

NOS Strategy Implementation Plan 2010-11

**UK Commission for Employment and Skills and the Alliance of
Sector Skills Councils**

March 2010

Final Draft for sign off by the UKVQRP Board.

NOS Strategy Implementation Plan

		2010-11											
		A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
1. NOS Quality Criteria and Guidance (includes Principles 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6)													
1.1	NOS Quality Criteria come into effect for all new and revised NOS												
1.2	Review of effectiveness of NOS Quality Criteria and Guidance												
1.3	Revised NOS Quality Criteria fully implemented												
1.4	Development of robust, streamlined QA processes												
2. Capability and Capacity Building (supports Principles 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6)													
2.1	Developing Standards for Developing and Promoting NOS												
2.2	Developing Training Programme for NOS Developments and Advisers												
2.3	Prototyping Training Programme for NOS Developers and Advisers												
2.4	Review of Training Programme for NOS Developers and Advisers												
2.5	Roll-out of Training Programme for NOS Developers and Advisers												
3. NOS Development (includes Principles 1, 2, 4 and 5)													
3.1	All new and revised NOS meet NOS Quality Criteria												
3.2	New NOS developed promptly to support industry and skills policies												
3.3	Pan-sector NOS rationalised and revised, where necessary												
3.4	Review of SSCs' core contracts with reference to NOS												
3.5	Research into review cycle for NOS												
4. NOS Database (includes Principles 3 and 4)													
4.1	Development and testing of NOS Database software												
4.2	Uploading of pan-sector NOS, imported NOS and new and revised NOS												
4.3	NOS Database available to SSCs and key partners only												
4.4	Initial review of NOS Database												
5. Promotional Strategy (includes Principles 2 and 3)													
5.1	Development of UK-wide overarching NOS promotional strategy												
5.2	Development of sector NOS promotional strategies												
5.3	Delivery of UK-wide overarching NOS promotional strategy												
5.4	Prototyping activities to deliver sector NOS promotional strategies												
5.5	Review of promotional strategies and prototyping activities												
6. Evaluation of Impact of NOS													
6.1	Development of evaluation framework for NOS												
6.2	Prototyping of evaluation framework												
7. Testing of brand name (includes Principle 9)													
7.1	Market research to test the brand name												
7.2	Confirmation of brand name												
8. Evaluation of NOS Strategy													
8.1	NOS Strategy comes into effect												
8.2	Review of effectiveness of NOS Strategy												
8.3	Costed plan for 2011-13												

Notes on the NOS Strategy Implementation Plan

1. NOS Quality Criteria and Guidance (includes Principles 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6)

The NOS Quality Criteria can be found in a separate document. They will apply to all new and revised NOS from April 2010 (1.1). The NOS Quality Criteria will be kept under review to check they are effective in assuring the quality of NOS (1.2) and be revised annually, if necessary (1.3).

The implementation of the new NOS Quality Criteria from April 2010 will ensure that high quality NOS, informed by a representative sample of employers, written in clear language and complying with common definitions are available for all significant functions in the workplace. Compliance with the NOS Quality Criteria will be assured through standards, training programmes and accreditation for those involved in developing and promoting NOS. New robust, streamlined quality assurance processes will also be put in place by the UK Commission (1.4).

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2. Capacity and Capability Building (supports Principles 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6)

This is about developing the capability of standards setting organisation staff and consultants to ensure they are competent to develop and promote NOS. This will involve developing Standards for Developing and Promoting NOS (2.1) which can be used for the development and assessment of people's competence. It will also involve a training programme (2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5).

3. NOS Development (includes Principles 1, 2, 4 and 5)

All NOS developed or reviewed from April 2010 will be in line with the NOS Quality Criteria and sector/occupation priorities (3.1).

Prioritisation of the skills needed for new industries and changing demographics, combined with streamlined development and quality assurance processes, will deliver NOS to support sustainable economic growth and secure social wellbeing within the shortest timeframe practicable. The UK Commission will commission prototyping work to reduce the lapsed time between identification of need for new NOS and their availability for qualifications and other purposes. (3.2)

A rationalisation programme will eliminate duplication and redundancy of NOS which are used by more than one sector thus facilitating the transferability of competence across sector boundaries. Standards setting organisations will be encouraged to work together to develop new NOS to meet the needs of new industries and to rationalise existing NOS which cover functions common to more than one sector or occupation (3.3).

The UK Commission will review the SSCs' core contracts to ensure they are clear about SSCs' role in relation to NOS (3.4). The UK Commission will also undertake research into

the review cycle of NOS and the required frequency of review in different sectors and with different types of NOS (3.5).

4. NOS Database (includes Principles 3 and 4)

A feasibility study has been carried out to replace the NOS Directory with a NOS Database which will present NOS in a common format whilst allowing standards setting organisations to use their own formats for presentation to their sectors/occupations. Separate research has been carried out into the format for the common template. Prior to commissioning the NOS Database, the UK Commission will review the legalities and implications surrounding the issue of the standards being readily accessible in the UK and worldwide.

Subject to the outcomes of the feasibility study, the NOS Database and common template will be developed and tested between April and September (4.1) and the first NOS will be uploaded to the NOS Database (rather than the NOS Directory) during the remainder of 2010-11 (4.2). This first tranche of NOS will include all pan-sector NOS, NOS which are frequently imported or tailored and any new or revised NOS developed during the year. All other NOS will be uploaded during 2011-12, after an initial review has taken place (4.4).

From October 2010 to March 2012, the NOS Database will be available only to standards setting organisations and key partners, such as qualifications regulators and awarding organisations/bodies (4.3).

Beyond the scope of this Implementation Plan 2010-11, it is intended that a formal review of the NOS Database will be carried out in the last quarter 2011-12 to check that it is sufficiently well populated and robust enough to be made available to the public. Assuming the outcome of this review is positive, the NOS Database will be made available to the public from April 2012 and the NOS Directory will be decommissioned at the same time.

Through the new NOS Database, NOS will be made available in a common format for awarding organisations/bodies, employers and other stakeholders to use for qualifications and other purposes across the UK. Where required, these NOS will also be available in the Welsh language. SSCs and other standards setting organisations will continue to take the lead in promoting and supporting the use of NOS, and, where funding is available, will develop and promote NOS-based products and services to meet their sectors' priority needs.

5. Promotional Strategy (includes Principles 2 and 3)

The UK-wide overarching NOS promotional strategy (5.1) and the sector/occupation promotional strategies (5.2) will be developed during the first quarter 2010-11 and reviewed/redeveloped annually in the last quarter of the fiscal year. Delivery of the UK-wide overarching strategy will start in July 2010 (5.3) with pilot activity by some standards setting organisations during the remainder of 2010-11 (5.4). The overarching NOS promotional strategy and the sector strategies will come fully into effect in April 2011.

The UK-wide strategy to increase the penetration of NOS will be tested out and a number of standards setting organisations will undertake focused work to encourage organisations in their sectors to adopt NOS to address specific problems and seize emerging opportunities.

The UK-wide promotional strategy will involve:

- **Managing the NOS brand** – establishing overarching brand guidelines and key messages and managing compliance with these;
- **Developing generic promotional materials** which can be tailored to the needs of different sectors/occupations consistent with the brand guidelines;
- **Promoting the benefits of NOS to key pan-sector stakeholders**, such as government departments, developed administrations, pan-sector awarding organisations, pan-sector professional bodies, pan-sector trade bodies, FE and HE;
- **Managing the NOS Database**, providing access to all NOS in a common format via the NOS Database;
- **Coordinating the sector/occupation promotional strategies** to ensure conflicts are avoided and synergies are achieved;
- **Monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of NOS** by drawing together data from standards setting organisation and pan-sector activities.

Each standards setting organisation will develop its own promotional strategy and plan to meet the priority needs of its sector/occupation. Key components of sector/occupation promotional strategies may include:

- **Researching sector/occupation priorities** (through LMI and other research if necessary);
- **Establishing measurable objectives and planning** to meet priority needs;
- **Development of NOS-based products/services** to meet needs;
- **Promotion of NOS and NOS-based products/services** in the sector/occupation;
- **Providing information, advice and support** to help stakeholders use NOS effectively;
- **Monitoring progress and evaluating impact of NOS** and NOS-based products/services in the sector/occupation.

6. Evaluation of Impact of NOS

The UK Commission will continue to work closely with the Alliance of SSCs to develop a framework to evaluate the impact of investment in NOS and ensure they are fully utilised and deliver excellent value for money (6.1). Prototyping of the evaluation framework will take place in the second half of 2010-11 (6.2).

7. Testing of brand name (includes Principle 9)

The UK Commission will commission market research amongst a representative sample of employers to test whether the National Occupational Standards brand, including its acronym "NOS", is meaningful, understandable and acceptable to employers or whether the name itself is a significant barrier to adoption of the standards (7.1). It is intended that the brand name is confirmed by July 2010 (7.2) before the implementation of overarching and sector promotional strategies.

8. Evaluation of NOS Strategy

The NOS Strategy comes into effect in April 2010 (8.1). From April 2010, all new and revised NOS will need to meet the new Quality Criteria and be entered onto the NOS Database as soon as it goes live. Capacity and capability building activities will ensure NOS developers are competent to deliver quality outputs.

However, 2010-11 will be a prototyping year with many of the elements of this strategy being tested out in parts of the system rather than by all players.

Progress will be evaluated in the last quarter 2010-11 (8.2) and any necessary refinements made before the full policy goes live with the roll-out of the strategy from April 2011. The roll out will be based on an agreed Implementation Plan based on the natural cycle of review and development of NOS.

The costs of the various components of the NOS Strategy will be kept under careful review during 2010-11 in order to be in a position to prepare a fully-costed Implementation Plan for future years (8.3).

Annex 1 Principles

In April 2009, the four nations, through the mechanism of the UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme (UKVQRP) Board charged the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UK Commission) with drawing up a future strategy for National Occupational Standards (NOS) based on the following principles:

Principle 1: NOS must be articulated by a representative sample of relevant employers across the UK;

Principle 2: NOS must be able to be used for a variety of purposes across the UK or in any one of the nations of the UK;

Principle 3: NOS, and NOS-based products, must be readily accessible for employers/key stakeholders via appropriate media;

Principle 4: The format of NOS (aka their 'architecture') must be consistent and use common definitions (eg standard, suite);

Principle 5: NOS must be written in clear, plain language with a minimum of jargon but using language recognisable to business sectors;

Principle 6: Robust, streamlined development and quality assurance processes must be in place.

The NOS Strategy 2010-20 and this NOS Implementation Plan 2010-11 addresses the six key principles above.

Additionally, the UKVQRP Board asked the UK Commission to:

Principle 7: work with partners to develop draft models to agree the future format of standards, including taking on board the importance of getting the format right so that the UK standards could be used to shape European standards;

Principle 8: explore how "softer" skills including literacy and numeracy should be captured within standards;

Principle 9: confirm the change of name to "UK Occupational Standards".

The UKVQRP Board has agreed that, whilst linkages to European policy and Employability Skills are important, they are longer-term objectives; Principles 7 and 8 will not therefore be addressed during 2010-11, but will be addressed later in the decade 2010-20.

Regarding Principle 9, further research will be carried out by the UK Commission during 2010-11 to test whether the National Occupational Standards brand, including its acronym "NOS", is meaningful, understandable and acceptable to employers or whether the name itself is a significant barrier to adoption of the standards.