RINGA HORA
Services
Workforce Development Council

Quality Assurance Findings

Security Industry 2024

Introduction

This report summarises the findings from the Ringa Hora Quality Assurance focus on security providers during 2024. The purpose of our focus was to gain an understanding of the current delivery and assessment of security training, and to establish if improvements can be made for delivery of security unit standards, with a primary focus on the Certificate of Approval (CoA) unit standards.

There are 36 unit standards relating to the security sector covering Level 2 to Level 6. These include the mandatory three unit standards as part of the Certificate of Approval (CoA). CoA is a minimum requirement for working in the industry as a security guard, and forms part of the New Zealand Certificate in Security (Foundation) (Level 3).

There are two main qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) for security:

- New Zealand Certificate in Security (Foundation) (Level 3)

- New Zealand Certificate in Security (Intermediate) (Level 4)

The industry is actively working to increase training provision to better meet workforce needs, including updating assessment materials and participating in developing new skill standards and reviewing unit standards.

Quality Assurance Activities undertaken to date

Continuing on from paper-based post-moderation activities in 2022 and 2023, in 2024 the Ringa Hora Quality Assurance team undertook the following:

- Visited (in person or met through Teams) providers who reported CoA unit standards in 2023 (See attached site visit engagement document):
    - 16 providers reported credits
    - 12 providers were visited in 2024
    - 1 provider had already had a 2023 visit
    - 3 providers were no longer offering CoA unit standards
    - 3 providers we were unable to visit.
- Gathered insights from participation in CoA skills standard developments
- Gathered insights from participation in bi-monthly hui NZ Security Association Special Interest Group (SIG) for security training and professional development.

Pre-assessment moderation

Ringa Hora remains committed to supporting best practice assessment in the security industry.

In conjunction with NZQA guidance on the appropriate use of multichoice questions, Ringa Hora is supporting Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) to review their use for "describe and explain" requirements. Multichoice assessments that had been developed and approved by the previous SSB are no longer available to TEOs. This change has led to an increase in providers submitting assessment materials for pre-assessment moderation approval.

One provider has noted that, as a result of our findings from other sectors, and the positive feedback they received from learners on the removal of multichoice questions from assessments, they are undertaking work to rewrite assessments across the Level 3 and 4 Security qualifications. They aim to remove multichoice questions and create more robust assessments.

Post-assessment moderation

No post-assessment moderation was scheduled for security for 2024. Instead, Ringa Hora decided to build upon last year's findings by engaging with providers who reported unit standards in the security industry in 2023. The aim was to shift the focus from paper-based moderation to gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges providers face. This approach seeks to develop a more comprehensive narrative on how to enhance the quality of training and assessment moving forward.

The sector summary from 2023 indicated that, of the samples moderated, the overall post-assessment moderation results met the national standard, though some improvements were needed:

- Post-assessment moderation, none called in 2024, however 2023 as below:
    - 22 unit standards called in
    - 15 providers moderated
    - 2 not acceptable with improvement plans requested

- 7 unit standards were given feedback for improvement.
- Common areas that require strengthening were:
  - Observation notes and detail
  - Brevity of learner responses
  - Assessments marked as complete where learners have not completed all answers
  - Inconsistency of marking process.
- Areas where further development and improvement plans were required had the following common findings:
  - Different versions of assessments, not in line with marking documentation
  - Inconsistency of marking, questioning the integrity of the assessment
  - Insufficient observation notes
  - Materials not pre-moderated by the SSB before using for assessment
  - Expired versions used.

Overall Findings

Assessment material

As noted above, some assessment material is still in circulation that was approved by the previous standard-setting body (SSB), which would benefit from a review and refresh. However, our observations have also seen some good examples of theory and practical assessment occurring. While post-assessment moderation often finds the theory assessments acceptable, we, in some instances, lack sufficient confidence that when combined with practical assessment, learners would have adequately demonstrated achievement of the unit standards.

Delivery duration

The delivery and assessment duration from some providers does not meet the notional learning hours required by the unit standards. This fails to ensure that guards adequately acquire the necessary skills and knowledge. Specifically, the practical unit standard US 27361 - Manage conflict situations in a security context (4 credits), is often delivered and assessed in just one day. Our observations and feedback from provider interviews indicate that this is insufficient. We recognise that commercial pressures to quickly and cost-effectively certify guards present barriers to extending the delivery duration and we will work with the sector to find acceptable solutions to address this shortfall.

NZQA definition of Notional learning hours: Notional learning hours comprise all planned learning activities leading toward the achievement of programme or qualification learning outcomes. Ten notional learning hours equals one credit.

Cost of training and time away from work

The cost of CoA training can be a significant barrier for individuals seeking to obtain licences. While some industry stakeholders have expressed a willingness to accept higher costs to enhance safety, the reality is that many guards bear the expense of training themselves. This financial burden is particularly challenging for those who need to obtain their CoA before securing employment.

There is a pressure on providers to deliver CoA training with minimal disruption to the guard's day-to-day duties. Cost and time, combined with the competitive nature of many security providers is a real challenge. Ringa Hora believes a collective approach is required if we are going to be able to shift the dial on this.

Oversight of subcontractors

Whilst there has been numerous feedback from industry about the use of subcontractors, Ringa Hora only came across one instance of a subcontracting arrangement. The provider was reporting credits on behalf of subcontractors without the expected level of oversight and moderation to ensure that delivery is satisfactory. This occurred where workplaces were conducting their own in-house training and using the TEO to report learner credits. This provider is no longer delivering to the security sector and the subcontractor has formalised their arrangement with another provider as a contract assessor.

There were no other findings to support widespread use of subcontractors as suggested by the sector.

Online delivery

Initially, some practical unit standards were delivered and assessed online; a necessity during the COVID lockdowns. However, due to quality assurance activities, this practice has now ceased and is no longer accepted for practical components moving forward.

There is still widespread online delivery of theory unit standards. While this approach should be encouraged to reduce barriers, it often lacks adequate support from the providers.

When done well in a synchronous learning environment, online delivery and assessment of theory unit standards has its place. Additionally, combining it with virtual reality for training could address challenges in training regional employees.

Onsite moderation

As a result of our engagement activities this year, there was an appetite from many providers for Ringa Hora to conduct onsite moderation, and to experience the delivery of US 27361 (practical) in person.

Next steps

Ringa Hora will factor onsite moderation into its 2025 planning. However, other remedial activities should commence straight away where possible.

Encourage the use of collective materials

The New Zealand Security Association (NZSA) is collaborating with a group of dedicated providers to develop CoA assessment materials. The goal is for Ringa Hora to approve these materials through NZSA, ensuring consistent version control and uniformity. The resources would be freely available to all providers, irrespective of their NZSA membership status.

Once the materials are approved, providers must adhere to Ringa Hora moderation requirements as per Consent and Moderation Requirements (CMR) and will not be allowed to make individual modifications to the material. Should there be a need to review material, providers must contact NZSA. Ringa Hora will share with NZSA any moderation findings to help ensure ongoing quality and consistency.

Skill standard development

Once the new skill standards are recognised in the legislation, this will likely cause an increase in pre-assessment moderation traffic.

Mandatory minimum training duration

Implementing minimum training durations for theory standards would be challenging due to the significant amount of self-directed learning currently in place. For practical unit standards, enforcing such durations would have a considerable impact on the industry, as it would necessitate time off the job, likely resulting in costs that would ultimately have to be covered by the employee.

As noted previously, Ringa Hora would like to work with the sector to find acceptable solutions to address this shortfall.

Employer responsibilities

Employers have a level of responsibility to ensure their employees are work fit regardless of when and how the employee has gained their CoA. Several employers indicated their induction processes and subsequent additional upskilling support this, as CoA is seen as a bare minimum. Many employers spoken to have well-structured processes in place. However, there is still widespread concern about the safety of security guards in what is an increasingly dangerous environment.

The length of time employees are engaged in training prior to attending a CoA course could have an impact on notional learning hours; however, it is worth noting that this only affects those already employed on a temporary licence and does not affect those seeking to step into the industry.

Conclusion

Ringa Hora has seen some good examples of delivery and assessment through our Quality Assurance activities. Whilst we have addressed the use of a subcontracting arrangement and the removal of online assessment for practical components, there are more conversations to be had around ensuring we collectively agree on how we address the remaining challenges.

Establishing a delivery duration that works for both employees, employers and providers alike without driving up costs and creating additional barriers is one of those challenges that urgently needs to be resolved. Ringa Hora, as the Standard Setting Body, can enforce TEOs to comply with our CMRs and escalate any noncompliance through to the NZQA risk team, but firstly we would prefer to work with providers and industry to find a solution for this ongoing challenge.

Ringa Hora is also undergoing a review of the current CMRs and will seek input on security specific requirements that relate to the delivery, assessment, and moderation of security unit standards and skills standards. We aim to do this in conjunction with NZSA as they undertake a review of their best practice guidelines. Through our discussions we know there are a number of sector requirements that will sit outside of the mandate of the CMR, and Ringa Hora supports the review and strengthening of the best practice guidelines to ensure they are captured and adopted by industry.

We put the guards and their safety first. How we ensure this first and foremost whilst addressing the historical and ongoing concerns is the priority. The involvement of Ringa Hora in supporting this is limited to within our mandated functions and is very focused on how, from our role, we can work with the sector to support and increase the safety for security guards.