



Title: Qidos QA Standards for DEAs
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Revision History

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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 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 quarter;
- 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.

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

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, i.e. TRVs, 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.

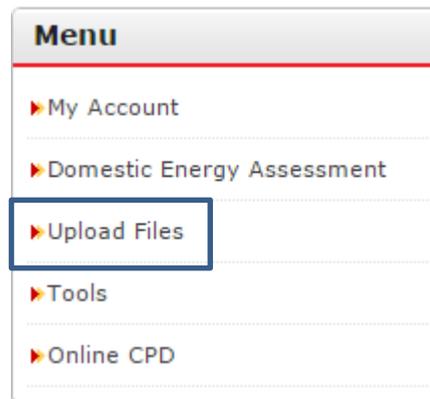
The full details of the minimum evidence which must be provided for Quality Assurance check can be found in **Appendix B** of this document.

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.

Photographic evidence is of particular importance, ensuring that they are clear and in context for the purposes required. All photographic evidence must include a date-stamp within the image, and 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, resulting in an audit failure, with the DEA requiring 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 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 Quidos 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, 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.

Scheme Auditing – Not due to QA Failure

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

- High lodgements (more than 120 in a month);
- 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.

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 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 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.

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 |
| Metadata | Information stored by an image file when the image is taken. Includes date, time, and possible GPS location. |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| 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 |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| EPC | <i>A copy of the lodged EPC to be provided</i> |
| On-site data collection sheets | <i>Field sheets; Site Notes produced from mobile App</i> |
| Floor plan | <i>E.g. sketch showing all levels, measurements, heated rooms, HLP/party walls, calculations</i> |
| Site notes | <i>Written notes of anything that would support your decision-making, thoughts, or amendments to recommendations (property age, construction, heating system notes, etc.) – NOT SAME AS DATA COLLECTION SHEETS (site notes may be supplementary to field sheets, but not in place of)</i> |
| Photographic Evidence: | Photos must be date-stamped within image and metadata retained |
| Front elevation | |
| Rear elevation | |
| Side elevation | <i>Applicable for detached or semi-detached dwellings</i> |
| Wall insulation | <i>Showing clear evidence of insulation (i.e. drill pattern); certification</i> |
| Roof construction | |
| Openings | <i>Window, open chimneys, feature not noted in other images</i> |
| Window glazing age/gap | |
| Primary heating system | <i>Boiler identification plate and other features</i> |
| Heating system controls | <i>All appropriate controls</i> |
| Secondary heating systems | <i>Open fires, fixed room heaters</i> |
| Heating fuel (Main/Secondary) | <i>Connected gas/LPG, mineral, wood, dual etc.</i> |
| Loft insulation | <i>In context (E.g. solid ruler demonstrating thickness)</i> |
| Evidence of wall thickness | <i>In context (E.g. measured with tape)</i> |
| Conservatory | <i>Separation; Heated?</i> |
| Water heating system | <i>Cylinder size, insulation thickness, cylinderstat</i> |
| Electricity Meter | <i>Taken to confirm tariff; accessibility</i> |
| Gas Meter | <i>Taken to confirm fuel; accessibility</i> |
| Low-Energy Lighting | <i>LED, CFL, LFL ONLY</i> |
| Additional features | <i>Other feature of the building or limitation whose presence or absence may be reasonably considered likely to affect the SAP rating (e.g. showers, renewables, FGHRs)</i> |
| | <i>Evidence that inspection of a particular element is impractical</i> |
| | <i>Any other evidence required to justify suppression or inclusion of additional recommendations (E.g. insulation certificates, MCS, FENSA, building control completion certificate)</i> |

APPENDIX C: EPC Auditing Process

