



Field Assessments – Essential Information

Q1. What are Field Assessments?

- A1. The Field Assessments (FAs) are one of the BSS Office's quality assurance measures. The main aim is to support BSS Examiners in carrying out examinations consistent with the Examination Checking Procedures (ECP) and other BSS guidance/instructions/directions. FAs help examiners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and help the BSS Office Team with their ongoing improvement measures, such as improving examiner training and/or upgrading BSS support material, etc.

Q2. How are examiners selected?

- A2. There is a range of selection criteria. As part of their post training and initial registration support all newly qualified examiners (NQEs) will be field assessed within approximately 12 months of their first registration. In addition it is hoped that all other examiners will have the opportunity to be field assessed at least once every five years. Examiners conducting particularly high numbers of examinations may be field assessed more frequently.

Q3. Do I have to pay for the Field Assessment?

- A3. No, FAs are provided by the BSS Office as part of our in-house examiner support and quality assurance measures, but examiners are responsible for making their way to the FA site and attending the assessment, at their own expense.

Please note however, that in the event you cancel an arranged field assessment the BSS Office reserve the right to pass on to you any costs incurred by them in cancelling and re-arranging the assessment. So please make sure that you do everything you reasonably can to keep to arrangements made with the Assessor.

Q4. Where do Field Assessments take place?

- A4. Each assessment takes place on-board a suitable boat. Such boats are made available by companies, private individuals and navigation authorities by prior arrangement with the BSS Office. The Assessors have a number of such boats available to them and they will agree a suitable location with you during your initial conversation. The boats are normally located in boatyards, marinas, etc, to where there is good road access, suitable parking and easy access to the assessment boat. The Assessor will endeavour to locate a suitable assessment boat within a reasonable distance (hopefully within 50 miles) of your public address as you have provided on Salesforce.

Q5. When will the Field Assessment take place?

A5. Normally FAs should be completed within a maximum of two months of the examiner receiving the BSS Office's Notification Letter. The actual date and time of the FA will be arranged between you and the Assessor. Assessors have to juggle the availability of boats, their own availability and, as it is likely they will be assessing two or more examiners on any one day, the availability of a number of examiners. As such please do everything you reasonably can to be flexible and to accommodate any dates offered by the Assessor.

Q6. How long will the Field Assessment take?

A6. Normally FAs should not take longer than 3 hours. There are likely to be other assessments taking place on the same day so please be timely in keeping to your agreed appointment otherwise there is risk of impacting on the success of the day for other examiners.

Q7. What happens if I have a concern regarding the assigned Assessor or the allocated FA period?

A7. Don't delay, get in touch with the Assessor or the BSS Office Team (as appropriate) immediately you realise there might be a problem. It's your responsibility to also help make this assessment work and that includes spotting any concerns or predicaments well ahead of time.

Q8. What happens if I am ill on the day of the Field Assessment?

A8. If there's a genuine last minute crisis we understand, but you must advise the Assessor or the BSS Office as soon as you can.

If you have conditions or needs, such as difficulty with hearing, reading or writing, etc, that we need to take into account, please get in touch with the Assessor or the BSS Office Team as soon as you can.

Q9. What will happen on the day of the Field Assessment?

A9. The Assessor will meet you on site at the time and place agreed during your pre-assessment telephone conversations. Then before the FA starts the Assessor will take you through a pre-assessment briefing, during which he will explain the assessment process and the four FA Elements. This discussion will allow you the opportunity to clarify any issues and to ask questions before the assessment starts.

Q10. How will the Field Assessment actually be carried out?

A10. There are four Elements to Field Assessments:

Element 1: Simulated examination

You will undertake a full BSS examination against one ECP Part (such as all relevant checks in Part 2, or Part 3 or Part 7).

The Assessor's role is to watch you undertake the simulated examination. He will observe whether you apply the correct Checking actions and arrive at appropriate compliance decisions. Try to imagine him as the boat owner, so talk him through your actions and decisions as you undertake the examination. The Assessor will endeavour not to interrupt your examination/concentration too much, but he may ask you a small number of questions, as would be consistent with an enquiring boat owner.

However, we realise some examiners have difficulty concentrating on the examination process with people around them and having to talk to them spoils their concentration. If you have such concerns make sure you let the Assessor know during the pre-assessment briefing. Once you have finished the simulated examination the Assessor will discuss with you in detail any ECP Check List Items where he feels you did not apply the Checking action appropriately, or where you did not reach the correct compliance decision.

Element 2: Multiple choice question paper

There will be 10 multiple choice questions with a time limit of 20 minutes. The questions will cover ECPs for Private Vessels Parts 2 to 9. The questions will be made available to you on a laptop computer. The Assessor will give any guidance necessary as to how to use the computer before you start the paper. The Assessor will make sure there is a suitable location (table with seat) on the boat (or in a nearby building) for you to read and complete the paper. The Assessor will not be in the same compartment/cabin as you while you are completing the paper, but he may stay nearby. The paper will be 'open book' which means you can refer to your ECPs, from where all the questions have been drawn.

Once you have finished the paper the Assessor will go through it with you question by question.

Element 3: Previous BSS examination verification

The FA Notification Letter you were sent by the BSS Office included the details (Salesforce Examination Report number, boat name and date) of an examination you carried out recently.

Your Assessor will have a copy of the above Salesforce-generated Examination Report (and any associated Appliance Record you've created on Salesforce), and you must take to the FA copies of any other documentation associated with this specific BSS examination that were completed during or after that examination, to talk through with the Assessor. For example - reports to the boat owner, marked-up checklists, Warning Notices, appliance record information (where this has not been recorded on Salesforce, any field notes, declarations, etc. If you have revisited the boat since the examination shown on the FA Notification Letter please also bring with you any additional records for this examination as well.

The Assessor will not take away with him any of your documents, but he may ask to photograph them for his records. If you took photographs of the boat during your examination as part of your field notes/records then you are welcome to bring these with you to the FA, but it is not a mandatory part of the assessment.

Element 4: Open discussions in support of improved performance

This will be an opportunity for you to discuss any queries, concerns or other matters you would like to air or have answered by the Assessor. You can raise any subject matter you like with the Assessor. It can be about your own knowledge or skills, or it can be about more general issues. Particularly welcome are constructive suggestions where you may have spotted a specific matter that the BSS Office Team can do better or differently that will have a positive impact on examiner performance. The Assessor may also take the opportunity to introduce a particular subject for discussion if time allows. The Assessor will ask you whether you would like any such discussions to remain informal (just between you and the Assessor), or whether you are happy for them to be taken back to the BSS Office Team.

Hopefully, in most cases the Assessor will be able to answer any technical/ECP related queries, but if he cannot, then with your permission, he will pass the matter on to the BSS Office Team. The BSS Office will then do its best to respond to any such outstanding queries within their feedback report to you (see below). Any such BSS Office response will also be sent to the Assessor.

The Assessor will also pass on to the BSS Office Team any other matters you've raised - your views are vital in support of in BSS Office improvement measures. All open discussion matters passed to the BSS Office by the Assessor will be handled and collated anonymously.

Feedback

Once any open discussions have finished the FA is complete. The Assessor will provide you with an overview of where he believes your strengths and any weaknesses lie, but he will not, as a matter of routine, go back over the individual assessment Elements in any detail. We will also provide you with a personal feedback report within two weeks of your FA. The report will provide a summary of your performance, and as appropriate identify any improvement needs. The feedback report will be private to you, your Assessor and the BSS Office.

You may be contacted after the FA by the BSS Manager in his role to ensure the quality of the FA process. If you are contacted, the manager will explore with you how you felt it went, the quality of the information and resources provided, the qualities of the Assessor and whether you were able to take away useful points that have materially changed anything that you do.

Q11. What should I take with me to the Field Assessment?

A11 You should approach the FA as if it were a normal BSS examination on a privately owned or privately managed boat, and as such take with you all the appropriate support material, equipment, protective clothing, etc that you would normally take to such an examination.

You must also take with you your examination documentation for the BSS examination identified in the Notification Letter, for Element 3 of the FA.

Q12 What responsibilities do I have?

A12 During FAs you have the same responsibilities and duties of care as when you are conducting normal BSS examinations. In particular, you will be responsible for your own health and safety, and have a duty of care in respect of all other parties and materials, including the Assessor.

Q13 Who is responsible for reporting any BSS non-compliances, or other duty of care items, to the owner of the boat?

A13 In the event you identify non-compliances during the simulated examination (Element 1), or other duty of care matters are noted during the FA as a whole, it will be the Assessor's responsibility to report these to the BSS Office, which in turn has a responsibility to report them to the owner of the boat.

Q14 What happens if the relationship between the examiner and the Assessor breaks down during the Field Assessment?

A14 If the situation cannot be retrieved the Assessor will terminate the FA and report the circumstances to a BSS Manager who will consider what action can be taken to ensure you have another FA opportunity under different circumstances.

Q15. What happens at the end of the Field Assessment?

A15. Assessors are required to provide a written report to the BSS Office within 3 working days of the FA. These reports cover:

Simulated examination – details of any Check List Items where you did not apply the Checking action correctly, or where you came to an incorrect compliance decision.

Multiple choice question paper – details of any questions answered incorrectly.

Previous examination verification – an overview of the examination documents made available to the Assessor.

Open discussions – an overview of any matters you've raised and improvement suggestions (that you've agreed the Assessor may report to the BSS Office Team).

Q16 What happens to the Assessor's report?

A16 The Assessor's report will be used to construct your personal feedback report (see Q&A 10, above).
The Assessors' reports are also used by the BSS Office to develop and implement examiner-wide improvement measures. For example, if a particular Check List Item is routinely misapplied by examiners the BSS Office will review the ECP, examiner training material, and BSS Office support material, and then alter these accordingly to improve examiners' knowledge and understanding. In addition, all BSS Office improvement suggestions collected during Element 4 (Open discussions) will be collected anonymously, the outcomes published to all examiners on the examiner support website, and the information used to implement improvement measures.

Q17 What rights of appeal are available?

A17 An appeal procedure is available should you feel that the FA process has been unfairly applied, or the Assessor has behaved inappropriately. Each appeal will be considered on its individual merits. Therefore, an appeal will not be a method of avoiding the FA process. If you wish to discuss an appeal, you can contact the BSS Office.

Q18 How were the Assessors trained?

A18 The Assessors have been trained and assessed at a course based on the NVQ Assessor competence criteria.

Q19 How does the BSS monitor the Assessors?

A19 They are subjected to a FA by a senior Assessor, exactly the same as you. There are also desk-based procedures for reviewing their assessment performance and techniques.

Q20 Am I insured?

A20 Whilst on-site and on-board the assessment boat you will be covered by your own Public Liability insurance for any loss/damage you may cause during your FA.

Q21 What about my health and safety?

A21 Whilst on-site and on-board the assessment boat you will be responsible for your own health and safety and have due respect for third party risks and interests. You will be covered by the boatyard/marina/hire operator's 3rd party or public liability insurance concerning any injury to you attributable to an aspect of the site/boat at which the FA is undertaken. Should you wish to see the boatyard/marina/hire operator's 3rd party or public liability insurance document before you start your assessment you must discuss this with the Assessor when you are arranging the FA. Such insurance documents can be made available by the boatyard/marina/hire operator on the day of the FA but it will be important that such activity does not delay the start of your time with the Assessor.

Q22 Are the Field Assessments applicable in any way to the BSS requirements for hire boats?

A22 No, the new format FAs are only relevant to the examination of privately owned or privately managed boats.