

Certificates of Competence

Guidance for applicants

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Author	Name:	MIRIAM DIAZ GALVAN
	Position/Role:	HEAD VETERINARIAN
Approver	Name:	ELENA MCWATT
	Position/Role:	HEAD OF OPERATIONAL DELIVERY

Summary

Intended audience:	Manufacturers and processors
Which UK nations does this cover?	This guidance is applicable in Scotland only
Purpose:	This guidance is designed to assist individuals with their applications for Certificates of Competence in Animal Welfare, which are required for their duties in approved premises.
Legal status:	This guidance is based on the requirements of The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
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2.1	28 August 2015	Amendments – P.6, 10, 11	Elena Gafenco
2.2	17 May 2016	Grandfather rights update – P. 12,16	Elena Gafenco
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4	18 August 2017	Added details in relation to assessment of TCoC holders by FSS; links updated	Elena Gafenco
5	01 June 2018	Review of all content	Operational Delivery

6	10 December 2018	Mainly the addition of charges	Colin Clark
7	13 March 2019	Update links to forms and addition of on farm flow process	Colin Clark
8	08 September 2021	Update fees and payments Add electronically completion of TCoC and Learning Contracts	Miriam Diaz Galvan
9	22 March 2022	Updated fees	Chris Quick
10	15 August 2022	Brief paragraph added on page 9, to ensure BOs have all activities requiring a CoC covered.	Elena Gafenco
11	23 December 2022	Additional clarification on who can consult this guidance (OV mention); instruction over the declarations on the TCoC and CoC (first and second page, respectively); brief paragraph added in the TCoC section, asking the OVs to request advice on the units; another brief paragraph under the same section, requiring for the Mandatory Unit to be added on the TCoC for first time applicants; clarification added under the LC section- units and date completion; clarification added with regards to the photograph of the candidates; hyperlinks for annexes for easier navigation through the document. Both TCoC and CoC templates updated to aid completion. Note added to underline the responsibility of FSS OVs to send the completed documentation to WATOK (for abattoirs only).	Ioana Negrea

12	21 June 2023	Notes for assessors included in section 8 (including the introduction of a letter for unsuccessful assessments); CoC application updated to remove the need for issuing a letter of successful assessment and instructions for completion added; Note added in section 12 about submission of photographs.	Ioana Negrea
13	4 September 2023	Clarification added on the completion of the CoC application in relation to the applicant's declarations; hyperlink to FSS charges updated	Ioana Negrea
14	11 September 2024	Corrected a hyperlink with a missing document	Chris Quick
15	11 December 2024	Information about the assessment process for candidates from knackeries added; CoC application for knackeries added.	Ioana Negrea
16	11 September 2025	Updated FDQ fees	Chris Quick

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1. Legal Status

These guidance notes have been produced to explain the legal requirements of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (as amended) – SSI 2012 No. 321 & No. 355. They cannot cover every situation and you may need to consider the relevant legislation itself to see how it applies in your circumstances. If you do follow the guidance notes they will help you comply with the law. Businesses with specific queries may wish to seek the advice of their local enforcement agency, which is Food Standards Scotland (FSS) in approved slaughterhouses and APHA in other cases.

2. Introduction

New EU legislation came into force on 1 January 2013. It introduced Certificates of Competence replacing slaughterers licences issued under the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or killing) Regulations 1995 (WASK). Implementing Scottish Domestic legislation also came into force on 1 January 2013.

Within the new legislation, there were transitional provisions that gave grandfather rights to holders of existing licences issued under WASK and to animal handlers and free-bullet shooters who could demonstrate three years' experience prior to 1 January 2013.

This guidance contains information on how to apply for a Temporary Certificate of Competence, a Certificate of Competence and how to convert a licence issued under WASK to a Certificate of Competence.

3. Who should read this guidance?

This guidance is designed to assist both experienced and new slaughterers and animal handlers with the application process for a Certificate of Competence.

This guidance can be consulted by Official Veterinarians (OVs)/CoC Assessors when being involved in processes related to CoCs (completing documentation and carrying out assessments).

Business Operators and Animal Welfare Officers will find the guidance useful in assisting them in ensuring that slaughter operations are carried out by suitably qualified individuals.

Individuals who carry out ancillary operations in a lairage who may handle animals (for example sheep shearers or cattle milkers), but are not otherwise involved in the handling process prior to slaughter do not require a Certificate of Competence. This includes forklift truck operators who do not handle birds directly in poultry premises.

4. Legislative References

Part 2 of [The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) sets out which operations require a Certificate of Competence and the conditions for issuing a Certificate of Competence.

The conditions reflect the requirements for Certificates of Competence as set out in Article 26 of [Regulation 1099/2009](#).

Glossary

The following terms and acronyms are used throughout this guidance:

- CoC – Certificate of Competence
- TCoC – Temporary Certificate of Competence
- BO –Business Operator
- AWO – Animal Welfare Officer
- APHA – Animal and Plant Health Agency
- FSS – Food Standards Scotland
- OV – Official Veterinarian (an FSS Authorised Veterinarian in an Approved Slaughterhouse)
- SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority
- FDQ – Food and Drink Qualifications
- WASK - The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (as amended)
- WATOK (S) – Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012
- VA – Veterinary Advisor

5. Temporary Certificate of Competence (TCoC)

The form to apply for a TCoC is at [Annex 2](#). This is split in 2 parts: part 1 – the application for a TCoC and part 2 – the actual TCoC, issued by the Official Veterinarian.

TCoCs are issued to BO's members of staff who do not have the necessary qualifications to hold a full CoC. A TCoC allows an individual to work under direct supervision of a full CoC holder for the species and operations being carried out while carrying out training that will lead to a CoC. A TCoC is issued by an OV in approved slaughterhouses and FSS VA in other premises. The holder can start working immediately after its issue.

TCoCs are valid for maximum 3 months from the date of issue. During this period the holder will have to undertake training and successfully pass the associated assessment in order to be awarded the Qualification Certificate required for the issue of a CoC.

FSS is an SQA and FDQ approved centre and applicants can choose to be assessed by FSS, providing in-house training is available. At the moment FSS do not train slaughterhouse operatives.

If the centre chosen for assessment is FSS, the OV will request a Learning Contract (LC¹) to be filled in by the candidate and signed by their manager at the same time the TCoC is issued. TCoCs and Learning Contracts to be filled up preferably electronically where possible. Signature can be either applied electronically or manually.

Both these documents will be sent by the OV to watok@fss.scot to enable the candidate to be registered with either SQA/FDQ, as appropriate.

Where FSS is not the chosen assessment centre the applicant must register their intention to train with an approved training body accredited by SQA, FDQ or the Rabbinical Commission, and the OV has to be presented evidence of such registration prior to issuing the TCoC.

Where a holder of a TCoC is unable to obtain a full CoC within 3 months for reasons outside their control, they can apply for a re-issue through the OV in the slaughterhouse or via watok@fss.scot, providing the reasoning behind the request. A second TCoC will only be issued in exceptional cases. Each case will be considered on its own merits by a panel from FSS and the Scottish Government Welfare Team, if necessary.

In some cases, FSS panel need not be consulted and the area VA can decide; please see example C below:

Re-Issue Examples

A. Jim has been working in the lairage of a cattle slaughterhouse for 2 months with a TCoC for animal handling of cattle, unfortunately he suffered an accident outside of work, breaking his leg. Because he was off work when his assessment was meant to take place he was unable to gain a qualification certificate for a CoC within 3 months of the issue of his TCoC. When Jim applies for a re-issue of his TCoC the panel agree.

B. Donald worked in a poultry slaughterhouse for 6 weeks, hanging broilers on a shackle line for which activity he held a TCoC. He left the job to work on a construction site before being assessed. After the building was finished, six months later, Donald applied to work in the poultry slaughterhouse again. As he was unable to finish his training and pass the assessment under the

¹ Detail on Learning Contracts at part 6

first TCoC and there were no issues in relation to his performance, the panel agree to have another TCoC re-issued for the same activities.

C. Anne has just been assessed for the activities on her TCoC and found competent. However, this took place only 2 days before the TCoC expires, so it is highly probable that the full CoC will not be issued that quickly. In this case, the plant OV, in consultation with the VA, can issue another TCoC for the same activities, until the full one arrives. FSS panel does not need consulted in this case.

There are six declarations to be provided for a TCoC, requiring a 'Yes' or 'No' tick; the applicant is asked to confirm that:

- they have not been convicted of a welfare offence in the last 3 years;
- they have not been previously refused a licence or CoC;
- they have not had a licence or CoC previously suspended or revoked;
- the information that they have provided for the TCoC is accurate and true;
- they have not held another TCoC in respect of the same activities and been assessed and found to be incompetent;
- they have registered on an approved training course (inserting the name of FSS or alternative training body eg: SQA/FDQ approved centre) providing evidence to the OV.

Where an applicant cannot confirm a specific declaration, this will not definitely exclude them from a TCoC. In this case the applicant must discuss their individual situation with the OV.

When applying for a TCoC, the Business Operators must ensure that they cover all slaughter related activities needed to complete the processes on site, for which a CoC/ TCoC is legally required, unless fully licensed personnel for some of the activities already exist.

The activities and species applied for must be entered in the application form using the codes set out in the Summary of Activities and Species Table. This table is available at [Annex 1](#). If you are unsure of the activity or its code, you should seek advice from your OV.

If OV's or businesses are unsure of the units required, when completing a TCoC form, they should contact watok@fss.scot or seek advice from their VA.

Activities and Species Examples

C. Jane works in a small poultry slaughterhouse that processes ducks and geese. The plant uses cones to restrain the birds which are then stunned using hand-held electric tongs. Jane undertakes all the activities associated with slaughter including managing the birds in the lairage when they arrive and bleeding them after stunning.

Jane will apply for the codes Q21, Q41, Q42, Q53, P21, P41, P42 & P53.

B. Ahmed works in a sheep slaughterhouse that provide lamb for the halal market using non-stun methods. Ahmed is the designated bleeder at the plant but does not handle the animals otherwise.

Ahmed will apply for the codes C53 & C61.

For first time applicants, the Mandatory Unit (M) should be introduced in the units box on the second page of the TCoC, alongside all units relevant for the welfare operations carried out by the candidates.

6. Learning Contracts (LC)

The contract is a collaboratively written agreement between the candidate, the business owner and the assessment centre. The contract provides a statement by the candidate agreeing to complete planned work within the assessment time. The business owner or representative of the business provides a statement detailing discussion around training and that they will support and encourage the candidate to final evaluation by the assessor.

The Learning Contract is the conduit to ensuring registration of chosen activity therefore this must be received along with the TCoC if FSS is the chosen centre.

The Programme Details on the second page should reflect the units stated on the TCoC.

The Learning Contract must be completed, dated and signed off at the start date of the candidate's training. Any changes to the requested activities must be confirmed via an amended Learning Contract, sent to watok@fss.scot as soon as possible.

Note (for abattoirs only): It is the responsibility of the FSS OVs to send the relevant paperwork (TCoC and LC) to watok@fss.scot, upon completion of the documents.

7. Certificate of Competence

The form to apply for a CoC for slaughterhouse employees is at [Annex 3](#).

For knackeries, where assessments are conducted by trained assessors who are not Official Veterinarians, a bespoke CoC application is at [Annex 6](#).

There are two methods of obtaining a CoC; either by gaining a Qualification Certificate for the activities and species applied for or through grandfather rights.

A CoC is valid for the lifetime of the current domestic regulations – WATOK(S).

There are four declarations to be provided for a CoC, requiring a 'Yes' or 'No' tick; the applicant is asked to confirm that:

- They have not been convicted of a welfare offence in the last 3 years;
- they have not been previously refused a CoC;
- they have not had a CoC previously suspended or revoked;
- the information that they have provided in order to obtain a CoC is accurate and true.

Where an applicant ticks 'Yes' at a specific declaration, this will not definitely exclude them from a CoC. In this case the applicant must discuss their individual situation with the OV or watok@fss.scot in the case of knackeries or farms.

The activities and species applied for must be entered in the application form using the codes set out in the Summary of Species and Activities Table. This table is available at [Annex 1](#). The mandatory unit is not required on the full CoC application. If you are unsure of the activity or its code, you should seek advice from your OV.

Notes for completion of the CoC application (second page, under the 'To be completed by the Applicant' section):

- The first declaration: *'I have been successfully assessed and I have included a copy of my Qualification Certificate'* is designed for candidates coming from plants that have their own assessment centre (e.g.: plant 1100). Therefore, 'Yes' should be scored here for these candidates and 'No' at the second declaration.

- The second declaration: *'I have been successfully assessed and a copy of my Qualification Certificate will be sent by FDQ directly to FSS'* refers to the candidates coming from any other plants or kanckeries/farms that use the FSS assessment centre. FSS receives the Qualification Certificates from FDQ and they send them further to the candidates. Therefore, for these candidates, this declaration should be scored with a 'Yes' and the above one should be scored with a 'No'.

General note for completion of the WATOK documentation (TCoC, CoC and LC): all relevant information to be completed in capitals.

8. Qualification Certificates

A Qualification Certificate is a Certificate granted by a body recognised and regulated by OFQUAL, or a Licence issued by the Rabbinical Commission, after an applicant has successfully completed training and assessment.

If FSS OVs are to be utilised for assessment, the candidate/ BO should inform FSS when they have received sufficient training and are confident to be assessed. FSS, in liaison with the assessor OVs, will arrange for the assessment to take place. Once the candidate was found competent, the assessor will complete all documentation to gather the required evidence. This will be sent to FSS, WATOK mailbox and will undergo Internal Verification; the candidate will be resulted once all administrative work will be completed.

Notes for CoC assessors:

- ***The relevant documentation is to be completed at the end of the assessment and sent to watok@fss.scot. This consists of: CoC application, Candidate Disclaimer and the Assessment Packs and a new TCoC application (if the previous TCoC expires soon after the assessment).***
- ***For slaughterhouses, upon successful outcome of the assessment, the assessor OV is required to note the result in the daybook and leave a copy of the CoC application in the plant's Welfare folder.***
- ***Should a candidate be deemed as unsuccessful, the assessor must discuss the result with the candidate, explain the decision and then follow up with a letter to the candidate and the BO (template [here](#)). The letter should contain the reasons clearly explained and recommendations for improvement. This applies for both***

practical and theoretical unsuccessful assessments. A summary of the feedback should also be provided on the assessment pack.

- ***The successful candidates will be allowed to work unsupervised, as long as they are still covered by the TCoC. This will be documented via the full CoC application.***
- ***If the candidate's TCoC expires on the day of the assessment or will expire before the candidate receives their CoC card, the assessor should issue a new TCoC, to cover the period.***

9. Grandfather Rights

Grandfather rights mean that an individual is eligible for a CoC without requiring a Qualification Certificate. After 08 December 2015, this only applies to slaughterers who hold a licence issued under WASK.

Where a WASK licence is used to obtain a CoC the slaughterer must enter their current licence number on the application form and attach a copy of the paper licence. The details on the current licence will be checked by FSS against the activities and species applied for by the applicant.

10. Exemptions

A CoC is not required for the following operations where **killing is not for human consumption**:

- Emergency killing, where an animal must be killed immediately
- Killing in the field by a free-bullet
- Killing for the purposes of official depopulation in connection with a notifiable disease
- Killing of a bird by cervical dislocation on the premises on which the bird was reared – mind that limits on weight and number of birds/person/day are specified in Regs 1099/2009.
- Killing by a veterinarian (or person acting under their direction) undertaking their professional duties
- In addition slaughter of an animal by their owner for his/her personal consumption (outside of a slaughterhouse) is permitted.

11. Fees & Payment

No fee is required for a Temporary CoC.

Charges for businesses undertaking assessment from FSS are based on the OV hourly rate if said OV is attending above any routine business agreement requirement, along with additional travel time, report writing time (if required) and mileage.

The business will be invoiced the charges FSS are charged by the qualification authority, along with a further charge of £25 for the first issue of the CoC or £8 for an amendment to or replacement of an existing CoC.

A full list of charges can be found [here](#).

- For slaughterhouses - payment will be requested by FSS once the applications are in, by means of a stand-alone invoice (or added to the routine FSS invoices).
- For on-farm/ knackery slaughter – a £25/ £8 cheque payable to Food Standards Scotland must accompany the CoC application form and Learning Contract.

12. Photographs

No photograph is required for a TCoC.

For CoCs, a passport sized photograph is required, 45mm tall by 35mm wide and front facing. The photograph must accompany the application.

Please note that a photograph must be submitted irrespective of the candidate going through the assessment process for the first time. Due to GDPR, FSS cannot hold on to photos and these are deleted after they have been used.

FSS accept electronic photographs. These should be in JPEG format and of suitable size and quality (above 10 KB and below 2 MB). Electronic photographs should be sent to watok@fss.scot with the name and date of birth of the applicant included in the e-mail.

The photograph needs to be clear, taken against a plain colour background and the candidate should not be wearing any PPE (hairnet, helmet etc.) from the neck up.

Annex 1: Summary of Species and Activities Tables

Red Meat	Cattle	Calves	Horses	Sheep & Goats	Pigs	Large Game
Reference	A	V	B	C	D	E
11. Penetrative captive bolt device (including assessment of effective stunning)						
12. Non-penetrative captive bolt device (including assessment of effective stunning)	N/A	up to 10 Kg	N/A	up to 10 Kg	N/A	up to 10 Kg
13. Firearm with free projectile (including assessment of effective stunning)						
14. Pithing (including assessment of effective stunning)	Not for human consumption	Not for human consumption		Not for human consumption		
16. Percussive blow to the head (including assessment of effective stunning)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Lambs and kids up to 5Kg	Piglets up to 5Kg	N/A
21. Head-only electrical stunning (including assessment of effective stunning)						
22. Head-to-Body electrical stunning (including assessment of effective stunning)						
31. Carbon dioxide at high concentration (including assessment of effective stunning)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
32. Carbon dioxide in two phases (including assessment of effective stunning)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
33. Carbon dioxide associated with inert gases (including assessment of effective stunning)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
34. Inert gases (including assessment of effective stunning)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
41. the handling and care of animals before they are restrained;						
42. the restraint of animals for the purpose of stunning or killing;						
43. the shackling or hoisting of animals;						
52. the assessment of effective stunning (standalone code – on completion of the specific unit)						
53. the bleeding of live animals; monitoring the absence of signs of life						
61. Slaughtering in accordance with Article 4 (4) of Regulation EC 1099/2009			N/A		N/A	N/A

Poultry, Ratites and Lagomorphs	Chicken & Guinea Fowl	Quail	Turkey	Ratites	Ducks	Geese	Rabbits
Reference	K	L	M	N	Q	P	R
11. Penetrative captive bolt device (including assessment of effective stunning)							
12. Non-penetrative captive bolt device (including assessment of effective stunning)							
13. Firearm with free projectile (including assessment of effective stunning)							
15. Cervical dislocation (including assessment of effective stunning)	up to 5 Kg	up to 5 Kg	up to 5 Kg	N/A	up to 5 Kg	up to 5 Kg	N/A
16. Percussive blow to the head (including assessment of effective stunning)	up to 5 Kg	up to 5 Kg	up to 5 Kg	N/A	up to 5 Kg	up to 5 Kg	up to 5 Kg
21. Head-only electrical stunning (including assessment of effective stunning)							
22. Head-to-Body electrical stunning (including assessment of effective stunning)							
23. Electrical waterbath (including assessment of effective stunning)				N/A			N/A
31. Carbon dioxide at high concentration (including assessment of effective stunning)	Not in abattoir	Not in abattoir	Not in abattoir	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
32. Carbon dioxide in two phases (including assessment of effective stunning)				N/A			N/A
33. Carbon dioxide associated with inert gases (including assessment of effective stunning)				N/A			N/A
34. Inert gases (including assessment of effective stunning)				N/A			N/A
41. the handling and care of animals before they are restrained;							
42. the restraint of animals for the purpose of stunning or killing;							
43. the shackling or hoisting of animals;							
52. the assessment of effective stunning (standalone code – on completion of the specific unit)							
53. the bleeding of live animals; monitoring the absence of signs of life							
61. Slaughtering in accordance with Article 4 (4) of Regulation EC 1099/2009				N/A			N/A

Annex 2: Form for application for Temporary Certificate of Competence

Click here - [TCoC](#)

Annex 3: Form for application for Certificate of Competence

Click here - [CoC](#)

Annex 4: Appeals

Any decision made by FSS regarding CoCs in Scotland may be appealed. The appeal system entitles you to make written representations to and be heard by the Sheriff. If you wish to appeal against this notice you should lodge an appeal with the Sheriff within 28 days of the decision.

More information on how to appeal can be found at the Scottish Courts website at: [Scottish Courts Rules](#) through Chapter 2: SUMMARY APPLICATION RULES (4).

Annex 5: Flow chart of the process

Click here for abattoirs - [Workflow](#)

Click here for on farm - [Workflow](#)

[Annex 6: CoC application for knackeries](#)