



**NPTC**

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**LEVEL 2  
CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE  
IN  
BRUSHCUTTING OPERATIONS**

**ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE**

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## Candidate Information

### Introduction

The scheme will be administered by NPTC.

NPTC will:

- Publish
  - scheme regulations
  - assessment schedule
  - assessment material

Approve centres to co-ordinate and administer the scheme

Set standards for the training of Verifiers and Assessors

Recruit, train and deploy Verifiers

Manage verification

Issue certificates to successful Candidates

### The Certificate of Competence

Certificates of competence will be awarded to Candidates who achieve the required level of competence in the Units to which their Certificate relates.

### Instruction

Attendance at a course of instruction is not a pre-requisite for an application for an assessment but potential Candidates are strongly advised to ensure that they are up to the standards that will be expected of them when they are assessed.

NPTC does **not** hold a register of instructors; however instruction will normally be available from recognised training providers and/or centres of further or higher education active in the areas covered by this certificate. Further information on training may be obtained from the local Assessment Centre.

### Access to Assessment

Assessment Centres will be responsible for arranging assessment on behalf of a Candidate. Assessment may only be carried out by an Assessor approved by NPTC for that scheme. Under no circumstances can either instructors involved in the preparation of candidates, or the candidates' work-place supervisors, or anyone else who might have a vested interest in the outcome, carry out the assessment.

The minimum age limit for Candidates taking certificates of competence is 16 years. There is no upper age limit.

### Assessment

Assessment is a process by which it is confirmed that the Candidate is competent in the Units within the award to which the assessment relates. It is a process of collecting evidence about his/her capabilities and judging whether that evidence is sufficient to attribute competence.

The candidate must be registered through an NPTC approved Assessment Centre for this qualification prior to assessment.

The result of the assessment will be recorded on the assessment report form.

The schedule of assessment contains the criteria relating to:

- Observation of practical performance
- Assessment of knowledge and understanding

### Performance Evaluation

The result of each assessment activity is evaluated against the following criteria:

- 4 = Meets or exceeds the assessment criteria by displaying a level of practical performance and/or underpinning knowledge, with no 'minor' or 'critical' faults. (Competent).
- 3 = Meets the requirements of the assessment criteria for both the practical performance and the underpinning knowledge, with some 'minor' faults but no 'critical' faults. (Competent).
- 2 = Does not fully satisfy the requirements of the assessment criteria, being unable to perform the practical task satisfactorily or being deficient in underpinning knowledge leading to the recording of minor faults. (Not yet competent).
- 1 = Does not satisfy the requirements of the assessment criteria, being unable to perform the practical task satisfactorily or safely or being deficient in underpinning knowledge leading to the recording of a critical fault. (Not yet competent).

A list of registered Assessment Centres is available from NPTC. ([www.nptc.org.uk](http://www.nptc.org.uk))

### Verification

Verification is a process of monitoring assessment; it is an essential check to confirm that the assessment procedures are being carried out in the way that NPTC has laid down. The overall aim of verification is to establish a system of quality assurance that is acceptable in terms of both credibility and cost effectiveness.

Approved Assessors will be subject to an annual visit by the Verifier at a time when assessments are being undertaken.

A selection of assessment reports completed by the assessor will be evaluated by an NPTC approved verifier.

Compliance with the verification requirements is a pre-requisite for Assessors remaining on NPTC's list of approved assessors.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

NPTC and its Assessment Centres have a formal Complaints and Appeals procedure. In the event of any dissatisfaction with the arrangements and conditions of assessment, the candidate should first contact the Assessment Centre through whom the assessment was arranged and submit the complaint in writing.

For further information on NPTC's Equal Opportunities Policy and Complaints and Appeals Procedures, please refer to [www.nptc.org.uk](http://www.nptc.org.uk)

## **Guidance Notes for Candidates and Assessors**

The assessment is divided into 4 units:

1. Maintain the Brush Cutter/Clearing Saw/ Trimmer (compulsory)
2. Operate a Brush Cutter
3. Operate a Clearing Saw
4. Operate a Trimmer

## **Qualification endorsement**

The qualification may be endorsed either:

- a) Brush Cutter And/Or b) Clearing Saw And/Or c) Trimmer

Candidates seeking assessment in 'a)' are assessed in Units 1 and 2.

Candidates seeking assessment in 'b)' are assessed in Units 1 and 3

Candidates seeking assessment in 'c)' are assessed in Units 1 and 4.

Candidates must successfully achieve all assessment activities in the units they have elected to take.

## **Safe Practice:**

The assessment is carried out in accordance with the safety guidelines laid down in FASTCo Safety Guides: 203, 801; Health and Safety Executive publications and current legal requirements.

Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be worn at all times.

Any equipment used must be operated in such a way that the Candidate, Assessor, other persons or equipment are not endangered.

**Failure to operate safely and comply with these requirements will result in the Candidate not meeting the required standard.**

## **Validation of Equipment:**

A Manufacturer's instruction book or other operators' manual should be available.

All equipment being used for this assessment must comply with the relevant requirements of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998.

Any appropriate brushcutter/clearing saw/trimmer complying with legal requirements is acceptable for the assessment, provided it is suitably equipped for **all** assessment activities to be carried out.

## **Additional Information:**

May be sought from the relevant manufacturer's instruction book, operators' manual or any other appropriate training or safety publication.

<b>Unit 1 – Maintain the Brushcutter/Clearing Saw/Trimmer</b>	
<b>Assessment Activity</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria:</b>
1 Identify any hazards specific to the site, task and machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walk the site and remove or mark hazards</li> <li>- Confirm the condition of the site as acceptable for the operation to take place</li> <li>- Report to the appropriate person if the site condition is unsuitable</li> <li>- Set out warning signs and barriers (if appropriate) to advise or exclude public/animals</li> <li>- Implement suitable controls to protect the operator</li> <li>- Ensure emergency procedures are agreed and in place</li> </ul> <p>Unless otherwise stated in manufacturers handbook or operators manual, PPE should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face/eye protection</li> <li>- Ear defenders</li> <li>- Safety footwear</li> <li>- Non snag clothing</li> <li>- Hard hat</li> </ul> <p>Other protection as highlighted by the Risk Assessment</p> <p>Appropriate precautions that can be made to protect the operator and public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authorities informed about work</li> <li>- Warning signs erected</li> <li>- High visibility clothing worn</li> <li>- "Exclusion zone" set up</li> <li>- Road or dual carriageway lane closed or coned off</li> <li>- Safe carrying position</li> <li>- Attach blade guard if appropriate</li> <li>- Use safe lifting techniques when attaching 'backpack' variants</li> <li>- Flying debris</li> <li>- Machine getting caught in thick undergrowth</li> <li>- Moving parts in contact with limbs</li> <li>- Contact with underground hazards</li> <li>- Kickback</li> <li>- Bio hazards</li> </ul>
2. Clean power unit/covers and inspect for security & damage  Demonstrate knowledge of the guarding requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Debris removed from fins/air intake</li> <li>- External screws, nuts and bolts present and secure</li> <li>- Security of muffler</li> <li>- All moving/hot parts to be guarded as defined in the operator's handbook</li> </ul>
3. Service the air filter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Filter prevents debris entering carburettor and needs to be clean to maintain air/fuel ratio and therefore performance</li> <li>- Excess debris removed from around filter prior to removal</li> <li>- Filter removed, protecting carburettor</li> <li>- Filter cleaned, appropriate to condition</li> <li>- Filter refitted correctly</li> </ul>
4. Service the spark plug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engine cover and spark plug removed</li> <li>- Plug cleaned or replaced as necessary</li> <li>- Wear/damage assessed visually</li> <li>- Gap size checked and set if necessary</li> <li>- If fuel rich, dark brown to black</li> <li>- If fuel starved, light brown to white</li> </ul>

Unit 1 – Maintain the Brushcutter/Clearing Saw/Trimmer (continued)	
Assessment Activity	Assessment Criteria:
5. Service recoil starter mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Starter cover removed and ventilation slots cleared</li> <li>- Cord inspected for wear</li> <li>- Cord and coil spring released and re-tensioned</li> <li>- Pull toggle checked for security</li>   <li>- Slack spring cord does not fully retract</li> <li>- Over tight spring binds before cord fully extended</li> </ul> <p>Cord wears at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Base of toggle</li> <li>- Attachment to pulley wheel</li> </ul>
6. Demonstrate knowledge of fuel filter maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fuel cap removed</li> <li>- Filter located and removed from tank using appropriate tool</li> <li>- Condition of filter determined</li> <li>- Cleaning procedures using non flammable detergents followed by rinsing and drying or replacement as appropriate</li> </ul>
7. Check angle drive gearbox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access plug removed</li> <li>- lubricant checked</li> </ul>
8. Identify safety decals on the machine and state their meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- operator protection decals</li> <li>- bystander protection decals</li> </ul>
9. Identify and state the purpose of the controls on the machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on/off switch</li> <li>- choke</li> <li>- throttle</li> <li>- throttle lock</li> <li>- primer bulb</li> <li>- decompressor</li> </ul>
<b>10. Either</b> <b>a) Brush Cutter</b>  Sharpen brush cutter knife secured in work vice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove blade guard</li> <li>- Secure blade using appropriate method (locking pin, spanner, etc.)</li> <li>- Remove retaining nut (L/H thread) and blade assembly</li> <li>- Check:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blade length</li> <li>• For damage to blade</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Position blade for filing securely</li> <li>- Check:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operator position for filing cutting edge</li> <li>• Method of supporting blade in work vice</li> <li>• Angle of file is acceptable</li> <li>• Angle and shape of knife</li> <li>• Sharpness of cutting edge</li> <li>• Balance of knife</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Use template if necessary</li> <li>- Inspect blade for cracks and other damage</li> <li>- Clean drive shaft and collar</li> <li>- Re-fit blade, washer and lock nut securely replaced according to manufacturer's recommendations</li> </ul>

Unit 1 – Maintain the Brushcutter/Clearing Saw/Trimmer (continued)	
Assessment Activity	Assessment Criteria:
<p><b>OR</b> <b>b) Clearing Saw</b></p> <p>i) Sharpen <b>five</b> left and <b>five</b> right hand teeth of blade fixed to machine on site</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove guard</li> <li>- Position saw on support</li> <li>- Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operator stance for filing right hand teeth</li> <li>• Method for support of machine and blade for sharpening</li> <li>• Stance of operator for filing left hand teeth</li> <li>• Tooth being filed is at 12 o'clock position</li> <li>• Angle of file and holder is acceptable</li> <li>• Angle and shape of tooth</li> <li>• Sharpness of cutting edge</li> <li>• Replacement of guard is secure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>ii) Sharpen and set remaining teeth with blade removed and secured in a vice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure blade using appropriate method (locking pin, spanner etc)</li> <li>- Remove retaining nut (L/H thread) and blade assembly</li> <li>- Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of teeth</li> <li>• Damage to teeth</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Select shortest tooth and sharpen to manufacturers specification</li> <li>- Select and set callipers to obtain even filing size of all teeth</li> <li>- Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angle and shape of tooth is acceptable</li> <li>• Sharpness of cutting edge</li> <li>• Gullet depth</li> <li>• Use of setting tool</li> </ul> </li> <li>Re-check and adjust teeth (if necessary)</li> <li>- Inspect blade for cracks and other damage</li> <li>- Clean shaft</li> <li>- Re-fit blade, washer and lock nut</li> <li>- Replaced according to manufacturer's recommendations</li> <li>- Remove locking pin (if used)</li> </ul>
<p><b>OR</b> <b>c) Trimmer</b></p> <p>Remove nylon cord from trimmer and refit/ fit new fixed length cords/fit new nylon blades</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure nylon head using appropriate method (if necessary)</li> <li>- Remove retaining nut (if necessary)</li> <li>- Remove casing</li> <li>- Inspect and comment on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casing</li> <li>• Ferrules</li> <li>• Retaining nut</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Check length of nylon cord</li> <li>- Check cord /nylon blades for any damage</li> <li>- Insert new length of nylon cord or refit existing nylon cord as appropriate</li> <li>- fit new fixed length cords as appropriate</li> <li>- fit new nylon blades as appropriate</li> <li>- Re-fit nylon head</li> <li>- Re-fit washer and lock nut</li> <li>- Nylon trimmed to recommended length</li> <li>- Secure lock nut or replace according to condition</li> </ul>
<p>11. Fuel machine, observing appropriate safety procedures for working with flammable liquids</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No smoking/naked flames</li> <li>- Avoid contact with hot surfaces</li> <li>- Fuel topped up to required level</li> <li>- Check engine oil level (if applicable)</li> <li>- Any spillage dealt with safely</li> </ul>

<b>Unit 2 - Operate a Brush Cutter</b>	
<b>Assessment Activity</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria:</b>
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the safety requirements to consider prior to operating machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear PPE at all times</li> <li>- Ensure Risk Assessment observed</li> <li>- Ensure safety of bystanders</li> <li>- Maintain minimum safe working distance of 15m at all times</li> </ul>
2. Remove blade guard & start engine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove and retain guard</li> <li>- Start engine</li> <li>- Check that blade is stationary at idling speed</li> </ul>
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the maximum blade speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maximum blade speed identified according to manufacturer's instructions</li> </ul>
4. Adjust harness	Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Length of shoulder straps</li> <li>- Length of side straps</li> <li>- Position of chest plate</li> <li>- Position of hip guard</li> <li>- Machine well balanced</li> <li>- Working height achieved</li> <li>- Handle bar adjusted (if applicable)</li> </ul>
5. Operate the brushcutter using the scything method as appropriate to work situation, covering approximately 30m <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure blade speed when cutting is appropriate</li> <li>- Use legs and hips to work machine</li> <li>- Cut vegetation using scything action</li> <li>- Plan work sequence efficiently</li> <li>- Clear jammed blade safely</li> <li>- Clear vegetation adequately</li> </ul>
6. Operate the brushcutter using the swatting method (may be a section of site above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure blade speed when cutting is appropriate</li> <li>- Use legs and hips to work machine</li> <li>- Cut vegetation using appropriate method</li> <li>- Plan work sequence efficiently</li> <li>- Clear jammed blade safely</li> <li>- Clear vegetation adequately</li> </ul>
7. Demonstrate knowledge of the reasons for cleaning the machine and the factors to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent corrosion</li> <li>- Facilitate maintenance &amp; adjustments</li> <li>- Prevent personal contamination</li> <li>- Identify PPE to be used</li> <li>- Removal of unwanted residues using appropriate methods               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compressed Air</li> <li>• Hose &amp; water</li> <li>• Brush</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Disposal of waste material according to company policy &amp; legislation</li> </ul>
8. Demonstrate knowledge of the need to inspect the machine after use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Machine inspected to establish any worn, damaged or missing components</li> <li>- Ensures any defects are rectified before it is next used</li> </ul>

<b>Unit 3 - Operate a Clearing Saw</b>	
<b>Assessment Activity</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria:</b>
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the safety requirements to consider prior to operating machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear protective clothing at all times</li> <li>- Ensure personal safety</li> <li>- Ensure safety of bystanders</li> <li>- Maintain minimum safe working distance of 15 m at all times</li> </ul>
2. Remove blade guard & start engine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove and retain guard</li> <li>- Start engine</li> <li>- Check that blade is stationary at idling speed</li> </ul>
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the maximum blade speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maximum blade speed identified according to manufacturer's instructions</li> </ul>
4. Adjust harness	<p>Check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Length of shoulder straps</li> <li>- Length of side straps</li> <li>- Position of chest plate</li> <li>- Position of hip guard</li> <li>- Machine well balanced</li> <li>- Working height achieved</li> <li>- Handle bar set</li> </ul>
5. Operate the clearing saw as appropriate to work situations covering at least 30m <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Select appropriate method(s)</li> <li>- State alternative methods</li> <li>- Stop engine and replace guard immediately after use</li> </ul>
6. Operate the clearing saw using the pushing and pulling method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of throttle</li> <li>- Ensure blade speed when cutting is appropriate</li> <li>- Use hips and legs to work machine</li> <li>- Assessment of stem lean</li> <li>- Use of blade sector (left and right)</li> <li>- Use of blade rotation</li> <li>- Identify kick out sector</li> <li>- Clear jammed blade</li> <li>- Clear vegetation</li> </ul>
7. Operate the clearing saw using felling method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure blade speed when cutting</li> <li>- Is appropriate</li> <li>- Use hips and legs to work machine</li> <li>- Assess stem lean</li> <li>- Insert sink cut</li> <li>- Insert felling cut</li> <li>- Use appropriate blade sector</li> <li>- Stump height</li> <li>- Clear jammed blade</li> <li>- Treat stump</li> </ul>
8. Demonstrate knowledge of the reasons for cleaning the machine and the factors to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent corrosion</li> <li>- Facilitate maintenance &amp; adjustments</li> <li>- Prevent personal contamination</li> <li>- Identify PPE to be used</li> <li>- Removal of unwanted residues using appropriate methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compressed Air</li> <li>• Hose &amp; water</li> <li>• Brush</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Disposal of waste material according to company policy &amp; legislation</li> </ul>
9. Demonstrate knowledge of the need to inspect the machine after use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Machine inspected to establish any worn, damaged or missing components</li> <li>- Ensures any defects are rectified before it is next used</li> </ul>

<b>Unit 4 - Operate a Trimmer</b>	
<b>Assessment Activity</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria:</b>
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the safety requirements to consider prior to operating machine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear PPE at all times</li> <li>- Ensure personal safety</li> <li>- Ensure safety of bystanders</li> <li>- Maintain minimum safe working distance of 15 m at all times</li> </ul>
2. Remove nylon guard (if appropriate) and start engine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove and retain guard</li> <li>- Start engine</li> <li>- Check that nylon cord is stationary at idling speed</li> </ul>
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the maximum revs/min of the nylon cord head or nylon blade head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maximum head speed determined from manufacturer's instructions.</li> </ul>
4. Adjust harness (where applicable)	Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Length of shoulder straps</li> <li>- Length of side straps</li> <li>- Position of chest plate</li> <li>- Position of hip guard</li> <li>- Machine well balanced</li> <li>- Working height achieved</li> <li>- Handle bar adjusted (if applicable)</li> </ul>
5. Operate the trimmer using the scything method as appropriate to work situation, containing a minimum of three obstacles e.g. shrubs, trees, fence posts, covering an area of approximately 30m <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adjust nylon cord speed when cutting as appropriate</li> <li>- Use legs and hips to work machine</li> <li>- Adopt cutting action - scything</li> <li>- Plan work sequence</li> <li>- Renew/replace nylon cord/blade as appropriate</li> <li>- Clear vegetation adequately</li> <li>- Avoidance of damage to obstacles</li> </ul>
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the reasons for cleaning the machine and the factors to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent corrosion</li> <li>- Facilitate maintenance &amp; adjustments</li> <li>- Prevent personal contamination</li> <li>- Identify PPE to be used</li> <li>- Removal of unwanted residues using appropriate methods               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compressed Air</li> <li>• Hose &amp; water</li> <li>• Brush</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Disposal of waste material according to company policy &amp; legislation</li> </ul>
7. Demonstrate knowledge of the need to inspect the machine after use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Machine inspected to establish any worn, damaged or missing components</li> <li>- Ensures any defects are rectified before it is next used</li> </ul>