

What are National Occupational Standards?

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A National Occupational Standard (NOS) is a document that describes the knowledge, skills and understanding an individual needs to be competent at a job. They are statements of the standards of performance which individuals must achieve for effective performance in the workplace.

How are they created?

National Occupational Standards are developed by the industry, for the industry. They are produced in consultation with practitioners carrying out the roles described on a daily basis, and they avoid the need to 'reinvent the wheel'.

Every standard goes through a strict Governance and Approvals processes as defined and set out by the Standards and Frameworks Approval Panel. This is a UK-wide process, with the approval panel containing representatives from each of the four nations (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).



Where I can see National Occupational Standards?

Once approved all National Occupational Standards sit on a national database that is easily accessible and available to everyone. You can see and search the database at ukstandards.org.uk.

How many are there?

There are approximately 23,000 standards, categorised into around 900 suites.

A set of NOS is presented as a 'suite' – relating to a particular business area or occupation.

Very few people will carry out all the functions described in any full suite of NOS. In addition, many of the functions / those carrying them out will vary dependent on the size of the organisation.

How are National Occupational Standards used?

National Occupational Standards have a variety of important uses for both individuals and organisations, including:

- providing guidance for career changes and upskilling
- assisting in the development of person specifications and job descriptions
- helping build career pathways
- being used as a measure of workplace competence, and as part of an organisational workforce plans
- providing guidelines for certification and accreditation
- underpinning training design and delivery of apprenticeships, regulated qualifications, and workplace learning and development.

“National Occupational Standards provide an employer-led, multi-sector definition of competence, setting the standards which govern and quality assure skills and skills development across the UK.”

Cathy Gallagher, Senior Consultant, Workforce Development Trust

Standards are designed so that a 'pick and mix' approach can be used – each user should select the appropriate combination of Performance and Knowledge and Understanding statements from across the units.

Employers use National Occupational Standards as a common language to support and facilitate consistency, standardisation, transferability and interoperability. They are used by all sectors, occupations and regions in the UK.

The logo consists of a white rounded square on a dark blue background. Inside the square, the text "Skills for Health" is written in a dark blue sans-serif font. "Skills for" is in a regular weight, and "Health" is in a bold weight.

Skills for
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