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**Setting the Standard – Principles for Writing NOS**

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| **General** |
| * Never assume that where NOS already exist that they meet all these principles. Check each NOS in full and apply the principles. * NOS development should be informed by functional mapping. * Check the NOS database for suitable NOS before determining a need to develop a new NOS. * Consider whether the function is a transferable function applicable across many occupations and sectors (pan-sector) or if the function is relevant to a number of roles across related sectors or within a broad sector (multi-sector). For both categories, consider whether existing NOS are suitable for use or whether there is a gap for development of new pan or multi-sector NOS. * Write in 2nd Person – (*you and your)* * Use plain English – drop unnecessary words. If it’s not adding any value, then remove it. * If you need to read the criteria more than once to understand it, then break it down. * Bullet points – only use if necessary to avoid duplicating criteria, 2-3 are ok but any more then consider new criteria. * Be consistent with language and terminology. Use the same phrases, words and terminology where possible to retain consistency across a NOS or suite of NOS. * Write in plural – (*risks* not *the risk*). Writing in singular suggests the criteria may only need to be met once. * Must be applicable across the UK. * The constituent parts should add up to the sum total – the title, overview, PCs and knowledge should reflect each other |
| ***Avoid*** |
| * Proliferation of NOS: * Taking existing NOS and adding context to the title thereby creating a new NOS (for example - *tailoring NOS*) * Taking existing NOS and allocating a new URN to indicate its inclusion in a new suite. If you identify an existing NOS as being relevant to a new sector/suite/function, then update the metadata do not allocate a new URN. * Using abbreviations and acronyms. * Including examples in the PCs, Knowledge and Scope/Range because NOS should provide a definitive standard. * Reference to specific pieces of legislation or naming specific legislation (use *current* or *relevant legislation*) * Using slashes (for example - *internal/external*). NOS should provide a definitive standard and it should be clear whether it’s either or both. |
| **Title** |
| * Should reflect the NOS content. * Should describe a work function and can be prefixed with ‘you will be able to’. * Always start with the verb, then the object and where necessary add context (but not always). *Examples - Good example of NOS title: Protect yourself from the risk of violence at work. Poor example of NOS title: Specialist or bespoke software* * Contextualising a title can often restrict a NOS to a particular sector, occupation or role. Consider using existing ‘pan-sector’ or ‘multi-sector’ NOS. If developing a new NOS, consider whether this can be written in a more general fashion (for example - *pan-sector or multi-sector*). * Ensure that the NOS has a unique title. Check for duplicates on the NOS database. * When adding multiple functions to a NOS you must be certain that all functions can be carried out by one individual working in the same role (for example *- Plan, supervise, enforce and review sentences in the community - can the same person carry out all 4 functions?)* |
| ***Avoid*** |
| * Adding ‘Ing’ to the verb *(promote* not *promoting; respect* not *respecting*) * Proliferation of NOS (for example - *creating new NOS just to add contextualisation to the title*) |
| **Unique Reference Number (URN)** |
| * Each NOS developed should be given a URN – this should include a prefix reference to the developing SSO. * If updating an existing NOS, consider version control and whether the NOS URN should be retained. |
| ***Avoid*** |
| * Creating new URNs for NOS that are imported – there is no need to create a new URN (indicating a new NOS) just to identify that it is suitable for inclusion in a new suite of NOS. The metadata should just be updated to indicate where the NOS is suitable for use. * Using a URN that you have used before for another NOS (unless as noted above it is an updated version of the NOS). |
| **Overview** |
| * The overview must reflect a summary of the NOS content, don’t just copy the title, expand on this. More than one sentence is usually required. * Identify where NOS are pan-sector or multi-sector (for example - *a manufacturing NOS may be multi-sector as it may be suitable across different contexts and manufacturing industries*) |
| ***Avoid*** |
| * Rewriting the whole of the NOS content to be included in the Overview. * The same Overview for the entire suite of NOS – the Overview should relate to the specific NOS and reflect a summary of the content. * Identifying contextualised target audience if the NOS can be used as pan-sector or multi-sector NOS. * Creating new NOS just to add contextualisation or to change the Overview. |
| **Elements** |
| * Most NOS are expressed as single elements and do not have Element sub-headings. * Consider whether you need to split into Elements. Sometimes this can lead to duplication of PCs or Knowledge Points (for example – PC *complete records in accordance with organisational procedures* may then be added to each Element when one PC will do). |
| ***Avoid*** |
| * Duplication of PCs and Knowledge Statements |
| **Performance Criteria** |
| * Always start with the verb, and then the object and then the standard (do something, to something, how well). * You should be able to prefix PCs with ‘you must be able to’. * Ask yourself - can the criteria be performed badly and still be achieved by the learner? If yes, then it needs changed. * Although not all NOS will be used in qualifications or to inform qualifications you should consider how PCs will be assessed (they should be assessable in a fair and consistent manner). * Make sure all performance criteria relate back to the title of the NOS. * Use verbs that will allow for the measurement of performance and not knowledge. * Use consistent language and terminology both within the NOS and across the suite of NOS. * Write in plural – (*risks* not *the risk*). Writing in singular suggests the criteria may only need to be met once |
| ***Avoid*** |
| * Using adverbs (qualifiers) as a standard to measure performance as they are difficult to measure (for example *- ‘promptly’ or ‘timely’ could be replaced with ‘within organisational timescales’)* * Using difficult to assess verbs (for example - *recognise, ensure*) and phrases (for example - *develop an appreciation of*) * Adding performance that don’t always happen (exceptions). If the activity doesn’t occur regularly then think about whether it should be added to the knowledge instead of the performance. * Duplication of criteria. * Reference to specific pieces of legislation and naming specific legislation. * Using ‘behaviours’ as the standard as they are subjective and difficult to assess with any level of consistency. * Including examples * Lists of items to be covered – consider whether they are essential or whether they can be expressed by a single statement. Or, alternatively included in the Scope/Range. * Using methods of assessment (for example - *observe*) * Complex statements which contain multiple activities |
| **Knowledge and Understanding** |
| * NOS should contain the essential knowledge required for the function. * Consider the weighting of knowledge and performance remembering NOS are competence based and the knowledge is to support the practice. * Use consistent language and terminology both within the NOS and across the suite of NOS. * You should be able to prefix Knowledge with ‘you must know and understand’. * Although not all NOS will be used in qualifications or to inform qualifications you should consider how Knowledge will be assessed (it should be assessable in a fair and consistent manner). * Break up complex statements into separate ones. * Consider the use of some common knowledge statements for use across a suite of NOS. |
| ***Avoid*** |
| * Writing knowledge statements for every performance criteria. Some knowledge may be implied by the doing so don’t add anything that is obvious. * Using the same set of knowledge statements throughout the suite of NOS (make sure they are relevant to each specific NOS). * Including examples * Lists of items to be covered – consider whether they are essential or whether they can be expressed by a single statement. Or, alternatively included in the Scope/Range. * Reference to specific pieces of legislation/naming specific legislation * Complex statements which contain multiple Knowledge points |

**Additional Information (this section is optional)**

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| **Scope/Range** |
| * This is optional and does not have to be completed, however, if you chose to use Scope/Range then apply it consistently within the NOS and across the suite of NOS. * The terms ‘scope’ and ‘range’ are sometimes used interchangeably in suites of NOS, however technically, ‘range’ specifies conditions which *must* be met, and ‘scope’ indicates the different variables an individual *might* have to deal with. * Scope or range should only be used where different circumstances or situations have a critical impact on performance. Scope or range should not be used simply to provide illustrative examples or clarify the meaning of a term or phrase (which can be done in a glossary). * The language and terminology used in the PCs and Knowledge should be carried through to the Scope/Range. |
| **Values** |
| * This is optional and does not have to be completed, however if used then ensure consistency across the suite of NOS. * This may refer to overarching values recognised by the sector. |
| **Behaviours** |
| * This is optional and does not have to be completed, however, if used then ensure consistency across the suite of NOS. * Generally speaking, we discourage the inclusion of behaviours because they are subjective and difficult to assess. Where used, this section should not include performance criteria, either repeated from the PCs or additional to the main content of the NOS. * Behaviours should not be used to define quality of competence. |
| **Skills** |
| * This is optional and does not have to be completed, however if used then ensure consistency across the suite of NOS. * This may give a short list of the skills which will be evidenced, as a guide to anyone considering if this NOS is appropriate for their use. |
| **Glossary** |
| * This is optional and does not have to be completed, however if included the words, phrases and definitions should be consistent throughout the suite of NOS. * List key words and phrases, with explanations of the particular meaning of these words and phrases as they are used within the NOS. * This should be used to define words that people are not familiar with, and which are pertinent to the individual NOS, not words which are in common usage. |
| **Links to other NOS** |
| * This is optional and does not have to be completed. * This may include the URLs and titles of closely related NOS showing how this NOS interfaces with other NOS in the same suite and/or other suites. |
| **External Links** |
| * This is optional and does not have to be completed. * This may include links to professional bodies, codes of practice, professional standards and regulatory frameworks. Beware of including anything which may go out of date and therefore do not include hyperlinks. |
| **Metadata** |
| * You must complete every section of the metadata prior to uploading the NOS to the database. * You must add allthe key words relevant to the NOS as these are used in the search function of the NOS Database. * You must add in all the occupations to which the NOS apply. |

**Administration and Quality Assurance**

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| **Importation of NOS (Change to Metadata)** |
| * A form is to be completed when importing standards whether they are from your own organisation or from another organisation. This is to allow the metadata to be updated. The form can be found on the NOS database <https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/resources> * Please note if a NOS is currently under review, it cannot be imported until it has been fully approved. You should contact the Originating Organisation to request they add the metadata on your behalf prior to their submission of the Final NOS. |
| **Replacing old with new** |
| * A form is to be submitted along with the approval of your final NOS to indicate that NOS are being replaced (to indicate ‘Legacy’ or ‘Archive’). The form can be found on the NOS database <https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/resources>   **Definition of ‘Legacy’ NOS:**  The NOS is no longer current and has been superseded by a newer NOS, however this NOS is imported by another organisation and / or is still used within a current qualification.  **Definition of ‘Archive’ NOS:**  The NOS is no longer current has been superseded by a newer NOS, this NOS has not been imported by another organisation or used within a current qualification. Please note ‘Archived’ NOS will be removed from the NOS Database. |
| **Quality Assurance** |
| * SSOs have a responsibility for the quality of the NOS they develop and therefore must have internal quality assurance systems in place. * All NOS should be internally quality assured before uploading the final versions to the NOS database for approval. * NOS templates should be completed, sense checked and proofread prior to uploading to the NOS database. |

**Other reference documents and links** –

* NOS Database - https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/en
* NOS Quality Criteria 2024
* SQA Accreditation NOS Approval Process Guidance
* Blooms Taxonomy
* SCQF Level Descriptors