

Retail competencies

Review of National Occupational Standards

What are National Occupational Standards?

A National Occupational Standard (NOS) is a document that describes the knowledge, skills and understanding an individual needs to be competent at a job. They are statements of the standards of performance which individuals must achieve for effective performance in the workplace.

A set of NOS is presented as a 'suite' – relating to a particular business area or occupation. Very few people will carry out all the functions described in any full suite of NOS. In addition, many of the functions / those carrying them out will vary dependent on the size of the organisation.

“National Occupational Standards provide an employer-led, multi-sector definition of competence, setting the standards which govern and quality assure skills and skills development across the UK.”

***Cathy Gallagher, Senior Consultant,
Workforce Development Trust***



What does the retail suite of National Occupational Standards cover?

The suite of Retail National Occupational Standards (NOS) covers the knowledge, skills, and performance criteria required for a wide range of roles within the retail sector.

These standards are designed to support various functions, such as customer service, stock management, sales, merchandising, taking payments and team leadership.



How many retail National Occupational Standards are there?

The retail suite currently contains 162 National Occupational Standards. During the review, the number of standards may reduce.

How are they used?

Employers use National Occupational Standards as a common language to support and facilitate consistency, standardisation, transferability and interoperability. They have a variety of important uses for both individuals and organisations, including being used in the development of job roles or service design, training and qualifications, or as a measure of workplace competence.

Where can I see them?

Approved National Occupational Standards sit on a national database that is easily accessible and available to everyone. You can view and search the database at ukstandards.org.uk.



About the review of retail National Occupational Standards

People 1st International (part of the Workforce Development Trust) are leading a review of National Occupational Standards related to retail.

A public consultation is open until 5pm on 14 February 2025.

The results and feedback will be analysed and implemented ahead of submitting the updated standards for approval.

The consultation aims to assess whether 162 of the National Occupational Standards are fit for purpose or require updating. We are asking for a wide range of employers and stakeholders to give us their feedback.

Help shape the
future of retail skills
[Take part in the consultation](#)



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