2025

Fire Risk Assessment National Practice Guide

**Fire Risk Assessor
Sector Lead Group
December 2025
Part 1 Guidance**

Fire Risk Assessment – National Practice Guide

Contents

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1. Background and Purpose

This Guide reflects learning and improvement developed after the Grenfell Tower fire (2017) and the Hackitt Report (2018). The original framework[1] was created by the Fire Sector Federation to improve competence standards in fire risk assessment and this was based upon experience and earlier work by the Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council (FRACC).

The purpose of this guidance is to aid development of robust, transparent and consistent professional practice for fire risk assessors engaged in the assessment of life safety risk from fire in all workplace premises, including residential and higher-risk buildings.

2. Scope

The intended purpose of this Practice Guide is, using industry good practice, to support a consistent and competent approach to undertaking the task of fire risk assessment in the UK with guidance on the important aspects that lead to the achievement of professional practice.

The guidance recognises that a well-established workforce of fire risk assessors already exists and addresses areas to help improve competence, support professional career development and identify issues, and to assist the proficient experienced assessor demonstrate their personal competence.

3. Historical Foundation of modern fire safety legislation

Early legislative control over fire precautions in common places of work comprised the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 and the Factories

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[1] Approved Code of Practice - A National Framework for Fire Risk Assessor Competency 2020

Act 1961, the latter of which consolidated various legislation on health, safety and welfare of workers in factories. The legislation applied throughout the UK and, other than in respect of small premises, required certification of fire precautions, particularly means of escape from fire, by the appropriate authority, normally the fire authority.

However, various other occupancy-specific legislation controlled fire safety in certain premises, such as cinemas and theatres.

All of the above legislation preceded national building regulations, which were first introduced, in England and Wales, in 1965 and came into operation in 1966; in Scotland, the first national building regulations were introduced in 1963 and came into force in 1964. Prior to this, design of new buildings fell within the scope of local authority bye-laws.

In 1970, the Holroyd report acknowledged that the role of fire services should comprise two branches, namely "fire prevention" and "firefighting". Holroyd considered that only the fire service had expertise on the subject of fire and, hence, were the appropriate body to determine relevant fire precautions in buildings.

The first attempt to consolidate the legislation that controlled fire safety in existing buildings comprised the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The principle of the Act was that, gradually, by means of designation orders, more and more premises would be brought within the scope of the Act. The first designation order came into force in 1972 and applied to hotels and boarding houses, largely as a result of a multiple fatality fire at a hotel in Saffron Walden in 1969.

A subsequent designation order brought offices, shops, railway premises and factories within the scope of the Act in 1977, so repealing the fire safety requirements in the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act and the Factories Act. However, there were no further designation orders, so many types of premises fell outwith the scope of the Fire Precautions Act. In some cases, such

premises were still subject to occupancy-specific legislation or (as in the case of blocks of flats) were not subject to specific fire safety legislation after construction in accordance with building regulations.

Other than in the case of small premises, in which it was the duty of the occupier to determine the appropriate fire precautions for themselves, the Fire Precautions Act continued a system of certification of premises within the scope of the Act by the fire authority. The duty of the occupier was to apply for a fire certificate, after which they simply waited until the fire authority determined whether fire precautions were adequate, or what measures were necessary to make them so. In effect, the fire authority were acting as consultants and specifying a form of retrospective fire strategy for existing premises.

In 1993, a Home Office study concluded that the Fire Precautions Act 1971 had been very effective in reducing fire deaths, but that it was out of keeping with modern health and safety legislation, in that employers were entitled to rely on the fire service to determine the appropriate fire precautions in their premises; this was very much in contrast with health and safety legislation, whereby employers needed to determine appropriate safety measures for themselves.

In 1994, the Interdepartmental Scrutiny of Fire Safety Legislation and Enforcement in England and Wales concluded that fire safety legislation was conflicting, confusing and imposed unnecessary burdens on business. The scrutiny recommended rationalisation and simplification of the legislative regime.

In 1997, the UK introduced a further legislative regime, which made matters even more complex, in response to European directives on health and safety in workplaces. These directives required every employer to carry out a risk assessment to determine the appropriate safety measures (including fire precautions) for their workplaces.

In England and Wales, the rationalisation and simplification recommended by the 1994 Interdepartmental Scrutiny was not practicable until the enactment of the Regulatory Reform Act 2001. This Act provided a streamlined route to reform of any legislative regime that had become complex to the extent that it imposed burdens on business.

By issue of a Regulatory Reform Order, all existing legislation could be repealed, revoked or amended by means of this single order, enabling a simpler regime to be brought into place. It is for this reason that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 should not be described as "the Regulatory Reform Order" or the "RRO"; there are many regulatory reform orders, and that applying to fire safety should be abbreviated to "the Fire Safety Order" or "FSO".

In England and Wales, as of October 2006, the Fire Safety Order repealed or revoked all fire safety legislation (with the exception of the Fire Precautions (Sub-surface Railway Stations) Regulations), or amended other legislation (such as that specific to certain occupancies) so that fire safety requirements were removed from the legislation.

In Scotland, by an alternative legislative route, the same occurred in October 2006, by virtue of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 in conjunction with the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006. Subsequently, a very similar reform occurred in Northern Ireland by virtue of the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 in conjunction with the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

These legislative reforms resulted in a single consolidated legislative regime, under which fire safety is now controlled in virtually all non-domestic premises, with the duty to determine appropriate fire precautions, imposed in workplaces, on the employer (and, in non-workplaces, on the person having control of the premises). This duty holder is required to determine the

appropriate fire precautions by means of a fire risk assessment; the fire and rescue authorities no longer act as consultants for this purpose, but, for most types of premises (with specific exceptions), are the enforcing authority for the legislation.

4. Culture

A significant finding from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry was the impact of culture upon fire safety. Responding to the Inquiry Phase 2 Report recommendations the Government[2] stated: *"Poor culture, a lack of integrity and malpractice jeopardise public safety".*

Acknowledging that creating the conditions, for a positive and inclusive culture, required a profound change in culture and behaviour by all those engaged across the built environment, the Government committed to stewarding the highest standard of culture and behaviour.

Fire risk assessors and their clients are now, as explained later in this Guide, expected to ensure the principles, which are the foundations, of a positive culture exist. Whilst a client does not have a duty to be competent in achieving a positive culture their influence is profound. Consequently, the competent fire risk assessor, will often be relied upon to guide the client in creating that positive culture.

Defining a positive culture is not easy. Likewise expectations, between the client and fire risk assessor, may vary markedly. Many clients will assume that, as a professional, the fire risk assessor will be knowledgeable in undertaking all the necessary steps to comply with all legal and specialist requirements.

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[2] Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report: Government response Presented to Parliament by the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State MHCLG 26 February 2025

This requires the fire risk assessor to explain clearly that the client has key roles to:

1. Accept legal responsibility and moral leadership to prioritise life safety in their premises;
2. Create a supportive climate by acting with integrity and honesty;
3. Avoid expediency that inhibits or restricts a safe and comprehensive fire risk assessment;
4. Recognise decision making that requires the balancing of risk reduction and cost must not compromise safety;
5. Ensure all those contracted to undertake fire safety work are competent;
6. Communicate with those permanently working or resident in the premises to ensure their awareness of the fire risk assessment;
7. Provide oversight, control and assurance of other activities, facilities and users of the premises;
8. Comply with safety and health legal duties and ensure safe systems of work are provided for the fire risk assessor

5. Role

British Standard 4422:2024 Fire – Vocabulary defines a fire risk assessor as a "person who carries out, and documents the findings of, a fire risk assessment", and a fire risk assessment as a "process of identification and evaluation of fire risk to people, property and/or the environment".

In the 20 year period following introduction of specific fire legislation regarding the requirement for fire risk assessment, the role of the assessor has been developed and scrutinised extensively and remains under current national review.

It is important to note that the assessor's role is limited and must be clearly bounded. In general terms, the assessment, while thorough, is non-destructive and conducted without any specialised equipment.

Consequently, other than, using a ladder when required to gain access to spaces and voids above doors and ceilings, or modest technology, such as a camera, to gain a limited view into a cavity, the fire risk assessment is a visual inspection of readily accessible areas.

Additionally the assessment is not part of a commissioning or maintenance test of any installed fire protection systems. As an example, emergency lighting, fire detection and alarm systems may (though not as standard practice) be operated to assess the effectiveness of illumination or audibility rather than any assurance of compliance to system standards. Satisfying those requirements, together with a detailed cause and effect' analysis, will be determined by other competent persons, such as manufacturers, installers and maintainers, whose certification of compliance will be acknowledged by the fire risk assessor.

It is important to note that it is not the role of the fire risk assessor to carry out a full review of documentation and services provided by other competent persons. The responsibility for ensuring the appropriateness or otherwise of installed fire safety systems must lie with those manufacturers, suppliers, installers and other dutyholders.

In practice, the assessment is therefore a review and inspection of the hazards and general fire safety precautions that exist, can be seen, have certification or other records indicating compliance to appropriate standards and can be measured and balanced against the fire risk present or proposed.

The role does not include the 'signing off' of the entity of a building or premises construction, structure, management or maintenance, as being safe from fire.

6. Fire Risk Assessor Practice

Professional practice requires both adherence to standards of good practice and the demonstrated ability to competently apply those standards in use. Fire risk assessment is a process of identification of hazards and the evaluation of life safety fire risk to people where fire risk is the combination of the likelihood of an occurrence of fire and the consequence(s) likely to be caused by fire[3].

The professional quality of the fire risk assessment depends on the fire risk assessor being able to operate in a manner that conforms to accepted standards in following a methodology and accepted conventional approaches, or, as may be required in certain premises or when required to meet specific hazards or circumstances, can be shown to reach justified conclusions and determinations based upon known good practice.

The following guidance is generally accepted as offering a basis of professional practice.

Methodology

PAS 79-1:2020 Fire risk assessment. Premises other than housing. Code of practice

This Publicly Available Specification, which although not a formal British Standard, offers a fire risk assessment methodology that follows the principles of fire safety. Intended for non-domestic premises, use of this approach will enable general fire precautions to be determined that are risk proportionate. The PAS 79-1 structured approach is therefore regarded as a basis for the "industry standard" good practice.

BS 9792:2025 Fire risk assessment. Housing. Code of practice

This British Standard details the process for undertaking and recording fire risk assessments in housing premises like houses in multiple occupation, flats and

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[3] BS 4422:2024 Fire - Vocabulary

maisonettes, specialized housing and student accommodation as well as premises in mixed use buildings. The assessment methodology excludes the construction phase and specialist external wall appraisal. In practice, great care has to be taken to ensure appropriate application to occupancy requirements.

Fire Safety buildings – Code of practice Design

BS 9999:2017 Fire safety in the design, management and use of

This document outlines an approach to fire safety design focused on the physical and human factors. It includes guidance on risk profiling, fire protection, managing fire risk, means of escape, access for firefighting, fire resisting structure, special risks and fire safety management including fire prevention and evacuation.

BS 9991:2024 Fire safety in the design, management and use of residential buildings. Code of practice

This standard complements BS 9999:2017 concentrating on dwellings and housing excluded from that Standard. The guidance utilises fire engineering principles to explore the interdependencies that need to be considered as part of fire risk assessment, e.g. the hazard in one part of a building affecting another part, and the possibilities of control mechanisms, e.g. structural or active fire protection that might be used.

External Walls

PAS 9980:2022 Fire risk appraisal of external wall construction and cladding of existing blocks of flats. Code of practice

This Code of Practice specifically considers the risk of fire spread via external wall construction and proposes a scalable methodology for assessment. The fire risk appraisal of external wall (FRAEW) has a correlation to the Building Regulations but this guidance places particular emphasis on the variability of external wall construction and the competence required for those undertaking appraisals. Although not intended to be applied as part of the practice of fire

risk assessors, critically awareness together with inclusion and consideration of any FRAEW outcomes, is essential good practice.

Fire Doors

BS 8214:2016 Timber-based fire door assemblies. Code of practice; BS EN 1634-1:2014+A1:2018 BS EN 1634–3 Fire resistance and smoke control tests for door and shutter assemblies; BS 476-22:1987 – Fire tests on building materials and structures

Fire doors are one of the most important components of passive fire protection for preventing the spread of fire and its products. Their role is often most critical in life safety and crucial to safeguarding structural integrity. Poor performance under the dynamic conditions of fire, due to poor specification and procurement actions linked to poor installation and maintenance, must be identified and eradicated. The fire risk assessor must therefore understand and recognise the variety of doors, components, materials and configurations used, to be able to assess likely performance.

Understanding should include an awareness of British and European test standards and benchmarking so as to enable judgements to be made about use in a particular context, as this relates to the specification and performance when in use. Other guidance will specify hardware, like hinges and latches, which ideally should be CE-marked and correctly installed, and maintenance to ensure gaps and seals maintain integrity, such as the maximum gap of 4mm between the door and frame, or, correct installation of intumescent seals and smoke seals to prevent cold smoke penetration.

Fire risk assessments should also acknowledge the need to have recorded regular door checks that are in accordance with any applicable legal requirements for specified buildings, or, more generally, to meet recommended British Standards.

Service Framework

Scope of Work

Providing a service that introduces the above methodologies and conventions outlined above into any contractual arrangement will require a formal statement of work and a fire risk assessor is expected to scope this work in an explicit document often called a 'scope of work[4]'.

Individuals, like responsible persons and accountable persons often termed 'duty holders', are sometimes unaware or unclear of their personal fire safety responsibilities and the current legal framework can add to this lack of clarity. It is therefore important that in the contracting process of engaging a fire risk assessor the scope of any work is detailed. This is essential to avoid common contractual misunderstandings and inadvertently contravening fire safety legislation.

For example, the legislative goal is the protection of life from fire, it is not about property protection and business continuity although these factors may benefit to some extent. A fire risk assessment is intended in part to identify important weaknesses and shortcomings in the general fire precautions of a premises or building or person(s) at risk.

A fire risk assessment is not an assurance certificate of building fire safety. It must, however, for each shortcoming or person(s) at risk, offer an action, again with the intent that this will mitigate the hazard or risk of fire identified to remove or reduce that risk from fire to a tolerable level.

The consequence of the above is that, prior to any fire risk assessment, the assessor and client, who is the ultimate duty holder, must ensure there is an accepted and bounded scope of work. Common misconceptions are, for example, that all voids and spaces will be inspected (including walls, cavities or

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[4] Professional bodies and trade associations like the Fire Industry Association often provide extensive guidance and documentation.

external walls), and that all active fire protection measures will be tested for full 'cause and effect'. These misconceptions need to be dispelled since fire risk assessment generally involves only non-intrusive visual inspections. Clients should be made aware of any conditions that will prevent accessibility or restrict the visual inspection.

This creates a shared responsibility and understanding, a particularly important feature in residential settings, as well as helping the client recognise their responsibility to act on any findings, maintain the fire precautions and ensure the continuation of a valid fire risk assessment if and when circumstances change in the relevant person(s) present or premises.

Ideally before the assessment commences, a client should be requested to provide information regarding the structural and fire protection arrangements (e.g. specification, installation and maintenance records) together with details of occupancy and use so the assessor can determine and prepare for the assessment. The assessor, as mentioned, will need 'access to all areas' that are in scope so that, what is essentially a visual inspection, can be undertaken. (If a FRAEW has been undertaken this will also be required)

The assessor will undertake the assessment, recording all relevant information before preparing the fire risk assessment report. The report should include the findings and any necessary actions, showing the priority of each action and a timeline, to enable the client to institute a programme of works. Thereafter it is the client's responsibility to manage the works, brief any relevant authorities or occupants, and ultimately maintain the agreed fire safety precautions.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

Professional indemnity insurance (PII) covers the cost of compensating clients for loss or damage resulting from negligent services or advice provided by a business or an individual. Most Fire Risk Assessors or their employer rely on the scope and limit of cover provided by their PII policy to pay civil liability claims brought by clients and other stakeholders. Many PII policies only cover

claims for contractual liabilities to the extent that those liabilities would exist in the absence of the contract.

Fire Risk Assessors should have a PII policy appropriate to their normal contract terms. Professional Bodies and Employers should be alert, assess and acknowledge that the level of PII cover available is appropriate to the likely liabilities and obligations for the contracts intended to be undertaken and the cost of legal representation.

Care should be taken by Fire Risk Assessors to avoid insurance risk transfer through the supply chain. Disproportionate or onerous transfer of risks for any work undertaken as a sub-contracting party may not fall within the scope of their PII cover and such a claim for loss or damage will not be paid by the PII insurers. This is not in the best interest of the client or Fire Risk Assessor.

7. Competence

Frameworks and Core Competence Criteria

In the aftermath of the tragic Grenfell Tower fire, improving competency became a major area of activity for many organisations. Although legislation and the implementation of recommendations resulting from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry will ultimately determine some aspects of fire risk assessment practice, recommendations to improve competent practice have already been made. National lead organisations in setting out this good practice are the British Standards Institution (BSI) and the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). BSI has an organised work process publishing standards and the BSR is developing process and publishing materials to support improved competence.

Core Standards

BS 8670-1:2024 Competence frameworks for building safety Part 1 Core criteria – Code of Practice

This Code of Practice establishes core criteria for building safety competence with recommendations that may be used for developing technical roles in sector-specific competence frameworks for individuals. The overall aims support compliance with the Building Safety Act and the Golden Thread[5] concept. The framework references principles around safety, risk management, communications and ethics whilst also highlighting structural and fire safety issues.

BS 8674:2025 Built environment – Framework for competence of individual fire risk assessors – Code of practice.

Following development of BS 8670, the core competence criteria for Individuals undertaking fire risk assessments, was developed and is detailed in this BSI publication. BS 8674 provides clear recommendations for anyone undertaking a fire risk assessment that will enable them to understand and recognise defined levels of competence. The basis for these recommendations is the fundamental principle of a duty of care not to exceed personal competence when undertaking fire risk assessments.

Performance criteria, to assure conformity to recognized and demonstrable standards of competence, is detailed at three levels of competence. These are: Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced, supporting individuals to undertake fire risk assessments across a wide range of buildings.

The criteria, which should satisfied by the fire risk assessor, includes the required skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours (SKEB) as minimum

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[5] Golden Thread is a comprehensive digital record of information about a building, including its design, construction, and ongoing management, that ensures accountability and safety throughout its lifecycle

criteria for each of the three levels, each progressively building upon the previous level. This creates a tiered professional career pathway. Entrants, following initial supervised learning and development, achieve the competence associated with Foundation level. After gaining further experience and demonstrating competence a fire risk assessor may progress to the Intermediate level and can continue to the Advanced level.

The standard defines the competence required to undertake a systematic process for fire risk assessment, taking into account a building's construction, use and occupation, with the primary aim of securing life safety in the event of fire. The process of undertaking fire risk assessments is covered in other standards (e.g. PAS 79-1 and BS 9792).

Governance and Oversight

Industry Competence Committee (ICC)

Following introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 the ICC was established as one of three statutory committees the BSR was required to set up and maintain. The ICC functions include monitoring industry competence, advising the BSR and the built environment industry in relation to industry competence and facilitating improvement in industry competence.

The ICC subsequently established a working group, the Industry Competence Steering Group (ICSG), to assist engagement between the ICC, BSR and representatives of the built environment industries via Sector Led Groups i.e. group representing those working in a particular area like fire risk assessment.

The ICC has produced guidance to assist industry in the development of competence management processes that support individuals and organisations in understanding and delivering competence. 'Setting Expectations' outlines the key principles and core components that the ICC considers necessary to ensure competence across the built environment.

The guidance, intended for those who carry out any design or any building work in all buildings, or manage buildings, and particularly those that are Higher Risk Buildings (HRBs) sets out what organisations should do to meet the competence management aspects of requirements in Part 2A of the Building Regulations 2010 and The Higher-Risk Buildings (Management of Safety Risks etc.) (England) Regulations 2023.

8. Demonstrating Competence

It is a key requirement that, when the competence criteria are used to offer awards that recognise the achievement that satisfy qualification and certification standards, the level of those standards are also aligned and attributable to recognised UK competence frameworks so as ensure the award levels reflect a recognised level of competence.

In relation to a Fire Risk Assessor practising in the UK, three qualification and certification systems are recognised as appropriate, they are:

Regulated Qualifications

Regulated qualifications in the UK require that approved courses meet strict quality and content standards set by an independent regulatory body to demonstrate individual skills and knowledge within national systems that are widely recognised by employers and educational institutions. In the UK, regulated qualifications are overseen by national regulators in three respective national frameworks[6], each of which supports comparison by assigning levels and credits to qualifications. The UK frameworks are broadly comparable and can also be broadly cross referenced internationally.

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[6] England and Northern Ireland use the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) regulated by Ofqual; Scotland use the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) regulated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); Wales uses the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) regulated by Qualifications Wales.

Regulated Qualifications are designed, developed and delivered by Awarding Organisations who offer qualifications to meet specific needs. Awarding Organisations and their authorised Training Providers then offer courses leading to the qualifications, all of which must satisfy the national standards. The level and title of a regulated qualification is designed to offer an indication of the level of education and length to avoid misrepresentation.

Awarding Organisations must, through the Regulator's approved oversight requirements, maintain the integrity and quality of their qualifications. The public register[7] may be searched for fire risk assessment qualifications where details summarizing a qualification's content and the Awarding Organisation can be found.

Accredited Certification

The UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) is the national accreditation body that assesses conformity against national and international standards and provides accreditation services such as certification, testing, inspection, calibration and verification. Accreditation determines the technical competence, reliability and integrity of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CAB) and conformity to the standards published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Three ISO standards are particularly relevant to fire risk assessment:

- ISO/IEC 17067 describes the fundamentals of product certification and provides guidelines for understanding, developing, operating or maintaining certification schemes for products, processes and services.
- ISO/IEC 17024 is an international standard for conformity assessment that provides general requirements for organizations that certify people, or personnel certification bodies.

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[7] https://www.gov.uk/find-a-regulated-qualification

- ISO/IEC 17065 is an international standard that sets out the requirements for bodies that certify products, processes, and services.

When combined and applied, these three standards offer a robust conformity assessment model that when applied by UKAS enables evaluation, endorsement and approval of organizations to operate validated schemes, for example, the BAFE SP205 Life Safety Fire Risk Assessment Scheme[8].

Professional Engineering Institutions

The UK Engineering Council (EngC) regulates the engineering profession, sets internationally recognised standards, maintains a national register and licenses around 50 professional engineering institutions (PEI), including the Institution of Fire Engineers[9]. The Council's Standard for Professional Engineering Competence and Commitment, known as (UK-SPEC), enables professional registration by a licensed PEI in one of three legal titles:

- Chartered Engineer (CEng) accredited integrated Level 7 Master degree or a combination of accredited Bachelor and Master Degree in engineering or technology or equivalents.
- Incorporated Engineer (IEng) accredited Level 5 Bachelor degree in engineering or technology
- Engineering Technician (EngTech) Level 3 qualification work related or approved apprenticeship scheme.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is undertaken at work and involves delivery and assessment of skills within a defined programme, which enables learning whilst gaining skills and knowledge for a specific role.

An apprentice must spend at least 20% of their work time in off-the-job training, sometimes in day or block release linked with other training days or

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[8] https://www.bafe.org.uk/bafe-fire-safety-services/fire-risk-assessment
[9] https://www.ife.org.uk

workshops. The training has to be delivered to meet an approved relevant framework or standard, with mentoring and practical training, which can on completion of the apprenticeship, be confidently demonstrated in a final assessment.

Apprenticeships form a vital start point on a defined career pathway for those individuals aged over 16 and not in full time education. They are intended for individuals wishing to enter the profession and aspire to becoming competent fire risk assessors at Intermediate and Advanced level.

The apprenticeship scheme designed for fire risk assessors is intended for those who are 18+ and will provide and offers an entry point to work and a career pathway for an aspiring fire risk assessor.

The entry level fire risk assessor apprenticeship schemes may also provide a fast-track facility for those individuals who show a greater capacity for learning acquiring skills and knowledge than through the usual apprenticeship route provided there is additional support and encouragement provided by the individual's employer.

Entry into any fire risk assessor apprentice scheme must be in accord, having been cross mapped, to BS 8674, to meet the specified entry requirements of Foundation Level.

Thereafter, apprentices are expected to progress, initially achieving a Level 3 Regulated Qualification (Foundation Level (BS 8674)) before progressing towards completion of their apprenticeship with an achievement of a Level 4 Regulated Qualification (Intermediate Level (BS 8674)). This qualification enables the fire risk assessor to carry out fire risk assessments on buildings within the low and medium level of risk.

Competence Awards Comparability

Defining learning outcomes, i.e. knowledge, skills and autonomy-responsibility, expresses what individuals know, understand and are able to do at the end of a learning process. The competence criteria described in BS 8674:2025

describes three levels of competence: Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced.

The three levels are expected to support individuals who undertake fire risk assessments across a wide range of occupied buildings, whilst also offering the basis of a common comparability factor between the UK's three qualification and certification systems.

The wide diversity of delivering training and qualifications by different organisations also requires that, within fire risk assessment practice, there is a consistency of reciprocity, applied throughout the UK between the recognised award systems. This enables awards from different training providers to be directly related to the appropriate competence level.

Using BS 8674 recommended competence levels, RQF qualification levels alongside the UK academic, vocational and work route approaches, the following table illustrates the comparable attainment equivalencies required to demonstrate fire risk assessor competence levels by qualifications:

Table1 Levels of Comparability BS 8674 and RFQ

BS 8674 Level	Minimum RQF Level	Educational Examples
Foundation	3	A level, Advanced Apprenticeship, AS level, Level 3 award, certificate, diploma, national certificate, national diploma, Level 3 NVQ, T or Tech.
Intermediate	4	Higher National Certificate, Higher Apprenticeship, Certificate of Higher Education, Level 4 award, certificate, diploma or Level 4 NVQ.
Advanced	5	Foundation Degree, Higher National Diploma, Diploma in Higher Education, Level 5 award, certificate, diploma or Level 5 NVQ.
Note: Specialised risks, for example, those in high hazard industries, acute care hospitals, or requiring major fire engineered solutions, and buildings of using non-conventional construction materials, systems or elements, including external walls, are not covered by BS 8674 and would require Advanced endorsements		

9. Professional Standards

Third Party Certification and Professional Body Membership

Accredited Third-Party Certification (ATPC) is essential to ensuring that there is independent oversight of competence. Membership of a professional body that has a public register of individual fire risk assessors and their certification or qualification levels can afford satisfaction that standards are being maintained.

Certification, via the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) can be of the individual assessor or a company. Individual fire risk assessors may also have a certificate to record the qualification awarded, via the UK Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Awarding Organisations or Professional Bodies should register the individual fire risk assessor's award. This certification can assist in assuring the public when selecting a fire risk assessor of the appropriate quality and competence and offer recourse, if performance falls below expected levels.

More generally certification and regulation authorities, professional bodies and fire risk assessment companies must:

- • Monitor and support assessor competence.
- • Ensure accessible complaint and enquiry procedures.
- • Maintain qualified, independent assessment reviewers.

Role of Professional Bodies and Employers

Professional Bodies and Employers are an essential part of this process of maintaining and improving competence. Their role is to monitor and support the individual fire risk assessor, ensure that they are correctly registered with any certification or qualification and are subject to open and on-going assessment as to their competence. The register used, which may be with another organisation, should be maintained up to date and accessible to the public.

Professional Bodies must have an enquiry and complaints procedure to enable those seeking to enquire, comment or make complaints, either about the professional body's processes, or an individual's performance or conduct.

Professional Bodies assessment processes, including the credentials of its assessment reviewers, who must be certified and qualified in accordance with this Practice Guide, must be available for scrutiny to provide assurance to the public. The credentials should show the reviewers':

• Appropriate professional qualifications
• Appropriate areas of assessment expertise or specialism
• Competence relating to their ability to assess others
• Demonstrate suitable experience and currency in fire risk assessment
• Demonstrate the maintenance of continuous professional development.

Assessing and Regulating Competence

The importance of being able to demonstrate competency in practice, ideally in practical circumstances to show application of knowledge, skills, and ethical judgement, requires continuous evaluation. Professional bodies play an important role in this process, particularly for independent self-employed fire risk assessors and employers who manage groups of assessors. Various assessment methods may be used including:

• Workplace observation, oral questioning, and case studies;
• Review of completed assessments and reports;
• Written examinations and accredited qualifications;
• Portfolio review and peer assessment;
• Behavioural skills assessment via interviews or group settings.

In all cases, the assessment process must be reliable, authentic, and externally quality assured. Regulated oversight is a fundamental part of achieving this

assurance, as both the UKAS and RQF have conformity requirements that must be satisfied before awards may be made under either system.

However, both regulatory oversight arrangements do not specifically detail technical requirements relating to the fire risk assessment component. This arises because the primary purpose of the comprehensive requirements, made by both organisations, is to ensure there can be equitable application of robust standards designed to secure the highest integrity for the whole award process, whilst being capable of encompassing an extensive diversity of different work and educational sectors.

Consequentially, to ensure consistency of application across the UK for all fire risk assessor awards, a series of technical requirements, additional to those required by the qualification and certification authorities, must be applied to maintain the integrity of this sector specific competence.

The requirements, referred to as the "Minimum Scheme Requirements" for UKAS schemes and the "Requirements of Fire Risk Assessor Regulated Qualifications" for RQF organisations, are shown at Annexes 2 and 3.

Remaining and Improving Competence

The requirement to retain and improve competence is crucial in any profession and fire risk assessment is no exception, especially given the ongoing evolution of building designs, materials and construction methods. Fire risk assessors must ensure that they fully engage in a practical process of continuous professional development.

This requires recording progress and seeking opportunities offering new learning and experience. Professional and trade organisations can greatly assist in this process, and some may mandate that fire risk assessors provide a formal record to ensure continued competence in their role and offer appropriate opportunities for maintenance of competency.

Auditable recorded training, competence and development are essential. The systems used may be simple (diaries) or sophisticated (digital HR systems), and whenever possible regular. Periodic reassessment is also required, as stated in the minimum requirements for regulated certification and qualification schemes, to ensure the overall integrity and maintain a currency of individual competence.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as mentioned may also be a mandatory requirement. An example, is that the individual must undertake a minimum of 25 hours of CPD each year of which formal study, attending courses, seminars, undertaking examinations, must be at least 50% of the total time. The remaining informal learning (credited on a 2:1 ratio) could be workplace learning, mentoring, peer review, reading technical materials or participating in meetings and other engagements or professional interactions.

Conformity to Competence Standards

Invariably, given the diversity of entry and career development opportunities available, the fire risk assessor workforce will be at various stages of demonstrating competence. Changes, made in the recent past with more likely in the future, regarding the demonstration of individual competence requires adherence to accepted standards. Industry has identified routes to support access to achieving ATPC conformity. Annex 3 illustrates the process of coordinating personal development and current award systems.

10. Technical Reporting

One area of considerable discussion and sometimes complaint is the actual fire risk assessment report.

The report's purpose has to be 'client centred' since usually the client is the duty holder responsible for legal compliance. Templates, which are not tick box forms, may assist provided ultimately they lead to production of a concise and

clear report of the premises fire risk assessment findings, both good and bad, written in a manner that will be understandable by the client.

Comprehensive detail is necessary that offers evidence to support the fire risk assessor's judgement. The report should always avoid confusing professional jargon, including unnecessary and unexplained abbreviations. Care should be taken to ensure any software type solutions avoid overblown, irrelevant or overstated information, simply designed to self-protect the fire risk assessor from future criticism. Style and format should enhance, not reduce, the value of the report's content.

In simple terms the report documents the findings and makes unambiguous statements. A good report will therefore be: written in plain English with content that is for the dutyholder; being concise and factual; organised so the reader understands the fire risk assessment process undertaken; with accurate and objective conclusions; illustrated only where required; and contains a summary of actions that are technically accurate and consistent and aimed to satisfy the required legal duty. Appendices can help organise less critical information to help avoid confusing the client.

The content should encompass the recommendations and document all appropriate findings. For example, those identified in BS 79-1:2020 Fire risk assessment – premises other than housing and BS 9792:2025 Fire risk assessment – Housing. In addition BS 8670-1:2024 Annexe B and in Annexe C of BS 8674:2025 identify common fire risk factors that assist as referenced headings in a fire risk assessment report. These headings refer to: Occupancy; Use; Construction; Complexity and Hazards.

Structured around this guidance, with details added to each factor, as well as details on the fire safety strategy, current fire safety measures, emergency response and evacuation procedures, together with fire safety management practices, offers a suitable framework to record the assessment findings and propose, if required, recommendations for improvements.

11. Proportionate Approach

The overriding priority for any fire risk assessment is to ensure it is "fit for purpose". The Fire Safety Order expresses this as an explicit requirement, that a fire risk assessment must be "suitable and sufficient", and, whilst Scotland and Northern Ireland do not use this legislative phrase, official guidance makes the priority apparent.

Notably, the immense diversity of buildings within the built environment creates a great variety of workplaces and premises. This diversity is such that using any fire risk assessment methodology is likely to require application and maybe adaptation, using professional judgement, to reflect the specific environment and circumstances present at the time of the assessment.

There are some commonalities that exist and support limited categorisation for distinct purposes or use, e.g. in England higher-risk buildings[10], or to describe typical use, e.g. as official guidance such as non-domestic premises[11], or, as in the case of BS 8674:2025, to explain the relationship between individual fire risk assessor competence and building risk profiles.

BS 8674:2025 also sets out criteria for competence with the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviour (SKEB) required for risk assessments whether the assessor operates at Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced level.

A further and important part of achieving successful application of a fire risk assessment methodology is adoption of a proportionate approach;

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[10] Section 65 of the Building Safety Act 2022 defines a HRB as at least 18 metres in height or has at least 7 storeys, and contains at least 2 residential units with exclusions

[11] https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/fire-risk-assessments

proportionality being a reasoned determination of justifiable conclusions made after consideration of the circumstances present. The selection and use of an appropriate assessment methodology will assist the identification the scale and nature of the fire risk present and enable selection of a suitable methodology.

However, the justification of recommended actions also requires care to ensure a reasoned balance is made between achieving a fire safety outcome and the impact of restrictions, interference, costs, or rights on individuals, entities or public. Justification should indicate how close the risk is to being intolerable, as part of any proportionate analysis to ensure actions are commensurate with the risk. Overprotective or unjustified blanket recommendations is not accepted practice.

The significance and consequence of these considerations is well illustrated in the historical context that has created the existing fire safety legislative framework. For example, buildings used as theatres, cinemas, sports grounds, licensed premises, hotels, etc. are subject to specific controls and others, like hospitals and those caring for vulnerable persons, have distinct codes or regulations to safeguard life from fire.

The role of the fire risk assessor, using acquired SKEB in a risk based approach, is therefore to undertake a fire risk assessment using a 'non-prescriptive' approach. Operating a risk-based approach that uses risk-proportionate measures that are based on current guides and codes, in conjunction with the judgement of the fire risk assessor, will help the assessor take into account full consideration of the risks presented to them when carrying out a fire risk assessment.

Only by taking a risk based proportionate approach within a suitable framework will the fire risk assessor be able to undertake a professional fire

risk assessment and be able to help and guide the Responsible Person to carry out their duties.

12. Person Centred Approach

A Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment focuses on the individual and the likelihood of increased risk from fire based upon personal behaviour, activities and environment with guidance is available from the National Fire Chiefs Council[12] on issues to consider. the person-centred approach has led to development of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP), a safety plan for individuals who may need assistance during an emergency. Legislation and official guidance is also available on Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (Residential PEEPs)[13].

Practice guidance and check-list (Annex 3) prepared to assist fire risk assessors within the fire sector industry is available to assist.

The conduct of PCFRAs and RPEEPs would not normally be the remit of a fire risk assessor, although it would be expected that the assessor be made aware that these assessments have been made in a building that they are assessing.

13. External Wall Appraisal

A fire risk assessment is required to include an appraisal of a building's external wall. A methodology is provided in BS 9980:2022 to undertake a Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls (FRAEW). The appraisal is not regarded as within the competence of an individual fire risk assessor who satisfies the criteria described in BS 8674:2025.

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[12] https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/prevention/person-centred-framework/person-centred-framework-guidance/
[13] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-personal-emergency-evacuation-plans-residential-peeps

However, a fire risk assessor is only expected to possess an awareness of FRAEW and recognize where specialist advice is required and to determine whether an FRAEW is required based on the risk of fire spread. Interpretation of how external wall systems are used on buildings, the various types of system that might be encountered, and how they can contribute to fire growth and spread requires careful appraisal. The recognition of external cladding risks, is therefore part of the competence requirements of fire risk assessors' practising at the higher levels of competence.

This level of competence enables critical assessment of the external wall systems to determine whether they present a fire risk or require specialist investigation, i.e. engaging a specialist appraisal as outlined in BS 9980:2022. The decision process must be supported by evidence and suggested two step approach is outlined in Annexe 5.

14. Acknowledgement

The following members of the Fire Risk Assessors Sector Led Group 16 convened by the Fire Sector Confederation contributed to this guide:

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