

Certified SQF
Practitioner

Exam Preparation

Study Packet



Certified SQF Practitioner **Exam Preparation**

The **Certified SQF Practitioner Examinee Guide** and **Certified SQF Practitioner Self-Assessment** cover essential topics to prepare practitioners for certification. The exam is based on a job analysis specific to a practitioner.

Exam Sections

Part 1: Covers essential foundational knowledge like HACCP training, sanitation practices, and understanding food safety basics such as microbiological hazards, allergen control, and food safety regulations.

Part 2: Dives into food safety plans, where you'll show how well you know the Codex HACCP plan process. This includes identifying hazards, conducting risk assessments, and handling corrective actions when needed.

Part 3: Show how to manage the bigger picture of food safety, such as overseeing audits, closing gaps in food safety systems, and staying updated on industry trends. Strong communication and collaboration skills are essential, as is your ability to assess and manage risks.

Once you register with **Exemplar Global**, you'll receive a link to access the exam.

<https://www.sqfi.com/training-events/search-for-training/certified-sqf-practitioner-credential>



Certified SQF Practitioner Examinee Guide

Overview

The Certified SQF Practitioner credential provides a consistent framework for food safety and is created in collaboration between SQFI and Exemplar Global. Those who earn this voluntary professional credential demonstrate their ability to implement, maintain, and continuously improve an SQF food safety system at any site. This certification is part of a defined professional path for the SQF Practitioner that ensures a standardized set of skills and knowledge, a clear roadmap for career development, and a way to acquire new skills and gain valuable experience leading to professional growth.

Terms Used in This Document

1. Item: Often called a question.
2. Stem: The question or statement posed that sets up the question or problem to be answered.
3. Distractor: As part of the item, the selections offered as choices.
4. Key: The correct distractor; often called the answer.
5. Candidate: The individual seeking to apply for the Certified SQF Practitioner credential.
6. Examinee: The individual taking the exam.
7. Exam, exam form: Often called test; the compilation of items that make up the assessment offered to the examinee.

About the Exam

Goal

The goal of the Certified SQF Practitioner exam is to assess the knowledge of the candidate for the Certified SQF Practitioner credential.

Audience

The audience for the exam is an individual who seeks to demonstrate the knowledge required of the candidate for the Certified SQF Practitioner credential.

Exam Delivery

The exam is delivered via the internet via a link that will be emailed to the address provided on your application. **The exam link will be sent after your application has been received and all other criteria for becoming a Certified SQF Practitioner have been met.**

Exam Format

The exam consists of fifty (50) multiple-choice items. The exam will require the examinee to review a series of items consisting of a stem and four distractors and then select the best answer (or key).



Exam Languages

The exam is currently available in English.

Duration and Number of Attempts Allowed

The examinee is given a single attempt to successfully complete the exam.

The duration of the exam is sixty (60) minutes.

Passing Score

The successful completion of the exam is achieved with a passing score of seventy (70) percent or higher.

Preparing for the Exam

What to Study

The content of the exam is based on a job analysis specific to the Certified SQF Practitioner. A self-assessment has been created from the identified job duties and is available to help the examinee in preparing for the exam. The Self-Assessment is available on the SQFI website at www.sqfi.com/training-events/search-for-training/certified-sqf-practitioner-credential.

Confirm Internet Connection and Browser

Prior to attempting the exam, the examinee is strongly encouraged to perform a system assessment to ensure a reliable and strong internet connection.

The testing platform requires the use of Google Chrome. The examinee must have Google Chrome installed on the computer used to take the exam.

Room/Space Preparations

The lighting in the room must be bright enough so that the examinee's face and eyes can be seen throughout the duration of the test.

The examinee's desk/workspace must be completely clear of all books and reference materials. In addition, please clear the entire room (including walls and bookshelves) of any materials that could be considered reference materials. Any suspect items seen during the initial room scan by the proctor will be flagged.

Sitting the Exam

The examinee should allow at least ninety (90) minutes of uninterrupted time to log in, confirm their internet connection, prepare their workspace, and complete the exam.

The examinee will receive an access link via the email included in their user profile.

Proctored Online Exam Requirements

The exam is delivered via the Proctor Exam system. This system allows examinees to take the exam at a convenient time of their choosing, and it will allow for the proctoring of the exam by recording the visual, audio, and desktop aspects of the exam and exam environment.

Important: The examinee's first (given) and last name (surname) must appear exactly as on their government-issued photo ID.

Room/Space Preparations

The lighting in the room must be bright enough so that the examinee's face and eyes can be seen throughout the duration of the test.

The examinee's desk/workspace must be completely clear of all books and reference materials. In addition, please clear the entire room (including walls and bookshelves) of any materials that could be considered reference materials. Any suspect items seen during the initial room scan by the proctor will be flagged.

Violation of these preparations will be flagged during the test by the web proctor and the examinee may risk failing the test, not being eligible for a refund, and potentially being banned from re-taking the test.

The examinee must ensure they adhere to the following rules during the test:

You **MUST** provide your valid government-issued photo ID when requested.

You **MUST** scan the room with your webcam when directed.

You **MUST** remain directly in front of your webcam for the duration of the test.

You **MUST NOT** have anyone else in the room with you for the duration of your test.

You **MUST NOT** interact or communicate with anyone by any means while testing.

You **MUST NOT** use any other electronic devices (phone, headphones, another computer, etc.) while taking the test.

You **MUST NOT** use any mobile device or have any mobile device within your eyesight during the test. A mobile device is used as part of the proctoring method but may not be used during the exam as a reference.

You **MUST NOT** access other websites or applications on the computer while testing.

You **MUST NOT** intentionally disable the internet connection while testing.

After the Exam

Examinees will receive their exam results after the review is completed for computer-delivered exams taken online.



Status of Certification Application

To check the status of your application, log in to Exemplar LINK using your username and password. Click on the "Manage My Certifications" button. From the drop-down menu choose the Exemplar Global option. From there, select the 'Current Certifications' tab. You will then be taken through to the 'Applications in Progress' page where you can check the status of your certification application.

For assistance contact info@exemplarglobal.org.



Certified SQF Practitioner Self-Assessment

Pre-Requisite Knowledge

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
HACCP training that meets the definition of HACCP training in the current version of the SQF Code.	High Medium Low
Understanding of sanitation practices, cleaning procedures, and personal hygiene requirements to maintain food safety.	High Medium Low
Basic knowledge of microbiological, chemical, and physical hazards in food products and how to control them.	High Medium Low
Basic understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time-temperature relationship for food safety - Microbial growth - Pathogens' growth and toxin formation - Common allergens in food products - Food safety labeling requirements in country of production and sale - Food safety regulations in country of production and sale 	High Medium Low
Proficiency in maintaining accurate and complete records related to food safety and quality.	High Medium Low
Familiarity with software and tools commonly used in food safety management, document control, and data analysis.	High Medium Low
Proficiency in technical writing skills relative to position as an entry-level SQF Practitioner.	High Medium Low

Implement and Maintain Food Safety Plans

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
Demonstrate knowledge of the Codex HACCP plan development process.	High Medium Low
Demonstrate ability to identify reputable sources of scientific data for use in risk assessment activities.	High Medium Low
Apply the knowledge of HACCP principles and risk assessment for the development, maintenance, and review of a food safety plan, which includes working with a food safety team to:	
- Complete a hazard analysis	High Medium Low
- Identify and categorize the hazards/risks at all stages of the food safety plan process flows	High Medium Low
- Decide appropriate corrective actions for CCP deviations	High Medium Low
- Decide the correct monitoring methods to identify CCP failures, monitoring failures and changes in risk levels	High Medium Low
- Assess when expert assistance is required	High Medium Low
- Research, review, and interpret regulatory and legal documentation applicable to the food safety plan	High Medium Low
Analyze data to predict the impact of food safety risk trends on the food safety management system, including:	
- Choose the data needed for analysis	High Medium Low
- Evaluate lagging and leading indicators	High Medium Low
- Analyze the data	High Medium Low
- Predict risk and evaluate the level of risk	High Medium Low
- Explain the impact to stakeholders	High Medium Low
Appraise data from multiple sources across the food safety system to formulate a holistic view of food safety risks.	High Medium Low

Differentiate relative risk and where controls are needed or not needed.	
- Assess risk to predict likelihood and consequence	High Medium Low
- Judge where controls are needed or not needed	High Medium Low
Identify leading and lagging indicators and explain how these are relevant to the food safety system.	High Medium Low
Identify action required to undertake validation, verification and evaluation of effectiveness, including:	
- Identification of information required	High Medium Low
- Research, review, and interpret scientific data for validation tasks	High Medium Low
- Determine the credibility, relevance, and applicability of data	High Medium Low
- Identification of actions required	High Medium Low
Apply product identification and lot control principles to traceability processes.	High Medium Low
Explain the differences among: - Verification - Validation - Monitoring	High Medium Low
Describe the principles of: - Validation - Effectiveness - Verification	High Medium Low
Describe principles for: - traceability - lot and product identification	High Medium Low
Describe the action required to verify the effectiveness of controls after a change to the food safety plan.	High Medium Low

Oversee System Elements

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
Apply internal auditing principles to undertake a gap assessment of a site food safety management system against the requirements of the SQF Code(s), and:	
- Identify the obligations for the SQF Practitioner	High Medium Low
- Identify the obligations for a site that is operating a certified SQF Food Safety Management system	High Medium Low
- Recognize and identify the inter-relationships and dependencies between different clauses and requirements within the SQF Code	High Medium Low
- Identify the programs, policies, and procedures required to fill identified gaps, including training requirements	High Medium Low
- Oversee the implementation of programs, policies, and procedures to fill the identified gaps	High Medium Low
- Identify and oversee monitoring activities to assess ongoing conformance to SQF Code(s) system elements	High Medium Low
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the food safety management system and identify how it could be improved	High Medium Low
Establish and manage an internal audit program for the food safety system, including:	
- Scheduling & resource assignment(s)	High Medium Low
- Evaluation of audit findings	High Medium Low
- Action follow-up and audit close-out	High Medium Low
- Communication of audit findings (written / verbal)	High Medium Low
Describe strategies for staying up to date with current SQF Codes, and industry information relevant to the food safety management system, including identifying:	
- Key industry sources	High Medium Low

- Emerging industry trends, changes	High Medium Low
- Potential implications for the food safety management system	High Medium Low
- Suitable responses, including pro-active recommendations, for the food safety management system	High Medium Low
Demonstrate understanding of key tasks required for effective implementation of the Food Safety Management System, including:	
- Scope definition	High Medium Low
- Planning for tasks, timelines, resource requirements, and dependencies	High Medium Low
- Time management	High Medium Low
- Monitoring & control	High Medium Low
Define and recognize the difference between auditing and inspection.	High Medium Low
Summarize internal auditing principles.	High Medium Low
Evaluate the adequacy and comprehensiveness of audit documentation.	High Medium Low
Analyze audit results to suggest necessary actions (which may include taking no action).	High Medium Low
Identify the pre-requisite and GMP programs that are required under the site's food safety management system.	High Medium Low
Apply internal auditing principles to schedule a gap assessment of a site food safety management system against the requirements of the identified pre-requisite and GMP programs. Identify the programs, policies, and procedures required to fill identified gaps, including training requirements.	
- Oversee the implementation of programs, policies, and procedures to fill identified gaps	High Medium Low
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the pre-requisite and GMP programs and identify how they could be improved	High Medium Low

Identify the pre-requisite and GMP programs that are required by the SQF Code(s).	High Medium Low
Describe strategies for identifying pre-requisite and GMP programs applicable to a site food safety management system, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant industry requirements - Relevant legal and regulatory requirements - Relevant customer requirements 	High Medium Low
Describe strategies for identifying when expert advice is required, including:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying suitable criteria for the selection of those experts 	High Medium Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding the advice as it applies to the food safety management system 	High Medium Low

Effective Communication

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
Illustrate and explain food safety management system concepts in a manner that facilitates understanding for the audience, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trends - Audit findings - Performance metrics - Role contributions 	High Medium Low
Present information about the food safety management system accurately and objectively.	High Medium Low
Explain the potential dynamics of cross-functional teams and describe strategies for managing these.	High Medium Low
Explain why a shared understanding about common food safety goals and objectives is critical to success.	High Medium Low
Explain the principles of collaboration.	High Medium Low
Identify methods for tracking the completion of corrective and preventive actions.	High Medium Low
Present the food safety management system to relevant stakeholder auditors, such as GFSI, regulators, and customers, including:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain how the food safety management system operates 	High Medium Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support decisions made within the food safety management system, using references relied upon for decision-making (for example scientific knowledge, industry practice, risk assessment) 	High Medium Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate activities to support an efficient audit of food safety management system assessment. 	High Medium Low
Explain strategies and rationale for integrating various external and customer requirements into a single food safety management system.	High Medium Low

Risk Assessment – Preventive

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
Explain the principles of food safety risk, as they relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relative risk based on consequence and likelihood. 	High Medium Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supply chain risk 	High Medium Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food fraud 	High Medium Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food defense 	High Medium Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food safety culture 	High Medium Low
Describe the difference between immediate, corrective, and preventive measures.	High Medium Low
Describe a general approach for assessing food safety culture components and developing an improvement plan.	High Medium Low

Risk Assessment – Post Incident

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
Explain the concept of "root cause" as it relates to problem-solving.	High Medium Low
Explain the principles and suitable application for the following tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 Whys - Brainstorming - Root cause analysis - Fishbone diagrams - Pareto analysis 	High Medium Low
Conduct a root cause analysis using a structured methodology.	High Medium Low
Identify appropriate corrective and preventive measures for an identified root cause.	High Medium Low
Construct records that accurately reflect the process, findings, and actions arising from a risk assessment – post incident.	High Medium Low

Manage and Plan for Change Control

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
Describe fundamental change control principles and change management principles.	High Medium Low
Recognize types of changes that may impact a food safety plan and/or conformance with SQF Code requirements.	High Medium Low
Illustrate the application of change control principles for a change that may impact a food safety plan.	High Medium Low
Review the food safety plan to predict changes in risk arising from the change, and identify controls needed for prevention and monitoring.	High Medium Low

Personal Attributes

Knowledge/Skill	Rating
Time management	High Medium Low
Communication	High Medium Low
Setting goals	High Medium Low
Delegation	High Medium Low
Working under pressure	High Medium Low
Team collaboration	High Medium Low
Leadership	High Medium Low
Self-motivation	High Medium Low
Analytical thinking	High Medium Low
Attention to detail	High Medium Low
Decision-making	High Medium Low
Strategic planning	High Medium Low
Planning	High Medium Low
Organizing	High Medium Low
Action-oriented	High Medium Low
Business acumen	High Medium Low
Integrity	High Medium Low
Empathy	High Medium Low
Self-awareness	High Medium Low

Dealing with ambiguity	High Medium Low
Adaptability	High Medium Low
Listening	High Medium Low
Problem-solving	High Medium Low
Solutions-focused	High Medium Low



Criteria for Certified SQF Practitioner Credential

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Disclaimer

While every effort is made to ensure that the process for evaluating applicants for registration is effective, FMI does not accept liability for services provided by registered SQF Certified Practitioners that fail to meet the requirements of all clients of the services.

Introduction

The SQF Code is a process and product certification standard. It is a third-party accredited food safety and quality management standard built on the HACCP principles and guidelines defined by the CODEX Alimentarius Commission and is intended to support industry or company-branded product and to offer benefits to sites and their customers. Products produced and manufactured under the SQF Code certification retain a high degree of acceptance in global markets.

First developed in Australia in 1994, the SQF program has been owned and managed by the Food Industry Association (FMI) since 2003 and was recognized in 2004 by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) as a standard that meets its benchmark requirements.

This document describes the qualifications, registration, and re-registration requirements to obtain and maintain the Certified SQF Practitioner credential beginning June 1, 2024.

Certification as a Certified SQF Practitioner against these criteria is conducted by Exemplar Global. It is designed to enhance the integrity of the SQF Program by providing the food industry with a register of individuals who have the appropriate competencies to oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of an SQF System.

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General Requirements

1.1 Scope

The criteria described in this document are for the purpose of certification and registration as a Certified SQF Practitioner.

1.2 Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the relevant definitions given in Appendix 2: Glossary in the SQF Food Safety Code, together with the following definitions apply:

Applicant	An individual applying to become a registered SQF auditor or SQF technical reviewer.
Certified SQF Practitioner	Designation for an individual who has successfully obtained the Certified SQF Practitioner credential.
Continuing Professional Development	Activities taken as described in the Certified SQF Practitioner Professional Development Handbook that allow the Certified SQF Practitioner to build knowledge and skills that contribute to the SQF-certified site's culture of continuous improvement.
Employment Certificate	A letter or other documentation serving as verification of employment and summary of important job duties at a current or previous employer.
HACCP Training	<p>Training in the principles and application of a HACCP system based on the Annex of the Codex Alimentarius Commission General Principles of Food Hygiene.</p> <p>The training shall be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Recognized as a HACCP training course used extensively in a country. ii. Administered and delivered by a recognized institution. ii. The acquired knowledge of the candidate shall be assessed as part of the training program.
Work Experience	Operational experience with food hygiene and food safety–based programs involving HACCP or other appropriate risk management systems. Alternatively, demonstrated experience involving equivalent practices, such as consulting or regulatory experience, that are deemed to provide experience relevant to the food safety system being developed, and the competencies described in this document may be considered.

1.3 Personal Declaration

Each applicant for registration is required to attest that they will comply with the SQFI Professional Code of Conduct (refer Attachment 2) and that any complaints regarding their performance have been or are in the process of being dealt with in a manner to prevent recurrence.

1.4 Appeals

Written appeals against the outcome of an application for registration or re-registration will be referred to the SQFI Compliance Manager or designee. Decisions made by SQFI relating to any appeal are final.

1.5 Complaints Against a Certified SQF Practitioner

Complaints regarding the conduct of a current or previous holder of the Certified SQF Practitioner credential will be acknowledged and investigated by SQFI. Substantiated evidence of misconduct may result in withdrawal of registration.

Registration Requirements

2.1 Initial Registration – Overview and Application Process

- 2.1.1 SQFI or its designee assesses the competencies of applicants for the Certified SQF Practitioner credential by evaluating the applicant's submitted documentation against the requirements specified below.
- 2.1.2 **Completed applications are submitted online via sqfi.com. A non-refundable application fee must be paid before the application review can begin. Fee information is available on sqfi.com.**
- 2.1.3 Applicants are required to utilize the registration portal linked on the SQFI website (sqfi.com). Attachments should be submitted in pdf format.
- 2.1.4 All forms shall be completely and accurately filled out and all necessary documentation submitted. Incorrect or incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant for correction. Missing documentation will be requested.
- 2.1.5 Following receipt of the application, all documentation, and payment of the application fee, the information is reviewed by SQFI or its designee for accuracy.
- 2.1.6 SQFI or its designee may request feedback from the verification contacts provided on the application about the performance of the applicant.
- 2.1.7 SQFI or its designee may request additional supporting information from the applicant as required. If SQFI or its designee is unable to obtain satisfactory verification of information and experience from competent references, an interview may be required.
- 2.1.8 Once the supporting documentation is approved, applicants will be sent a link to complete the online Certified SQF Practitioner examination.
- Successful completion of the exam consists of a minimum passing score of 75%.
 - Further information on the online Certified SQF Practitioner examination can be found in the Certified SQF Practitioner Certification Examinee Handbook and Exam Preparation Guide available on the SQFI website (sqfi.com).
- 2.1.9 Once an application is approved and the exam completed, applicants shall pay the registration fee before their SQFI professional credentials and badging can be issued.
- Fee information is found on the SQFI website (sqfi.com).
- 2.1.10 SQFI or its designee maintains a file on each applicant, which remains confidential. The file will include the original application documentation; check sheets, records of investigations, appeals and complaints, and re-registration documents.

2.2 Publication of Registration

2.2.1 A register of those having received the Certified SQF Practitioners credential is displayed on the SQFI website (sqfi.com) and on the Exemplar Global website (<https://exemplarglobal.org/portal/files/sqfi-searchregister.php>).

2.2.2 The terminology to be used by those achieving the Certified SQF Practitioner credential in describing their certification on business cards, letterheads, etc. is: "Certified SQF Practitioner."

Registration Requirements
Pre-requisite 1 – HACCP Training
HACCP Training Course that meets the definition in the current SQF Code.
Pre-requisite 2 – Knowledge and Experience with the SQF Program
<p>Implementing SQF Systems Examination completed on or after January 2, 2018 (SQF Code edition 8 or 9).</p> <p>or The Implementing SQF Systems Examination completed at any time AND at least 1 year of experience as an SQF Practitioner/substitute Practitioner in the past 3 years.</p> <p>or 2 years of experience in food safety management, quality assurance, or related roles within the food industry at a site that maintains an SQF System or similar food safety standard, including involvement in at least one SQF certification or re-certification cycle.</p> <p>or 2 years of experience leading or significantly contributing to the development, implementation, or management of an SQF System (for example, a scope extension for an existing certified SQF System).</p> <p>or completion of a comprehensive in-house training program tailored to understanding and implementing the SQF Code, provided by an experienced and qualified trainer(s). Must demonstrate the course meets the minimum requirements: Navigate the SQF Code and understand the obligations for both the SQF Practitioner and site that is operating a certified SQF Food Safety Management System.</p>
Experience 1:
Minimum of 2 years within the past five years of experience in food safety management, quality assurance, or a related role within the food industry at a site that maintains SQF certification or similar independently audited food safety standard with demonstrated responsibility for developing, maintaining, and reviewing a site's risk-based food safety plan.
Experience 2:
Demonstrate the application of the principles of validation and effectiveness; verification; traceability, and product identification within the food safety management system.
Criterion 1:
Successful completion of the Certified SQF Practitioner examination.

2.3 Ongoing Registration – Overview and Re-registration Requirements

2.3.1 Re-registration and payment of an annual fee is required to maintain status as a Certified SQF Practitioner. Additionally, every third year, evidence relating to continuing professional development and ongoing work experience must be submitted via the Exemplar Global [online portal](#).

Annual registration requirements:

- Complete the annual SQFI Program Update for Certified SQF Practitioners
- Payment of the annual registration fee
- Attest ongoing compliance with the SQFI Code of Conduct and that any complaints regarding performance have been or are in the process of being dealt with in a manner to prevent recurrence.
- Additional evidence, once every three years:
- Evidence of at least 45 hours of continuing Professional Development within the previous 3 years. This is a personal Professional Development plan and may be developed using the [Certified SQF Practitioner Professional Development Handbook](#) which includes a variety of activities and both technical and soft skills.
- Demonstrate ongoing experience as a food safety professional with responsibility related to the management of their site’s food safety system. Minimum of 1 year employment experience within every 3 years.

Re-registration Requirements
Criterion 1:
Annual SQF Program Update.
Criterion 2:
Continuing Professional Development – minimum of 45 hours within the candidate’s 3-year registration period based on a self-defined plan as described in the Certified SQF Practitioner Professional Development Handbook, and to include both technical and soft skills.
Criterion 3:
Continuing Work Experience.
Criterion 4:
Reaffirmation of the SQFI Code of Conduct.

Attachments

3.1 Attachment 1: Key Competencies for Certified SQF Practitioner Credential

3.1.2 The Certified SQF Practitioner will have the knowledge and ability to:

- Navigate an SQF Code and understand the obligations the Code specifies for both the SQF Practitioner and a site that is operating a certified SQF Food Safety Management System.
- Oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of a Food Safety Management System, including the system elements.
- Oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs), including pre-requisite programs.
- Implement and maintain food safety plans.
- Undertake a food safety risk assessment, including predicting the impact of food safety risks on the food safety management system; ascertaining the level of risk; and identifying when additional expert advice is required.
- Understand and apply change control principles to changes that may impact food safety, including verification of the effectiveness of controls.
- Apply the principles of validation and effectiveness; verification; traceability; and product identification within the food management system.
- Conduct a root cause analysis (including the identification of appropriate corrective and preventive measures).
- Communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders to ensure implementation and maintenance of the food safety management system.
- Demonstrate ability to differentiate relative risk and where controls are needed or not needed.
- Ability to assess/identify food safety culture weaknesses and develop plans for improvement.
- Ability to act as the organization's lead food safety management system representative, including during external audits.

3.2 Attachment 2: SQF Professional Code of Conduct

3.2.2 All those who have obtained the Certified SQF Practitioner credential have an obligation to maintain the integrity of the SQF Program by observing the SQFI Professional Code of Conduct. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of their certification. The SQFI Professional Code of Conduct must be carefully reviewed and acknowledged as part of the applicant's certification or re-certification.

3.2.3 Professional Integrity and Competence

- Professional Behavior: Act professionally, accurately, honestly, and impartially and in an unbiased manner.
- Integrity of the SQF Program: Act in a manner that will not prejudice the reputation of the SQF Program.
- Commitment to Food Safety: Prioritize food safety and management of risk in all aspects of professional practice.
- Continuous Learning: Stay updated with the latest developments, standards, and regulations in food safety.
- Accurate Reporting: Ensure all reports and records are truthful, accurate, and complete.
- Ethical Advocacy: Promote ethical practices and challenge unethical behavior within daily activities.

3.2.4 Ethical Behavior

- Honesty and Fairness: Act with honesty, fairness, and integrity in all professional interactions.
- Conflict of Interest: Avoid situations where personal interests conflict with professional duties. Disclose any potential conflicts of interest to relevant parties.
- Confidentiality: Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information obtained during the course of professional activities.

3.2.5 Compliance with Laws and Regulations

- Adherence to Standards: Follow all applicable food safety laws, regulations, and standards, including those set by the Safe Quality Food (SQF) Institute.
- Reporting Deviations: Promptly address any deviations from food safety standards or regulations per internal policy.

3.2.6 Professional Responsibility

- Competence in Practice: Only undertake tasks and responsibilities for which you have the necessary knowledge, skills, and competence.
- Due Diligence: Exercise due diligence in identifying and managing food safety risks.
- Accountability: Take responsibility for the consequences of your professional actions and decisions.

3.2.7 Respect for Others

- Fair Treatment: Treat all colleagues, customers, and stakeholders with respect and without discrimination.

- Collaboration: Foster a collaborative work environment to enhance food safety practices.
- Communication: Communicate effectively and respectfully with all stakeholders.

3.2.8 Commitment to Continuous Improvement

- Continuous Improvement: Strive for continuous improvement in food safety practices.
- Innovation: Encourage and implement innovative solutions to improve food safety.

3.2.9 Transparency and Trust

- Openness: Maintain transparency in all professional dealings.
- Building Trust: Work to build and maintain trust with customers, colleagues, and the public through reliable and ethical practices.

3.2.10 Professional Development

- Education and Training: Pursue ongoing education and training to maintain and enhance professional competence.
- Mentorship: Support and mentor less experienced professionals in the field of food safety.

3.2.11 Commitment to the Profession

- Representation of Credential: Appropriately represent the Certified SQF Practitioner credential and the importance of food safety in public forums and within the industry.

3.2.12 I understand that any breach of this Code of Conduct may lead to warnings, suspension, or withdrawal of certification, in accordance with SQFI's disciplinary procedures.



Certified SQF Practitioner

Professional
Development Handbook



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2.0 Introduction

A. Overview of the Certified SQF Practitioner

- i. **The Certified SQF Practitioner credential** provides a consistent framework for food safety created in collaboration between SQFI and Exemplar Global. Those who earn this voluntary professional certification credential demonstrate their ability to implement, maintain, and continuously improve an SQF food safety system at any site.
- ii. Most importantly, **the Certified SQF Practitioner credential builds trust and reliability** in our food safety systems while enhancing the credibility of our industry. When practitioners follow defined career paths, it demonstrates their commitment to professionalism, continual learning, and excellence. This boosts confidence in our food safety systems among companies and consumers alike.
- iii. Companies employing Certified SQF Practitioners can showcase their commitment to food safety and quality, setting themselves apart in the market.
- iv. For the food safety professional, this credential creates:
 1. **Recognition:** A professional path to career growth and to attract new talent into the food safety professional community.
 2. **Continuous Improvement:** Improvement of the SQF Practitioner profession, including a framework for continuing professional development within this critical role.
 3. **Career Growth:** Validity when SQF Practitioners change roles in that their skills are transferrable.
 4. **Competitive Advantage:** In a competitive job market, holding a globally recognized credential that employers will value is an advantage.
 5. **Workforce:** A pipeline of trusted food safety professionals to supply the SQF auditor pool.
 6. **SQF Program Knowledge:** This credential is a natural bridge between the Code requirements for the SQF Practitioner and the SQF Excellence Award for the SQF Practitioner.

B. Purpose

- i. This handbook is intended to aid the Certified SQF Practitioner in fulfilling the re-registration requirements for Professional Development (PD) as described in the Criteria for Certified SQF Practitioners.
- ii. Those who aspire to earn the Certified SQF Practitioner credential are encouraged to create a learning path using this handbook.

3.0 Professional Development

A. Review of Re-registration Requirements

- i. The Certified SQF Practitioner is required to re-register every three years. Within that time, the individual is required to complete a minimum of 45 hours of Professional Development.
 1. One contact hour of a qualified activity accrues one hour of PD.
- ii. The individual is asked to create a self-defined Professional Development Plan (PDP) to aid in the identification of activities that support ongoing Professional Development.
- iii. The individual will attest annually that PD is ongoing.
- iv. PD will be recorded by logging into the individual's Exemplar Global profile at [exemplarlink.org](https://www.exemplarlink.org)

B. Create a Personal Professional Development Plan (PDP)

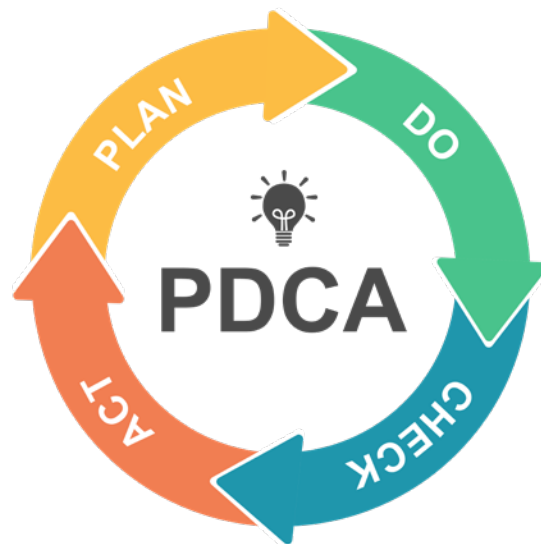
i. Overview

1. For Certified SQF Practitioners, a PDP aligned with the site's food safety policy and supported by senior site management is **pivotal for fostering continuous improvement** for both them and their site. PDPs provide a proactive investment in professional growth that not only boosts individual performance but also cultivates a culture of continuous improvement as the site benefits from increased productivity, adaptability, and sustained food safety resilience.
2. **There are five steps to creating a PDP:** Assess, Plan, Do, Check, and Act. Each is described below.

ii. Assess

1. **The first step to creating a PDP is to identify what to focus on.** Take a moment to reflect on your personal strengths and weaknesses to identify where you'd like your career to go.
2. **A skills self-assessment is a great way to identify areas for professional growth.** These tools provide structure to your reflection and aid in identifying targets. Under each heading in the skills self-assessment in Attachment 1 are skills and knowledge areas relevant to the Certified SQF Practitioner. While not all may apply to you and there certainly may be others, use these lists as a "jumping off point" and a means to generate ideas for your personal targets for professional growth.

3. **Record the skills and knowledge areas that resonate with you** and add others not listed. Once finished, move to the next step: goal planning.



iii. Create a Goal Plan

1. **Hopefully the skills self-assessment tool and self-reflection helped identify potential targets** for professional development. Take a look at your list. Does it resonate with you? Make any final edits and corrections.
2. **How will you get to where you want to be?** And how will you know you've arrived? Before heading on your journey to self-improvement, you want to have a good chance for success. And to do that, you'll need a plan.
3. **SMART Goals are a systematic way to describe your plan for success.** SMART is an acronym for the steps involved in developing a goal plan.
 - a. **Specific:** Target a specific area for improvement. You've done this by conducting a self-assessment. But are you really homed in on a specific target? Give it a bit more thought and make your goal as specific as possible.
 - b. **Measurable:** Quantify the goal. You want to improve, but by exactly how much? Identifying such things as targets, milestones, and end points will help you "visualize" progress along your journey and recognize success when you achieve it.
 - c. **Achievable:** Set yourself up for success by making the goal challenging, but not impossible.
 - d. **Realistic/Relevant:** Take a moment to think about what you want to achieve and whether you've settled on the right target. Will making this improvement actually move you toward your career goal? Is this goal specific to you, or is it someone else's vision of success?
 - e. **Time-bound:** Determine the timeframe for completing the goal. It doesn't have to be an exact date, but having an endpoint will help keep you focused and motivated.

4. Take a moment to add structure to your goal(s) using the SMART approach.

Start with one of your identified skills and knowledge gaps; narrow it down by making it specific; help yourself out by making it measurable; step back and ask if it is realistic; and lastly, identify a timeframe by which you want to achieve your goals. Document your goal plans and post it in a place where you will see it.

iv. Do

1. Look at you! **You're achieving what you set out to do.**
2. At this stage, **you are actively implementing your goal plan.**

v. Check

1. Just as monitoring a critical control point within a HACCP plan helps a site **determine if the critical limit is met**, taking time to assess your development allows you to determine whether you are progressing, whether your plan is effective, and whether your overall goal is the right one for you. Lastly, tracking will help you recognize success when you achieve it.
2. **As added incentive**, research published by the American Psychological Association tells us the more often you monitor your progress toward a goal, the greater the likelihood you will succeed.
3. **Progress is tracked** quantitatively and qualitatively.
 - a. **Quantitative:** As food industry professionals, we're used to measuring progress using quantitative means: percentages, charts, counts, time, etc. The same quantitative metrics can be used to track professional goals.
 - b. **Qualitative:** Don't forget the power of tracking qualitative progress toward your goals. This is particularly relevant if the goal targets soft skills, such as behaviors and relationships. Here you're looking at activities, patterns of behavior, and the nature of relationships. Relying on a trusted friend or colleague can help you gauge your progress.
4. **A word on accountability:** You are the CEO of Team You. You are accountable to the CEO to meet your goals, so check in and share your progress. Being accountable to your goal will keep you on the path to success.

vi. Act

1. **Success!** Congratulations on achieving your goal. Before heading off to accomplish your next goal, take a moment to celebrate your success, and also take a moment to recognize your achievement by reflecting. Reflecting allows you to pinpoint exactly what worked so you can repeat it in the future and what didn't so you can discard ineffective processes. Taking pride in your accomplishments by celebrating them—even the small ones—can also boost your self-confidence and motivate you to achieve more.

C. Documenting Professional Development

- i. The following evidence will need to be provided to demonstrate a minimum of 45 hours of Professional Development. A log is provided in Attachment 4
 - 1. **Date activity was completed**
 - 2. **Activity Title**
 - 3. **Activity Sponsor and Contact Information**
 - 4. **Activity Description**
 - 5. **The content domain(s) the activity supports**
 - 6. **Number of Contact Hours**

D. Professional Development—Resources

- i. Implementing and maintaining an SQF System as an SQF Practitioner is challenging work requiring a wide breadth of knowledge at a comprehensive level. Here are some points to help identify professional development activities that allow you to grow your knowledge and skills.
 - 1. **Knowledge and Skills Development.** Your ability to effectively perform the duties of a Certified SQF Practitioner depends on having both appropriate knowledge and practiced skills. Use the Skills Self-Assessment found in Attachment 1, which is based on the identified Knowledge and Skills for the Certified SQF Practitioner.
 - 2. **Soft and Hard Skills.** The Certified SQF Practitioner needs a combination of hard and soft skills to effectively ensure the safety of food products. Some relevant hard and soft skills are included in the self-assessment in Attachment 1.
 - 3. **Integrity and Professionalism.** Intentionally integrate the values of integrity and professionalism into your PDP by setting clear goals for ethical conduct and professional behavior. This might involve seeking out training in ethical decision-making, committing to ongoing education to stay current in one's field, and actively seeking feedback to improve personal and professional conduct. Additionally, it's important to establish a personal code of ethics and regularly reflect on one's actions to ensure they align with these standards. By embedding integrity and professionalism into long-term goals, you can build a strong reputation, foster trust with colleagues and customers, and create a solid foundation for career advancement.

- ii. Generally Accepted and Unaccepted PD Activities
 - 1. **The individual is responsible** for identifying activities that align with their PDP.
 - 2. **Accepted** – generally accepted PD activities
 - a. **SQF Unites** – Education Sessions and Knowledge Swaps
 - b. **Continuing education activities** (seminars, conferences) offered by professional associations and formal non-credit courses offered through a university
 - c. **Short courses or technical workshops**
 - d. **Serving as a speaker in technical sessions** at regional, national, or international conferences
 - e. **Teaching employees**
 - f. **Writing articles and blogs**
 - g. **Self-directed study**
 - h. **Formal college or university course work at any level** (undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral) offered by regionally/globally accredited programs. Courses may be taken via distance education.
 - 3. **Unacceptable/Generally Unacceptable PD activities**
 - a. **Performing activities associated with day-to-day responsibilities** as an SQF Practitioner or food safety professional (e.g., conducting internal audit activities, coaching team members, monthly senior site management updates, verification activities)
 - b. **Attending or participating** in committee or board meetings, serving on leadership committees, etc.
 - c. **Association membership** and leadership activities
 - d. **Business meetings**
 - e. **Expositions at conferences**
 - f. **Supervision of subordinates**, including interns
 - g. **Curriculum development**

4.0 Questions and FAQ

- i. For questions about the Certified SQF Practitioner program, qualified Professional Development activities, contact sqfi.com.
- ii. For questions about accessing the CPD portal and application, lost login, portal support, contact exemplarlink.org.

5.0 Attachments

- i. You can find the Certified SQF Practitioner Self-Assessment, the SMART Goals Planning Tool, the Professional Development Plan Tool, and the Professional Development Activities Log at sqfi.com/training-events/search-for-training/certified-sqf-practitioner-credential.