



Command Training, Assessment, and Qualification

Fire and Rescue Service Guidance

Contents

Introduction

Purpose

Background

National Occupational Standards (NOS)

Command Qualifications

Awarding Centres and Qualifications

All Hazard Command

Tactical Adviser

Non-technical skills and PQAs

Development and maintenance

Quality Assurance

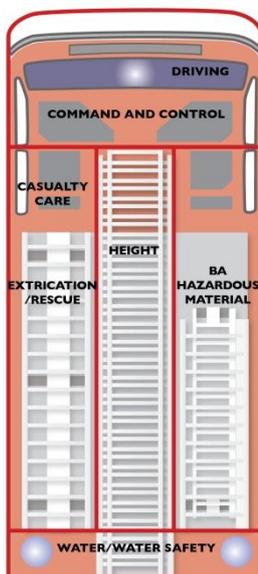
Glossary

Introduction

In September 2013, the Operational Competence Guidance (OCG) document was launched as part of the Fire Professional Framework (FPF). The FPF is the outcome of a lengthy review of training and development requirements in the fire and rescue service that was previously presented as the Organisational Competence Framework. The OCG was developed with the support of both the Operations Directorate and the People and Organisational Development (POD) directorates through a steering group that included both CFOA Ops and POD directors. The guidance provides UK Fire and Rescue Services (UK FRS) with an operational competence framework for operational firefighters and commanders to ensure that they can safely and effectively apply the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in an operational environment. It is a guidance document for FRS and is not intended to dictate or prescribe how competence should be achieved or how training and development programmes must be delivered; that is a matter for each individual FRS.

The OC guidance defines Core Operational skills and knowledge that a Firefighter or Operational Commander requires, these are represented using the fire engine graphic below and include:

- Driving
- **Command and Control**
- Breathing Apparatus
- Hazardous Materials
- Working at Height
- Water/Water Safety
- Extrication/Rescue
- Casualty Care



Purpose

The following information refers to the topic of training, assessment and qualifications associated with the skills and knowledge requirements of effective command and control.

The National Command and Control Working Group (NCCWG), that sits within CFOA's National Operations Committee's Operational Effectiveness work-stream, produced this document titled '**Command Qualifications and Command Training in the UK Fire and Rescue Service**' to assist in providing a recognised standard and model by which all UK FRS would train, develop and assess their incident commanders.

Command Qualifications and Command Training in the UK Fire and Rescue Service should both inform and support the Operational Competence Guidance.

Command Qualifications and Command Training in the UK Fire and Rescue Service provides:

- Background to command training.
- An overall framework for the delivery of command training with the aim of achieving consistent and standardised levels of command at all levels and in all UK FRS.
- An overview of the concept of an 'All Hazards Commander' and 'All Hazard Command' training.
- Detail of the relationship between technical and non-technical skills and the role they play in effective incident command.
- An understanding of the importance of developing command skills: via acquisition, application and maintenance through continued professional development.
- Detail of the four levels of command and command qualifications.
- Detail of the importance of delivering the qualifications through an accredited Awarding Centre.
- Details of what constitutes a suitable assessor, with particular reference to advanced and strategic level assessment.

Background

Since 2007 Skills for Justice (subsequently Skills for Fire & Rescue, which now sits within Skills for Justice) have worked with CFOA to develop four levels of command qualification. These subsequently received approval by OFQUAL before being launched by Pearson, Edexcel and SFJ Awards. The result is four levels of command, which are underpinned by four command qualifications applicable to the fire and rescue service.

The development of command training across UK FRS has resulted in a variety of different command courses becoming available. Some courses are generic, whereas others have been focused on specialist areas at specific levels of command responsibility (the CBRN Gold course for example). In many cases, the focus has been on the specialist technical area rather than on the subject or skillset of command itself.

The nationally recognised levels of command provide an opportunity to focus attention on command competence itself, rather than concentrating on the incident types. The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Command and Control provide a structure that enables UK FRS to undertake and deliver a consistent level of training to a common standard.

National Occupational Standards (NOS)

The NOS broadly consists of eight separate units across all four levels of command. Trainees, students and/or candidates are required to demonstrate competence in two broad areas set against Guided Learning Hours.*

- **Knowledge and Understanding** is assessed in a controlled learning and development environment. This may be achieved in a number of different ways including oral or written examination or through assignment work followed up with professional discussion.
- **Command Competence** is assessed in a simulated work environment covering both the Incident Commander and Sector Commander roles.

**Guided learning hours are the times when a tutor, trainer or facilitator is present to give specific guidance towards the learning aim for a programme. This definition covers lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, open learning centres and learning workshops. It also includes assessment by staff where learners are present. It does not include time spent by staff marking assignments or homework where the learner is not present.*

To ensure that the Command NOS remain current and fit for purpose, indicative review periods have been set for consideration by Skills for Fire and Rescue and the National Occupational Committee. It is important that the NCCWG and NCCUG are consulted in any further review process.

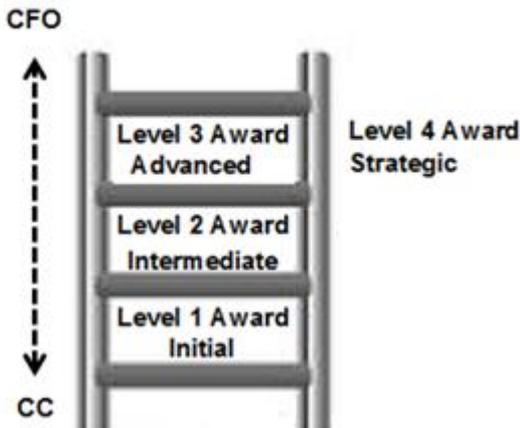
Command Qualifications

There is a difference between being 'qualified' to command and being 'competent' to command. If an individual passes a command assessment and gains the national qualification, he/she still needs to apply their learning and demonstrate competence. It is likely that this will be supported by continual development within his/her home UK FRS (the individual should be able to consistently demonstrate his/her ability to command against the standard). Individual UK FRS are responsible for the maintenance of such competencies through the monitoring of the individual's performance.

The four qualifications of Command form the basis for all development and assessment of commanders, with the four levels corresponding to the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) as detailed below:

- **Level 1 Award in Initial Incident Command (QCF level 3)** in Fire and Rescue Services. This level is typified by the officer who will demonstrate the ability to command and control operations at a task-focused supervisory level, or to control a more serious escalating incident in the early stages until relieved of command by a more senior commander.
- **Level 2 Award in Intermediate Incident Command (QCF level 4)** in Fire and Rescue Services. This level is typified by a responding tactical commander who will demonstrate the ability to review and determine incident status, assume responsibility and take over command and control operations at middle manager level.
- **Level 3 Award in Advanced Incident Command (QCF level 6)** in Fire and Rescue Services. This level requires an officer to tactically command the largest and most serious incidents, usually on-scene or at an appropriate location, characterised by the requirement for tactical co-ordination and having reached the stage of utilising developed command support.

- Level 4 Award in Strategic Incident Command (QCF level 7)** in Fire and Rescue Services which covers the role of Strategic Command associated with the functions and responsibilities of operations within a Strategic Co-ordinating Group. (The ladder diagram below illustrates how the four levels interconnect.)

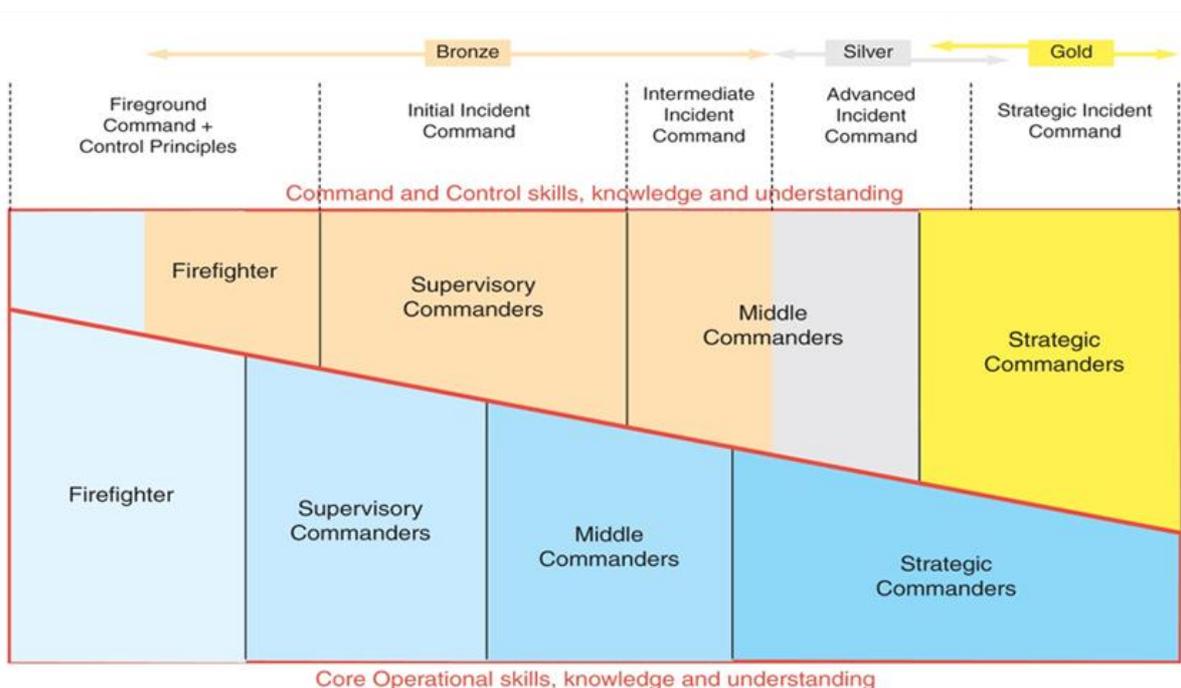


- As indicated by the graphic above, levels 1, 2 and 3 cover technical operational command roles from Crew Commander up to and including Chief Fire Officer. Level 4 is different in that it is a qualification associated with the additional skills required to operate within a Strategic Co-ordinating Group in a multi-agency environment. The level 4 qualification can run parallel to level 3 depending on the needs of the individual UK FRS.

The entry criteria for level 1-3 would be competence at the previous level.

The entry criteria for level 4 would be a sound understanding and recognition of the roles and responsibilities of operational and tactical command in a Fire and Rescue context.

The diagram below illustrates how the relationship between core skills and knowledge and the application of these changes as a firefighter progresses through the command structure to Strategic Commander.



A firefighter requires the full range of core skills and knowledge as well as knowing how the incident command structure is applied. However, the Strategic Commander needs to understand the capabilities and limitations of operational skills and knowledge, but must be able to apply incident command skills in a complex, multi-agency environment and consider their potential political impact.

Any on-going or future developments such as JESIP, Initial Operational Response Programme (IORP), NCAF or CBRNE should continue to be reflected within the four levels of command. The impact of any such changes on this guidance should be reviewed by the NCCWG.

Due to the geographical size of some UK FRS areas, Principal Officers, Area and Group Managers are on occasion used as the (nearest) first officer mobilised to command level 1, 2, and 3 incidents. Where this is the case each respective UK FRS will need to be assured that the officers acquire and maintain command competence across each of the levels they will be required to take command responsibility for.

Awarding Centres and Qualifications

To be able to award all or some of the four command qualifications a UK FRS must become an Approved Centre. Approval is obtained via an awarding body such as Pearson edexcel or SFJ Awards. It is possible that other non-FRS organisations will also become awarding centres.

There are different ways of delivering the qualification. The important factor is ensuring that the guided hours are met, for example, this may be done via a one-off course. Another option is for phased learning over a longer period through e-learning, development, professional discussion and simulation. It is important that the method chosen by the UK FRS fulfils the requirements of the awarding body.

A UK FRS wishing to qualify as an awarding centre and award the command qualification must:

- Have appropriate physical resources (for example; equipment, IT, learning materials, teaching rooms) to support the delivery and assessment of the qualifications
- Provide systems to ensure staff delivering the qualifications receive continuing professional development
- Be able to develop individuals prior to and following assessment
- Provide a means of standardisation and quality assurance of assessors
- Ensure assessors/staff involved in the process can provide evidence of their occupational competence and expertise. *(It may be difficult for some UK FRS to be able to do this due to limited exposure to the assessment process).* Collaboration between UK FRS could address this*.

**The ability to provide suitable assessors (for the initial qualification) at levels 3 and 4 is particularly challenging because the Awarding Organisation requires evidence that the assessors:*

- *are able to demonstrate competency in the role that is being assessed*
- *understand the relevant NOS for the role being assessed*
- *can demonstrate currency by having completed the required number of assessments*

A number of UK FRS utilise assessors who are of a lower or equivalent rank to those being assessed (this is common practice in other public sectors.)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) may be appropriate as an alternative for those currently in role. RPL requires the candidate to provide sufficient evidence to meet the assessment criteria within the qualification and again that is for the individual Fire and Rescue Service to determine. As an example a

UK FRS could accept 2 years' experience and successful completion of an internal command course as an alternative to the level 3 qualification.

It is strongly recommended that newly promoted officers should commence working towards the appropriate qualification at the earliest opportunity.

In order to support the qualification, consideration should be given to the value of peer review. This will ensure a standardised approach across local, regional and ultimately national levels.

Many FRS work in regions and may want to work collaboratively through a regional centre using common resources and saving on costs.

All Hazard Command

The four levels of command apply to an 'all hazards' approach. This means that the commander will be provided with the skills and knowledge to command any incident at the appropriate level. The skills and knowledge associated with command should be transferable to any given incident the commander may encounter, e.g. Hazmat, MTFA, Fire, CBRNE etc. As part of acquiring the respective command qualification, each candidate should be exposed to, and assessed against, a range of scenarios, either simulated or via practical exercises relating to:

- Fire
- Rescue
- Hazardous Materials and Environmental Protection

This means a commander first and foremost acquires and develops the skills and knowledge to command any incident. The commander may then need additional specialist information specific to the incident; this is likely to be provided by an adviser (who possesses specific technical skill sets and information). Each UK FRS will need to determine the type and number of Tactical Advisers (specialist subject matter advisers) they need.

Tactical Adviser

Tactical Advisers are personnel who are trained, qualified and competent in specialist fields, providing additional technical and tactical guidance that is specific to the incident in order to inform the Incident Commander's tactical considerations, priorities and objectives. To complement the principle of the All Hazard Commander it is vital that the Tactical Adviser is competent to the current nationally recognised standard. In order to satisfy this, National Occupational Standards (NOS) will need to be written by Skills for Fire and Rescue to ensure consistency is achieved across the FRS. Tactical Advisers need to satisfy the requirements of any future National Occupational Standards.

The following list includes some of the specialist technical areas where a UK FRS may wish to call upon the services of a specialist adviser for the areas:

- Hazardous Materials and Environmental Protection
- Technical Rescue
- Fire Investigation
- Wildfire
- Command Support
- Interagency Liaison
- Urban Search and Rescue
- CBRN (E) and DIM
- MTFA
- Bulk Foam
- Media

This document does not detail every specialist area that may be required; each UK FRS will determine its own local requirements.

The newly-qualified commander then needs the opportunity to apply his/her skills over a range of situations. This could be provided within the UK FRS by attending exercises or simulations that expose the commander to challenging events that enables them to apply their command skills across a range of scenarios. This means that commanders will no longer be required to attend a wide range of specific / specialist command courses in areas such as CBRNE or MTFAs.

Part of the process in gaining a command qualification is for the individual commander to be aware of his/her limitations and the understanding of what a Tactical Adviser can contribute. The All Hazard Commander courses will need to develop the Incident Commander to utilise the specialist knowledge of the Tactical Adviser.

Non-technical skills and PQAs

Technical skills relate to the knowledge and understanding that an individual possesses in a subject area.

Non-technical skills (NTS) relate to the attributes and behaviours of an individual when commanding an incident.

Non-technical skills include:

- Situation Awareness
- Decision Making
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Managing Stress
- Coping with fatigue

Good non-technical skills are essential. They enhance the ability of a Commander to effectively lead and control an incident. Effective non-technical skills will be required to achieve each level of Command Qualification. Without the ability to demonstrate these qualities in the simulated work environment, the candidate is unlikely to pass the qualification.

Although these qualities are to some extent inherent in an individual, UK FRS will need to develop their commanders in this area. This would be achieved through a structured training and development process where instruction is provided prior to assessment.

Non-technical skills and Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs) are closely related, as both are behaviours inherent in an individual. Non-technical skills are especially relevant to command with PQAs being more traditionally associated with managerial roles. The importance of non-technical skills is highlighted in the Health, Safety and Welfare Framework for the Operational Environment (link below).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209362/HSFrameworkJuncombined.pdf

Development and Maintenance

Passing the relevant command qualification should be regarded as a first step. The individual needs the opportunity to apply his/her recently acquired command skills in a variety of situations such as:

- Operational Incidents

- Tabletop exercises / Tactical Decision Exercises
- Classroom discussions to confirm technical knowledge prior to carrying out operational simulations
- Simulator exercise (observation and participation)
- Station or locality drills/exercises
- Attendance on relevant courses/development opportunities
- Review of case studies or technical related command documents
- Personal Study

It is incumbent on the UK FRS to provide Commanders with the opportunity to continually develop their command portfolio at each level and across a range of incident types. The individual will, through continued professional development, need to demonstrate and maintain their command competence and portfolio. Therefore, individual UK FRS need a structured training and development framework that provides their commanders with continued professional development.

The qualification needs to be supported by the re-assessment of individuals to ensure they continue to meet the standard; a minimum two yearly basis between re-assessments is recommended.

Over a period of non-use/application, knowledge and skills decay may affect an individual's ability to maintain his/her competence. The training and assessment frequency identified by a UK FRS and the fire and rescue authority's risk profile to continually develop commanders, providing assurance of their maintenance of competence, should take account of each individual's ability to acquire and maintain skills.

Maintenance of competence will be demonstrated through exposure at incidents, exercises and through other methods of simulation. As incident numbers continue to fall, there will be greater reliance on exercises and simulation. This evidence would then be set against the training framework and stored as portfolio evidence.

Portfolio evidence should dictate the assessment and training need, with certain maximum frequencies set as safeguards. The assessment periods should also reflect the risk to the organisation, e.g. officers temporarily promoted require more development and should be assessed more frequently.

Quality Assurance

As with any process of this nature it is vital that it is quality assured to ensure standards, consistency and currency are maintained.

The quality assurance of the qualification is a role fulfilled by the respective Awarding Organisation; UK FRS must also have their own quality assurance processes in place to ensure there isn't a wide degree of variance across the country and that each UK FRS is delivering a consistent and standardised product.

Glossary

Advanced Incident Command - This level requires an officer to tactically command the largest and most serious incidents, usually on scene or at an appropriate location, characterised by the requirement for tactical co-ordination and of having reached the stage of utilising developed command support.

All Hazards Command – This is a term to explain how the principles of command can be applied to any incident type (with support from Tactical Advisers where appropriate).

Pearson edexcel – Awarding Organisation.

Guided learning hours – This is the time when a tutor, trainer or facilitator is present to give specific guidance towards the learning aim for a programme.

IORP - Initial Operational Response Programme.

Initial Incident Command - This level is typified by the officer who will demonstrate the ability to command and control operations at a task focused supervisory level or to control a more serious escalating incident in the early stages until relieved of command by a more senior officer.

Intermediate Incident Command - This level is typified by a responding tactical commander who will demonstrate the ability to review and determine incident status, assume responsibility and take over command and control operations at middle manager level.

IQA - Internal Quality Audit.

JESIP – Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme.

MTFA – Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack.

NCAF - National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework.

NCCUG - National Command and Control User Group.

NCCWG – National Command and Control Working Group.

NOS – National Occupational Standards.

NTS - Non-technical skills.

OFQUAL - Regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments.

PQAs – Personal Qualities and Attributes.

QCF - Qualification and Credit Framework.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) In this context refers to UKFRS assuring themselves that existing Commanders can meet the assessment criteria using the knowledge and skills that they already possess, as an alternative to gaining the qualification.

Skills for Fire and Rescue – Skills for Fire and Rescue (employer led body for FRS) forms part of the Justice Sector Skills Council (JSSC) and works in partnership with UK FRS and CFOA.

SfJ Awards – Awarding Organisation.

Strategic Incident Command – This level covers the role of Strategic Command associated with the functions and responsibilities of operating within a Strategic Co-ordinating Group

Tactical Adviser (TA) - an individual who is an expert in a particular area or topic with the skills to give advice on tactical considerations.

UK FRS - United Kingdom Fire and Rescue Service(s).