

SEC GROUP

Core Criteria for assessing Contractor Safety



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Many contractors undergo 'pre-qualification' or 'Stage 1' assessments from clients or major contractors when tendering for work. These assessments look for evidence of contractors' basic health and safety credentials. Unfortunately, many contractors have to prove their credentials time and again, to a range of clients or health and safety assessment schemes. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) "unnecessary bureaucracy associated with competency assessment obscures health and safety issues and diverts effort away from them".

To help address this problem, the HSE has worked with SEC Group and others to develop a set of 'core criteria' against which they recommend competence should be assessed. The core criteria are based on the key requirements in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and they are included in the Approved Code of Practice to CDM 2007.

SEC Group fully supports the need for nationally recognised 'core criteria' for health and safety 'pre-qualification'. SEC believe that clients, major contractors and their own members will benefit from a universally recognised approach to pre-qualification.

These core criteria state clearly what contractors should be doing to meet clients' basic health and safety requirements. As such, they provide clients and contractors with a clear picture of what 'good' looks like. Other key industry players such as the Construction Confederation, which includes the Major Contractors' Group, and the 'CHAS'

health and safety assessment scheme have also expressed their support for the guidelines.

The core criteria are *not* yet another health and safety pre-qualification scheme. They should, however, help to resolve the confusion and administrative burdens associated with an array of existing UK pre-qualification schemes. While clients and major contractors will find the criteria are a valuable guide for Stage 1 assessment, they can still ask for further information, if necessary, to ensure health and safety on-site (e.g. for specific types of work, or for 'Stage 2' enquiries).

In addition to providing essential guidance to construction clients and contractors, the criteria should also benefit other sectors, since virtually every company takes on contractors at some time. SEC Group also recommends that clients and contractors engaged in routine maintenance work or the provision of 'one off' services adopt these guidelines.

RECOMMENDED 'CORE CRITERIA' FOR ASSESSING CONTRACTORS' BASIC HEALTH AND SAFETY CAPABILITIES

SEC Group, with the support of the HSE, recommend that a 'Stage 1' (or pre-qualification) assessment should consider the 'core criteria' below. Column 1 shows 12 basic criteria, and Column 2 lists standards against which a client's, or major contractor's assessment can be made.

	CORE CRITERIA	STANDARD TO BE ACHIEVED (BY THE CONTRACTOR)
1	H&S policy and organisation (five employees or over)	Have and implement an appropriate policy, regularly reviewed, and signed by the MD or equivalent. The policy should be relevant to the nature and scale of the work and set out responsibilities for health and safety (H&S) management at all levels in the company.
2	Arrangements for ensuring H&S measures	These should set out the arrangements for H&S management and should be relevant to the nature and scale of the work. They should set out how the company will discharge duties under CDM 2007 and other relevant H&S legislation, with a clear indication of how these arrangements are communicated to the workforce.
3	Competent advice - company and construction/sector related	The company and its employees must have ready access to competent H&S advice, preferably from within the company. The advisors must be able to provide general H&S advice, and advice relating to H&S issues on site.
4	Training and Information	Have in place, and implement, training arrangements to ensure employees have sufficient skills and understanding to discharge their various duties. Have a programme of refresher training (e.g. a CPD programme or life long learning) that will keep employees updated on legislation and good H&S practice. This applies throughout the company from top management to trainees.
5	Individual qualifications and experience	Employees should have the appropriate qualifications and experience for the assigned tasks, unless they are under controlled and competent supervision.
6	Monitoring, audit and review	Have a system for monitoring procedures, for auditing them at periodic intervals, and for reviewing them on an on-going basis.
7	Workforce involvement	Have, and implement, an established means of consulting with the workforce on H&S.
8	Accident reporting and enforcement action; follow up investigation	Records of all RIDDOR-reportable events for at least the last three years. Have a system for reviewing other incidents, and recording the action taken as a result. Record any enforcement action taken against the company in the last five years, and action taken to remedy any enforcement-related issues.
9	Sub-contracting/ consulting procedures (if applicable)	Have arrangements for appointing competent sub-contractors/consultants. Be able to demonstrate how to ensure that sub-contractors will also have arrangements for appointing competent sub-contractors or consultants. Have arrangements for monitoring sub-contractor performance.
10	Risk assessment (leading to a safe method of work if necessary)	Have procedures in place for carrying out risk assessments and for developing and implementing safe systems of work/ method statements. Note: this <i>should include</i> occupational health issues.
11	Co-operating with others and co-ordinating work with other contractors	Illustrate how co-operation and co-ordination of the work is achieved in practice, and how others are involved in drawing up method statements/safe systems of work.
12	Welfare provision	Able to show how the appropriate welfare facilities will be in place <i>before</i> people start work on site.

Further information on the core criteria is available in the Approved Code of Practice to the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2007 (CDM 2007).

HSE emphasises the importance of using 'judgment' when deciding whether or not the evidence submitted meets the standards in the core criteria. HSE also reassures those making these decisions that, as long as the judgment is reasonable, and based on the evidence asked for and provided, it is unlikely they will be criticised if the contractor subsequently proves to be incompetent.

As such, SEC Group, with the support of the HSE, actively encourage:

- Clients and major contractors to consider the core criteria when setting their own Stage 1 requirements or when adopting a health and safety assessment scheme;
- Clients, major contractors and assessment schemes to improve mutual recognition, and convergence, between their various schemes, in line with the new criteria;
- trade associations and other stakeholders to target their training and information to members to help their members to comply with the criteria;
- trade associations to take the criteria into account when assessing the competency of their members.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE 'CORE CRITERIA', CONTACT

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The SEC Group is an umbrella representative body in the construction industry. Its membership consists of the industry's six premier trade associations: Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors (APHC), British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA), Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA), Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association (HVCA), Lift and Escalator Industry Association (LEIA) and SELECT (Electrical Contractors' Association of Scotland). Together these bodies represent a sector comprising 60,000 firms and a workforce of more than 300,000.

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