

WQNetwork Qualification Outline

The Welfare Quality® protocols for Poultry, Pigs and Cattle have been widely used as the basis for experimental project work. They have also been included (in part) in some farm assurance schemes as well as being used as a training tool in outcome assessment for interested bodies (veterinary agencies, state inspection bodies). To ensure continuation of the high standards set by the Welfare Quality Network an examination process has been developed in order to determine and certify the competency of candidates wishing to effectively assess animal welfare according to the requirements of the Welfare Quality® protocols. This process is described below.

A candidate will be required to demonstrate a capacity to effectively assess animal welfare while ensuring that the requirements of the Welfare Quality® protocols are met. This will be determined using a written examination, tests against established reference materials, and a practical assessment on a real farm, and if required, at a slaughterhouse (see Parts 1, 2 and 3 below).

The structure of the WQNetwork examination consists of three parts:

Part 1: Written exam

- Multiple choice (no guess correction, no negative scoring): covering areas such as definitions, sampling strategies, sample sizes, order of measures, technical questions, scoring scales and thresholds, methods and the integration process .
- There will be five answer options for each multiple choice question.
- A pool of questions is available and from this a random selection of 20 questions will be used for the examination.
- This is not an open book exam.
- A pass mark of 75% will be set for the written exam,

Part 2: Test against references (pictures and videos)

- The candidate's efforts will be examined against a set of established gold standard reference materials.
- A measure of concordance for pass or fail with the gold standard per measure will be used – a Cohens Kappa value of concordance will be used to assess the students agreement with standard reference values of 0.2-0.4 (fair agreement), 0.41 – 0.6 (moderate agreement), 0.61 – 0.80 (substantial agreement) and >0.81 (very high degree of agreement).

- Overall – the candidate must achieve a ‘composite score’ (mean) of 0.65 or more where multiple measures are assessed, and the score for any individual measure must not fall below 0.5.

Part 3: Witnessed on farm (and/or at slaughter)

The ‘on farm’ examination comprises:

- 1) Candidates will be required to explain how they would approach the producer, go about assessing the farm, dealing with practical issues and possible obstacles, choosing a sample size ETC,.
- 2) Use of non-desk measures - candidates will be tested on the use of measures that cannot be covered in Part 2, e.g., distance based tests of avoidance where live animals have to be used. , Thus, part of the assessment/examination must involve evaluation of the candidates’ performance when using live animals. The examiner will assess these practical skills against a checklist.
- 3) Candidates are expected to demonstrate a professional approach to the producer, an effective and efficient assessment manner and a careful, considerate approach to handling animals. Should the candidate be unable to satisfy these requirements this will be constituted as sufficient grounds for failure to pass the examination and achieve approval status.
- 4) Candidates will score a sample of animals consistent with the requirements of the Welfare Quality protocols. The candidate will enter the results on recording sheets. The candidates’ results will be compared against the scores obtained by the examiner and against reference standards.

For Part 3 of the examination each candidate must achieve an overall score of 65%.

The candidate must pass ALL sections in order to achieve an overall pass.

Duration of certification

Certification duration: finite (5 years).

The ‘first issued’ certificate is valid for 18 months only, but can be extended subject to the ‘crosscheck’ described below;

Crosscheck - In order to obtain a 5-year certificate, newly trained assessors are required to meet another assessor (approved by WQN) and to score the same farm between months 12-18.

No formal testing will occur at this time, the aim is to simply assess performance. If the assessors demonstrate poor agreement at this crosscheck meeting – then re-evaluation may be required at the discretion of the original examiner and the WQNetwork.

If the candidate assessor passes this ‘crosscheck’ procedure, he/she is entitled to receive the extended certificate with an overall lifespan of 5 years (5 years from the approval date of the first examination).

After 5 years

After 5 years, all assessors will be required to resit the WQNetwork examination described above to ensure that their knowledge and consistency remains relevant and that they are familiar with the current version of the Welfare Quality protocols.

FAQ’s - Frequently Asked Question’s

1. Can we provide an examination for ‘parts’ of the protocol (i.e. measures selected by the user)

No, we only offer one examination covering the entire protocol - not for parts of it

2. Who will be approved to train?

Candidates can be trained by any person or organisation. The performance of the candidates will be assessed by the WQN examiner team, based on fixed criteria (as described above). Possibilities for training are also available from the WQNetwork through the contacts mentioned below.

3. What are the duration and costs?

Stage 1 (first exam)

First exam - the ‘first examination’ process will take 2 half days.

Parts 1 and 2 (written and test against reference material) on the first half day.

Part 3 (practical assessment at a farm) on the second half day)

The first examination fee is 350 euro per person. To ensure that the process is cost and time effective (and to avoid single candidate exams) a minimum number of 6 candidates will be required to register before an exam course can be run.

No. participants	Costs
≤6	2500 euro + expenses (travel & accommodation at candidate's own cost)
6 – 15*	Additional: 350 euro extra per person if the group exceeds 10 people

For any group greater than 15, a second examination will be organized.

Crosscheck (12 to 18 months) - 1 day duration

The crosscheck examination - will take 1 day.

The examination will be administered by the organisation which carried out the initial examination – and the fees charged will go to this organisation. The ‘crosscheck’ examination fee is 200 euro per person. To ensure that the process is cost and time effective (and to avoid single candidate exams) a minimum number of 6 candidates will be required to register before an exam course can be run.

Yearly approval process

The 5 yearly approval examination - will take 1 day.

The process described above for stage 2 will then be repeated every 5 years (different assessors must meet at this time) to maintain approval status. The ‘5 year approval’ examination fee is 200 euro per person. To ensure that the process is cost and time effective (and to avoid single candidate exams) a minimum number of 6 candidates will be required to register before an exam course can be run.

4. Will there be a register of approved assessors?

On successful completion of the first examination, the candidate will be issued with a certificate that prescribes the period/duration of approval and the scope (species, limitations) of the approval provided. The format of the approval certificate will be agreed by the WQNetwork. If the participant fails to maintain approval status through periodic and ongoing validation activity (described above) then both the certificate and approval will be revoked and the certificate must be returned to the original assessment organisation. A register of currently certified assessors will be made available on the WQNetwork webtool.

5. Who should I contact?

The three species protocols have a ‘first contact person’ – this person will facilitate the assessment process and may refer you to others in the Welfare Quality Network for further information.

For poultry - please contact Andy Butterworth andy.butterworth@bristol.ac.uk

For pigs - please contact Antonio Velarde antonio.velarde@irta.cat

For cattle - please contact Christoph Winckler christoph.winckler@boku.ac.at