

# FIRE RISK ASSESSOR REGISTRATION AND BS8674

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**Q1 Why is there a need now to become a registered/certified fire risk assessor? I have relevant qualifications and many years of experience of a wide variety of premises.**

Primarily this change stems from the Grenfell Tower fire and the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety undertaken by Dame Hackitt and several subsequent reports. The competency of all those engaged in the design, construction and management of buildings has been under significant scrutiny and working groups established to define competency standards for widespread application – this includes fire risk assessors. More specifically Section 156(4) of the Building Safety Act 2022, whilst yet to be enacted, would make amendments to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 stating:

(4) After article 9 insert—

**Risk assessment: assistance**

**9A** —(1) The responsible person must not appoint a person to assist them with making or reviewing an assessment under article 9 unless that person is competent.

(2) A person is to be regarded as competent for the purposes of this article where the person has sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to enable the person properly to assist in making or reviewing the assessment.

Whilst work has been ongoing for several years to establish competency requirements for fire risk assessors, there are insufficient numbers of assessors currently that can demonstrably prove their competence through registration with a certification and/or award scheme to meet the likely demand for their services and hence, as described above, have taken a pragmatic decision to not enact this clause at this time.

*The previous Government indicated their intention in this direction and the Grenfell Inquiry has in the Final Report made clear its recommended approach for fire risk assessor competence. Whilst all the Report's recommendations are still being considered by the current Government there has already been a clear statement that change is needed. Industry needs to prepare for that change, initially with some focus on those premises which fall under the auspices of the Building Safety Act 2022, whilst also addressing fire risk assessment competence comprehensively over time.*

**Q2 I am already on a register, does that mean that my competency is already proven?**

Yes, but also no. Whilst there are existing schemes (BAFE SP205 for example) and several existing registers such as those run by the Institute of Fire Safety Managers (IFSM) and Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE), they are not all equal and differ in their approach to proof of competence and subsequent registration of assessors.

Going forwards, scheme holders and Certification Bodies have agreed to collectively use the British Standard for Fire Risk Assessor (FRA) competence (BS8674) as their baseline, operate under a common set of minimum requirements and obtain UK Accreditation Service accreditation. Awarding Organisations have also agreed that qualifications should be regulated and directly mapped against the standard to ensure consistency and commonality in learning outcomes. These qualifications will correspond to one of the tiers in the Standard and demonstrate the level of competence of individual FRAs.

**Regulated qualifications** are those that have been reviewed and approved by a regulatory body. The review ensures that the programme provides qualified content, teaching methods and learning outcomes and that the assessments are marked objectively and fairly to ensure that the certificate is recognised as a credible and valid achievement in the subject area or industry.

Regulated qualifications are reviewed and assessed over time to ensure they maintain quality and relevance.

As a result, most existing schemes/awards are working to adapt their current processes and protocols to meet these new requirements. As an existing FRA, you are advised to contact your current scheme/award operator to establish what this means for you and the actions that may be required going forward to renew or maintain your certification. Whilst requirements are likely to vary, it will be important to ensure that you can evidence currency in your knowledge and fire risk assessment practice through having both: -

1. Evidence of fire risk assessments undertaken in the past six months, and
2. A complete and appropriate record of CPD undertaken over the last 24 months.

*Review your registration certificate from your operator for information of what is required by you to keep your registration current and up to date. The terms and conditions of registration may be available on their website giving information of the latest date of review.*

**Q3 As an experienced fire risk assessor but not aligned to any particular professional body, certification, registration and/or award scheme that recognises me as competent to carry out fire risk assessments, what should I be considering?**

BS8674 *Built environment - Framework for competence of individual fire risk assessors - Code of practice* establishes competency criteria through the recognition of three levels (or tiers) of competence, which are expected to support individuals who undertake fire risk assessments across a wide range of occupied buildings and workplaces, from small shops to larger public entertainment venues and from low occupancy non-residential workplaces and buildings under construction, to multi-occupied large residential premises and specialised housing.

Each level of competence requires certain skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours to enable the fire risk assessor to adapt dynamically and operate successfully to meet the specific situation and circumstances presented, and progressively be able to mentor and supervise others. The standard identifies the three tiers as follows:

- Foundation
- Intermediate
- Advanced

Each tier will be associated with a regulated qualification(s) that establishes the 'knowledge' element of the competence mix, which assessors can build upon through proving appropriate behaviours and experience to fully evidence their competence. *This helps provide reassurance to Dutyholders and Regulators that a competent person of the appropriate standard has been engaged to conduct the risk assessment.*

Progression between tiers is not mandatory and some accredited assessors may be content to operate on lower fire risk premises.

*You should be considering if new legislation and guidance that will be implemented and enacted by government will lead to your potential clients expecting you to be able to prove your skills and competency have been tested to a level that meets the **suitable and sufficient** requirement of law. The need for duty holders to ensure they employ a competent assessor and have a means to know who to ask for proof will often result in enquirers requiring proof by reference to a register.*

**Q4 Does the Tier of registration impact on the type of building I am deemed competent to undertake a fire risk assessment on?**

Yes, the Tier of registration correlates with the type of building an assessor will be deemed competent to assess albeit loosely as follows: -

- Foundation fire risk assessor – low risk premises such as small shops, low occupancy non-residential workplaces.
- Intermediate fire risk assessor – medium or normal risk premises such as large retail premises, multi-storey office or mixed-use premises, large storage facilities, manufacturing facilities.
- Advanced fire risk assessor – high risk premises, in particular, those defined as higher-risk buildings in the Building Safety Act 2020 but including for example larger public entertainment venues, specialised housing, buildings under construction.

**Q5 How can I establish whether the qualification(s) I have is a recognised 'regulated qualification(s)'?**

The process of gaining registration for experienced workers without formal qualifications is being designed to follow a 'conformity assessment' model and is

intended to be both flexible enough to deal with experienced assessors from a wide variety of backgrounds and robust enough to test those individual's knowledge, skills, experience, and competence. Recognition of qualifications via an Approved Training Centre and the status of existing qualifications held by applicants in relation to the criteria described in BS8674 will be a key part of the process; which will consider evidence such as the date the qualification was awarded alongside the curriculum and the assessment criteria used, matched against any associated regulated qualifications.

Where close correlation with regulated qualifications is noted, then this will allow progression onto the next step of the process. However, in circumstances where the qualification mapping shows significant deviations from regulated qualifications it is likely that additional learning will be required by the applicant to upskill.

Approved Training Centres are already undertaking cross mapping exercises with a view to developing additional short courses where needed.

**Q6 Other than achieving a regulated qualification are there any other actions that will be needed as an experienced worker to confirm my competency?**

It is important to remain mindful that competence is a mix of certain skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours. Whilst a regulated qualification(s) will establish the 'knowledge' element of the competence mix this will need to be built upon by assessors through proving appropriate behaviours and experience to fully evidence competence.

Hence, in addition to ascertaining the status of qualifications held, the process may also require the experienced worker to complete a self-assessment questionnaire and forward to a registration and/or awarding body or Approved Training Centre for review and consideration.

It is anticipated that the self-assessment questionnaire will focus on

- Employment history
- Relevant qualification certificate(s)
- Professional membership certificate(s)
- CPD record
- A professional review report
- Details of the number of fire risk assessments completed in recent years and the types of occupancies, (including construction and height) those assessments cover
- Previous or current registration or accreditations.

Once this information has been received and reviewed against the criteria described in BS8674, they will agree with you a provisional Tier of registration and subsequently request a portfolio of evidence, based on the information provided in your self-assessment questionnaire, for review. Likely evidence would be modified complete fire risk assessments with personal and confidential data obscured.

This review will be comprehensive, and include an on-site assessment or review and interview focused on a minimum of five fire risk assessments conducted in the immediate past six months.

**Q7 I have a regulated qualification and been through the review process described in Q6 successfully. What next?**

Assuming that the evidence provided, and subsequent activities undertaken as part of the review prove satisfactory you will be able to register on the chosen operators register of fire risk assessors on the Tier agreed.

Whilst the register will be specific to the operator, it is the intention to enable ease of access by those looking to procure the services of a competent fire risk assessor to implement a national register. The register will collate and publish certain limited information about individual registrants whilst signposting the register held by their chosen operator that will contain full registration details.

**Q8 I have been through the review process with an Assessment Body or Approved Training Centre but have been told that my training and/or experience is insufficient to gain registration at the desired Tier. How do I progress from here?**

In circumstances where the level of training or scope of qualification held is insufficient then an Approved Training Centre will suggest appropriate additional learning to help address the shortfall.

Similarly, in other circumstances where perhaps the review identifies weaknesses in the number, scope or content of an assessment then the operator will make recommendations for the gaining of additional suitable evidence or implement a more detailed audit, interview or witnessed assessment approach.

**Q9 Are there any other important considerations or requirements in relation to undertaking fire risk assessments that need to be addressed?**

**Professional Indemnity Insurance:**

All fire risk assessors are expected to obtain and maintain suitable and adequate professional indemnity insurance, or an alternative composite protection. This ought to be to an appropriate level to meet any assessment of liability, such that work undertaken has an adequate guarantee of financial redress in the event of failure by the fire risk assessor to meet agreed contractual, legal or public safety requirements.