



Title: DEA Quality Assurance Standards
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Issued By: David Jones **Date:** 04/01/2016
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Revision History

Issue	Issued	Approved	Reviewed
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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 QA requirements are in place:

- A minimum 2% of all EPCs lodged through the scheme are audited
- Every active member is audited at least once every yearly quarter
- Members are audited on at least 1% of their lodged reports
- Each new member is audited within 30 days of joining the scheme

There are other circumstances which would require QA checks:

- Excessive use of the Quidos help desk
- Customer complaints
- High lodgement rates (in excess of 120 lodgements a month)

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. If you do not provide evidence for a given element, i.e. TRVs, the auditor has to proceed and complete the audit as though the particular element is not present, which will often result in an audit failure. If you are able to provide these evidence once the audit feedback has been sent, we can decide that the EPC will not require re-lodgement, but the audit will still be a fail.

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

For Quality Assurance checking, we require the following basic evidence provided:

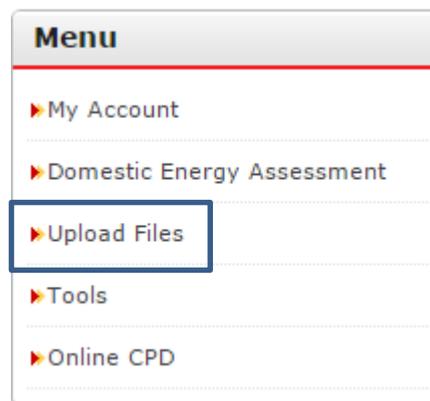
- **Field Sheets** – Your field sheets are your most important asset while on site. Ensuring clear and concise notes, as well as clarification on any issues, is essential to completing an excellent survey. Field sheets should be used to explain missing evidence or access issues.
- **Site Plan** – a sketch plan covering all levels, annotated with measurements, areas, heated rooms, as well as party and heat loss walls.
- **Completed EPC** – the completed certificate lodged onto the correct EPC register.
- **Photographic Evidence** – this sort of evidence is the most helpful to an auditor checking your EPC. Your photographic evidence should be able to justify all of your data entries in iQ-Energy. The following list is the basic evidence that an assessor should be taking whilst on-site, and must be included for auditing purposes:
 - Front/rear/side elevations
 - Evidence of wall insulation
 - Evidence of wall thickness (image should provide context to thickness of wall; e.g. with a tape measure/ruler)
 - Roof construction
 - Openings – windows, chimneys etc
 - Glazing type – date stamps, gaps thickness
 - Loft insulation (providing evidence of insulation depth)

- Primary heating system(s)
 - Heating controls
 - Secondary heating system(s)
 - Hot water cylinder and stat
 - Electricity/gas meters
 - Low-energy lighting
 - Conservatory (showing whether separated)
 - Evidence of corridor (heated/unheated) for flats/maisonettes
 - Any other key feature not covered above (i.e. solar panels, wind turbines)
- **Additional Evidence** – this should include justification for why key element associated with the inspection have not been completed (e.g. sealed loft hatch, locked meter cupboard), and also any secondary documentation used to justify the overwriting of any of the default values within the software (for example: solar panel information, wall/room-in-roof U-Values).

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.

Photographic evidence is of particular importance. Photographic evidence should include a date-stamp, 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. 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.

If the photographic evidence is deemed to be of underwhelming quality, the assessor will be warned 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, and the assessor will require further targeted QA.

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 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 one of the following three 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 sufficiently inaccurate such that it brings into question the accuracy of the rating. 'Sufficiently inaccurate' 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.

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.

If an audit fails due to insufficient evidence, an EA will not need to re-lodge the EPC or upload any additional files.

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 Quidos to carry out further checks on an EA's competence in their role. There are a number of different routes which might lead to an assessor to require 'targeted auditing', but the most common 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, Quidos 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.

Targeted Auditing – Not due to QA Failure

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

- High lodgements (more than 120 in a month)
- Over-use of 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 targeted auditing requests have a 15-working day upload time limit.

High lodgement auditing is usually a photographic audit. Only the photographic evidence for two, randomly selected, EPCs is required to be uploaded.

Appeals

If you believe that an EPC has been incorrectly assessed, we strongly recommend 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.

In order to speed up the QA process, we would ask assessors to make appeals within 10-working days of the audit feedback.

Moving forward

In applying these strict 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 Quidos 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.

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: EPC Auditing Process

