

Quidos

Excellence in Efficiency

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Issued By: Billy Say
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Revision History

Issue	Issued	Approved	Reviewed
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1.2	19/09/2018	19/09/2018	06/02/2019 (BS)

Domestic EPC Quality Assurance

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 a relatively new 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.

Quality Assurance Requests

QA requests should not be seen as a burden, or be perceived as a punishment. For those assessors who maintain high standards in their work, QA can be an opportunity to demonstrate this, or even to develop better practice. By regularly auditing all of our members, we aim to ensure that all 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;
- Every active member is audited at least once every half year;
- Members are audited on at least 1% of their lodged reports;
- Each new member is audited within 30 days of joining the scheme, or if not, their first available lodgement. Thereafter at a rate of 5% for the first 6 months.

There are other circumstances which would require QA checks:

- Excessive use of the Quidos help desk;
- Customer complaints;

QA checking is processed in the following manner:

1. Landmark and EST lodgement processed at the start of the month;
2. Based on selection criteria, EAs requiring QA checking will be selected, and a randomly selected RRN nominated;
3. Assessors will be given the RRN number/s of the reports required for audit, and be expected to submit full and complete data from the survey within 15-working days;
4. Once your audit evidence has been uploaded, the assigned auditor (also chosen randomly) will then review your report and evidence. Feedback will be given within 15-working days.

Minimum Requirements

As a practicing member of the Quidos Accreditation Scheme you are expected to keep detailed records of all EPCs lodged. These records must be of a professional standard, and enable us to adequately audit the submitted work. The fundamental underlying principle of Quality Assurance is this: the scheme should be able to reproduce the EPC solely from the evidence provided by the assessor.

When uploading your files, the QA team would hope you ask yourself:

“Would another assessor be able to recreate the EPC fully from this evidence?”

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

Where you do not provide evidence for a given element, the auditor will proceed and complete the audit as though the particular element is not present, which will often result in an audit failure. Evidence provided following audit feedback will only be considered to determine if the EPC is not defective, but will not change the audit result.

It's really important that EAs double- and triple-check all files before pressing the 'Notify QA Controller' 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.

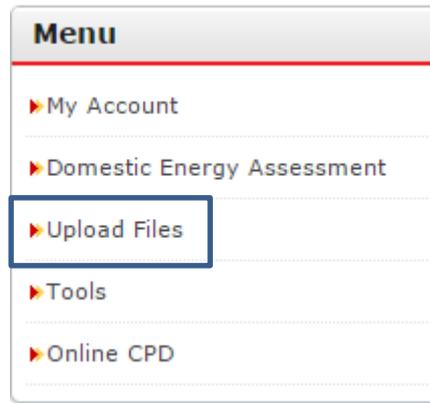
The full details of the minimum evidence which must be provided for Quality Assurance check can be found in **Appendix B** of this document.

Evidence Uploading

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. However, targeted audits will need to be uploaded manually using the 'Upload Files' button in the Control Panel menu. Just search for the requested RRN and upload your files.



The evidence you provide should be clear, concise, and of a high enough standard to enable the auditor to review your EPC accurately.

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

Audit Process

From the date of an audit request, an EA has 15-working days in which to make the necessary uploads to iQ-Energy.

If an assessor has a legitimate reason for an auditing deadline being missed, they must inform the Scheme, who will be able to provide an extension to the audit request of up to five working days from the assessors return to work.

Once the submission deadline has elapsed, if an assessor has failed to upload evidence, they shall be immediately suspended. This suspension will only be lifted once the files have been uploaded and the EA can make a reasonable and compelling case as to why the information was not available. Should an upload be made without any comment from an EA, the suspension shall remain until it has been established why the audit was returned late.

Following the lifting of a suspension, EAs will be required to undertake 'targeted auditing'.

Random EPC Auditing

Once the evidence has been submitted, it will be audited by a member of our Quality Assurance Auditing team. The auditor 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.

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.

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. 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.

From the date of failure, EAs will also have 10-working days within which to appeal against the audit decision. After this has elapsed, the EA will be identified as requiring 'targeted auditing'.

Targeted Auditing

Targeted auditing is a way for Qidos to carry out further checks on an EA's competence in their role. The most common reason for requiring targeted auditing is following an auditing failure.

Any assessor who fails a QA check, or does not provide enough information required for the auditor to accurately assess an EPC, will require additional monitoring. This will consist of the auditing of a further two EPCs lodged within the 30 day period both prior to, and following, the audit failure, or two reports lodged in the 30 days following the feedback. If this is not possible then the next two EPCs lodged by the EA should be selected.

Targeted auditing following QA failure has a much stricter upload timescale than for random audits. Assessors have only 5-working days from receipt of the targeted request to upload their evidence, or risk suspension.

The following principles apply:

- If both audits are passed, the assessor will return to normal QA checking;
- If just one of the two audits fail, the Scheme will make a judgement as to what remedial action is required, depending on the severity of the errors made;
- If both audits are failed, the assessor is automatically suspended from the Scheme, until remedial action is undertaken. An appeal will not necessarily remove a suspension following the failure of both targeted audits;
- Where an EA is identified as requiring remedial training, Qidos will identify the requirements and ensure that the remedial training is undertaken. We aim to complete any remedial action within 5-10 working days;
- Upon return to the scheme, escalation procedures are implemented that will see the assessor audited on 10% of EPCs lodged for the following six months. If the assessor

does not undertake the required remedial action, then they may be expelled from the scheme.

Scheme Auditing – Not due to QA Failure

As an accreditation scheme, we have an obligation to undertake additional audits for the following scenarios:

- Over-use of telephone helpdesk or Support Log;
- Customer complaints.

Whilst complaints will generally result in the questioned EPC being requested for audit, the other two scenarios require two EPCs to be audited. These types of auditing request have a 15-working day upload time limit.

Appeals

If you genuinely believe that an EPC has been incorrectly assessed, you have the opportunity of lodging an appeal against the decision. Within the *'Upload for QA'* section, 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 EA'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 targeted audits. Appeals made after this time will not necessarily remove an account suspension.

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.

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.quidos.co.uk>; alternatively, you can send an email which will log a support ticket to support@quidos.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.

As previously noted, whilst we appreciate that Energy Assessors have a right to contact the technical support team if they have a query, the over-use of these support channels will result in targeted auditing to confirm your confidence in completing EPCs.

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 Failure	There are FOUR reasons for an audit failure: <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
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
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
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.
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 – Document that all accrediting bodies must adhere to
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

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
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)	Identification of targeted audits	10 Working Days	Targeted audits will be sent following the end of appeal period	
Target request for audit evidence	Evidence uploaded to iQ-Energy	5 Working Days	5 working day extension for illness, hols, etc	Suspension if failure to upload
Audit feedback (failure x2)	Remedial Action	Assessors will automatically be suspended if they fail both targeted audits, pending completion of remedial action.		

APPENDIX B: Minimum Evidencing Requirements

	Required Evidence	Notes
AS DESIGNED CALCULATIONS	Date File used to calculate the EPC	<i>This should be the data file used to calculate and lodge the EPC and enable the QAA to recalculate the EPC</i>
	Design Floor plans, Elevations, Sections, etc used to support the calculations used in the EPC	<i>The drawings provided should provide sufficient details to allow the QAA to confirm measurements of the following;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Internal Perimeters</i> • <i>Internal Floor Areas</i> • <i>Warmer Living Areas</i> • <i>Storey Heights</i> • <i>Roof Areas</i> • <i>Wall Areas</i> • <i>Window / Door sizes</i>
	Thermal bridging lengths	<i>Assessors should provide sufficient information for the QAA to be able to replicate any Thermal bridging details used in the calculation.</i> <i>Where thermal bridging psi values have been calculated, the assessor should provide details of the individual that calculated and details to confirm that they are suitably qualified to produce such calculations.</i>
	Building services equipment	<i>Specification notes must be included for all building services equipment installed within the building and any other non-dimensional information required to recalculate the EPC.</i>
	Evidence required to justify the inclusion or suppression of recommendations	<i>Where the energy assessor has either included additional recommendations, or suppressed recommendations generated by the software, the EA shall provide notes as to the why this change has been made.</i>
	Manual Calculations undertaken in line with SAP 'Appendices', 'innovative energy saving features' and any evidence used to support these calculations	<i>Manual data input into SAP using SAP Appendix Q criteria shall be checked, as will any innovative energy saving measures.</i> <i>Non-provision of supporting evidence shall result in the EPC being classified as defective if the manual data input results in a total absolute DER error outside of the QA requirements. QAAs shall apply their judgement as to whether the level of evidence provided by the EA is acceptable.</i>
	Specification notes and U-value calculations	<i>Where EAs have calculated U values based on BR443, these calculations shall be provided.</i>
AS BUILT CHECKS	Statement from the developer or equivalent person who is the client for the building construction	<i>This must confirm that the construction is in line with the design, or if not then it must record what differences have been incorporated between design and build.</i>
	Copy of the Pressure test certificate	<i>Confirming the relevance of the certificate to the building being accessed</i>
	Copy of the Accredited Construction Details (ACD) certificate <i>(where applicable)</i>	
		<i>Any other evidence required to justify suppression or inclusion of additional recommendations (E.g. insulation certificates, MCS, FENSA, building control completion certification)</i>

APPENDIX C: EPC Auditing Process

