

Quidos

Excellence in Efficiency

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This document shall apply to all accredited Domestic Energy Assessors, regardless of National registration, and supersede any previous copies.

These Standards shall be read in conjunction with the **Quidos Code of Conduct for Energy Assessors**.



Domestic EPC Quality Assurance

1. Overview

As an Accreditation Scheme, we are responsible for ensuring that the quality of work carried out by our members is of a consistently good standard. In an evolving sector, such as that of Energy Performance Certificates, it is important that high standards are established and maintained throughout every strand of the industry. This will help maintain the credibility of the EPC as an important document for both cutting carbon emissions, and reducing energy consumption in households and businesses within the UK. It is vital that these high standards are implemented; both by us as an Accreditation Scheme, and you as an Energy Assessor.

2. Surveillance Audit Requirements

Requests for audit should not be seen as a burden, or be perceived as a punishment. For those Energy Assessors who maintain high standards in their work, QA can be an opportunity to demonstrate this, or even to develop better practice. By periodic auditing of our members, we aim to ensure that all Energy Assessors can prove themselves capable of providing the best service to the customer and the industry.

As a general rule, the following minimum QA requirements are in place:

- At least 2% of all EPCs lodged through the Scheme are audited;
- Energy Assessors are randomly audited on at least 1% of their lodged reports, with a minimum of 1 random audit per year;
- Each new Energy Assessor will have their first lodged EPC audited;
- Audits which trigger risk-based selection criteria.

There are other circumstances which would require QA checks:

- Customer complaints;
- Stock image checks on at least 2% of audited EPCs.

In addition to these requirements, we also undertake auditing on those certificates that have been re-lodged following a surveillance auditing failure.

3. Risk-Based Auditing Selection

The introduction of risk-based audit selection (RBAS) is a sea-change in how the Industry monitors the lodgements of Energy Assessors.

Whereas, previously, surveillance audits were selected on a purely random basis, we will now also be calling audits where EPCs are found to meet specific triggers.

RBAS audits are considered separately to a DEA's 1% minimum audit requirement. Therefore an Energy Assessor *may* receive many more audits than their 1% if they are found to be meeting these trigger criteria.

These triggers are determined and reviewed by the Accreditation Schemes on a regular basis, under the umbrella of the Energy Assessor Scheme Operating Board (EASOB).

The RBAS triggers are available for DEAs to view within iQ-Energy, and will be noted on auditing feedback.

4. Surveillance Audit Evidence

As a practicing member of the Qidos Accreditation Scheme, you are expected to keep detailed records from all assessments undertaken.

Whilst on-site, you should be asking yourself one question:

**“Would another assessor be able to recreate the EPC fully
from this evidence without question?”**

If you wouldn't be able to, the auditor almost certainly wouldn't either.

In this respect, the most important evidence that you can collect are your **site notes**. These are different to your data collection sheets, which record the individual RdSAP data inputs, and give you an opportunity to record your thought process, reasoning for assumptions, and highlight any limitations or issues whilst carrying out an assessment.

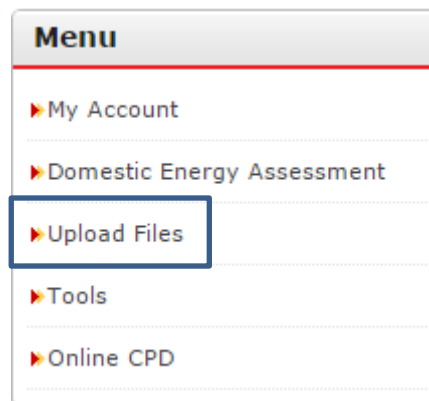
Coupled with your site notes, a thorough and detailed floor plan can also give much more detail than a couple of photos. Floor plans can identify lighting fixtures, the locations of heating emitters and controls, as well as isolate extensions and habitable room. DEAs should not believe that a very small box with some measurements on it is an acceptable floorplan to provide.

The full details of the suggested evidence which can be provided for surveillance auditing can be found in **Appendix B** of this document.

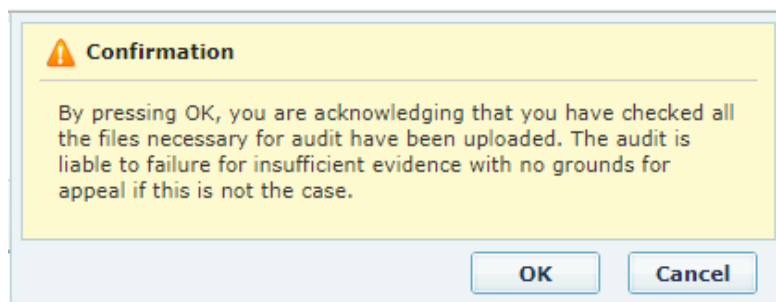
4.1 Uploading your Evidence

All evidence **MUST** be uploaded through iQ-Energy, and cannot be submitted by email or Dropbox to the QA Team. This preserves the audit trail between assessors and auditors, and makes the EA solely responsible for management of their data.

Your audit RRN will appear in your Control Panel in iQ-Energy stating when it is due, as well as a link to upload. Alternatively, evidence may be uploaded manually using the **Upload Files** button in the Control Panel menu. Just search for the requested RRN and upload your files.



It's really important that EAs double- and triple-check all files before pressing the **Confirm QA Upload** button. Once you press this button, you are confirming that all of the evidence you have uploaded are sufficient for the auditor to complete the survey. If this is not the case, it is likely that your audit will fail.



Photographic evidence is of particular importance, ensuring that they are clear and in context for the purposes required. We request that photographic evidence be uploaded as separate files, and not pasted into a single document. This enables the auditors to check each image thoroughly.

All photographic evidence must include a date-stamp within the image or retain the associated metadata created by the camera when taking the photograph. You should ensure that, if using an image resizing program to aid in image uploading for audit, the metadata (EXIF) is maintained.

If the photographic evidence is deemed to be of underwhelming quality, the assessor will be advised that more care is required in future. If it is deemed that the evidence provided is not of sufficient quality to allow accurate auditing, the report cannot be audited, resulting in an audit failure, with the DEA requiring further follow-on auditing.

As detailed in the Quidos Code of Conduct, it is essential that assessors keep the records of each EPC assessment both secure and readily accessible. We will not accept excuses related to missing QA information.

5. Surveillance Auditing Process

Once the evidence has been submitted, it will be audited by a member of our Quality Assurance Auditing team. The QAA will review the work and establish whether or not the EPC is acceptable or defective; providing the assessor with a feedback report for the audit upon completion.

5.1 How the report gets audited

- The QAA works through the supplied evidence and data entries;
- Using a QAA-generated copy of the report, each data input will be reviewed and amended if necessary to reflect the correct Convention or supplied evidence;
- Where evidence for a data input is omitted or insufficient to back up the assumption, the appropriate worst-case scenario will be input;
- At each data entry change, the report is recalculated and the change in SAP rating is recorded, as well as any changes to the recommendations or description of the EPC itself;
- This is repeated until all RdSAP data inputs have been checked and amended (if necessary);
- Once completed, the cumulative SAP rating variation is calculated – absolute variance is the total number of points changed, irrespective of positive or negative direction;
- Any changes to the recommendations or description of the EPC are also noted;
- Finally, any areas of insufficient evidence are considered.

5.2 The Audit Result

If the absolute variance is zero or less than five, with no changes to the recommendations or description of the EPC, the audit will be considered as a Pass – congratulations! This is a validation of the standards that you set for yourself against the rest of the industry.

An EPC will be considered defective if it fulfils any of the following **four** criteria:

1. The sum of the absolute errors between the energy assessor's and QA assessor's SAP score is more than 5 SAP points. This does not allow for 'self-corrective errors';
2. If errors in the building's description would result in a change in the recommendations made;
3. If the building's description is insufficiently accurate such that it brings into question the accuracy of the rating. This is taken to mean information on the EPC which is demonstrably incorrect subject to an ability to change the description in the software to account for what the assessor has seen.
4. Insufficient evidence for the audit to be completed; the EPC will be deemed defective until the necessary information is provided to confirm your data inputs. An EPC can then be considered correct, but the audit status will remain as a fail.

6. Failure Consequences

In the event that the report is declared defective, it will need to be cancelled and re-lodged with the correct information in place within 10-working days. The onus is on the assessor themselves to do this, using the audit feedback summary as guidance.

Defective EPCs shall always be cancelled by the Energy Assessor. Although lodging a new report makes the latest version most accessible to download from the EPC Register, it does not 'overwrite' or remove the incorrect report.

Cancellations shall be processed through iQ-Energy or by email, giving the RRN to be cancelled, the RRN of the replacement, and the reason for cancellation. The QA team will occasionally process cancellations following audit failure, but the expectation shall always be on the assessor to cancel.

If you provide further evidence which would prove the EPC correct, you will not have to re-lodge the report, however it would still be classified as an audit failure.

Although this might seem harsh, we expect DEAs to be professional in their operation, particularly in ensuring the collection of sufficient evidence to prove the EPC is an accurate reflection of the dwelling. If this is not the case, we cannot turn a blind eye and are obliged to use a follow on audit as a sanction.

From the date of failure, DEAs will also have 10-working days within which to appeal against the audit decision.

6.1 Follow-on Auditing

Where a randomly-selected or RBAS audit fails, the DEA will be required to complete a single follow-on audit. This will either be based on the next triggering of the failed RBAS rule, or another random audit.

Follow-on audits will be selected from the next available month's lodgement data.

Where the follow-on audit also fails, the Energy Assessor will be immediately suspended, pending the completion of appropriate corrective action.

Where a DEA fails three RBAS audits in succession for the same RBAS trigger, Schemes are able to impose the ultimate sanction of striking off the DEA from the Central Register. This action would only be taken in the most extreme circumstance.

In addition, where three random audits in succession fail for the same technical reasons, the Scheme may also decide to strike-off the Energy Assessor.

Appendix C of this document shows a flowchart of how the auditing process works.

7. Audit Appeals

If you genuinely believe that an EPC has been incorrectly audited against the evidence supplied, RdSAP Methodology or Conventions, you have the opportunity of lodging an appeal against the decision. Within the 'Evidence' section for the report, you will see an **Appeal** button.

By giving your reasons for appeal, we can review the auditor's decision and make a judgement. Audit appeals are not decided by the auditor in question, but from the QA team; this ensures that the DEA's opinions are considered independently.

We would strongly advise assessors to make appeals within 10-working days of the audit feedback. This is within the window required for EPC re-lodgement and ensures that you are not unduly suspended and subject to unwarranted follow-on audits. Appeals made after this time will not necessarily remove an account suspension.

Once your appeal has been submitted, we will aim to resolve the appeal within 5 working days, however we will always prioritise appeals following the failure of follow-on audits.

The appeal feedback is the final and binding decision of the QA Team and will not be reconsidered unless compelling additional evidence is provided. Auditing appeals will not be taken further once feedback has been given.

8. Moving forward

In applying these Quality Assurance requirements, we are helping to ensure that quality is considered paramount in the Energy Performance industry. Energy Assessors should take pride in the quality of their work, and know that the higher the quality of Certificate they produce, the more they are contributing to helping cut the UK's carbon emissions and domestic energy usage. The better the standard of product that is produced, the more respectable and professional our industry will become.

We understand that this extra level of administration will add to the workload of a DEA, but we are confident that all energy assessors will appreciate the benefits of a quality product.

9. Audit/EPC Help and Advice

The QA and Tech Support team is always available to aid EAs with any queries they might have about the auditing process.

The best way to contact the QA team is through the Qidos Support Log. This can be found by logging onto <http://support.qidos.co.uk>; alternatively, you can send an email which will log a support ticket to support@qidos.co.uk.

The telephone helpdesk service should only be used for URGENT telephone queries, such as an assessor on-site with a complex query which requires resolving.

The overuse of support channels may lead us to question your competency as a DEA, requiring additional auditing.

Glossary of Terms

Absolute Error	SAP score errors are based on the total number of errors. E.g. +4, -2, +1 has an absolute variance of 7 SAP points, not 3.
Audit appeal	<p>A request to have an audit decision reviewed. This is never completed by the original auditor.</p> <p>The appeal feedback is the final and binding decision of the QA Team and will not be reconsidered unless compelling additional evidence is provided.</p>
Audit Failure	<p>There are FOUR reasons for an audit failure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More than 5 SAP variance; - Error in recommendations; - Insufficiently accurate EPC description; - Insufficient evidence for the audit to be completed.
Cancellation	Process of removing a defective certificate from the EPC Register. This must always be done to ensure incorrect data is removed from the Register.
EASOB	Energy Assessor Scheme Operating Board – responsible for management of Level 2 SOR document.
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate.
EST (Energy Savings Trust)	Company in charge of the management of the Scottish EPC Register.
Insufficiently Accurate EPC Description	In terms of the wording on an EPC, if a mistake by a DEA leads to changes in the written description, or wording, of the report, this can lead to the accuracy of the SAP score being questioned.
iQ-Energy	Quidos RdSAP software.
Landmark	Company in charge of the management of the England & Wales, and Northern Ireland, EPC Registers.
Metadata	Information stored by an image file when the image is taken. Includes date, time, and possible GPS location.
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.
QAA	Quality Assurance Auditor.
RdSAP	Reduced Standard Assessment Procedure – Used to create existing building domestic EPCs; makes many assumptions about the property and occupation to produce the report.
Re-lodgement	Cancelling a failed report and re-completing it with the changes outlined by the QAA.
Risk-Based Audit Selection (RBAS)	A process where domestic audits are chosen based on the triggering of a risk-based selection rule, such as a particular age band or combination of data inputs

SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure – The methodology that underpins the creation of EPCs.
Self-correcting Error	Difference in SAP scores is 0, but, for example, there has been one variance of +3, and another of -3. Total variance of 6.
SOR	Scheme Operating Requirements – An agreement between Government & Accreditation Schemes, act as minimum level for Scheme processes.
Stock image	Generic or previously-taken images submitted in place of evidence which should have been collected on-site. These images are generally not taken at the property being assessed.
Strike-off	This is a type of status applied to someone’s accreditation and updated to the EPC Register, as well as broadcast to Schemes. The status means that you will no longer be able to practice as a DEA. In severe cases, such as use of stock images or non-attendance to a dwelling, it will be permanently applied by all Schemes.
Suspension	Your accreditation is temporarily suspended. You will not be able to lodge whilst suspended, but still able to upload to QA, or inputting data for new EPCs.
Underwhelming Quality	Photographic evidence is of a poor quality. This could be due to blurred images, lack of context, or unfit for purpose.

APPENDIX A: Auditing Time Limits

From:	To:	Max. Time Limit	Exceptions	Sanctions
Scheme first requests audit evidence	Evidence uploaded to iQ-Energy	15 Working Days	5 working day extension for illness, hols, etc	Suspension if failure to upload ¹
Evidence received	Auditing completed	15 Working Days	Circumstances beyond our control	
Audit feedback (failure)	Lodgement of replacement EPC	10 Working Days	Appeals received within 10 working days	Suspension if not re-lodged
Audit feedback (failure)	Appeal deadline	10 Working Days	We request all audit appeals to be submitted within 10 working days from the date of feedback receipt	
Follow on (random) request²	Evidence uploaded to iQ-Energy	5 Working Days	5 working day extension for illness, hols, etc	Suspension if failure to upload ⁴
Follow on (RBAS) request³	Evidence uploaded to iQ-Energy	5 Working Days	5 working day extension for illness, hols, etc	Suspension if failure to upload ⁴

¹ Where a surveillance audit is uploaded after the specified timescale without extension or a 'reasonable or compelling' reason for late upload, the surveillance audit will be reviewed as normal for errors, but will fail automatically for insufficient evidence.

² Follow-on audits from random failures will be selected from the next month's audit selections.

³ Follow-on RBAS audits are called on the next instance of the rule being triggered by the assessor.

⁴ Follow-on audits are requested for upload within 5 working days in order to quickly follow up on a previous auditing failure.

APPENDIX B: Evidence Collection Guidance

For audit, DEAs are required to supply sufficient evidence for the auditor to be able to replicate the lodged report without question. The provision of insufficient evidence will lead to the failure of an audit.

The following list is suggested guidance for what DEAs should be collecting whilst on-site undertaking an assessment. The provision of a detailed floorplan and detailed set of site notes and data collection forms can give more detail than a single photo out of context.

Evidence for Upload	Notes
EPC	<i>A copy of the lodged EPC to be provided</i>
On-site data collection sheets	<i>Raw collected assessment data indicating the data inputs to be made; iQMobile acts as data collection sheet</i>
Detailed floor plan & calculations	<i>E.g. sketch showing all levels, measurements, extensions, heated rooms, HLP/party walls, calculations; may also include LELs, location of heating controls etc.</i>
Detailed site notes <i>NOT SAME AS DATA COLLECTION SHEETS (site notes shall be supplementary to field sheets, but not in place of)</i>	<i>Written description of anything that would support your decision-making, thoughts, or amendments to recommendations (property age, construction, heating system notes, etc.)</i>
Photographic Evidence:	Photos must be date-stamped within image or have the photographic metadata retained for checking
Elevations, Openings & Construction	<i>All dwelling elevations; wall, loft and floor construction; open fires, doors, windows, whole-house ventilation, conservatory.</i>
Glazing details	<i>Multiple glazing, glazing manufacturing date, glazing gap,</i>
Wall Insulation	<i>Clear evidence of insulation (i.e. drill pattern); certification</i>
Floor Insulation	
Loft Insulation	<i>Full loft space covered; measured in context (solid ruler against thickness)</i>
Space Heating System	<i>Boiler identification plate, all heating controls, fuel tank (LPG/Oil)</i>
Secondary Heating	<i>Open fire, fixed room heaters; solid fuel options</i>
Water Heating System	<i>Cylinder size, insulation thickness, presence of cylinderstat</i>
Multi-rate electricity meter	<i>Taken to confirm tariff</i>
Additional features	<i>Other feature of the building whose presence or absence may be reasonably considered likely to affect the SAP rating (e.g. showers, renewables, FGHRs)</i>
Limitations	<i>Evidence that inspection of a particular element is impractical; either photographic or written in site notes</i>
Documentary Evidence	<i>Any other evidence collected as part of the assessment, including such evidence as required by Conventions (insulation certificates, MCS, FENSA, building control sign-off, u-value calculations)</i>

APPENDIX C: Audit Process

