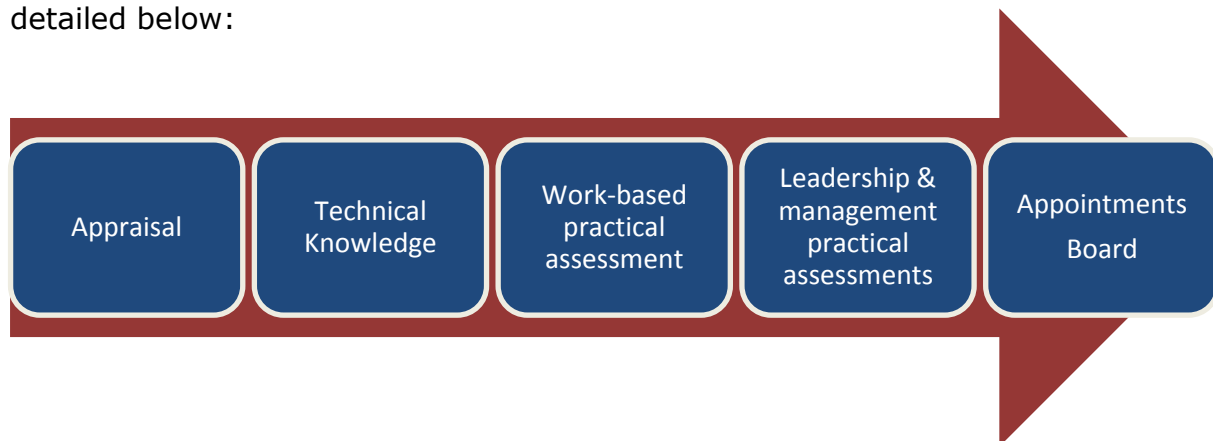


Background:

There is a need to identify development pathways for key roles to ensure resilience for the Authority, support staff retention as well as improving overall service performance. The principles governing employees' development, progress and eligibility for promotion should include opportunity, learning, practice and recognition of achievements and performance.

In 2013, The Authority's Promotions and Qualification procedure, introduced a revised development centre process, which follows a modular approach as detailed below:



Between 2013 and 2014, the Authority designed and assessed our managers level of technical knowledge via internal examinations. This proved a good tool to bridge the gap between the change in processes, however concerns were raised over the time and costs involved in the development and administration of these examinations as well as the process for maintaining the integrity of the papers.

An opportunity was identified to utilise the technical knowledge qualifications hosted by the IFE, to fulfil the technical knowledge module of the DC process.

The IFE qualifications are recognised nationally as the benchmark for technical knowledge and it is this standard that The Authority aspires that all managers achieve.

A pilot scheme was launched in November 2014 to trial the introduction of the IFE at Middle and Supervisory Manager level.

Following the successful uptake at all levels, in April 2015 the IFE qualifications were formally introduced as the gateway for participants of development centres.

Participants are required to apply for and sit two papers of the relevant level of qualification aligned to the development centre they are applying for. The remaining 1 or 2 papers are then required to be completed before the participant will be deemed competent in role. The outcome being that all personnel will have achieved the full qualification when being deemed competent in role.

The levels of IFE qualifications are aligned to the levels of management as detailed below:

- The IFE Level 3 Certification in Fire Science, Operations, Fire Safety and Management – Crew Commander
- IFE Level 3 Diploma in Fire Science and Fire Safety – Watch Commander
- IFE Level 4 Certificate in Fire Science and Fire Safety – Station Commander

In July 2015, the Authority rolled out the IFE technical knowledge requirements to On-Call staff wanting to progress with their development.

40 participants sat papers across all levels in March 2015 and a further 25 candidates have applied to sit the limited papers held by the IFE in October 2015.

BMKFA has been awarded examination centre status for the IFE, with a view to holding future exams either at HQ or at an external venue within the County.

In March 2016 a joint examination centre will be held at a Buckinghamshire venue for both BMKFA and Oxfordshire candidates. The centre will also be advertised by the IFE as a possible venue for any candidate across the Country. We currently have members of the Thames Valley Branch of the IFE.

Further progression utilising the IFE is being explored with the proposed introduction of The IFE Level 2 Certificate in Fire Science into our On-Call FF Development Programme. This qualification covers the knowledge requirements of the National Occupational Standards for the Firefighter role.

Research will also be undertaken exploring the use the IFE to meet the technical knowledge requirements of the apprenticeship programme.

The Institution of Fire Engineers:

Founded in 1918, the IFE assesses knowledge of fire and professional experience, awarding internationally recognised membership grades and fire-related qualifications.

Through its Engineering Council licence as a Professional Engineering Institution (PEI), the IFE registers suitably qualified IFE members as Chartered Engineers (CEng), Incorporated Engineers (IEng) and Engineering Technicians (Eng Tech).

Learning opportunities are worldwide within the IFE fire community and the IFE delivers over 7,300 fire-related exams each year which are required by many Fire and Rescue Services for promotion both within the UK and internationally.

IFE vocational qualifications are recognised by employers throughout the UK and internationally. They are recognised and regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and the Welsh Government.

The IFE is the only regulated Awarding Organisation in the UK that specialises entirely in the fire sector. Their assessment materials are developed and quality assured by sector experts who bring extensive experience and up to date knowledge to the assessment process.

All the IFE Qualifications are mapped to the National Occupational Standards.