



Sterling Accreditation
Setting the Standard

Sterling Accreditation Energy Assessor Guidance

QA Auditing of EPC's

Practices and Procedures Manual

Version 1

Sterling Accreditation Limited

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The Sterling Accreditation quality auditing manual has been created to support Energy Assessors (EAs) with reasonable guidance on their obligations from a scheme perspective and what information is required to complete an EPC audit and what the critical areas a scheme should review when auditing.

When an audit is called for; the EA will need to provide the Sterling Audit team with evidence to verify if the EPC is true and accurate, this should include:-

- The data file, and or software data collection forms, relating to information used by the Energy Assessor
- The lodged EPC
- Site photographs (including photos covering all elevations)
- Site Notes
- Design floor plan, elevations, sections etc which allows the EPC to be recalculated. This should consist of a sketch plan covering all levels, annotated with measurements, areas and HLP. Site notes – paper or electronic file .
- As part of the quality audit and even though it is not mandatory Sterling will request evidence of the health and safety risk assessment and the client covering letter, this does not affect the overall EPC score but it enables us to check you have a good working practice.

All schemes have a minimum requirement for auditing purposes. See below for audit timeline to understand the process and what you should expect .

Audit escalation process

1. The audit process starts with recognising an audit requirement in line with the current Scheme operating requirements (SOR)
2. As soon as the Sterling audit team request evidence from the assessor, the countdown process starts for the assessor to provide the complete evidence pack. (Unless individual arrangements are made with the Sterling Audit Team, the maximum period for supply of information from the Energy Assessor is five days.)
3. If evidence is not provided within the required period, the Sterling audit team will contact the assessor and advise that failure to supply information could result in membership suspension. If the Energy Assessor is able to provide a reasonable excuse as to the delay in sending data through the Audit Team may offer an extension to this period.
4. If evidence is not provided the Sterling Audit team review the case to decide next actions and advise assessor accordingly of any potential outcome
5. If the audit is a pass, no further QA action is taken until required by the SOR. The Sterling audit team write out to the assessor with a full audit report including comments where applicable. All QA audit reports are held online in the members reporting area for your reference.
6. In the event the Audit fails, the Sterling audit team write out to the assessor with a full audit report detailing the reasons behind the failure. The assessor is provided an agreed timescale to review and challenge the audit report. A timescale will also be assigned to re-lodge the corrected EPC.



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7. If an audit fails the Sterling audit team write out to the assessor to request further two evidence packs for QA in accordance with the SOR
8. If evidence is not provided within the required period, the Sterling audit team will contact the assessor and advise that failure to supply information could result in membership suspension. If the Energy Assessor is able to provide a reasonable excuse as to the delay in sending data through the Audit Team may offer an extension to this period.
9. If evidence is not provided within the allowed timescale then Sterling Audit team review the case to decide next actions and advise assessor accordingly of any potential outcome
10. If both additional QA audit's pass, no further action will be taken by the audit team, until required by the SOR. The Sterling audit team write out to the assessor with audit pass reports, including comments where applicable. All QA audit reports are held online in the members reporting area for your reference.
11. If the assessor fails one of the two additional audits triggered by the initial audit failure the audit team will have to make a judgement as to the appropriate remedial action based on the seriousness of the fail, the Sterling audit team write out to the assessor to confirm next actions in accordance with the SOR.
12. If the assessor fails both audits triggered by the initial failure then the assessors is automatically suspended until it is clear what remedial action is needed to be taken to correct the lack of knowledge. Membership to Sterling will only be reinstated following evidence from the EA that remedial actions have been completed.
13. In the event a QA Assessor can demonstrate that the two consecutive failures in the follow on audits were minor in nature and knowledge can be easily rectified by the EA undertaking self learning, the EA will be released from suspension. On return from suspension the Audit Team will subject the assessor to whichever is the greater of:
 - a. 10% clear auditing regime for a period of 6 months subject to at least 5 EPCs being assessed during the period; or
 - b. An audit of 5 clear EPCs within the 6 month period following a return to lodgement. Should 6 months be insufficient to generate 5 EPCs then the scheme should select the first available EPCs.

When auditing an EPC Sterling QA Assessors will check all **Critical Inputs (CI)** and accompanying supporting evidence.

Sterling QA assessors will also check a sample of the **Less Critical Inputs, (LCI)** to check that errors in areas and Km values are unlikely to cause a significant error. In buildings with a small number of zones (less than 10 zones) all less critical inputs should be checked. In buildings with a large number of zones then a sample of zones should be checked, the sample should comprise of the zones most likely to have the greatest impact on the rating, and the sample must be sufficient to undertake an assessment, and in any case no less than where the number of zones is less than 10.



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Calculating the sum of absolute errors

The QA Assessor works through the assessment in accordance to Sterling's QA procedure, when the QAA finds an error a correction is made and the changes in values are noted. The assessment is then returned to the original state and the QAA moves on until the next error. Once the QAA has worked all the way through, the sum of all the absolute values is then used to determine if the certificates is a pass or fail.

The QA assessor reviews the impact on the BER (Building Energy Rating) and EPC rating differences between the EA and QA assessor's calculations, Certificates are deemed to be defective and should be replaced when the BER "truth" is greater than +/-10% and or EPC "truth" is greater than +/-5%. The truth is identified by the Scheme QA assessors in line with the requirements laid out in the SOR.

The final rounding exercised by the software or any manual calculation process which takes the sum of the absolute errors for each stage of the SBEM/DSM calculation, to be such that errors of between 4.5 and 5.49% of, for example, an EPC rating must be rounded to 5% and therefore 'Pass'; whereas an error of 5.5% is therefore a 'Fail'.

Audit checks

The points below work through a methodical process for undertaking a comprehensive audit to be completed in line with the Sterling QA audit report. The guidance notes below are the key areas a quality auditor will review and will be the basis of how they calculate the points difference between the EPC rating and the BER.

Insurance Check (LCI)

- The Sterling QA will check assessors insurance against software file.

EPC Level CI

- The Sterling Assessor will check that the energy assessor is suitably qualified / accredited to assess the building. The building should be correctly recorded in line with current guidance.
- Analysis stage should define building "as built" or "as designed"

Building information (CI)

The Sterling QA will check the file and review the following-

- Building orientation against site notes and mapping software (google maps)
- Building location is suitably entered on software.
- Services available on site against photographs of meters/supply pipes or storage vessel.
- Construction of the building to include openings
- Power factor – confirm if appropriate
- Air permeability should be appropriate to building age and category where no air test certificate is available.



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Building Benchmark Category (Activity) CI

- The Sterling QA will check whether the building been correctly identified and does this correspond with site notes and Photographic evidence

Floor & Walls & windows& Roof area data (CI)

- Check the U and Km values for opaque constructions, U, L and T solar values for glazing types
- Confirm construction inputs for all build types within the site (extensions & alternative wall types) against site notes and photographic evidence.

Zoning (CI)

- Have the specific activities been identified for each Zone
- Is there sufficient evidence to support zoning decisions?

Heating System & Ventilation (HVAC & DHW) (CI)

- Check the efficiencies and fuel type for heating, cooling, and HWS systems (including storage, losses and secondary circulation data where required)
- Has the EA evidenced the make and model, is there photo graphic evidence to support this

Energy Data – Lighting (CI)

- Is there photographic evidence of lighting per lamp type
- Is there evidence of the lighting controls per zone
- Has current guidance on lighting been observed?

Photographic Records (LCI)

- Does the photographic evidence support the use of the building, the different activities for each different zone including lighting HVAC base plates and controls
- Has the EA provided external photo evidence of the walls, windows and roof type
- Are the photos date stamped or the electronic file date stamped
- Are photographs sufficient to complete the audit process, on average a minimum of 25 pictures should be used

Site notes & description (CI)

- Has the EA used a pro-forma
- Have the site notes collected the right amount of information
- Are the site notes legible
- Are the site notes logical
- Do the site Notes reflect the zoning information



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Drawings provided (CI)

- Do the drawings reflect the Zoning information
- Are the drawings legible
- Are the drawings measured to CLG standard

Use of default values (CI)

- Efficiency defaults and data entry defaults should be avoided. Any use of defaults should be supported in site notes.
- Reasonable effort should be made by site assessor to obtain sufficient information to produce an accurate EPC report.
- When values are entered, these must be supported by documentary evidence or photo's

EPC Recommendation Report (LCI)

- Is the recommendation report relevant
- Has the assessor edited or implied their own recommendations

Certificates are deemed to be defective and should be replaced when any one of the following conditions is met:

The sum of the absolute errors between the Energy Assessor's and QA Assessor's BER or EPC rating exceeds DCLG's accuracy requirement, or in the case where it is the QA assessor's judgement that the certificate is defective (eg incorrect number of zones; sufficient errors in sample associated with a building with more than 10 zones).

If the QA assessor believes that recommendations have been incorrectly added or removed. If errors in the building's description would result in a change in the recommendations made. The building's description is sufficiently inaccurate that it brings into question the accuracy of the rating by the seller. 'Sufficiently inaccurate' is taken to mean information on the EPC which is demonstrably incorrect subject to an ability to change the description in the software to account for what the assessor has seen. If the evidence provided to justify the EPC is deemed insufficient by the Scheme (i.e. does not allow the EPC to be recreated by the QA Assessor).

Please note it is the EA's responsibility to correct and re-lodge any incorrect EPC's identified by the Sterling QA team. It is also the responsibility of the EA to back check their catalogue of EPC's that have been completed in between audits to ensure correct lodgement.



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Member Appeal Procedure

If the Scheme Member wishes to appeal against one or more elements of the Sterling Accreditation audit process; they may, within 28 days seek to appeal any such decision by giving written notice (See form below) that they wish to refer the matter to the Sterling Accreditation appeals committee and to state the reasons for the appeal and providing any relevant documentation.

The Sterling Accreditation appeals committee will consist of three members of the Sterling auditing team , at least one of whom is a senior member and one who will be an accredited Energy Assessor qualified to the relevant strand to the enquiry.

The Appeals Committee will duly consider the Appeal and reach a decision based on evidence / interviews as appropriate. The Appeals Committee will respond within 14 days of the receipt of the Notice of Appeal.

If the Scheme Member wishes to appeal against one or more elements of the Sterling Accreditation Appeals Committee's hearing; or Sterling Accreditation's decision under the audit Procedure they may, within 28 days of that decision seek to appeal any such decision by giving written notice that they wish to refer the matter to the Sterling Accreditation independent Appeals Committee and to state the reasons for the appeal and providing any relevant documentation on the Sterling member appeals form .

The Sterling Accreditation Appeals Committee consists of three members of the Institute of Civil Engineers mediation committee, at least one of whom is a senior member The three members should not have any working relationship with the Scheme Member and should not have been involved in the original decision in any way.

If, for whatever reason, it is not possible to construct a Committee based on these criteria, the matter will be referred to the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, for the appointment of a single arbitrator for final resolution.

The Appeals Committee will duly consider the Appeal and reach a decision based on evidence / interviews as appropriate

The Appeals Committee will respond within four weeks of the receipt of the Notice of Appeal.

All decisions made by either the Disciplinary Committee or the Appeal Committee is held securely and centrally, together with any relevant documentation, for fifteen years for future audit purposes.



Member Appeal Form

1. Introduction

Each Member has the opportunity to appeal against the decision within four weeks of the original notification.

All Appeals will be received and vetted by the Sterling Audit Team and passed to the Senior Quality Auditor for further appraisal.

For further details, please see the 'Sterling Disciplinary and Appeal Procedure' document.

The following template should be used for Member Appeals:-

Question	Response
Date of Appeal	
Name and ID of Appealing Member	
Contact Details Of Appealing Member Address	



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<p>Postcode</p> <p>Telephone No Home:</p> <p> Mobile:</p> <p>Email Address(es)</p>	
<p>Availability for feedback :</p> <p>Preferred Means of Contact (email/phone/letter):</p> <p>If phone, preferred Time:</p>	
<p>Brief description of Nature of Appeal</p>	



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Full details of the Appeal

Please be as detailed as possible, giving the reasons for Appeal and any facts which might assist your appeal. Attach any evidence which is relevant to this appeal.

(Continue on extra paper if required)

Sterling Office Use Only

Date Appeal Form Received



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Sterling Appeal Handler	
Current Status	
Escalation	
Resolution Resolution Date	
Response Date	