Respiratory Protective Equipment Fit Test Providers Training Course Approval Scheme

Training Course Submission Handbook

[Version V1.0 27 January 2022]

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Training Course Submission Guidance Notes

1. Introduction & Background

Fit testing is an essential part of an effective respiratory protective equipment (RPE) programme. Tight-fitting RPE, i.e., those that have a face seal (BS EN136, BS EN140, BS EN149), will not provide optimum protection if they do not fit.[1,2,3] Therefore, all wearers of tight-fitting RPE should be fit tested to verify that the selected make, model, and size of a tight-fitting RPE adequately fits the wearer.[4,5]

A fit test should be performed prior to first use of the RPE and be conducted by a competent fit tester. Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Approved Code of Practice and guidance, requires that fit testing is undertaken by a competent person.[4]

Market experience[a] has shown that there have been cases where RPE face fit testing has been incorrectly carried out, due to a lack of underpinning knowledge, insufficient practical skills and experience, potentially resulting in the RPE wearer not being issued with an adequately fitting facepiece with may lead to lower protection and greater exposure to hazardous substances.

The Fit2Fit Accreditation Scheme (supported by HSE) has been established to assess and accredit competence of RPE face fit testers. This accreditation offers a 'signpost' to RPE users, who require fit testing, towards a competent service. The competence measurement is based upon the requirements of the HSE's fit testing guidance document *Guidance on respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit testing* (INDG479), the BSIF *Fit2Fit Companions to HSE INDG479* and the underpinning knowledge of RPE which is covered in HSE's RPE guidance document *Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide* (HSG53).[6,7,8,9,5]

To achieve Fit2Fit Accreditation it is essential that the fit tester is both suitably trained and has gained experience of fit testing in practice. Training courses are therefore a vital tool in developing competence in RPE face fit testing and as such their content must be accurate, provide sufficient information and contain practical elements.

2. Purpose of the Fit2Fit Training Course Approval Scheme

The Fit2Fit Training Course Approval Scheme has been developed to assess whether training courses comprise the level of information and practical training which, when satisfactorily delivered by the trainer and implemented by the candidate, should provide a sound baseline of knowledge and skill, which with experience of application, ultimately enable satisfactory RPE face fit testing competence, as measured by the Fit2Fit accreditation scheme.

Note: It is important to point out that approval of the training course is not a 'guarantee' that all delegates attending an Approved training course will go on to achieve Fit2Fit Fit Test Providers

[a] Health and Safety Executive (HSE) / The HSE's Asbestos Licensing Unit / British Safety Industry Federation (BSIF) / Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) / end users

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Accredited status. It is important that training is satisfactorily delivered and implemented and combined with field i.e., on-the-job experience, preferably overseen by a mentor, to ensure sufficient competence is gained to achieve Fit2Fit accreditation.

The approval indicates that the training course content covers all the required information and practical training requirements of Fit2Fit training syllabus but cannot and does not offer any sureties of competence of the delegate upon completing the course.

Individual face fit tester's Fit2Fit Accreditation can only be granted upon successfully completing the requirements of the Fit2Fit Accreditation scheme. Please note that Fit2Fit Accreditation cannot be granted through completion or participation in a training course and can only be achieved through the successful completion of the Fit2Fit assessed accreditation scheme, administered by BSIF.

3. How will the training course be assessed?

Desk-top assessment: The submitted training course material will be assessed using a desk-top approach to ensure that the content and structure of the course covers all the topics required within the **Fit2Fit Training Course Syllabus** (see section 7).

Course approval will be awarded for four (4) years subject to a satisfactory "observational review" undertaken at the midpoint i.e., within approx. two years of the course validity period.

Observational review**:** This will be a practical assessment of the delivery of the course. This will be conducted within two years of the approval being awarded, via the attendance of a Fit2Fit Training Course Assessor at an Approved Fit2Fit training course. A convenient date and venue will be agreed between Fit2Fit and the Approved training course provider

4. What will the training course assessor be looking for?

The assessor will be reviewing the material submitted for the following content:

- A training course that covers, in a clear and understandable way, all the topics required by the Fit2Fit training course syllabus**.**
- A set of reference notes (delegate handouts) the delegate can use following the training.
- Sufficient practical demonstration and 'hands on' use of the fit testing equipment and practice in conducting fit testing.

5. What should the training material contain?

The training materials should contain sufficient details such that an assessment against the **Fit2Fit Training Course Syllabus** can be made against each element of the syllabus for:

- accuracy of content
- explanation of **what** actions a competent fit tester needs to perform
- **when** those actions should be performed during a fit test procedure, and
- **why** these actions are required.

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IMPORTANT

Each element of the Fit2Fit training course syllabus must be covered in the training materials. Links to external content such as videos and publications can be used to reinforce the training but should not form the sole content of how the training fulfils a specific element within the Fit2Fit training course syllabus. Use of external content embedded within the training presentation (materials) should be used to reinforce the content delivered by the trainer. Where in the opinion of Fit2Fit the use of external content is core rather than reinforcing, the training course may be returned to the provider for correction, please note this may incur a fee. *Please consult Fit2Fit for further details*

This content should be supported with sufficient detail to provide the essential underpinning knowledge, which is then reinforced during demonstration and practical sessions during the training; just covering the actions a fit tester needs to perform is not sufficient.

In the **Fit2Fit Training Course Syllabus** where the content refers to, for example, *General understanding of RPE use in workplace - Potential hazards* and *Required Legal Knowledge and Understanding*, the training materials should contain content to give the delegates an overview of the fundamentals of RPE use in the workplace including for example applicability of different RPE for different hazards, and the relevance and impact of legal requirements relating to RPE and fit testing.

6. How should the training materials be prepared for submission to Fit2Fit

Training providers are required to submit a copy of all the materials they intend to use in the training which should include, where appropriate:

- a completed course **Syllabus Reference Form** (see section 13)
- training PowerPoint slides (pdf format is acceptable)
- PowerPoint slide notes
- teacher/trainer notes
- copies of videos (or links)
- lessons plans
- delegate handouts
- a breakdown of the practical and classroom content
- ratio of delegates and trainers
- a list of practical resources available including the fit test equipment and range of RPE (including numbers, RPE types and classes) – refer to section 8.

7. Course Content

The **Fit2Fit Training Course Syllabus** (downloadable from the resources page of the Fit2Fit website at Resources - fit2fit) specifies the minimum content that the training course must deliver. The training course must cover the entirety of the syllabus (specific to the fit test method). Additionally, the training course must deliver the minimum level of understanding and practical skills required to undertake fit testing using the qualitative or quantitative fit testing methods as specified in the

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Fit2Fit Accreditation scheme syllabus (downloadable from the resources page of the Fit2Fit website at Resources - fit2fit)

The **Respiratory Protective Equipment Fit Test Providers Accreditation Scheme Candidate Handbook** (which can be downloaded from the resources page of the Fit2Fit website at Resources - fit2fit) explains what will be required of the candidate at any future practical assessment and the training should also reflect these requirements.

Training providers can submit courses in either Qualitative or Quantitative (i.e., Ambient particle counting (APC) with or without N95 technology and controlled negative pressure (CNP)) RPE fit testing or both. Other systems may be included in the future.

8. Course resources for practical sessions

It is important that sufficient resources are available to enable adequate practical training. Please indicate the likely ratio between delegates and available equipment and trainers. As an indication, Fit2Fit would expect a maximum of 8 delegates to 1 trainer on any course and a maximum of 4 delegates to any equipment used. Any higher ratios will require detailed explanation. The 'hands on' practical content will require an overview of the time and detail covered, plus an indication of where demonstrations will be used and where delegates are expected to undertake practical activities themselves.

An essential criterion is that the course includes appropriate practical sessions to cover the Fit2Fit training course syllabus. Practical sessions should be designed to allow delegates to practice facepiece identification, inspection, fault finding (incl. taking corrective actions), undertake fit testing themselves, manage a failed fit test, troubleshoot and rectified fit problems and have an emphasis on correctly managing the RPE wearer during the fit test. The ability of a fit tester to correctly troubleshoot a failed fit test or to ensure the validity of a passed fit test are vital skills for a competent fit tester.

As an indication a minimum of 6 different facepieces types and classes covering a good cross section of the models and types available and appropriate to the fit test method(s). QNFT training must include a range of different fit test probing techniques.

9. Course Delivery

The course content should be delivered using both formal teaching methods (e.g., lectures, presentation slides, written information, and revision), alongside practical demonstrations and hands-on usage of the testing equipment, with explanations, fault finding, understanding of erroneous results and usage of appropriate record keeping, etc.

As many 'what if' real workplace scenarios as possible should be built into the training, along with fault finding on RPE and fit testing equipment and discussions on likely 'real life' situations with RPE wearers and how these are overcome. Additionally, a wide range of RPE types and models should be used to enable the candidate to gain a substantial knowledge of a range of different testing requirements.

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Emphasis must be placed upon the need to ensure that fit tests are giving an accurate result on each occasion. Unspecified or 'short cut' testing methods must be firmly discouraged.

10. Course duration

The duration of the course should be commensurate with the aims and objectives of the course. The lesson plans should include sufficient time to deliver the four sections of the **Fit2Fit Training Course syllabus** ensuring all elements within each section are covered. Sufficient time should also be factored-in to ensure delivery of tutor led demonstrations and delegate practical sessions to embed the knowledge and theory they have learnt.

The expected duration for a qualitative or quantitative fit testing course is one-day. Where a course covers both qualitative and quantitative fit testing is it expected that a suitable duration will extend beyond a one-day course.

11. Trainer requirements

All trainers must be Fit2Fit accredited in the method of fit testing in which they deliver the training. In addition, they must be fully conversant with the background knowledge, understanding and practical skills for RPE fit testing in the method(s) in which they offer training. They should ensure their specified equipment is available, appropriate and in good working order. Additionally, the RPE to be used during the course should be applicable for the fit test method and in good working order - however the use of poorly maintained or faulty RPE should be included to facilitate fault finding and RPE inspection. A suitable location to enable theoretical learning and practical RPE fit testing sessions to be undertaken should also be available.

12. How to submit your material?

All training materials used in the course (presentations, course notes, etc., as details in section 6) must be submitted in electronic format (pdfs are acceptable) to fit2fit@bsif.co.uk. The material must be an exact copy of the materials as presented to and/or supplied to the delegates. Additionally, the material submitted must be accompanied by a completed **Syllabus Reference Form** (see section 13); the **Syllabus Reference Form** may be accompanied with explanatory notes if required (but these should be kept to a minimum).

13. Syllabus Reference Form

Training materials submitted should be accompanied by a completed Fit2Fit training approval **Syllabus Reference Form**. This form should clearly reference where each syllabus topic is covered in the course materials submitted. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the content is fully covered and correctly referenced in the **Syllabus Reference Form**.

14. Period of validity

The approved status will be for a period of four years from the date of approval being issued, subject to the conditions set out at section 3 and in the Responsibilities and Terms and Conditions sections.

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15. How will detail of the course's approval be published to the market?

The BSIF / Fit2Fit websites will contain a list of approved training course providers, and this will be communicated to all enquires for fit test training.

16. Assessment outcomes and 'Approval'

In the event of a successful approval, Fit2Fit will write to the training provider, informing them of their success, send an 'Approval' certificate and allow them to use the Fit2Fit approved course logo in their material. Additionally, their name will be included in the Approved training providers list which will appear on the Fit2Fit website and be mailed to companies requesting training information.

Where the courses content submitted fails to meet the required standard, the applicant will be informed and provided with details of the area(s) of the syllabus that require corrective actions.

If, in the opinion of the assessor, the courses content submitted fails to meet the required standard due to a few omissions, the applicant will be informed, provided with details of the area(s) of the syllabus that require corrective actions and an opportunity to re-submit.

Should, in the opinion of the assessor, the courses content submitted fails to meet the required standard due to significant omissions or unclear content, then the full re-submission will be required, and a full assessment charge will be applicable.

17. Four-yearly reassessment

The four-yearly reassessment will be conducted as explained in section 4, i.e., a further review of the course content and subject to a satisfactory "observational review", within two years of the four-yearly reassessment.

18. Costs

The costs for approval of RPE fit test training courses:

- £750 + VAT to assess 1 test method
- £1,000 + VAT to assess 2 methods
- £500 / £750 reassessment
- £500 / £750 Four-yearly reassessment

Please contact Fit2Fit for details and costs for the "observational review"

19. References

1. BS EN136 Respiratory protective devices - Full-face masks - Requirements, testing and marking
2. BS EN140 Respiratory protective devices - Half masks and quarter masks - Requirements, testing and marking
3. BS EN149 Respiratory protective devices - Filtering half masks to protect against particles - Requirements, testing, marking

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4. HSE L5 The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended) Approved Code of Practice and guidance. Control of substances hazardous to health (Sixth edition) - L5 (hse.gov.uk)
5. HSE HSG53 Respiratory protective equipment at work A practical guide. Respiratory protective equipment at work: A practical guide (hse.gov.uk)
6. HSE INDG479 Guidance on respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit testing. Guidance on respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit testing - INDG479 (hse.gov.uk)
7. BSIF Companion to HSE INDG 497 Guidance on respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit testing - Qualitative Method
8. BSIF Companion to HSE INDG 497 Guidance on respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit testing - Quantitative Method Ambient Particle Counting
9. BSIF Companion to HSE INDG 497 Guidance on respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit testing - Quantitative Method Controlled Negative Pressure

20. Additional reading materials

- BS EN 529:2005 Respiratory protective devices. Recommendations for selection, use, care and maintenance. Guidance document
- Other sources of information and guidance relating to the provision of fit test training include:
    - Fit test equipment suppliers/manufacturers
    - RPE manufactures

21. Responsibilities

1. Fit2Fit

a) Fit2Fit will carry out the initial assessments and reassessments to determine that the training material as submitted meets or exceeds the criteria for approval to the 'Fit2Fit' training course approval scheme.

b) Fit2Fit undertakes to apply the criteria for approval consistently and to provide from its own staff or through sub-contractors suitably qualified personnel to perform the assessment process.

c) Once Fit2Fit is satisfied with the content of a submitted training course to meet the published criteria, Fit2Fit will issue an approval certificate, which will remain in force for the defined period.

d) Fit2Fit reserves the right to carry out surveillance visits at any point within the awarding period to assess the training actually delivered, as it may reasonably require. A convenient date and venue will be agreed between Fit2Fit and the Approved training course provider.

e) In the event of a significant change to guidance that warrants a change to the approved training content, Fit2Fit reserves the right to request a copy of the training materials to ensure that the changes are correctly addressed in the training materials. Where the assessor deems the course material no longer meets the required course syllabus, Fit2Fit will communicate to the training provider the actions required.

f) Where the course material/delivery is no longer deemed to fulfil the Fit2Fit training course requirements, then Fit2Fit reserves the right to withdraw approved status at any stage and with

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immediate effect. This will be communicated to the training provider company in writing.

2. Approved Training Course Provider

a) At all times to comply with the terms of the agreement and its relevant requirements

b) Not to use the approval in such a manner as to bring it into disrepute and to take appropriate steps to correct an action or statement used by the provider and or its clients which Fit2Fit consider to be misleading.

c) The Approved Training Course Provider is responsible to ensuring that their training materials continues to meet the requirements of the Fit2Fit syllabus. The Approved Training Course Provider is also responsible for keeping well-informed of changes in fit testing guidance issued by HSE and/or RPE and fit test equipment manufacturers, relevant for the scope of their approved training course materials, and for accurately reflecting those changes in their training materials.

In the event of a significant change to guidance that warrants a change to the approved training content, Fit2Fit reserves the right to request a copy of the training materials to ensure that the changes are correctly addressed in the training materials. Where Fit2Fit deems the course material no longer meets the required course syllabus, the approved training course provider will be requested to take immediate steps to correct the content.

d) Only the course material submitted to and approved by Fit2Fit (subject to any agreed changes as per 2.c) may be described as and presented as Fit2Fit approved.

e) To make it clear to all clients (i.e. training course delegates) that attendance on a Fit2Fit Approved course does not imply Fit2Fit in any way accepts liability for the actions of the training provider. The scheme merely confirms the training material as assessed by Fit2Fit and submitted for approval by the provider covers all of the points required in the Fit2Fit syllabus and is presented to the student in an appropriate manner.

f) Certificates provided to course delegates at the conclusion of the approved course must not state that the learner has “passed” or “successfully completed”, certificates must only confirm attendance at the training course.

g) To make it clear to all clients (i.e., training course delegates) that attendance on a Fit2Fit Approved course and any assessment conducted as part of the training course does not imply individual delegate Fit2Fit fit tester accreditation status. Only by successfully completing a Fit2Fit assessment arranged via the Fit2Fit Scheme can an individual gain Fit2Fit Accredited Status.

h) All approved training providers must have sufficient liability insurance to cover any possible actions taken against them and will indemnify Fit2Fit against any sub-action which may be started against the accreditation scheme.

i) The training provider agrees that only Fit2Fit accredited RPE fit testers (with appropriate accreditation for the course being undertaken (i.e., qualitative and / or quantitative)) will be used to deliver the training programme.

j) Use their best endeavours to utilise their skills on each and every training course to ensure the course meets the requirements of the Fit2Fit approved course and ensures all students receive thorough and comprehensive training in RPE fit testing.

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k) Confidentiality: The training provider agrees that all data collected regarding individuals or companies and including details regarding the Fit2Fit scheme are treated as confidential and not disclosed to any third party without the express agreement of the scheme, company or individual.

Terms & Conditions

The following terms and conditions apply to all RPE training companies applying for approval to the Fit2Fit training approval scheme.

1/ Payment: All fees are paid in advance of any stage in the approval process. The fee is not refundable if a candidate withdraws from the accreditation process.

2/ Approved status: Approved status is granted to the training company submitting and using the required training content. Approved status will remain with the training company until the approved period expires (a maximum of four years). Within the 4-year period, re-approval can be applied for and following a successful assessment be granted for a further 4 years and so on.

3/ Failure to pass the assessment stages: There is no limit to the number of times the assessment process can be entered into. On each occasion, the appropriate fee is payable.

4/ Appeals: If at any stage the training company believes the training material has been unfairly assessed, an appeal can be lodged (in writing or e mail) to the Fit2Fit governing board, via the schemes administrator (BSIF). The Governing board will appoint a panel of not less than two independent adjudicators, who will investigate the complaint and report to the governing board within 30 working days of the original contact. The decision of the governing board will be final in all cases. The decision will be communicated to the training company within 30 working days of receiving the adjudicators report.

5/ Removal of Approval status: The Fit2Fit Governing board reserves the right to suspend or withdraw Fit2Fit training approval status from a training company, at any time, as it deems appropriate. Withdrawal of approval will be communicated in writing to the individual (along with the cause) and an opportunity to appeal will be granted.

The major cause for approval suspension / removal will be that the course does not meet the content requirements of the approval scheme. Other causes (such as bringing the scheme into disrepute, non-payment of fees etc) may also lead to approval withdrawal and in all cases the decision of the Governing body will be final.

The Governing board will appoint a panel of not less than two independent adjudicators, who will investigate the circumstances for removal / suspension of approved status and report to the governing board within 30 working days. The decision will be communicated to the training company within 30 working days of receiving the adjudicators report.

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Re-establishment of approval can be achieved through a satisfactory reassessment and if required, satisfactory resolution of any other issue creating the original approval removal. In the latter situation, the Governing Body (or their representatives) will make the final decision upon acceptable remedy for the Fit2Fit Scheme.

6/ Liability: Approval to the Fit2Fit scheme confirms that at the point of assessment, the course content was deemed comprehensive and meet the schemes criteria. It does not, in any way, imply the scheme will bear any responsibility whatsoever in the event of a provider failing to satisfactorily offer comprehensive training as required by the approval scheme. As a condition of approval, approved providers must ensure they are adequately insured against such an event.

In providing approval, neither Fit2Fit, BSIF nor any of its officers, employees or agents warrant the accuracy or completeness of any training carried out, information or advice supplied.

7/ Limitations: Approval for the training scheme confirms that at the point of assessment, the training schemes content meet the requirements of the training providers approval scheme. Fit2Fit cannot guarantee the delivery of the approved content or the competence of the delivery of that material during any training session. BSIF will not, in any way bear any responsibility whatsoever in the event that the approved training course fails to delivery sufficient knowledge to competently undertake RPE fit testing.

END

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