

Qualification for Task?

A Discussion document

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Background

Since the 1970s the forest industry has had an active training and qualification system specific to firstly harvesting and then silviculture. The industry has been proactive in developing this system and often well ahead of other industry training and qualification systems.

In the 1990s the forest industry made 2 key policy statements that resulted in a huge uptake in training and qualification across the industry and ultimately the development of the LFITB and FITEC organisations which managed the system for the industry. Those statements required forestry workers to hold the qualification for the job they are doing or be training towards that qualification.

Since the 1970's, the training and qualification systems have undergone a number of significant changes which have seen a weakening from the original intent of the forest industry to have everyone qualified for the job they are doing.

Most importantly the industry has unintentionally moved away from all the skills and knowledge required to undertake a role to focusing on one small aspect of that role. Namely a single unit standard.

In conjunction with this change in focus, the forestry ITO and other providers have continued to struggle with lowering uptake of forestry qualifications. This has been identified as a real concern by the industry and without some form of intervention these organisations may become unsustainable.

This discussion document proposes, that as has been done historically, the forest industry communicates a national policy that:

“All harvesting and forestry workers shall either hold the National Qualification for the task they are doing or be in a signed training agreement with a suitable provider to achieve that National Qualification.”

“Where no appropriate National Qualification exists for the role they are doing, the attainment of the relevant unit standards may suffice”

The implementation of this policy will serve two key purposes.

1. Remove the focus from single unit standards to a national qualification that the industry has already agreed covers all the skills and knowledge required to fulfill that role.
2. The industry training and qualification providers will receive a kick start as employers and forest owners move to meet the requirements of the policy.

The history of training and qualification in forestry

1970s to 1992 - The forestry industry had its own set of logging qualifications for harvesting workers, called the Loggers Certificate. It consisted of Logger 3, 2, 1 and Senior logger. These different levels encompassed a series of tasks. If a person met the standards of the Senior Logger, they were able to demonstrate their competency in skid work, breaking out, tree felling and machine operation. Loggers were issued with a small book that recorded their assessment and importantly what they were doing at the time and where.

A full set of standards, quality assurance etc was administered by an industry funded organisation called the Logging and Forest Industry Training Board (LFITB). The LFITB was almost totally funded and directed by the 3 largest forest owners, NZ Forest Products, Tasman Forestry and Forestry Corporation of NZ.

Importantly, the majority of trainer/assessors were employed by the 3 largest forest owners with significant infrastructure and resourcing allocated to this area.

A copy of the original standards is shown below.

LEVELS OF SKILL & EXPERIENCE

Logger III

This level of the Certificate can be gained by the applicant having:

- Satisfied General Requirements
- Spent at least 80 days working in a logging operation of which 60 days must have been spent operating a chainsaw, limbing, trimming and cutting to length in a production situation.
- Demonstrated the ability to maintain, sharpen and operate a chainsaw efficiently. (Training Guides, "The Chainsaw" 1-6).
- Shown a sound knowledge of relevant sections of the "Safety Code for Bush Undertakings".
- Demonstrated practical skills and knowledge to the standards required in "Practical & Verbal Assessments - Logger III".

Logger II - Tractor/Skidder

This level of the certificate can be gained by the applicant having:
Been assessed and passed the requirements for logger III

- Spent at least 240 days working in a logging operation, 120 of which must have been spent breaking out for a tractor/skidder in a production situation.
- Shown a sound knowledge of the relevant sections of the "Safety Code for Bush Undertakings".
- Demonstrated the ability to plan the extraction of logs safely and efficiently from the felling face to the landing
- Demonstrated practical skills and knowledge to the standards required in "Practical & Verbal Assessments, Logger II Tractor/skidder".
- Demonstrated a sound knowledge of all signals relevant to the operation.

Logger II - Cable Hauler

This level of the certificate can be gained by the applicant having:
-Been assessed and passed the requirements for Logger III.
-Spent at least 240 days working in a logging operation, 160 days of which must have been spent breaking out in a cable logging operation.
-Shown a sound knowledge of the relevant sections of the "Safety Code for Bush Undertakings".

- Demonstrated the ability to plan the extraction of logs safely and efficiently from the felling face to the landing.
- Demonstrated a sound knowledge of all signals, visual and audio, recommended in "Recommended Signals Code", plus any signals used in local conditions.
- Demonstrated the ability to recognise faults in ropes, blocks, rigging, etc., and demonstrate competence in any rope or block changes.
- Demonstrated practical skills and knowledge to the standard required in "Practical & Verbal Assessments, Logger II - Cable Hauler".

Logger I

- This level of the certificate can be gained by the applicant having:
- Been assessed and passed the requirements for Logger III.
 - Spent at least 480 days working in a logging operation of which 160 days must have been spent felling trees in a production situation.
 - Shown a thorough knowledge of all relevant sections of the "Safety Code for Bush Undertakings".
 - Demonstrated the ability to fell trees

- involved in that operation.
- Spent at least 480 days working in a logging operation of which 160 days must have been spent operating that type of machine in a production situation.
 - Demonstrated a sound knowledge of relevant sections of the "Safety Code for Bush Undertakings".
 - Demonstrated a sound knowledge of the machine's maintenance requirements.
 - Demonstrated the practical skills and knowledge required in "Practical and Verbal Assessment - Machine Operator".
 - Demonstrated any special skill and knowledge required for that specific machine, i.e. tractor, skidder, hauler operator must have gained the Special Skill for rope splicing.
 - To be certificated on a tractor/skidder, or hauler, the operator must hold the corresponding Logger II certificate.

Senior Logger

- This level of the certificate can be gained by the applicant having:
- Spent at least 950 days working in a logging operation.

safely, efficiently with minimum wastage, using felling aids and recognised felling techniques (Training Guides - "Tree Felling" 1-6).

- Demonstrated the ability to recognise the hazards involved in felling trees and how to overcome or eliminate these hazards.
- Demonstrated the practical skills & knowledge to the standard required in "Practical and Verbal Assessments - Logger I".

Logger I - Indigenous

When the applicant wishes to be assessed in this type of operation, 160 days must have been spent felling in an indigenous logging operation in addition to any exotic felling experience. All Logger I standards will apply, with special emphasis being placed on tree species and characteristics when making each tree assessment.

Machine Operator

This level of the certificate can be gained by the applicant having:

- Satisfied "General Requirements".
- Demonstrated a general knowledge of the requirements for the ground work

- Gained certification for Logger III, II, I.
- Gained certification for Machine Operator.
- Correctly answered the questions in "Verbal Assessment - Senior Logger".
- Sets a good example and maintains a profession attitude in all aspects of logging. (Applicant will again be required to demonstrate the appropriate practical skills for all certificate levels previously gained).

Special Skills

Generally speaking, Special Skills are those for which clearly defined standards of achievement cannot be laid down. However, the applicant will be required to present some proof of skill or knowledge such as a practical demonstration, or an appropriate certificate, or confirmation from an employer, or meet any special requirements for that skill as determined by the L & F I T B. Such skills include rigging and setting up of hauler systems, preparation of strops, rope splicing, repair and maintenance of chainsaws, holding a current St Johns First Aid Certificate, log making etc.

1990 - FITEC was formed by NZ Forest Owners as an advisory committee. The LFITB became a separate organisation contracted to FITEC to deliver training and assessment to the industry and as such began to provide training and assessment directly as well as quality

assurance. The training and assessment service to the industry was still totally funded by the forest industry.

1992 - The Loggers Certificate was converted into modules under the NZ Qualifications Authority which more represented the skills and knowledge required by task. Modules were very similar in content to a current LCP or SCP and specific to a defined task.

Silviculture was also included in the module system and cable logging was differentiated from ground-based logging. Those loggers with a Loggers Certificate had their competency recognised with certain tasks transposed into the new module system.

The situation in which the logger attained their Logging Certificate was carried over to the module system as well. E.g. if the loggers book said he was tree felling in production thinning, then he was given the Production Thinning Tree Felling module.

There were 2 National Certificates in Harvesting. Ground Based and Cable, and one National Certificate in Silviculture. The National Certificates were achieved when a person had completed 13 modules and was a fairly rare qualification as it was very difficult to pass 13 modules.

It is important to note that both the Logger's Certificate and the module system recognised the total competency of the forestry worker in a specific task with the assessments covering a wide range of knowledge and practical skills. As such the assessments were large and lengthy and often carried out over a number of days.

1992 - FITEC became an Industry Training Organisation (ITO), partly funded under the Industry Training act and responsible for standard setting with the industry, quality control and industry consultation. The process was now in place to formally consult with industry and set qualification standards appropriate to roles within forestry.

The LFITB became a privately owned provider on its own merit being bought by two employees of the LFITB at the time. The Forest Owners Association continued to part fund FITEC.

1994 - The NZ Forest Owners put out a policy that 'by 1996 all workers will be either qualified or under training for the qualification'.

The uptake of training from this point was massive with many trainers and assessors in full time work. Employers, forest owners and the industry, monitored and reported progress against the NZFOA policy statement.

It is at this point where the term 'module for task' was born and is still quoted by some within the industry today.

1995 - The major forest owners dropped their fulltime trainer/assessors and they either became private contractors working directly to and paid by contractors or moved into other roles with the forest owner. Most private trainer/assessor contractors did not survive in this role for more than a year without the support of forest owners and found employment elsewhere.

At this point, there was a conscious move within the forest industry's major companies to move the responsibility and cost of forestry training directly onto the employer having previously been funded by forest owners.

1996 - The module system was converted to unit standards and National Certificates as we know them today. Those workers who held modules had those converted into units with the now recognisable Records of Learning. Generally, a module equated to 2 or 3 unit standards.

However, many of the high-level forestry units were not transferred and had to be reassessed. There were also many forestry workers who did not get transposed over due to failings in the administration systems of the time.

1996 - NZ Forest Owners amended their policy statement on training to read 'All forest workers shall hold or be under training for the relevant NZQA unit standard for the task they are doing'

As with the previous policy statement in 1994, there was a huge uptake in training and assessment but with the entire focus being on single unit standards.

At this point the industry had unconsciously moved from qualifications reflecting the workers entire role to a single unit that focused on one aspect of the workers role.

There was no industry focus on achievement of the National Certificate for task despite that qualification being set as the standard by the industry via FITEC.

1996 - the LFITB based in Rotorua as a provider started to employ its own assessors and generally undertook most of the training and assessing for the forest industry.

1998 - FITEC began to use Contract or Roving Assessors contracting them directly in competition to the primary provider, LFITB. LFITB began to consolidate its operations to the Central North island.

2009 - the LFITB closed down and FITEC became the main provider of external assessment to the industry.

2013 - FITEC merges with Competenz quoting reduced trainees undertaking qualifications and therefore less government funding and associated services as a key reason for the merger.

Today - anecdotally qualification achievement has continued to decline in the forest industry with many employers opting for single unit assessments or no assessment.

So why a National Qualification?

Since the inception of forestry training and qualification, the industry as a group have set the standards to be met for every role. This setting of standards has never changed even as the qualification systems have changed. Even with the move to Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), industry consultation on standards has remained. In fact, it has probably got stronger as it is now mandated by NZQA as part of the ITO's core duties.

This mandated consultation process is called the Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ). In 2011 as part of the TROQ process, FITEC/Competenz convened several working groups to look at specific areas and tasks in forestry. For example, Tree Felling. These groups were made up of specialists for each area or task and included forest managers, employers, assessors, specialist forestry workers, providers and other interest groups. Working groups were formed across New Zealand to ensure a geographic spread of opinion. In all, over 100 forestry representatives were involved in these working groups.

The key role of each of the working groups was to develop a 'graduate profile' for each area or task. This is what the graduate can do, be and know for each area and at each skill level. As an example, "What is it that a Tree Faller at Level 4 needs to know, do and what should they look like?"

In addition to the meetings of the individual working groups, the forest industry was consulted for feedback on the drafts during the 18 months it took to finalise the graduate profiles. Only once the graduate profile was agreed to by industry could FITEC/Competenz begin to look at what unit standards were required to match the graduate profile.

It was the role of FITEC/Competenz to match unit standards to cover what the industry decided the person needed to know and do. Part of this was ensuring that current unit standards covered exactly what the industry wanted and making changes or creating new unit standards if necessary. As before, the forest industry was consulted widely during the review of the unit standards with working groups formed for the higher risk tasks of tree felling and breaking out for cable operations.

It is the 'National Qualification' that covers the entire role of the forestry worker and not the unit standard. If the forest industry wants forestry workers to have all the skills and knowledge required for the role, they must specify the qualification. A unit standard will only ever cover off a small component of that. Failure to recommend the qualification is going against what the industry originally intended as the benchmark so unintentionally sets a lower standard.

As an example, the level 4 tree faller is accepted as a highly skilled worker able to demonstrate a wide range of skills and knowledge in a role that can pose several risks which need to be managed. Tree felling is a role that garners a lot of attention due to the potential risk demonstrated by the high number of fatal and serious injury accidents.

Yet when the industry asks for evidence of competence in this role, it only asks for the attainment of unit standard 28561 – Plan and Fell trees using advanced techniques in a commercial forest harvesting operation or its earlier version unit standard 17765 - Fell trees in a commercial forest harvesting operation.

In the graphic below several key competencies are listed that do not appear within unit standard 28561 however they do appear in the level 4 qualification for Tree Felling.

Are these Competencies important for a Level 4 Tree Faller?



Knowledge

- H&S duties of an employee
- How to identify and manage stress and fatigue
- Understanding of induction, training and supervision
- Know the industry's and employers D&A testing and management process
- Ways to minimize damage to the environment in general, specific to their operation and for their particular role.
- Know the correct rules and procedures around road control when tree felling
- Know the correct rules and techniques around machine assisted tree felling
- How to respond in an emergency

Skills

- Demonstrate the correct set up of traffic control signs, banners and procedures for roadside tree felling
- Demonstrate felling of difficult trees with machine assistance
- Demonstrate how to manage the site of an emergency in the event of one occurring

Competency. Unit standard or National Qualification?

The Approved Code of Practice for Safety and Health in Forest Operations (ACOP) states:

1. Every person undertaking any forestry work shall be either under documented training and close supervision or deemed competent.
2. Where a worker has been deemed competent the company shall have detailed documents showing:
 - the task the worker was carrying out
 - the situation the task was being carried out in
 - the person who deemed the worker competent and their qualifications and/or experience
 - how long the competency assessment took and when it was carried out
 - what visual demonstrations were observed?
 - the process of assessment used to deem the person competent

The deeming of competency does not specify the attainment of any formal qualification and there is no legal obligation to have a worker 'qualified' for task. However, over time the industry and the regulator have fallen back to qualifications as a measure of competency as bullet points 3 and 6 (underlined) are easily satisfied by the attainment of a qualification.

Unintentionally the industry, including the regulator, has begun to see the holding of a single unit standard as a measure of a worker's current competence. Advertising for forestry workers and stating they must hold the unit is an example of this. WorkSafe inspectors and forest owner staff asking if a worker holds the unit rather than 'are they competent' is another example. Competency is a far tougher test. As an example, a person may hold all their Tree Felling units and the level 4 National Certificate in Tree Felling awarded in 2006. They may even have the skills, but lack the work fitness and may never have felled trees in a hauler operation. Are they competent to fell trees in a professional capacity?

We can understand why the forest industry and WorkSafe want to set standards around qualification. However, if forest owners wish to use qualifications as an indicator of compliance or competence, then I would strongly suggest that they look at the National Qualification rather than individual unit standards.

This does not however remove the need for an employer to constantly deem their workers as competent as defined in the ACOP.

Reasons not to

Most often the biggest barrier to the achievement of National Qualifications are employers. The main issues raised by employers are listed below. All are misconceptions and easily answered through clear communication.

1. If I spend money on them, they only leave, and I have wasted the money.

The reality - Yes, the forest industry does experience high turnover which has been quantified in historical research reports and noted anecdotally in organisations like FITEC that try to keep employee lists for employers. However, it is short sighted for employers to grumble about spending money on a worker when they subsequently leave as the next employee is likely qualified at some level therefore the employer is reaping the benefit of some other employers' investment. To be fair they should write out a cheque and send it to that new employee's previous employer.

Research has also proved that a worker that has received an investment in training is twice as likely to stay.

2. It is too expensive.

The reality - No. In almost all cases it is far cheaper to complete an entire National Qualification compared to a single unit standard and associated pre-requisite units. The government subsidises all National Qualifications through the ITO and providers. Normally if an employer went through an ITO, they only pay 30% of the cost of a National Qualification compared to 100% of a single unit standard.

As a comparison, here are the Competenz costs of the Level 4 Tree Felling qualification versus unit for task.

Note - The cost of achieving unit standards 17769 – General Requirements, 22994 - DKO factors that affect the performance of forestry workers and 17772 - DKO environmental requirements in forestry operations have been included as pre-requisites.

Note 2 – It has been assumed the Workplace Assessor has been approved to assess all the unit standards contained in the qualification. This is not normally the case and contract assessors may be needed for some units so the real cost would be somewhere between Contract Assessor and Workplace Assessor.

	Contract/Roving Assessor		Workplace Assessor	
	Qualification	Unit for task	Qualification	Unit for task
Worker holds pre-requisites and/or level 3 qualification	\$965.00	\$1375.00	\$50.00	\$500.00
Worker has no pre-requisites or level 3 qualifications	\$1445.00	\$3135.00	\$100.00	\$1390.00

A Contract or Roving Assessor is a self employed individual who can assess across multiple workplaces but only by agreement with Competenz. Any assessment materials must be pre moderated and any assessments and credits achieved must be reported through Competenz

A Workplace Assessor is generally an employee of a forestry contractor and can only assess for their workplace using Competenz assessment material and report assessments through Competenz.

Once a level 3 or level 4 National Qualification has been attained, the next qualifications at that level are significantly cheaper as the core units are common across all the qualifications so only done once.

For those employers of sufficient scale, it is always an option to have their own Workplace Assessors. There are very specific quality, quantity, and scope requirements around this, but it could be worth contacting the ITO and asking.

Note: Recently the government announced they would 100% subsidise forestry training and assessment if working toward a National Qualification.

3. I cannot get any assessors.

Reality – Yes there is shortage of contract assessors but this primarily due to the low uptake of qualifications and the unreliability of assessment as an income stream. Currently, very few contract assessors rely on assessment as their sole income.

Employers must shoulder much of the blame for this as assessment achievement has always been very unreliable. Contract assessors are often asked at short notice to assess units to meet forest owner requirements with little regard to the contract assessor's schedule or making the day worthwhile financially. Add to that last-minute cancellations and the lack of preparation by those being assessed and you see why contract assessors look for alternative work.

Employers need to remember that contract assessors are paid on results and not on hours spent or kilometers travelled.

You would hope that a sustained increase in assessment activity by introducing Qualification for Task would lead to an increase in assessor numbers and availability.

4. My men don't want to go into a classroom. That's why they left school and started in the bush.

Reality – Yes that is true. However, there is a very low level of theory/classroom type content in all the forestry qualifications. The design of the qualifications was purposely set up that way after consultation with the industry during the TRoQ process. For example, there is about 1 day of classroom type assessment in Tree felling level 4.

But.....there are some units done better in a classroom on a Saturday morning with an assessor that specializes in that area and has created a relevant and informative assessment specific to the trainees operation. Most class sessions are done on a morning and finish at lunchtime. Attention spans do not tend to last an entire day. Another valuable feature of the classroom type assessment is the interaction with other trainees and the learnings from discussing real life experiences.

Despite initial concerns from trainees around attending these types of courses, it is my experience that they are pleasantly surprised and will often go up to the assessor after the course and thank them.

There is also the option of doing the unit standards as homework or on site, but trainees generally do not get as much benefit/learning from this form of assessment as they would from a classroom set up.

But remember they only have to do them once.

5. They don't need those theory units.

Reality – Yes they do. The industry has already agreed that the content of the theory units is important to their role. It is part of what they must know.

So in summary there are no valid reasons not to specify National Qualification for Task as forest industry policy.

All it takes is the desire to do it.

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