

February 2007 PROCESS NOTE

RE: Review of QA procedures, Code for Sustainable Homes, BREEAM Prisons, BREEAM Schools 2005, BREEAM Multi-residential and Non domestic assessor day feedback.

This letter is sent to the main contact in your organisation please can you ensure that this information is copied to all other EcoHomes/BREEAM assessors within your organisation.

The following contains important information and news regarding all of our BREEAM Schemes.

Review of QA procedures

Over the past few months the BREEAM (and EcoHomes) quality assurance procedures have been reviewed in light of Assessor feedback and in order to improve BRE workflow. As a result some changes and clarifications will be made to the QA system. These changes will come into effect on Monday 19th March. The changes fall into the following areas:

- A clarification of the QA levels (Admin check, Credit check, Full audit)
- A revised QA feedback form
- QA outcomes
- Clarification of QA error scores for Credit Checks
- Guidance on rounding
- Guidance on referencing
- Guidance on assessment reports that will be rejected
- Use of the report templates

QA levels

There continues to be three different types (levels) of QA check, however, their names have been changed to better reflect the activities associated with each type of check:

ADMIN check: 100% of reports are checked to ensure completeness. For example, all reports must include a comprehensive postal address for the development. Note, a technical review of credits is not performed in an ADMIN check.

CREDIT check: a percentage of reports will have each credit reviewed to ensure that:

- the credit justifications are correct and fulfil the credit criteria
- appropriate supporting evidence is correctly referenced

The selection criteria for a CREDIT check is based on an Assessor's performance in the last two CREDIT checks. High recorded error scores will lead to subsequent assessments being selected for CREDIT checks. Assessors with lower recorded error scores will have CREDIT checks performed less frequently but to meet the requirements of UKAS and ISO procedures.

FULL AUDIT check: a percentage of reports will be selected as follows:

- New Assessor's first assessment and another in quick succession (not always the second report as selection depends on the timing of the reports being received). This is to help train new Assessors in the required level of quality.
- Existing Assessors will receive a FULL AUDIT occasionally to fulfil UKAS/ISO requirements
- Assessors who regularly receive high recorded error scores on CREDIT checks.

A FULL AUDIT will require documents to be provided to BRE so BREEAM staff can re-work credits based on the evidence provided for the credit.

A revised QA feedback form

The QA form serves a number of purposes; provides feedback to Assessors, calculates QA fees and provides a work flow of QA tasks for BREEAM staff. The new form clarifies these different purposes, whilst recognising that the key purpose is providing clear feedback to Assessors. Therefore, the outcome of the QA checks, the calculation of fees and the assessment details (reference number, name, address etc), are the only pieces of information on the first page.

The first page of the form now makes it very clear which reports have been 'selected' for a CREDIT check. The new form also clearly separates feedback from the ADMIN check, and feedback from the CREDIT check.

Assessments QA checked after 19th March will use this new format.

QA Outcomes

The A to E rating will no longer be used. There are now four QA outcomes:

Outcome	Next Steps
PASS	BRE sends certificate and Assessor may send report to client.
PASS, with modifications	BRE sends certificate, and Assessor modifies any minor errors before sending report to client (BRE does not need to see these modifications).
Partial RESUBMIT	BRE will not certify until the Assessor resubmits those sections requiring modification, by posting, emailing or faxing the relevant part(s) and clearly stating the assessment ID (Identity number).
Full RESUBMIT	BRE will not certify until the Assessor corrects all the errors and resends the full assessment report to BRE by post.

Clarification of QA error scores for CREDIT checks

The definition of error scores for CREDIT checks have been more clearly defined and are:

- 0 – Technically correct and complete
- 1 – Technically correct, but lacks clarity
- 2 – Technically incorrect or omissions
- 3 – Fundamental error

An error score of '3' will automatically trigger a resubmit. The new QA form will provide greater detail of the error scoring.

Guidance on Rounding

All individual credit calculations should be performed to two places of decimals (2pd), and the final percentage overall score should also be stated to two decimal places i.e. **final answers should never be rounded to the nearest whole number**, e.g. if the development achieves 69.99 and the threshold for an EXCELLENT is 70, then a VERY GOOD is achieved. All calculator tools provide answers to 2pd. Rounding errors will be treated as 'technically incorrect' and will receive an error score of 2 as there is a potential to affect the final rating.

Note: For non-domestic schemes the use of calculator tools is mandatory, in future the use of BRE calculator tools and scoring sheets is likely to be mandatory for all schemes. If non-BRE versions are used, the logic may be difficult to validate, which may lead to inconsistencies between Assessors.

Guidance on referencing

Credits are reviewed to ensure that justifications are:

- correct and fulfil the credit criteria
- and that appropriate supporting evidence is referenced correctly

UKAS requires that an auditable trail of documentation relating to an assessment is stored for ten years. To fulfil this requirement, Assessors are required to use a recognised referencing system for all documents contained within the assessment report, or stored at the Assessor's office.

There are a number of recognised referencing standards, and any robust referencing procedure can be used. The examples below are provided to demonstrate the level of information required:

LETTERS

Letter from NAME (ORGANISATION) to NAME (ORGANISATION) dated DATE.

Example: Letter from D Robinson (Jones Construction) to E Nicholls (Nicholls Assessors Ltd.) dated 27/10/2006

EMAILS*

Email from NAME (ORGANISATION) to NAME (ORGANISATION), DATE

Email from A Pierce (Developer) to E Jackson (Sovereign Housing Association), 17 March 2006

SPECIFICATION DOCUMENTS

Development specification for NAME OF DEVELOPMENT/ TITLE OF SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT, Version NO., DATE, Clause NO.: TITLE OF Clause, pNO.,

Development Specification for Bucknalls Lane, Watford, Version 1, dated 12/12/06, Clause 3: Appliances, p45.

DRAWINGS

Drawing No., REVISION NO., DATE, TITLE OF DRAWING

Drawing No. 1109/32 Revision 1, dated 12/12/06 - Site Plan

OTHER DOCUMENTS/ REPORTS

COMPANY NAME: TITLE OF DOCUMENT/ REPORT – DESCRIPTION OF DOCUMENT (DATE)

A.N. Other Acoustics Ltd: Sound insulation between 5 dwellings at Bucknalls Lane, Watford – Summary of sound insulation results (22/08/06).

WEB PAGES*

DESCRIPTION Website. FULL WEB ADDRESS (accessed DATE, hard copy stored in LOCATION).

Boiler Manufacturer Website. <https://www.boilermanufacturer.co.uk/boiler-spec-page.html> (accessed 20/09/2006, hard copy stored in project file 1.2).

** Further Guidance for the Storage of Electronic Media – Please ensure that a hard copy of the evidence is kept for audit purposes. Pages from websites and e-mails should be printed out or stored appropriately – i.e. not on an employee’s PC or in an e-mail account. Paper copies or on CD would be acceptable forms of storage.*

Guidance on assessment reports that will be rejected

Generally BRE will QA all assessment reports submitted and will endeavour to review all credits so Assessors can address all errors at the same time when resubmitting.

There are however some situations where assessment reports will be rejected before a QA is performed. The two main examples are:

- Bespoke assessments based on the ‘draft’ criteria i.e. not the ‘final’ criteria
- If an older version of the method has been used (than the one that the development is registered under). E.g. if a 2005 registration is submitted against the 2003 criteria or uses the 2003 report template.

Use of the report templates

In the July, October and December Process Notes it was stated that the use of report templates is mandatory from 1st January 2007. From 19th March, the ADMIN check will now check that the correct report template has been used (or a very close equivalent with the same content and order). If not, the report will require resubmitting on the correct report template. Report templates for each scheme can be found on the Assessor extranet.

This requirement is to increase efficiency and speed up the turn around of reports and certification. By using the report template, BRE staff know where credit validations, score sheets, certificate information etc are within the report and that the full set of required information is included.

The changes outlined above are intended to increase efficiency and clarity for both Assessors and BREEAM staff. This is particularly important as the number of BREEAM and EcoHomes assessments is increasing significantly year on year. Please let us know if you have any concerns regarding the QA system.

Launch of Code for Sustainable Homes

Please note that EcoHomes will continue in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and will also be applicable to refurbishments throughout the UK. The Code will replace EcoHomes in terms of the new homes built in England.

We will still be accepting EcoHomes reports that are registered before April 5th 2007 i.e. EcoHomes registrations are not going to be changed to be Code registrations and they are valid for the standard 5 years. After the Code go-live no EcoHomes registrations will be accepted for new build domestic developments in England.

The following dates are free Code awareness seminars;

26th March 2007
16th April 2007
26th April 2007

BREEAM Prisons

A note concerning LE4 has been added to the “Guidance to relate ecology reports to BREEAM” document. The guidance has been updated and is now on the extranet, Rev01. This note is relevant to Prisons only.

BREEAM Schools 2005

Credit MW01b: Environmental Impact of Upper Floor Slab

Where there are no upper floor slabs to be assessed in the school building, this credit can be achieved by default. This is only applicable to the 2005 version.

BREEAM Multi-residential

There is an inconsistency between the manual and the spreadsheet in relation to the "View out" credit. Please note that communal sitting areas are excluded from the 2006 View out credit and will be reviewed for inclusion in 2007. This will not affect any current assessments, as the spreadsheet excludes these areas from the credit.

Non domestic assessor day feedback

Please note, the feedback received at the non domestic assessor day (Oct 06) has been summarised and is now on the Extranet.