



A look at things (impartially, of course) from a rigging point of view . . .

This month, the Rigging Call column is given over to update readers with progress on the National Rigging Certificate - probably the most significant development in entertainment rigging in the UK since the inversion of the chain hoist.

The scheme is well under way, pilot schemes planned and the first assessments on track for the New Year. I'm advised there have been many obstacles to overcome and there will doubtless be more in the future, but the existence of a National Rigging Certificate is now a reality.

For years, many of the rigging community have been banging on about the lack of a formal method for riggers to demonstrate their competence, especially since there is no current legal requirement to meet a recognised standard. We all know that if the rigging industry doesn't do something itself, someone outside will - potentially something inappropriate to what entertainment industry riggers actually do.

So here's the latest information which explains the scheme and shows just how busy the PLASA team, and the rigging community, have been . . .

It is now a year since PLASA agreed to develop the idea of a National Rigging Certificate. In that year a lot has happened and we are now in a position to give a more detailed update on what the scheme is about and what it means to a potential venue owner, employer or candidate.

What is the overall aim of the scheme?

In simple terms, the aim of the scheme is to create an industry recognised skills card for 'Entertainment Rigging'. The Skills Card will be underpinned by a qualification gained through assessment against a set of written measurable national occupational standards - in other words, a test of an individual's skill against the same agreed national benchmark. The standards once agreed are owned by government and incorporated into a qualification by PLASA. These standards are applied and used for qualifications across many other industries and will give entertainment rigging a recognised status as a profession.

On achieving the criteria in the standards, the candidate is awarded a certificate and a skills-based Photo ID card for that level, as shown below



The card and qualification structure is configured to feature four levels:

- Level 1 – Trainee Rigger
- Level 2 – Rigger
- Level 3 – Rigging Supervisor
- Level 4 – Rigging Manager (Title TBC)

The key difference in the levels is one of responsibility and increased knowledge. These levels equate with the structure used for all UK qualifications - the National Qualifications Framework.

One of the most fundamental aspects of the certificate is that it is an assessment scheme, not a training scheme. It is a standardised measure of an individual's competence. How someone acquires the skills to undertake the assessment is down to the individual - an approach we believe gives choice and flexibility and recognises the value of both formal training courses and work-based learning.

Why do we need this scheme?

There is currently no 'National' formal mechanism in place to assess rigging skills, which makes it quite difficult for freelancers or companies offering rigging services to demonstrate to a potential employer or client their competence to carry out work.

Concerns were also raised amongst the rigging sector that if the rigging industry didn't create a means to demonstrate competence, someone outside the industry would, and it could be a system wholly inappropriate to the work riggers do.

In addition, the need for a Certificate has been strengthened by the recently introduced Working at Height Regulations, where there is a specific requirement that 'all persons working at height are competent to do so'. Whilst the majority of riggers working in the industry today are competent, this provides a mechanism to prove it. The scheme will also provide acknowledgement of 'entertainment rigging' as a profession in its own right and provide clear career choices for new entrants.

Who agreed the standards?

The strength of the scheme is that the benchmarking for rigging skills has been set by members of the Rigging industry itself through the Rigging Advisory Group, which features representatives from companies such as Nippy Industries, Outback Rigging, Summit Steel, Star Rigging, Safe Working Ltd, Total Solutions, The Rigging Partnership, Unusual Rigging and Vertigo Rigging, together with venues such as Earls Court and key members of the freelance community. These companies and individuals represent a broad range of sectors including conference and corporate events, concert and touring, broadcast, theatre and live arts. This has ensured the development of an inclusive certificate applicable



to anyone involved in carrying out the core skills and knowledge required for entertainment rigging work.

As part of the process for National recognition, we are working with government bodies such as Creative and Cultural Skills, a sector skills council responsible for approving occupational standards through consultation with industry sectors.

What is the qualification structure?

The model below illustrates the structure of the qualification for the varying levels. It is a modular framework made up of occupational standards (units), which require the candidate to demonstrate not only their technical rigging skills, but also how they communicate and work safely with others. The mandatory units cover communication, health & safety and risk. At Level 3 and 4 there is an additional mandatory unit for supervisory and management skills respectively.

The rigging units that have been selected cover the generic core skills required in rigging - regardless of the sector worked in. Achievement of all of these units will lead to the National Rigging Certificate and the opportunity to apply for the skills-based 'Photo ID Card'.

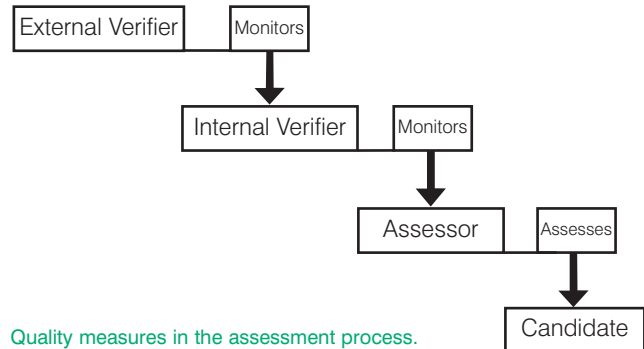
The framework that is used also creates an opportunity for individuals to have additional sector-specific skills assessed with a choice of additional units from a 'Skills Bank'. This allows for further recognition of skills that allow for job progression and development, and will assist individuals in demonstrating their range of skills to potential employers.

How will it work?

The plan is to approve assessment test centres around the UK to facilitate the assessment.

Alongside this there is a three-step quality check in place to ensure the integrity of the scheme is maintained. Firstly, the assessment is carried out by assessors who themselves are experienced entertainment riggers and have been assessed to be occupationally competent to the same rigging standards. They have also

undertaken the A1 Award - the nationally recognised assessor award. Assessors are then monitored by Internal Verifiers and finally the third quality check is through External Verifiers who are independently sent from the awarding body to ensure that the assessments carried out are valid, accurate, current, sufficient and reliable. So why have we done it this way? In short it provides integrity to the quality of the scheme and keeps it all in line with National Qualifications.



Quality measures in the assessment process.

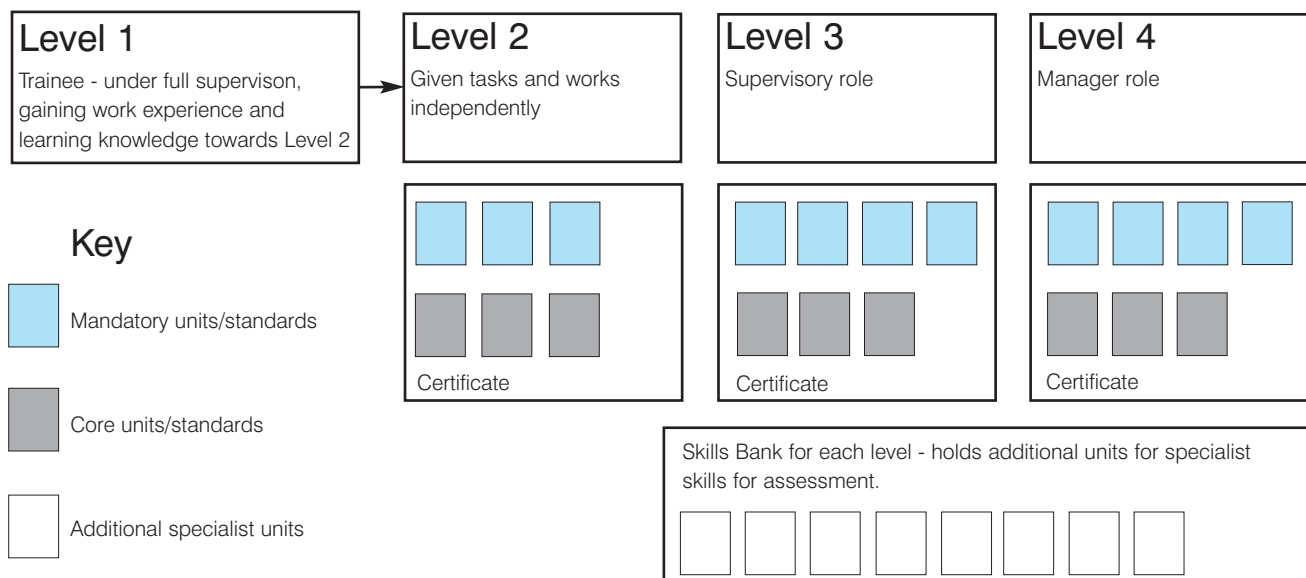
How will you know what type of assessment route to take?

In the initial stages there are two routes of entry for each Level because there are existing riggers and new entrants entering the scheme. The 'existing rigger route' will be prioritised for both Level 2 and Level 3, with the new entrants route (Level 1) gradually introduced as the scheme develops. The 'existing rigger route' will only be available for a set number of years, as eventually everyone will enter into rigging as a new entrant or they will hold a Level 2 qualification and card.

The assessment route you take depends upon your proven industry experience, and the candidate application packs will clearly identify what you need to know and do. If you are unsure, this can be discussed with PLASA, an approved test centre or an assessor before applying.

The direct entry assessment process for Level 2 and Level 3 will take two days at an assessment test centre. In addition to this - for Level 3 only - there is a one-day workplace-based assessment, which is directly observed by an assessor.

Modular Framework used for the Qualification



What is the assessment process?

The assessments are based on the following:

- Observation of practical skill
- Underpinning knowledge
- Prior learning and experience

The assessor will carry out the assessment through a combination of practical observation of what you do, a check of your underpinning knowledge (that you know why you do what you do) and lastly, by accrediting prior learning/experience which could include witness testimonies, qualifications and previous time served as a rigger (candidates will be expected to provide evidence of the latter). Clearly, the longer you have been working in the industry, the easier it will be to provide the evidence required. To maintain consistency, everyone will be assessed to the same occupational standards.

On conclusion of a successful assessment where an individual has met all the standards, the candidate will subsequently be issued with a certificate and Photo ID card with the title and Level attained clearly indicated.

If a candidate does not achieve at the chosen Level, then the assessor will give them guidance on what areas they need to develop; this may involve training or further work experience depending on the individual.

We are aware that some will be apprehensive about the thought of being assessed and so it is important to stress that the occupational standards are only a reflection of what riggers actually do, as agreed by the industry.

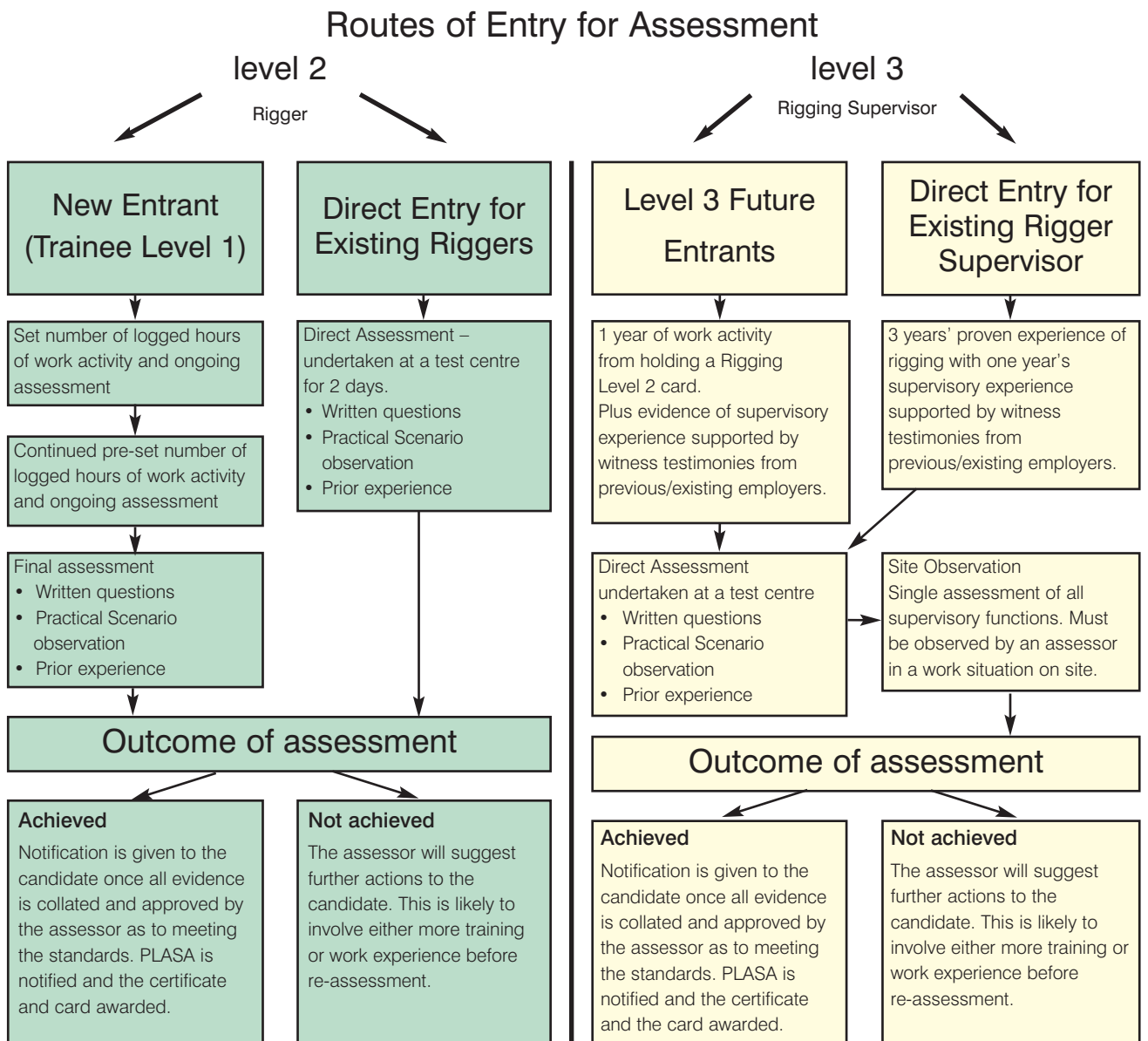
What types of things are being assessed?

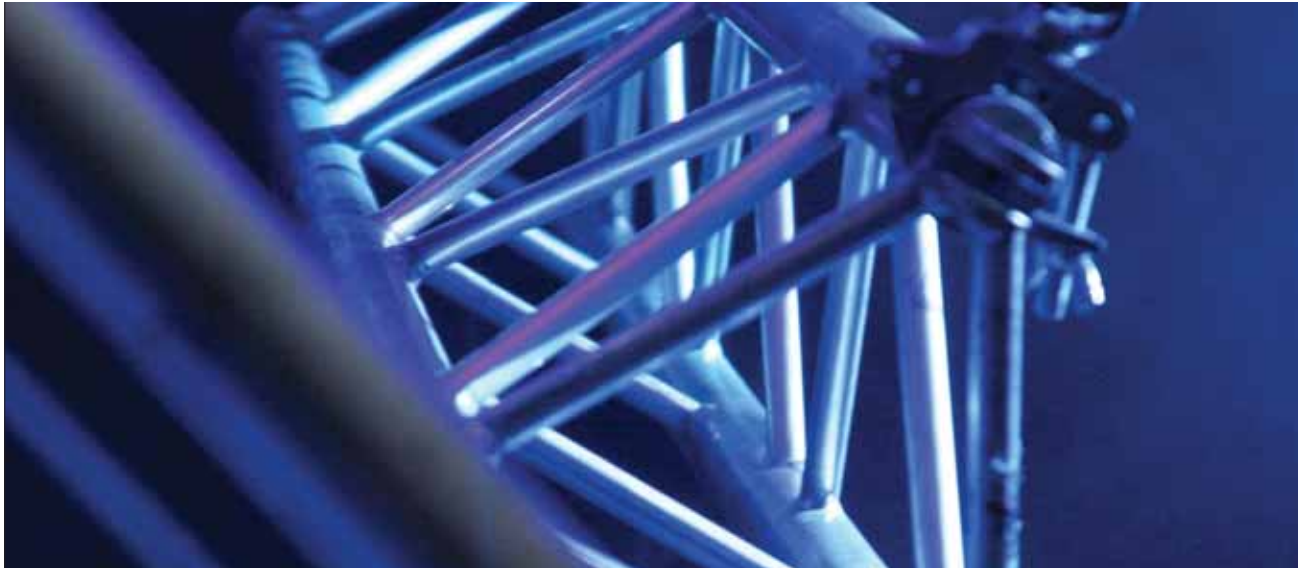
To apply for a Level 2 or Level 3 direct entry existing rigger route, a candidate would need to supply witness testimonies and other forms of evidence to provide confirmation of their experience. The Level 3 candidate is assessed on the core rigging skills of Level 2, as well as supervisory functions and greater technical knowledge.

During the assessment process, the candidates will be given a number of written questions relating to the rigging standards to assess their underpinning knowledge. They will also be given defined rigging tasks in the form of scenarios within a specified time. The scenarios encompass the basic rigging skills required in rigging work using chain hoists, trusses and rigging accessories. Outlined below are some of the knowledge and skills required:

Level 2: Direct Assessment Route

- Understand basic legal requirements and personal responsibilities in rigging work
- The terms used in entertainment rigging
- Work safely and effectively under supervision as part of a team





- Working from plans and marking out rigging points
- How to make pre use checks of equipment
- Preparing, marking out and assembling rigging
- Making attachments to structures at height and at ground level
- Basket and choke hitches
- Dead-hangs and bridles
- Using electric chain hoists (motors) and controllers safely
- Using steel, chain and fibre slings, shackles and masterlinks correctly
- Safe working at height, including using fall arrest equipment
- Assembling, slinging and lifting trusses
- Terminating steel wire rope using industry-standard methods
- Setting up and using access equipment
- Using ropes and the knots used for safe lifting with ropes

Level 3: Direct Assessment Route

- Write risk assessments and implement the control measures identified in them
- Make rigging calculations and load estimations for trusses, bridles and slinging
- Supervise other riggers on site and interpret method statements
- Understand legal requirements personal and organisational responsibilities in rigging work
- The terms used in entertainment rigging
- Work safely, communicate effectively and supervise a team
- Interpreting and devising plans and marking out rigging points
- How to make pre use checks of equipment
- Preparing, marking out and assembling rigging
- Making attachments to structures at height and at ground level
- Basket and choke hitches
- Dead-hangs and bridles
- Controlling the lifting operation
- Confirming the correct use of lifting equipment

- Supervise work at height and use of fall arrest equipment
- Knowledge of appropriate rescue planning
- Assembling, slinging and lifting trusses
- Ensuring correct use of truss system
- Terminating steel wire rope using industry-standard methods
- Supervision of the operation of access equipment
- Knowledge of appropriate rope work and knots

Where will the assessments take place?

Assessment test centres will be approved and set up in a wide range of locations in the UK. An approved list will be available on the PLASA website in the near future.

How much will the fees be?

At this stage, we're not able to give a definite fee for the assessment because of a number of parameters and details that still need to be finalised. We will issue information on the fees as soon as they have been agreed.

What is the future plan?

The scheme should officially go live in early 2007 with the first candidates undertaking their assessments. Further information will be available for candidates on what they may need to know and do and where they can acquire knowledge for certain aspects. PLASA will continue to lobby employers, venue owners, local authorities and the health and safety executive to explain and promote the scheme.

The long-term aim is to raise and acknowledge the skills of rigging through a known recognised qualification for 'entertainment rigging' that establishes it as a profession and is clear to all involved.



For more information

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