must be able to provide evidence of the following:

- D1. When recording details of any visit or contact, that the details you record are sufficient for the requirements of the Service or Organisation.
- D2. That you have used appropriate information sources and ICT tools in order to analyse, assess, record and deal with a particular issue.
- D3. That you used appropriate information sources to assess the scale/scope of any particular issue.
- D4. That you used a clearly stated justification and methodology for the work you were undertaking.
- D5. That the suggested work area was a valid one for the Trading Standards Service or Organisation to be taking an interest in.
- D6. That clearly stated and measurable objectives (e.g. SMART objectives) were identified for the outcome of any work you were undertaking.
- D7. When carrying out any form of statistical analysis on data, that you had an appreciation of the strengths, limitations and validity of available data when attempting to draw conclusions from it.
- D8. Where information gathering or project work was carried out, that you were able to make valid and appropriate recommendations for further action arising out of the results, including circulation of information to other organisations (where applicable).
- D9. That you were able to reflect on your information skills, and identify your strengths, and areas for future development.

Task E Cognitive skills

The evidence for these outcomes may be drawn from any area of work, however the use of evidence generated for other parts of the portfolio is usually the simplest way to do this.

The minimum number of matters to be looked at across the whole of the portfolio is stated in part 3 required activities.

The skills that this section will evidence are:

Cognitive skills:

Demonstrating the ability to find, interpret and apply legislation and its principles to real life situations and explain to the parties involved the meaning and context of any specific legal provision and the rights and obligations contained within it

You must be able to provide evidence of the following:

- E1. That you identified correctly the nature of the product or service, the appropriate legislation, and how it applied.
- E2. That you identified correctly, and applied, any codes of practice, guidance, risk analysis systems or best practice, as applicable, relevant to each product or service identified.
- E3. That you used appropriate protective equipment and clothing, as required.
- E4. That you identified, and took, all appropriate measures with regard to health and safety, hygiene and bio-security in order to reduce risk to yourself and others.
- E5. That you were able to identify correctly any relevant examinations or tests which apply to each product or service.
- E6. That you performed all relevant examinations and tests of the product or service identified, in order to determine compliance or otherwise with legal requirements, including the examination and interpretation of any technical file/product information package, if applicable.
- E7. That you determined and explained the options for further action arising out of the results of the examinations and tests carried out.
- E8. When advising consumers or businesses, that you identified correctly all relevant infringements and potential breaches for further consideration.
- E9. Where applicable, that you identified any other legal issues that are outside the remit of Trading Standards.
- E10. That you showed appropriate problem solving skills when assessing any particular situation.
- E11. That you were able to reflect on your cognitive skills, and identify your strengths, and areas for future development.

Task F Investigative skills

The evidence for this set of outcomes may be drawn from any type of work, however the suggested way of doing this will be to:

Investigate a variety of matters and formally report with a view to consideration of legal proceedings (whether civil or criminal) within any area of regulatory work.

The minimum number of matters to be looked at across the whole of the portfolio is stated in part 3 required activities.

The skills that this section will evidence are:

Investigative skills:

Demonstrating the ability to investigate matters and identify necessary information, and then, through questioning, document examination and other relevant methods, collect and collate evidence, in order to present formal reports.

You must be able to provide evidence of the following:

- F1. That you clearly and correctly identified at an early stage the potential infringement/breach which was the subject of the investigation.
- F2. That you complied with your service or organisational standards.
- F3. That you considered properly all relevant and alternative offences or breaches.
- F4. How you identified the evidence required to prove the offence(s) or breach(es).
- F5. That you demonstrated a clear rationale for your recommended course of action.
- F6. That you carried out any sampling or test purchasing in accordance with statutory requirements, mandatory / voluntary codes of practice, accepted good practice and service or organisational protocols / guidance as applicable.
- F7. That you obtained witness statements from all relevant parties in the appropriate format, and that these were clear and demonstrated the chain of evidence.
- F8. That you used your powers appropriately.
- F9. That any samples, or seized or detained goods, were treated and stored appropriately.
- F10. Where applicable, that you were able to secure any digital evidence stored on electronic media in accordance with any relevant guidance.
- F11. When interviewing any person, that you followed all required guidelines and statutory procedures.

- F12. That you correctly identified the legal status of the person or business that was the subject of the investigation.
- F13. That you used appropriate questioning skills during any interview, sufficient to provide confidence that the correct person was being interviewed and to confirm the facts under investigation.
- F14. That you asked the questions necessary to establish whether the interviewee / business was able to make out any potential defences.
- F15. That you explored all avenues of enquiry that pointed both toward and away from the possible breach or offence.
- F16. Where applicable, that you considered whether to obtain a victim personal statement, and if one was obtained, that you did so in accordance with relevant procedures / guidelines. (Not applicable to Scottish candidates).
- F17. Where applicable, that you sourced appropriate expert witnesses, commissioned appropriate testing, and obtained the required evidence from the expert(s).
- F18. Where applicable, that you were able to organise and carry out a suspension or recall of unsafe product.
- F19. Where applicable, that you used the correct procedure to obtain and execute an entry warrant.
- F20. Where applicable, that you followed the correct procedure for the application for, and use of, Directed Surveillance , Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) or communications data under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, the Human Rights Act or the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act and within Service or Organisational policy.
- F21. Where applicable, that you were able to draft an undertaking, particulars of claim, schedule of complaints and/or enforcement order under the Enterprise Act.
- F22. Where applicable, that you were able to draft an Information, (in Scotland a specimen charge or equivalent), in accordance with Criminal Procedure Rules.
- F23. That you included all the required information in the final report, in particular that you included all the essential elements of the alleged offence or breach and identified the relevant time limits.

You will need to have considered the following:

- Preservation and demonstration of the chain of evidence;
- Provision of sufficient evidence to allow the Service or Organisation to make the appropriate decisions;
- That the distinction was made between used and unused materials;
- That the report was compiled in accordance with the Service or Organisation policies and guidance;
- Adequate exploration and explanation of statutory defences;
- That relevant case law had been considered;
- That the report was compiled and submitted in a timely manner.

- F24. That you were able to reflect on your skills as an investigator, and identify your strengths and areas for future development.

Part 3 - Required activities

In completing the portfolio the following is the minimum for which you will need to provide evidence. The evidence provided should be, as far as possible, part of the day-to-day work of the Service or Organisation, and should relate to real-life complaints, trade queries, inspections and projects or proactive work. You should carry out as many activities as deemed necessary by your Service or Organisation and Assessors and Verifiers to ensure that you can demonstrate the required skills competencies in your normal area of work.

N.B You should carry out the tasks across as wide a spectrum of the work of your service/organisation as possible to ensure you demonstrate competency in all aspects of the work you are expected to undertake. In particular, if you are going to undertake enforcement in a food or agriculture related role it is advised that you carry out sufficient formal sampling and inspections to satisfy your Authority, Assessors and Verifiers that you are competent in this area.

- At least **five** requests for business advice.
- At least **five** consumer complaints.
- A minimum of **two** e-mails, **two** letters, **two** telephone conversations and **two** face-to-face interactions. At least **two** pieces of communication must include advice to business about best practice, and/or relevant defences under the legislation in question.
- At least **five** on-site visits to high or medium risk premises dealing in goods or services governed by Trading Standards legislation. These premises must be a mixture of retail and non-retail establishments.
- The full details of the visit/inspection should be recorded and included in the final portfolio.
- A minimum of **two** full investigations, one of which must include the evidence of an expert or test house, and one of which must have been initiated by formal sampling/test purchasing, or seizure, of a relevant product. Of these investigations you should aim to make one a criminal investigation and one a civil investigation if this is possible. The investigations do not have to result in court action.
- **Two** initiative-based projects, full details of which, from initiation through to conclusion, must be recorded and submitted in the portfolio.
- Examination of, and reporting on, at least **15 products** and services (a minimum of five products and five services must be selected, with the remaining five from either category). At least half of these products or services must have subject-specific legislation, with the remainder controlled by generic legislation. Where applicable this should include formal sampling of the products in question.

Organising portfolios:

The expression 'where applicable' is used in some criteria and the expectation is that the candidate will be required to provide work-based evidence to meet this criteria only if their work permits this. However if the work carried out does not permit this criteria to be met, then the assessor and candidate must determine an alternative method of generating evidence of competence, for example through written or oral questioning.

Any piece of work evidence may be used more than once for different assessment criteria if it provides acceptable evidence for them (and may also be used in specialist portfolios if it meets the specific criteria contained within).

At the end of each Task the assessment criteria asks for evidence of reflection by you on your performance. You should critically examine your own experience and performance in the professional context, judge what went well and what did not go well, and then identify how this can be used to improve your professional performance in the future. This process may be facilitated through discussion with your Assessor and/or mentor, or by your own personal reflection, and then making a written record of this process and including it in the portfolio.