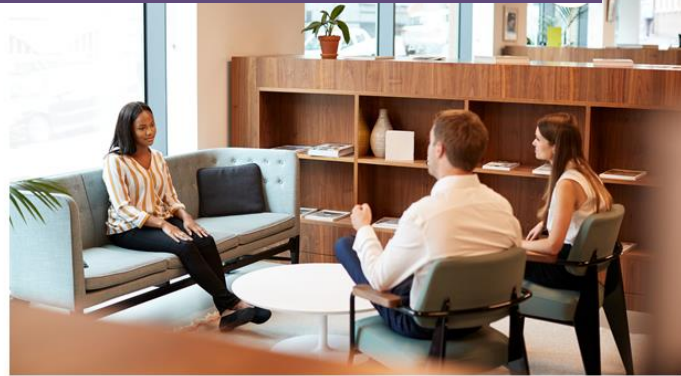


Guidelines for independent/objective SFIA assessments



This is the second of a series of guidelines for SFIA assessments. Keep informed of further developments by registering on the SFIA website. www.sfia-online.org.

This document describes recognised and generally accepted good practice in performing SFIA assessments of other people's skills and competencies.

The SFIA Foundation obtained input from a global, collaborative working group of experienced SFIA users.

The guidelines are illustrative of different approaches to SFIA assessments. They are not prescriptive in describing only one way.

It is intended to help organisations to establish their preferred approach.

Introduction

These guidelines introduce the role of an independent/objective assessor. The assessor's role is to:

- analyse / review the evidence against the required SFIA components
- make an objective assessment and record the outcomes of the assessment
- communicate the outcomes of the assessment to the individual and/or other parties

SFIA is a flexible resource and can be used in support of many of uses cases related to skills/competency assessment:

- professional / career development discussions
- performance conversations between managers and individuals
- skills gap analysis
- training needs analysis
- recognition schemes run by industry/professional bodies
- apprenticeship/industry placement schemes
- internal recruitment, career progression, promotion processes
- external recruitment
- organisational resource management and deployment
- organisational workforce planning
- industry-wide or country-wide skills registers including by those run by professional bodies
- digital badging for SFIA skills or for standard industry roles

This means that the independent/objective assessor could take a variety of forms, such as:

- an individual's line manager
- a practice manager or professional development manager
- a specialist recruiter or a recruiting manager. These could be internal or external to the employing organisation.
- an internal, but independent, SFIA skills assessor.
 - e.g. employed by the same organisation as the individual being assessed.
- a tutor or staff member in an academic and/or industry placement context.
- an external, independent SFIA skills assessor.
 - e.g. an end-point assessor for an apprenticeship scheme
- a procurement specialist or supplier relationship manager
- a project manager or resourcing manager

In selecting an independent/objective assessor; it is important to consider the purpose of the SFIA assessment.

- Where there is a need to follow up in a business as usual context then individuals / roles who are closer to the individual can be the most effective assessor, e.g., a line manager who can support development on the job after the assessment).
- If a greater level of independence is required, someone without an existing relationship with the individual being assessed may be preferred.

Overview of the content of the SFIA Assessment Guidelines

Independent / Objective assessment guidelines	Assessors guidelines	Self-assessment guidelines
<i>- for people setting up and running assessments in organisations</i>	<i>- for the people performing assessment of others</i>	<i>- for the individual being assessed</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear purpose, outcomes and process for the assessment		
<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation for the independent/objective assessors		
<input type="checkbox"/> Briefing/preparation for the individual being assessed		<input type="checkbox"/> Clear purpose
<input type="checkbox"/> Gather evidence		<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation
<input type="checkbox"/> Review evidence and assess against SFIA components	<input type="checkbox"/> Assess SFIA level of responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Select / prioritise SFIA skills to assess <input type="checkbox"/> Assess SFIA skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-assess SFIA level of responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Select / prioritise SFIA skills to assess <input type="checkbox"/> Self-assess SFIA skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Conclude the assessment and record the results		<input type="checkbox"/> Record work experience to support assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate assessment outcomes		
<input type="checkbox"/> Quality assurance		

Note

- The Assessor’s Guidelines are complementary to and entirely aligned to the [SFIA self-assessment guidelines](#).
- This means that when independent/objective assessments include a self-assessment; the guidelines to individuals and assessors will be consistent.

Key Principles for independent/objective SFIA assessments

<p>Clear purpose, outcomes and process for the assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The organisation accountable for the SFIA assessment should design/adopt an assessment process and tools to achieve the desired outcomes. ➤ This includes the selection of the SFIA components to assess and ensuring the assessment is aligned with organisational policies, procedures and codes of conduct.
<p>Preparation for the independent/objective assessors</p>	<p>Ensure independent/objective assessors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ understand the purpose of the SFIA assessment and the methods used for the SFIA assessment ➤ receive preparation in the methods and tools needed to perform the assessment. It can help assessors to undertake a self-assessment themselves, so they are more aware of how the process operates. ➤ have the skills, knowledge and information needed to perform the SFIA assessment
<p>Briefing/preparation for the individual being assessed</p>	<p>Ensure the individuals being assessed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ understand the purpose of the assessment and the process to be used ➤ understand what they need to do to perform their part in the SFIA assessment ➤ have the skills, knowledge, information and opportunity to perform their part in the assessment, such as performing a Self-Assessment
<p>Gather evidence</p>	<p>Evidence to be collected includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ evidence elicited by the independent/objective assessor(s) through the assessment process, including information provided verbally as in an interview ➤ information gathered by the individual being assessed – including a self-assessment.
<p>Review evidence and assess against SFIA components</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This may be in the form of a discussion with the individual being assessed, or, it may be an off-line/desktop activity or a combination of both. ➤ Enough time should be made available for a comprehensive exploration and review of the evidence.
<p>Conclude the assessment and record the results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The independent/objective assessor makes a considered decision on the evidence available. ➤ The results of the assessment are recorded according to the purpose of the assessment and the method and tools being used.
<p>Communicate assessment outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The outcomes of the assessment are communicated to the individual and/or other parties, according to the purpose of the assessment and the method and tools being used.
<p>Quality assurance</p>	<p>To verify that the reviewed assessments are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ conducted according to organisational policies/procedures/codes of conduct ➤ effective in achieving the desired outcomes

Key Points

- SFIA is designed to be flexible and easy to understand and use.
- You may need to introduce new processes but SFIA assessments can also be embedded in your existing or refined people management policies and practices.
- Understand why your organisation is performing the assessment and what your desired outcomes are. Then design/adopt a process to achieve this.
- A SFIA assessment can be performed quickly. However, additional value can be obtained with more thought and with good preparation for all stakeholders.
- Familiarise yourself with the key concepts of SFIA. Then focus on the elements of SFIA you want to assess
- SFIA is about assessing actual work-based experience of performing the skill not just having knowledge of the subject matter
- Follow a structured assessment process, based on the individual's work experience to assess accurately with good supporting evidence.
- The assessment does not have to address all skills, only those necessary, and it may be added to incrementally in the future
- It is good practice to collate and record evidence to support the decisions made and the outcomes of the assessment

Detailed Guidance

Who this guidance is for

- Line Managers, HR & L&D consultants, resourcing specialists, recruiters, SFIA consultants & practitioners who are supporting employers, professional bodies and other organisations to adopt SFIA
- Anyone who wants to understand generally recognised good practice in the use of SFIA assessments

Notes

- SFIA is a flexible resource and can be applied in many ways.
- These guidelines are illustrative, and present alternative approaches. They do not mandate a single definitive approach.
- The approach you choose will depend on the purpose of the SFIA assessment, your work or academic environment and the planned use of the assessment outcomes.
- There is an active global ecosystem of SFIA Partners, SFIA Training Providers, SFIA Consultants and Practitioners. They are available for advice on SFIA assessments and the use of specific processes and tools (including skills assessment software) to support SFIA assessments. Full details are available on the SFIA website.

Clear purpose and process for the assessment:

Before you start to use SFIA for the assessment of others it is essential to be clear on the purpose and desired outcomes of a reviewed assessment.

Design an assessment process to achieve the desired outcomes.

Ensure it is guided by and/or aligned to organisational policies, procedures and/or codes of conduct.

Select the SFIA components to assess. E.g.

- generic attributes,
- specific skills and skill levels,
- the full set of SFIA skills & skill levels to find all the skills relevant to and individual's work experience

Examples of purposes for SFIA skills assessments

- performance conversations
- personal and career development planning
- skills gap analysis/training needs analysis
- recognition scheme run by industry/professional bodies
- apprenticeship/industry placement schemes
- internal recruitment / career progression / internal promotion
- external recruitment
- organisational resource management and/or workforce planning
- industry-wide or country-wide skills registers including by Professional bodies
- digital badging for SFIA skills or industry roles

The selection of SFIA components to be assessed, as well as the process and assessment methods to be used, should be designed with the purpose and desired outcomes in mind.

- Ensure there is traceability between all desired outcomes and the assessment process.
- For critical assessment components; more than one assessment method may be needed to ensure it is tested thoroughly.
- For an effective process; avoid repeated testing of the same SFIA component.

For employers; SFIA assessments would come under the scope of existing HR organisational policies, procedures and codes of conduct.

If assessments are not in the context of employer/employee relationships; then other relevant policies / principles would apply e.g. for recruitment agencies, professional bodies, SFIA partners.

For academic institutions; a SFIA assessment process should be compatible with broader assessment approaches such as those used for knowledge assessments.

Common principles to be covered include topics such as treating individuals fairly, transparency, avoiding bias in assessment, data confidentiality, aligned to relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies, rights of appeal, respect the rights and dignity of individuals and groups.

Preparation for the assessors:

Independent/objective SFIA skills assessors should have the appropriate skills, knowledge and resources needed to conduct the assessment.

This includes

- knowledge of SFIA and the specific components being assessed
- knowledge, skills, experience to perform the assessment process and use associated tools
- necessary information about the individual being assessed to be able to make an informed and accurate assessment

Notes

Independent/objective assessors will need to be briefed on what components of the SFIA framework are being assessed, and how that assessment should be performed.

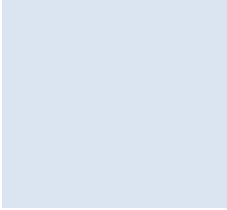
- supporting SFIA material is available on the SFIA website.
- if you are using a tool or HR system to support assessment; some or all of the SFIA content may be embedded in the tool.

SFIA is designed to be a practical resource for people who manage or work in or around information and communication technologies, digital transformations and software engineering. It follows, that for most of the purposes listed above; assessors do not require in-depth training in SFIA before performing an assessment. However, this does not mean anyone can perform SFIA assessments.


- assessors need to be experienced professionals who understand the industry context of the SFIA components being assessed.
- as a minimum, assessors need to understand the SFIA framework and concepts sufficiently to perform the required assessments.
- This can be achieved using the material available on the SFIA website and/or using in-depth SFIA training from a SFIA training partner.
- Assessors should be competent and knowledgeable in the methods/tools needed to perform the assessment. E.g. competency-based interviewing
- typically, assessors should be operating at a SFIA level 4 or higher.
- Depending on the context of the assessment; assessors may need to be operating at higher SFIA levels for assessing higher-level individuals.

Independent/objective assessors need to understand the nature of the assessment activities and how it fits the overall process.

- Independent/objective assessors need to have the skills, knowledge and information to perform the activity.
- Skills will be needed for specialist assessment techniques such as competency-based interviewing, case study evaluation, work-based simulations.
- Independent/objective assessors should be trained in relevant assessment techniques, and



have read and understood the questions and know how the rating system works

- The assessment process and tools should be designed to provide enough evidence about the individual to make an assessment.
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Briefing and preparation for individuals being assessed:

Ensure the individuals being assessed:

- understand the purpose of and methods used for the SFIA assessment
- understand what they need to do to perform their part in the SFIA assessment

Individuals being assessed should be fully briefed on the assessment process and what information they need to provide to support the assessment. E.g.

- Process steps and timing
- Who is involved, how they should prepare?
- What supporting evidence is required?
- What templates, tools, systems they should use to provide their supporting evidence

A self-assessment performed by the individual in line with the organisation's practices is typically a necessary part of the process.

Notes

SFIA may, or may not, be explicit in the assessment process. Either way; the individual needs to understand the components of the SFIA framework which are being assessed, and how that assessment will be performed.

- supporting SFIA material is available on the SFIA website.
- if you are using a tool or HR system to support assessment; some or all of the SFIA content may be embedded in the tool.

SFIA is a practical resource for people who manage or work in or around information and communication technologies, digital transformations and software engineering.

- in-depth training in SFIA is not required for the individuals being assessed
- The briefing on the assessment process and/or the tools used for the process should provide all the required orientation to SFIA

The assessment should be of the individual's professional skills and competencies; not a test of their knowledge of the SFIA framework

- SFIA is publicly available; so, in most circumstances, it is recommended that organisations should inform individuals of the source of the SFIA-related assessment components.
- This adds credibility to the assessment and helps with fairness as no individual gains an advantage by having access to SFIA-related material that others do not.

Gather evidence:

Includes

- evidence elicited by the independent/objective assessor(s) through the assessment process, including information provided verbally, as in an interview
- information gathered by the individual being assessed – including a self-assessment.

A wide range of evidence gathering techniques are available.

Techniques should be selected to fit the context and intended outcomes of the assessment.

SFIA describes workplace behaviours – it follows that *direct* or *near-direct* observations of workplace behaviours provide the most reliable evidence.

Where direct observations are not possible then good practice for obtaining indirect evidence should be followed.

Notes

The assessment of individuals is based on their actual work experience. Not their potential or their aspirations.

- evidence must be clearly related to what is being assessed
- it is useful to gather relevant personal work records and related information before starting the assessment. The value and availability of this information will be dependent on the context.
 - In an employer/employee relationship the quality/quantity of personal work records will be quite different than a review by an external professional body.
- methods of assessment should be appropriate to the evidence sought and the assessments should be made, wherever practicable, on evidence relating to an individual’s performance on more than one occasion and in a variety of contexts or situations.
- Assessment methods used should be consistent with the nature of the work being undertaken.
 - As an illustration, consider the different techniques for assessing a skill such as Programming/software development versus Enterprise Architecture
 - The former could use coding tests performed in exam-like conditions or reviews of code produced
 - The latter could be through a walk-through presentation of a future state architecture model produced by the individual

Examples

Direct or near-direct evidence of responsibilities/experiences in the workplace

- Endorsements and feedback (formal or informal) from managers, colleagues, customers or other parties with experience of seeing the individual operate in a work environment
- Recent job descriptions, assignment objectives, or terms of reference for their work
- Performance reviews / performance ratings
- An organisation structure chart
- A list of key stakeholders or contacts – and the nature of the relationship

- Key deliverables you have produced, the outcomes you achieve in your work
- Records of training, education and professional development undertaken by the individual

Self-assessment / personal representations

- A CV / resume / LinkedIn profile
- Reflective learning journal
- A self -assessment of SFIA skills
- Completed application form

Indirect observations

- Competency-based interviews – ensuring interview are structured effectively. E.g. questions are planned carefully before the interview, all individuals are asked the same questions, answers are scored using a rating system, questions focus on the SFIA-related attributes and activities being assessed
- Tests of situational judgment
- Presentations by individuals based on their work experience including an opportunity for independent/objective assessors follow up with additional questions
- Sharing examples or a portfolio of work-based outputs and artefacts

Review evidence:

Enough time should be made available for a considered review of the evidence against the agreed SFIA components.

Depending on the assessment method, the review of evidence may be performed:

- in the presence of the individual being assessed (an interview or professional discussion)
- or as an off-line / desktop activity
- or a combination of both

Notes

- the SFIA components and the marking scheme / recording mechanism should be designed into the process and methods used
- consideration should be given to how much effort / prompting is reasonable to offer the individual
 - e.g. is the obligation on the independent/objective assessor to search through a CV and application form to find evidence or is the obligation on the individual to present their information in such a way that the evidence is clear to see
- For employers; business as usual HR processes often provide ideal opportunities for review of evidence in an interactive and engaging manner e.g. a 1 to 1 conversation based around performance reviews and personal development
- Skilled interviewers with an effective question bank can elicit and review evidence information in an interview or other interactive situation
- Evidence reviews may need follow up conversations or requests for further information from the individual or other parties who have observed the individual. These should follow an agreed process to protect the integrity of the assessment.
- Some moderation / calibration with other independent/objective assessors can be helpful in reaching a judgment

<p>Conclude the assessment and record the results:</p>	<p>The independent/objective assessor reaches a considered opinion and records the results of the assessment. The approach used will follow the agreed process.</p>
<p>An assessment should be made on all available evidence.</p> <p>The assessor should bring together all the evidence and reach a conclusion for each of the required SFIA components.</p>	<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should be recorded using the agreed method, tools, template. • Where appropriate provide additional feedback / commentary in addition to the raw score. • Where the scope of the assessment is more focussed than an individual's self-assessment (e.g. fewer skills are being assessed than are included in the self-assessment), then this should be made clear to individuals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In this case only the assessed components should be recorded as being assessed • The approach used should take account of all relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies when recording assessments

<p>Communicate the assessment outcomes:</p>	<p>The outcomes of the assessment are communicated to the individual and/or other parties, according to the purpose of the assessment and the method / tools being used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In designing and executing the assessment; it is important to consider how the results of the assessment are communicated. • There are likely to be different approaches for formative or summative assessments. • In an employer / employee context; it should be expected that the individual’s manager is a key part of the communication. • Where a review is conducted with a different scope to the self-assessment, this should be noted in the communication <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of business as usual HR processes and conversations • Performed as part of the inbuilt workflow of assessment tools • Feedback to individuals and their manager as part of an internal or external skills assessment • The communication may include additional formative feedback (specific development recommendations or feedback on specific gaps, rationale, etc.) • Reports, certificates, digital badges • Any additional information (e.g. specific development recommendations or feedback on specific gaps/ reasons) • Academic results or grading • Formative assessment providing feedback to support performance improvement, professional development and learning • Summative assessments focussed on the achievement or not against a particular benchmark or standard </div>
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Quality assurance:

Ensuring that the SFIA reviewed assessments are:

- Are conducted according to organisational policies / procedures / codes of conduct
- Are effective in achieving the desired outcomes.

- The organisation should ensure that their SFIA assessment activities are conducted according to documented policies, practices, procedures.
- A named individual or role should be accountable for quality assurance
- Where appropriate, quality issues are documented and addressed.
- There are likely to be different levels of rigour applied to quality assurance approaches for formative or summative assessments.

Examples

- Moderation of assessment results. Moderation is a post-assessment review across a population of individual assessment results. This provides confidence that assessments are being performed consistently and that individuals are being fairly assessed compared to each other
- Calibration of assessment processes and outcomes. Calibration is a pre-assessment activity to help independent/objective assessors assess consistently. Creating model assessments of known individuals or established personas / behaviours helps independent/objective assessors in gathering evidence and in their assessments.
- Business as usual processes for compliance with HR policies and procedures
- A recruitment firm’s code of conduct
- Quality assurance activities agreed between suppliers of assessments and assessment tools and their client organisations
- Sampling of assessments by an independent body
- Sampling of assessments by supplier management functions of staff augmentation services or outsourcing service providers