

SCHEME RULES

NATIONALLY ACCREDITED CERTIFICATION SCHEME
FOR
INDIVIDUAL GAS FITTING OPERATIVES
(ACS)



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1. Introduction

This document describes the Scheme Rules applied by Blue Flame Certification (BFC) for the operation of the United Kingdom Gas Industry's 'Nationally Accredited Certification Scheme for Individual Gas Fitting Operatives' (ACS).

Definitions of terminology utilised throughout this document can be found in Appendix 1.

This document explains how an individual can obtain Certification by undergoing Assessment at a BFC Assessment Centre (or one of its 3rd Party Approved Assessment Centres). Certification for successful candidates may only be achieved within the Scope of Accreditation awarded by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to BFC against the requirements of BS EN ISO / IEC 17024.

2. Scope

These Scheme Rules cover the process necessary for the Certification of an individual gas operative by BFC. These Rules only apply to Assessment and do not cover any prior training.

The Scheme assesses an individual's competence to carry out safe gas work. The Scheme is not intended to assess competence in other areas which may be undertaken within the complete range of activity. Appendix 2 details non gas safety legislation and other requirements that are outside the scope of the Scheme. All operatives and employers should be aware of their responsibilities and statutory duties that cover their range of work.

3. Policies

BFC will make available Assessments to all individuals who meet the Scheme and / or Operational Requirements (see Section 5) regardless of race, colour, creed, ethnic origin, nationality, marital status, gender, political affiliations or beliefs, age or disability.

BFC will take all steps necessary to offer Assessments to individuals with special needs.

Individuals are invited to indicate any special needs at the time of application and each situation will be individually considered.

4. Assessment Criteria for the ACS Scheme

Gas safety assessment criteria for the Scheme are devised by Standards Setting Body (SSB) under the direction of the Health and Safety Executive. The Scheme is modular in nature which undergoes regular change and amendment in line with standards and statutory requirements amendments.

The complete list is available on request to BFC and the criteria against which an applicant is assessed against are available from EU Skills via their website.

The Scheme consists of a number of specific work sectors:

- Domestic Natural Gas (NG)
- Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)
- Non Domestic incl. Pipework, Heating, Catering & Laundry (NG & LPG)
- Emergency Service Provider / Gas Meter Installer (NG)

Where competence has already been proven in a sector there are a number of changeover modules available which may avoid the duplication of assessing common areas.

The combining of Assessments and particularly packaging of modules enables Assessments to be tailored to individuals needs and work areas.

For advice on appropriate modules candidates should contact their nearest BFC Approved Assessment Centre. A list of Assessment Centres can be found on the BFC website or by calling 0845 194 90 31.

5. Application

An application form will be provided by Assessment Centres and this must be completed with all details prior to commencement of any Assessment.

At the time of first attendance at the Assessment Centre, the Centre Representative shall complete the following actions:

- If the candidate is previously unknown to the centre or Gas Safe Register the document type presented by the applicant as proof of identity and its identification number will be checked and recorded on the Application Form.

A number of documents are suggested as an acceptable proof of identity:

- A current valid Passport;
- A current valid Driving Licence (photo ID card type);
- A photo ID card issued by the UK Border Agency;
- A valid Home Office issued work permit, accompanied by a current international passport; or
- Other Photo ID issued by any other Governmental agency

In exceptional cases, e.g. candidate not in possession of any of the above identification, the following examples of suitable identification are acceptable:

- Birth certificate
- Travel pass, including a photograph
- Under 21 ID cards issued by local authority etc.

The completion of the above requirements and signatory verification by the Assessment Centre and candidate will constitute a Contractual Agreement between candidate and centre to deliver the service as outlined within these Scheme Rules.

The Application Form contains a number of options for eligibility to undertake ACS Assessments. The Assessment Centre will ascertain an applicant's eligibility and complete the Application Form. The candidate will be advised if there are any optional or mandatory training requirements prior to undertaking any ACS Assessments.

6. Assessment

Candidates wishing to be assessed under the Scheme are able to 'tailor' the Assessments undertaken to reflect their areas of work. Assessment criteria laid down consists of a number of elements against which candidates are required to demonstrate competence.

For candidates holding an ACS Competency Certificate (or other equivalent qualification / certification) a suite of 'Re-Assessment' modules may be available to be taken which consist of a reduced Assessment criteria as compared with 'Initial Assessment' that would typically be undertaken by 1st time applicants to the Scheme or where previous Certification is no longer eligible for Re-Assessment (e.g. an ACS Competency Certificate that has expired by more than 12 months).

ACS Competency Certificate holders who wish to extend their areas of work are required to undertake 'Initial Assessments' in those areas.

For both 'Initial' and 'Re-Assessment', candidates are required to complete written and / or practical Assessments which are dependent upon the type of assessment undertaken. If necessary, candidates may be asked oral questions by an Assessor.

Attendance at Assessment Centres requires that all candidates must adhere to all health, safety and conduct requirements as indicated by the Assessment Centre.

The Assessment Centre will also provide:

- Tools and equipment necessary to carry out practical tasks.

Candidates with special needs who bring their own tools will be required to have them approved by an Assessor prior to their use.

- Specialist protective clothing and equipment (as necessary).
Candidates should provide and use their own personal protective equipment that would be required during a normal working day (e.g. safety shoes).
- Reference, normative, industry and legislative documentation will be provided to enable the candidate to select information to answer 'open book' questions. In the event that the candidate provides own material or sources adapted from training material then this will be required to be approved by an Assessor prior to use.
- All necessary manufacturers' instructions will be provided.

The Assessment Centre will indicate to candidates on completion of Assessments a provisional outcome and will supply a 'Provisional Assessments Result' form prior to the candidate leaving the centre. Candidates will be informed that Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is required to be carried out and if this results in a differing view to the provisionally reported outcome then the candidate will be informed immediately. Candidates will also be informed that any decision made by the Assessment Centre is a recommendation only. Candidates will be informed that the final decision on certification lies with BFC.

The process of Assessment, referral, partial retakes, Re-Assessment and supply of information to Gas Safe Register is contained in illustrated in the Flowcharts in Figures 1 to 4 appended to these Scheme Rules.

Assessment Centres will provide BFC with all necessary paperwork within 20 working days of completion of any assessments or suite of assessments to enable a certification decision to be made. This period may be extended if a candidate gives permission to the centre

Transmission of a candidates result to BFC may be delayed for a period of up to 90 working days subsequent to the completion of a module or suite of modules with the candidate's permission. After 90 working days the Assessment Centre has to transmit the candidate's paperwork to BFC. After 90 working days the candidate will have to fully re-take any incomplete Assessments (see also Figures 1 to 4).

BFC will endeavour to make the Certification decision, issue Certificates and download information to Gas Safe Registers National Database of Gas Fitting Operatives within 20 working days of receipt of correct and complete candidate paperwork from the Assessment Centre. Although given in good faith, times quoted for the provision of the Services are intended as estimates only, and are not therefore to be treated as being of the essence of this Agreement. Delays may be experienced where commercial issues exist between the various parties involved.

The Application Form completed by candidates includes a disclaimer box which if ticked by the candidate will mean that an employer has not been given permission to receive information regarding results of Assessments or copies of successful candidates Certificates if requested.

7. Certificates

The Certificate of Assessment issued, which is designed to prevent counterfeiting, contains the following information:

- BFC name
- UKAS Logo with BFC's UKAS registration number
- Certificate issue date
- A description of each gas safety Assessment with its expiry date
Typically 5 years from the date each Assessment was completed unless the ACS MOT style system rules are applied
- BFC contact details
- National Insurance (NI) number of the certificate holder.
- Date of birth of the certificate holder
- Signature of the certificate holder's

The Certificate also contains the following statements:

The certificate remains the property of Blue Flame Certification Ltd. and must be surrendered on demand.

The certificate is only valid when presented on original paper by the certificate holder, duly signed. Unsigned Certificates or photocopies are not evidence of competence and should not be accepted as such.

Statements also to the effect that:

- The holder of this certificate has been deemed competent only in the areas of gas safety detailed on the certificate and the various elements listed on this Certificate are not valid beyond their stated expiry date or if the appropriate core safety assessment is not held or has expired or if they have been withdrawn by BFC.
- For the holder of this certificate to undertake gas work legally within the scope of the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations their employer, or they as a self-employed person, must be a member of class of persons approved by the Health and Safety Executive. For Great Britain, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and Guernsey this means Gas Safe Register. Details can be obtained from Gas Safe Register at www.gassaferegister.co.uk.

8. Suspension and Withdrawal of Certificates

Any misuse of the BFC Logo, breach of these Scheme Rules or failure to pay any agreed fees will result in the suspension or withdrawal of Certification.

Corrective actions may be agreed to be implemented, however, if these are not implemented within 3 months from notification withdrawal procedures will be implemented.

Whilst suspension of Certification is in force the certificated operative must cease carrying out any work as described within the Certificate. In both cases of suspension or withdrawal of Certification, Gas Safe Register will be informed of BFC's actions.

When a certificated operative receives notice of withdrawal of their Certification, they will immediately return Certificates to BFC and cease carrying out work within the scope of the withdrawn Certification. Withdrawal of any Certificates will be made public via BFC's website and details will be forwarded to Gas Safe Registers National Database of Gas Fitting Operatives.

There is a right of appeal as outlined in Section 10.

9. Complaints

Individuals have a right of complaint against any aspect of the Scheme. Complaints must be in writing and can be addressed to either an Assessment Centre or BFC.

Complaints will be investigated and formally reported to the complainant as laid down in procedures available at all BFC Assessment Centres. All individuals raising a complaint have a right of Appeal subsequent to any decision as described in Section 10.

10. Appeals

Any decision not to issue, suspend or withdraw Certification and results of a formal complaint investigation may be appealed against.

Appeals must be notified to BFC in writing within 30 days of such decisions addressed to the Scheme Manager (address below) and a remittance of £350 submitted which will be refunded in full if the Appeal is successful. If the Appellant holds current and appropriate Certification they will remain Certificated until the outcome of the Appeal is known.

Individuals have the right to representation at an Appeal hearing after notifying BFC that they wish to be represented. Representation may be by a friend, colleague, trade union representative or legal counsel. BFC will convene an Appeals Panel, consisting of the Scheme Manager and a member of the Governing & Impartiality Board nominated by its chairman with the date notified to the Appellant in writing. The Individual has the right to object to any member of the Appeals Panel and BFC will re-constitute an alternative. The Appeal will be held within 60 working days of receipt of request from the Appellant with the results notified in writing to the Appellant within 5 working days after the close of the Appeal hearing.

The Individual has a final right of Appeal against the initial Appeal's findings and an Independent arbiter will be appointed to mutual agreement, whose decision will be final.

11. General

BFC has the right to carry out verification and on-going monitoring of a certificated operative as deemed necessary during the period of validity of Certification (usually 5 years from the date of Assessment).

This monitoring will be carried out to determine continuing satisfactory performance and / or to investigate any evidence received indicating lack of competence.

An Individual's responsibilities, duty of care and statutory requirements are not diminished on receipt of Certification.

12. Publicity

Holding of Certification by an Individual does not confer the right to use of either BFC or UKAS logos unless an agreement is in place.

Scope of Certification held by an Individual must be made available in the public domain and such information may be provided by either BFC or Gas Safe Register to any person with a valid reason to see it.

13. Confidentiality, Data Collection and Usage

It is a requirement of the Scheme that Gas Safe Register be provided with candidate information and Assessment results so that their records in relation to the candidate can be updated to ensure continuous registration or advice can be given on registration options on initial or extension to scope.

The process of data collection, usage, retention and disposal of such information ensures confidentiality is maintained meeting the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations.

14. Fees

The costs of Assessment and related Certification Fees will be levied by the Assessment Centre that the candidate applies to, these Fees are due in all cases to be paid to BFC.

If certificated operatives require a replacement / duplicate Certificate(s), BFC will levy a Fee. If a replacement / duplicate Certificate(s) is required due to error on BFC's part, they will be provided free of charge. Where claims that a Certificate(s) has not been received by a certificated operatives are received within three months of the date the Certificate was issued a replacement will be supplied free of charge. After the expiration of this period BFC will charge a fee for the replacement Certificate.

Note: Non-payment of agreed Fees to either an Assessment Centre or to BFC by any party will result in the candidate's paperwork not being processed for Certification and / or a Certificate(s) not being issued or in the case of an issued Certificate(s) that Certificate(s) being suspended or withdrawn by BFC.

15. Gas Safe Register Registration

Upon successful completion of an Assessment(s) and Certification, BFC will download the scope of Certification to Gas Safe Register thus updating the National Database of Gas Fitting Operatives.

Individuals shall hold a current Gas Safe Register licence card (issued via their employer registration or registration as a sole trader) and be in possession of valid competency certification for the areas of work concerned, before any gas work within the scope of the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations is carried out. Individuals should contact Gas Safe Register for details of registration and licence cards.

16. Contacts

Blue Flame Certification Ltd
1st & 2nd Floor, N^o 1 Endon Road
Norton le Moors
Stoke on Trent
Staffordshire
ST6 8NA

Gas Safe Register
PO BOX 6804
Basingstoke
Hampshire
RG24 4NB

UKAS
2 Pine Trees
Chertsey Lane
Staines upon Thames
TW18 3HR

Tel: 0845 194 90 31

Tel: 0800 408 557

Tel: 01784 429 000

Figure 1: Initial Assessment Result Flow Chart - K&U

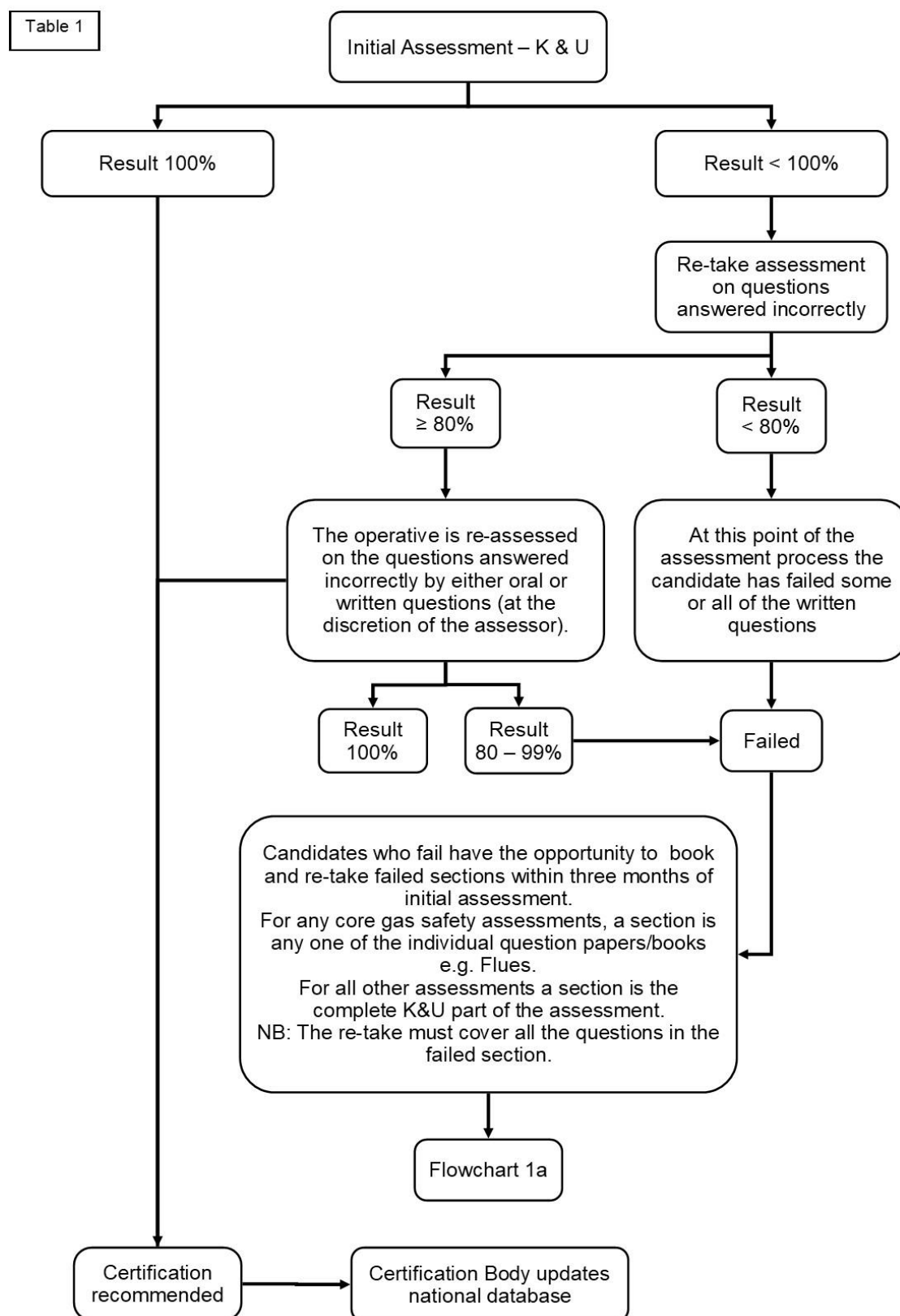


Table 1a

Re-Take Assessment – K & U

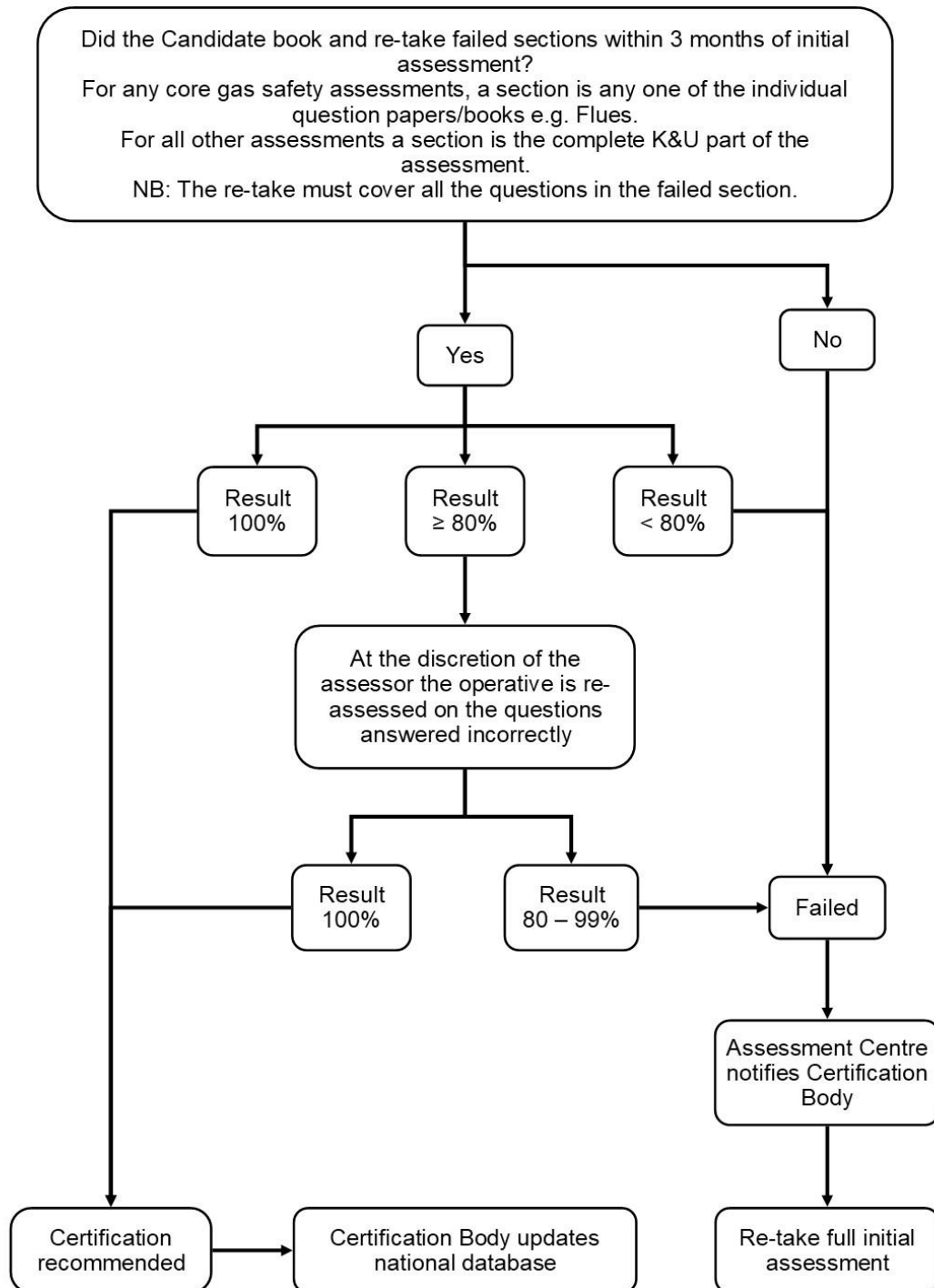


Figure 2: Initial Assessment Result Flow Chart - Practical

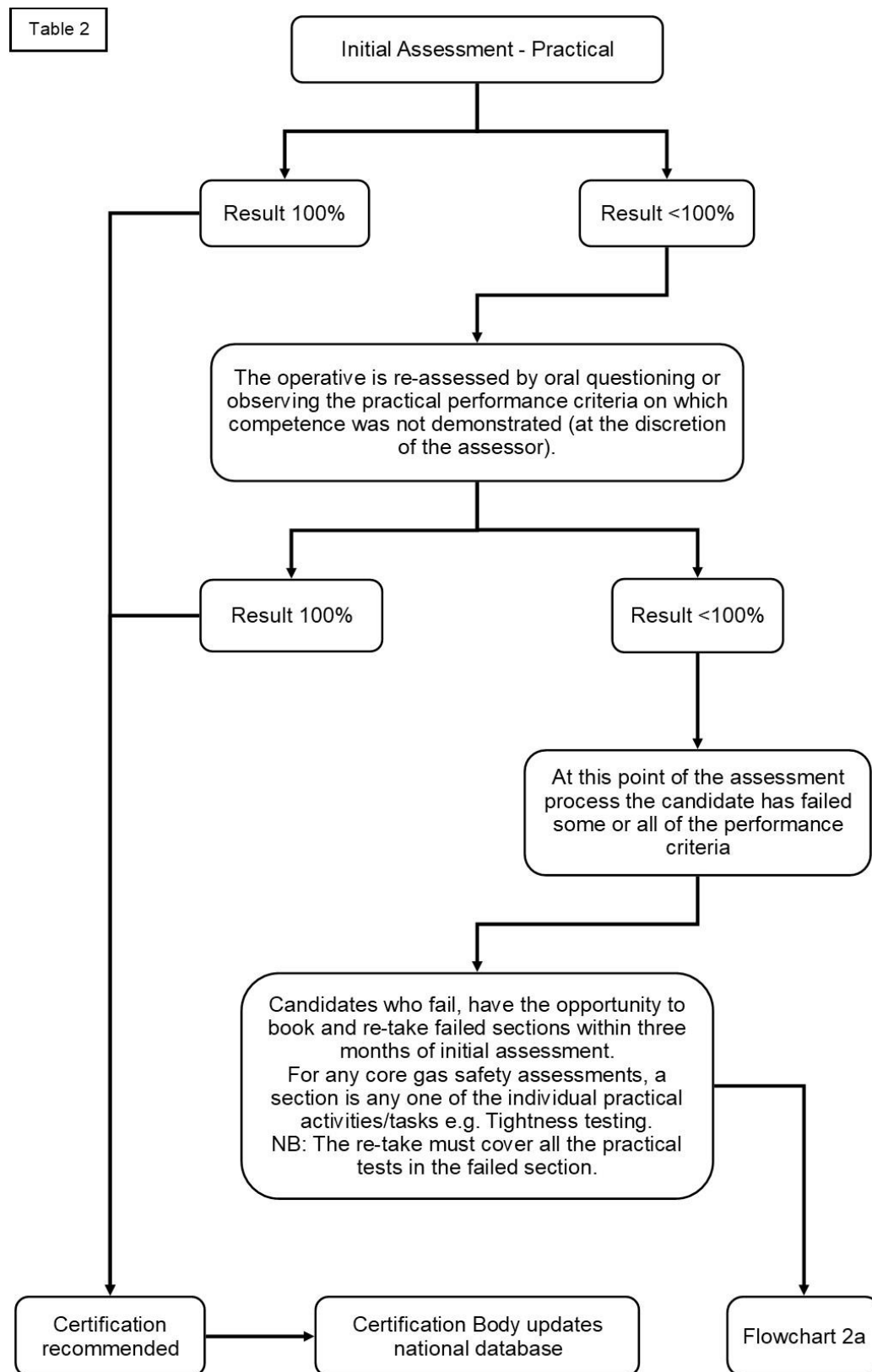


Table 2a

Re-Take Assessment - Practical

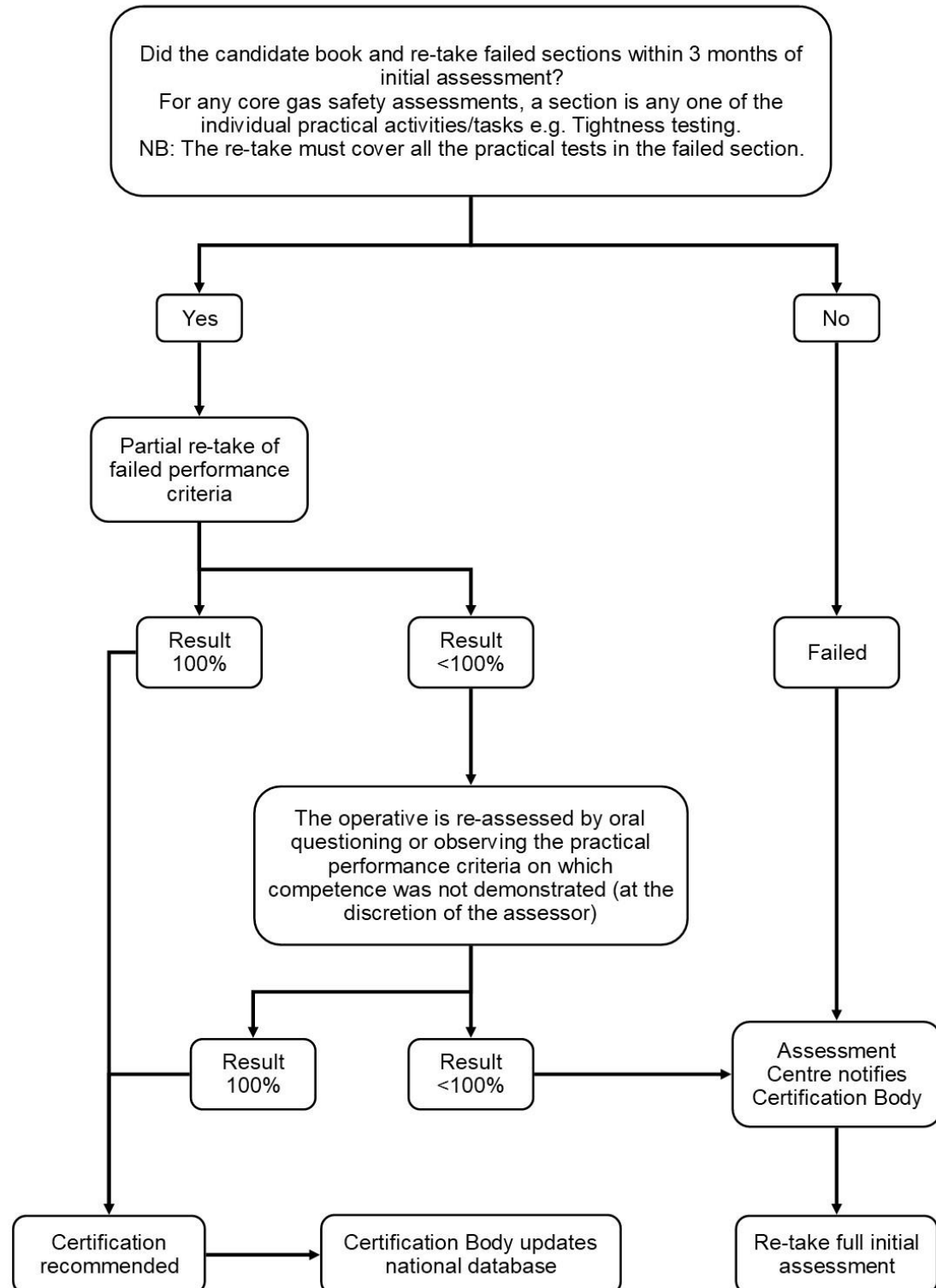


Figure 3: Re-Assessment Result Flow Chart - K&U

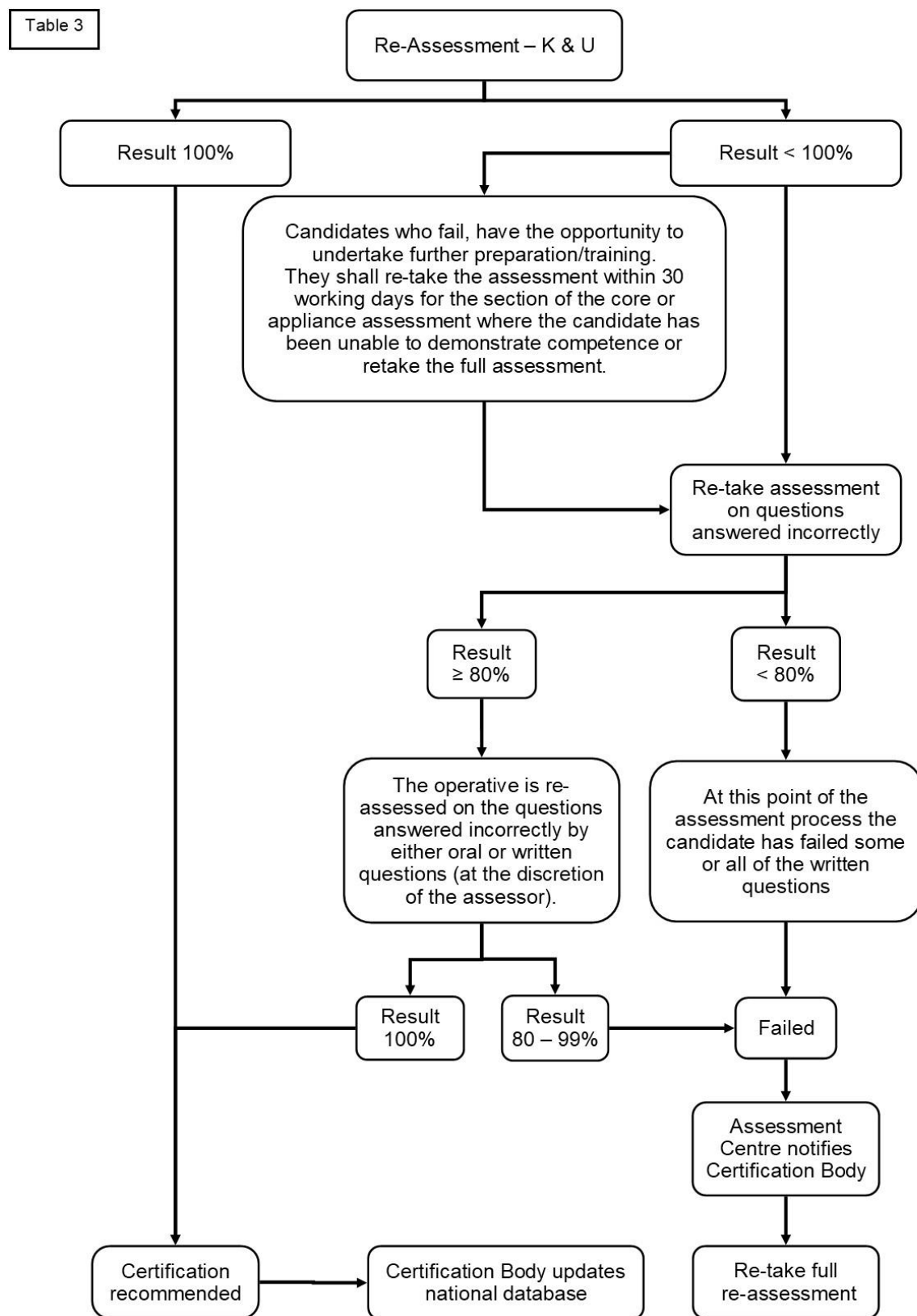
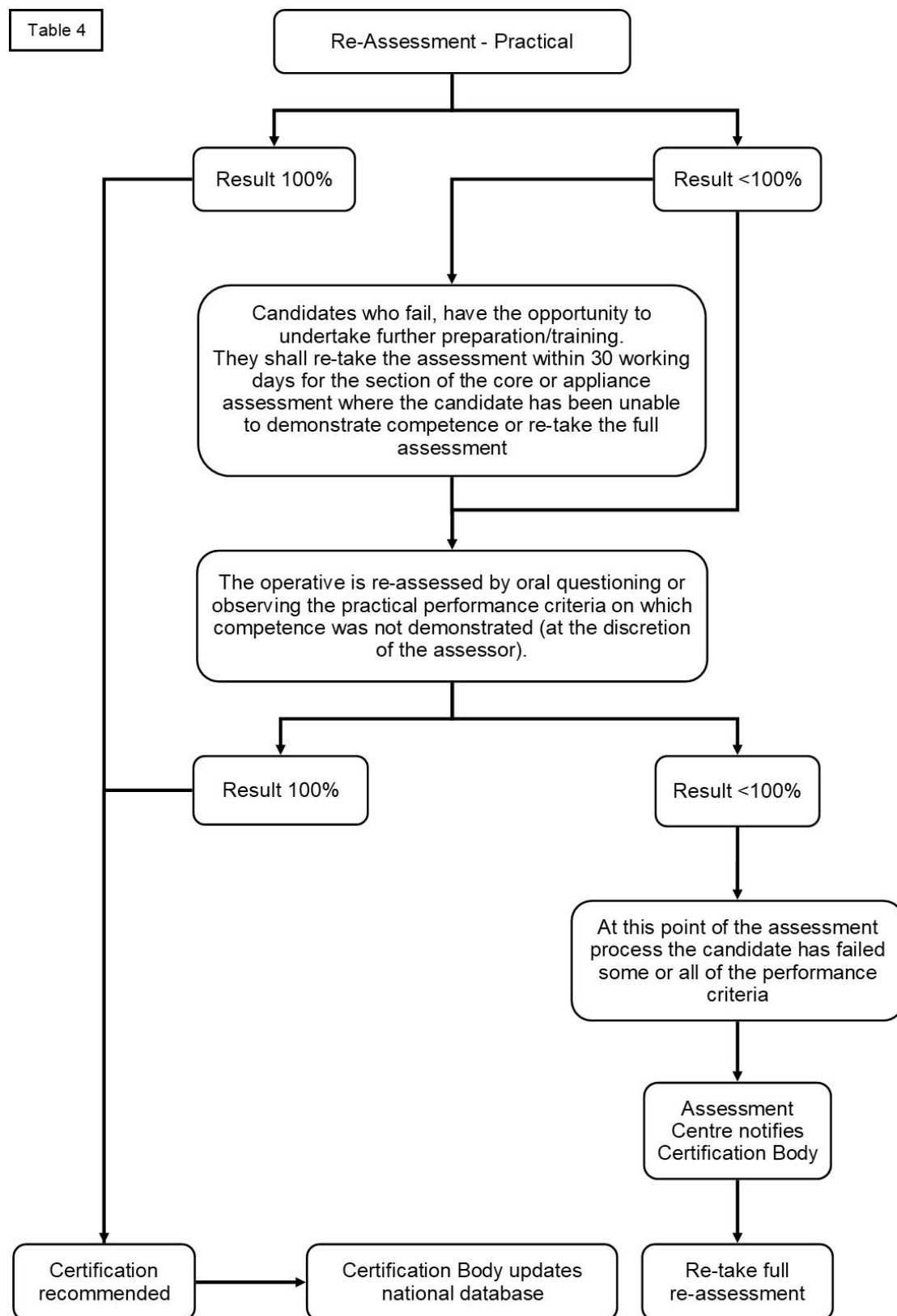


Figure 4: Re-Assessment Result Flow Chart - Practical



Appendix 1: Definitions

Assessment & Re-Assessment

An Individuals activity that when complete demonstrates competence at the time of Assessment against those criteria assessed.

Assessment Centre

BFC location and other locations approved by BFC

Assessor

A person Approved by BFC who is qualified to supervise and assess candidates

BFC

Blue Flame Certification Ltd., a Certification Body accredited by UKAS to operate the Scheme described within this document.

Certification

Issuing of a Certificate of Assessment subsequent to successfully demonstrating competency through Assessment.

Gas Safe Register

Appointed by the Health & Safety Executive to operate the national Register of Gas Businesses working within scope of the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations along with a database of gas fitting operatives that contains details of Individuals participating in the Scheme.

Individual

Any person applying for Assessment and Certification, undertaking Assessment or a holder of a Certificate(s).

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

The process of verifying candidate's assessment paperwork by an Assessment Centre's Internal Quality Assurer.

Scheme

The Nationally Accredited Certification Scheme for Individual Gas Fitting Operatives.

Scheme Rules

This publication

UKAS

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service, the National Body which Accredits Certification Bodies and recognised by the United Kingdom Government.

Appendix 2: Non Gas Safety Legislation & Other Requirements Outside the Scope of the ACS Scheme**General**

Examples of non-gas safety legislation and other requirements that are outside the scope of the Scheme, and are not covered by competency assessment, are detailed below. This is not a definitive listing but is intended to provide guidance to the breadth of legislation that covers the work of gas fitting operatives.

Candidates are encouraged to secure relevant training, qualifications, etc. so they are competent in all areas of work they undertake. Assessment Centres may offer training, assessments, etc. in other areas of work, such as legislation, safety, electrical and plumbing, but such activities are not features of the Scheme.

Legislation etc., relevant to the work of gas fitting operatives but outside the scope of the Scheme

- Gas Safety (Management) Regulations. (Not directly work related).
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, including:
 - Working at height, for example ladder work and working from steps, in activities such as working on roofs, installing flues, and accessing roof spaces.
 - Building work, for example penetrating structures, in activities such as making openings for flues, ventilation, and pipes. Also, for example, lifting flooring, and notching joists.
 - Sweeping chimneys - that is sweep work associated with, but not involving, disconnection and refitting a gas appliance.
- Electricity at Work Regulations.
- Electricity Supply Regulations (as amended).
- BS 7671 (IET Wiring Regulations).
- Construction (Design & Management) Regulations.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, for example risk assessment and associated procedures.
- Provision of Work Equipment Regulations, for example tools and equipment are suitable for the use they are going to be put to.
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations, for example lifting and handling, moving appliances, pipework, and equipment.
- Workplace Regulations, for example workplace ensures health, safety and welfare.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Work Regulations, for example that PPE is fit and proper for the purpose intended and will be maintained and replaced as required.
- The Construction (Head Protection) Regulations, for example working in obligatory 'head protection zones'.
- Noise at Work Regulations, for example working in 'hearing protection zones'.
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations, for example recognition and protection from exposure to hazardous materials used by the trade.
- Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations, for example work on insulated pipes and asbestos pipe.
- Control of Lead at Work Regulations, for example work on water pipe.
- Water Undertakers Bylaws, BS 5449, BS 6700 or their EN / ISO equivalents or replacements, for example any water system pipework or equipment.
- Building Regulations, for example those that are non-gas specific/related, and protected shafts.
- Factories Act.
- Gas Meter Regulations.
- Gas Quality Regulations.
- Boiler (Efficiency) Regulations.
- Pressure Systems and Transportable Gas Container Regulations.
- Gas Meters (Information on Connection and Disconnection) Regulation